

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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Prayer

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.

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

Venerable José María García Lahiguera

I consider the seminary the school where you are trained to reach that sanctity which has to be called "priestly" in you. And for this, we must set our eyes on the great "prototype": Christ the Supreme and Eternal Priest. That is the "form" to be acquired. It is not a question of removing human values and principles, but the consequences of being poor sinners. We have to accept those consequences, but before them there is no choice but to take up the stance of the Gospel: abnegation. There is no choice but to remove what is not in accordance with Christ. And this is not tiresome but joyful when it springs from a heart that loves and aims to become "like Him".



D. Jose Maria with the seminarians of Huelva – 1965

Then, the great substantial "form" of the priesthood comes participating by virtue of ordination. It is the work of grace and the Holy Spirit. And then you can say that you are "configured" with Christ Priest, which is to be, in you, the obsession, the passion, the love. This has to be "the great formation". In such a way that, once you are priests, even though not only the accidents –as they remain in the Eucharist– but also the reality of the human being remains in you, nevertheless, the "transformation" has come about in your spirit.

Beloved of my soul: That transformation means turning to think as Christ thought; to feel as Christ felt; to want what Christ wanted and in the same way as He wanted it; to act as Christ did... The work is so great that it can only be carried out in the impulses of love. I wish you understood that your great work as seminarians is your own holiness. And since holiness is not improvised, you must take it beforehand and do it in earnest.

Seminarians: Cheer up! The Virgin is with you, and she is the great "educator". Are you not going to be "another Christ" on earth? Be it with respect to the Father, with respect to the Church, with regard to souls... and with respect to the Virgin. Just as Christ.

(Homily to seminarians - 30.05.1967)

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TESTIMONIES

In the radiant morning of May 29, 1926, shortly after turning twenty-three, he was ordained a priest. According to his own confession, that day he promised "Ask for nothing, refuse nothing". And that was to be his unalterable rule of behavior in the exercise of his ministry. Don Jose Maria was sure that Christ's priestly act par excellence was the sacrifice of the Cross by obedience to the Father. Therefore, the fact that he participated ministerially in the priesthood of Christ necessarily implied for him to participate in the same way in the obedient disposition of Jesus, who said: "I cannot do anything on my own ... because I do not seek my own will but the will of the one who sent me" (Jn 5,30).



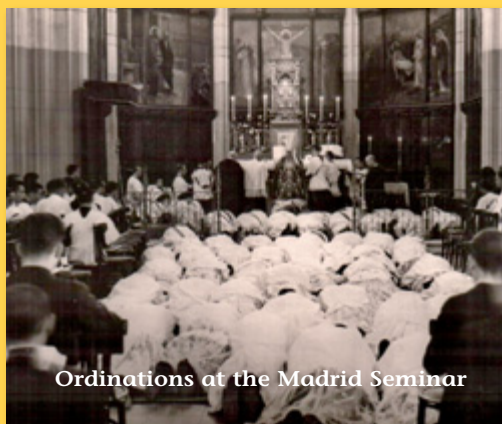
External Prefect at the Madrid Seminar - 1930

Being a newly ordained priest, his musical talent and his proved ability to lead the Schola Cantorum—as he had been doing in his last years as a seminarian—kept him tied to the Seminary. He was in charge of teaching music, geography and history, the Prefecture of external seminarians, the Secretariat of Seminary Studies, the Directorate of Catechetical Museum and the Catechesis of the School Group "Vázquez Mella". At the same time, he was appointed chaplain of The Angelicas, whose Foundress Mother Genoveva Torres, was a close friend of his mother.

ASK FOR NOTHING, REFUSE NOTHING

By obedience, without any personal desire, he obtained the degree of Doctor of Canon Law by the Pontifical University of Toledo in 1928. He also seconded the wishes of Bishop Eijo y Garay—who was concerned since the proclamation of the Second Republic about the secularist and extremely sectarian dyeing of legislation, especially on education—when he encouraged the most prepared priests to obtain the title of National Teacher. Quickly, Don Jose Maria reported in the Normal School of Avila to validate his studies in order of the new title. In the Seminar, the surprising result of the examinations was commented with extraordinary joy, although with a great deal of indignation: some sectarian member of the Tribunal, who knew the priestly condition of Don Jose Maria—in spite of the obligatory disguise in which, on the orders of the Prelate, priests presented themselves—intended to suspend him in music, precisely! However, on October 16, 1933, he obtained the title of National Teacher.

Very soon, many seminarians began to follow his spiritual guidance. The Prelate, seeing that the tide was uncontainable, had to appoint him Spiritual Director, first of the Minor Seminary (1932) and then of the Major (1936). I do not mean by this that Bishop Don Leopoldo made this appointment unwillingly or grudgingly. I want to say that he did so—as he would later tell us—"gladly forced" by the spiritual prestige Don Jose Maria enjoyed in the absolute majority of the seminarians at that time.



Ordinations at the Madrid Seminar



1925

Salvador Muñoz Iglesias, "José María García Lahiguera. A Charisma-A Life"

Reported graces

- Because of a fall I suffered a shoulder dislocation and I was operated on twice without achieving a stable reduction, so the doctor decided to put on prosthesis. In the third operation there were no problems; nevertheless, once the drainage was removed, the liquid flowed abundantly. They treated me several times and as it continued to flow, the doctor made the decision to reopen it for the fourth time and to clean it out.



1942

While I waited to go back to the operating room, the priest who brought Holy Communion to the clinic arrived. After giving me Communion, he made, with great faith, a plea for healing through the intercession of Father José María, and when he said goodbye he told me, "Do not fear, you will see. The Father does not fail."

Before I went down to the operating room, the doctor came and removed the bandages. Then he saw that the wound had a new aspect. He pressed it several times but nothing came out. He ordered that nothing should be taken nor be treated nor be cleaned concerning the wound until the next day at noon. When that time had passed and everything was fine I was discharged.

I communicate with thanksgiving this special favor, for me a small physical and spiritual miracle, to the glory of God and with the desire that the process of beatification be accelerated and come to an end

Teresa González, Huelva.

- I entreated the Venerable José M^e García Lahiguera because I had a daughter with a very deep and lasting depression. She was on sick leave for almost a year. Thank goodness she is now well and happily working. In addition to this she now works the 9-2 shift which is less stressful. God bless you.

P. Montero Conde



Spiritual Director at the Madrid - 1943 Seminary