

Venerable JOSÉ MARÍA GARCÍA LAHIGUERA

Archbishop Emeritus of Valencia
Founder of the
Oblate Sisters of Christ the Priest

SACERDOS ET HOSTIA

“...«These words have been my life on earth
and I hope they will be my glory in heaven»

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Player

For private devotion

Holy Father, source of all holiness, who hast deigned to confer your faithful son José Maria the fullness of priesthood, thus identifying him with Jesus Christ, Eternal High Priest: We humbly pray now for you to grant us the grace we plead, trusting in his intercession, so that one day the Church, which he loved and served with the total offering of his life, will raise him to the honors of the altars, to the glory of your name. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

(Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory)

In accordance with the decree of Pope Urban VIII, in no way it is intended to prevent the judgment of the Church. This prayer does not have any purpose of public worship.

Biographical notice

José María García Lahiguera was born in Fitero (Navarra-Spain) March 9, 1903, and was baptized three days later. During his lifetime, he always wanted to follow the action of the Holy Spirit in him. When he was still young, he expressed his desire to be a priest, and at Madrid Seminar he left a durable memory of his great virtue. Ordained on May 29, 1926, he was soon called to be spiritual director of the seminarians. Full of zeal for priestly holiness, he founded in 1938 with Mother M^a del Carmen Hidalgo de Caviedes the Oblate Sisters of Christ Priest, a Congregation of contemplative life, which attained Pontifical approval in 1967. D. Jose Maria was appointed Auxiliary Bishop of Madrid in 1950; Bishop of Huelva in 1964; and Archbishop of Valencia in 1969. Promoter of the Feast of Christ the Eternal High Priest, he was happy to see this celebration introduced in the liturgical calendar of Spain in 1973. He died in Madrid, on July 14, 1989, with fame of holiness. His body rests in the Motherhouse chapel of the Oblate Sisters of Christ Priest. Pope Benedict XVI declared him «Venerable» on June 27, 2011.

Acknowledgements

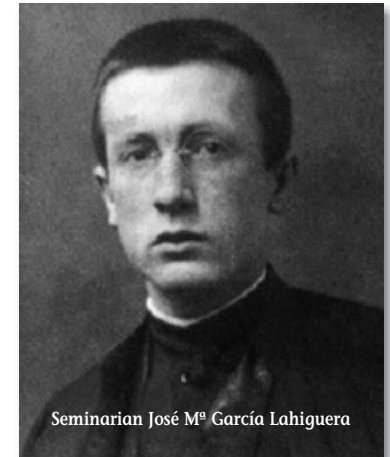
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Newsletter
On the life and holiness fame of
Venerable José María García Lahiguera, Archbishop

Testimonies

In the Madrid Seminar, José María was called «Albericio», because he was the great nephew of Canon D. Ignacio Albericio, author of a famous Latin Grammar that was studied in classrooms at that time. Amongst teachers and schoolmates there was an unanimous voice, «Albericio is a saint».

Seeing him for the first time, I thought I saw San Luis Gonzaga, but with glasses. He was delicate and well mannered. He radiated a special goodness and a captivating sweetness. Everything about him gave me the impression



Seminarian José M^a García Lahiguera

of being in the presence of one of those pictured saints we saw in our childhood. And as time went on, I was more convinced of that impression. He inspired in me such devotion that, on more than one occasion when I stepped into the chapel, to see him, I was where theologians should have been. He was so absorbed and transfigured before the tabernacle, next to the altar of the Immaculate, with a cheerful and serene face.

Pious, observant, humble and helpful, José María was a kind and unaffected saint, who also knew how to both play jokes on others and be on the receiving end of them

During his theological studies, he was in charge of the Schola Cantorum. I'll never forget his great patience, self-control and kindness in the rehearsals. I never saw him with a gesture of impatience or irritated words.

On the contrary, merely one of his sweet glances made us quiet, repeating pieces again and again until we got it right. He instructed us, rather than scolded us, with some words full of unction—which he always kept—, such as «The things we do for the Lord or the Virgin must be done well and with love, don't you think?»

D. Hermenegildo López Gonzalo

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2016
N.º 10

Venerable José María García Lahiguera



I always wanted to be a priest. I never wanted to be anything else. As a boy of nine (I remember it!) I told my father I wanted to enter the seminary, because I wanted to be a priest. (Diary, 05/25/1976)

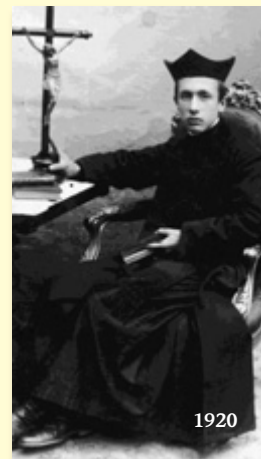
I entered the seminary in Madrid on October 1, 1915; and I left it, heading the Bishopric, on January 1st, 1949. During these thirty-five years I lived day and night in the seminary, fulfilling what I would name three stages; seminarian, then superior-professor and finally, spiritual director: first in the Minor Seminary and then —the most interesting—, in the Major Seminary.

I was happy, entirely happy at all times, then and now when I remember it. The seminary years left their mark on my being. They forged the figure of the future priest with the heat of the spirit and the continuous work. They were as soft water on the seeds of vocation which then developed throughout the apostolate of my life.

Those were filled years; we breathed deeply the air of grace, of peace and of hope. We were then a good number of seminarians. We walked cheerfully, good-humoredly; some very studious, others less so; some piously, others not as much; but all with a holy desire of reaching the priesthood.

Everything helped. Gently, the figure of the priest was carved into our being; our spirit was entering into the deep of the received gift —vocation— and, almost not realizing it, we climbed the slope of asceticism... and sometimes, realizing it, always stimulated by the examples, we overcame the difficulties frequently present in the life of a seminarian. That atmosphere of strong austerity did not reduce the healthful joy nor dried the juice of spontaneity, but as a beneficial rain of graces, was forging our souls in sacrifice, in detachment, in solitude full of God.

I was happy as a child, and as a teenager, and as senior seminarian. I lived in the seminary like in my own home. It was my home. And remembering those years, I just thank God and the Virgin, Mother of Christ the Priest, who has such a direct influence on the advance of the seminarian.

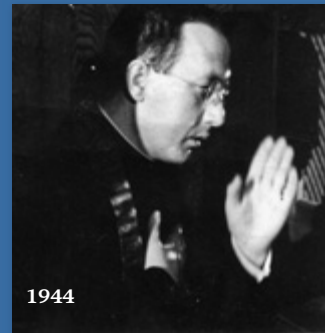


"My time at the Seminar"

I was also happy with the superiors who opened the way to our beginners' steps with their examples and guidance. How often a look, a smile, a word, dispelled the doubt or pointed out the deviation and error, or lighted the flames of love for our vocation!

My seminary years were so, leading up to Holy Orders received with deep emotion. Unforgettable seminar years that linked with those of Superior; because I was immediately appointed professor and then Prefect, which required me to live there. Therefore, the seminary continued being my home.

Later, the charge of Spiritual Director, which I have always considered the greatest grace after Priesthood, culminated my vocation. The formation of the future priests demanded of me a constant dedication, faithfulness, God's life...



The priest is *alter Christus*; he is chosen by God to be minister and dispenser of his mysteries... and I was fully dedicated to this task. Seminary, seminarians, priests... Hours in the room where they could always find me; hours in the confessional (a labor I considered primarily); and not a few hours in the chapel, because there I had to find light and security to guide those selected souls,

chosen by God, who I had to lead to the altar, but above all to the configuration to Christ Priest our Divine Master, our model, our life.

This has been my way through the seminary. A constant and determined effort to reach the priesthood. A life given without rest to the entrusted ministry.

And now, in the twilight of life, I remain so grateful for what I received in the seminary; I still exult with joy for the gift of the priesthood; I'm giving my life, in the silence of my retirement, for the sake of priests and seminarians. And now, writing *My time at the Seminar*, I confirm that I have lived and continue to live on that time until death. Because I have not finished going through the seminary. I am still there in spirit.

J. M^a GARCÍA LAHIGUERA, in "*The Spiral Staircase*", 1981.



Reported graces



- The son of a friend of mine was born premature at seven month who had serious problems with his lungs and heart. Fearing for his life, and in view of the extreme gravity of his situation, I prayed to D. José María. After several weeks of danger, the child recovered and was able to go home. I publish this favor for the glory of God and participation in it of his servant.

Marta - Toledo

- For some time I prayed the prayer of José María and I carry his stamp with me. When I was diagnosed with colon cancer, I asked Don Jose Maria to intercede before God our Lord for me and my family.

I was taken to the operating room with the stamp, and I asked him for everything to go well and for the surgeons. Two months later we went to consultation with the oncologist and he told us I did not need any treatment or radiotherapy or chemotherapy, although I still have to have regular check ups. For all this I want to give thanks.

M. L. - Huelva

- Thank you, Father, for having taken my brother from hell that is the world of drugs, which had engaged him for 22 years. Thank you for his conversion and for his recovery after a serious accident. Father, continue to protect my family!

S. López - Salamanca