



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<sup>a</sup> 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

**Barcelona:** Carmen Sagarra — M.<sup>a</sup> Lourdes Tristany. **Cáceres:** Pilar Gómez Moreno (Plasencia). **Cádiz:** M.<sup>a</sup> Isabel Romano Morón — Rvdo. José Hachero Álvarez (Jerez de la Frontera) — Francisco Arenas. **Madrid:** Pilar Sadia Palacios (Collado Mediano) — Milagros Leal Feliz — Purificación Fernández Rojo — Juan Carlos García — Antonio Iniesto Acevedo — José Palacios López (Leganés) — Josefina Salas Santos — Familia Vicente-Tutor García — M.<sup>a</sup> Luisa Muñoz de Santos. **Málaga:** Josefa Ruiz Pérez — Félix Marcos Medina. **Navarra:** Teodoro Muro (Fitero) — Anónimo. **Salamanca:** Sres. de Sánchez Egidio — Anónimo. **Segovia:** Máxima Alonso Barahona. **Sevilla:** Dominga Martín Gómez. **Toledo:** Rafael José Barrera Revuelta. **Valencia:** Mila Soler (Catarroja) **Vizcaya:** Clarisas de Guernika — M.<sup>a</sup> Teresa Eheverría.

Newsletter

II

2018  
N.º 13

## Testimony

From 1942, the date on which I returned from Rome and was assigned to the Seminary, I had occasion again to live day and night under the same roof with the Father. I am, therefore, an exceptional witness of his life of dedication to the spiritual direction of seminarians, day after day and year after year, until his appointment as Auxiliary Bishop of Madrid in 1950.

Three notes swim in my memories of this time that, in my modest opinion, are as many master lines in his spirituality and behavior. It is the first the atmosphere of need of holiness that he was able to create around the exercise of the priestly ministry. The same priestly being of a man, associated by the sacrament of the Order to Christ Eternal High Priest, demands sanctity of life, which cannot be conceived as an obligation imposed from outside, but as a felt necessity from within. This conviction, insistently repeated by D. José Maria, in public and in private, became for seminarians of that time an evident and indisputable postulate.

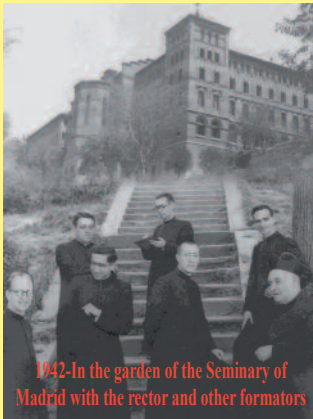


Another feature of the personality of D. José Maria was *joviality*. Convinced that "a sad saint is a sorry saint", he was all joviality and friendliness. Not by recourse: it came from within. How pleasant were those after-lunch chats with the superiors and especially those after-dinner, in which the Father relaxed, joked and cheered up the conversation! Oh, if only his seminarians had seen him placing himself with the younger superiors at a certain distance from the wall, trying, without helping himself with the hands, to head butt against it and get back on his feet...! It was a glory to see him smiling, whether he won or lost.

And along with this, the most delicate discretion. Frequently, comments regarding behaviors of seminarians was necessary among the superiors, who had to correct them. Don José Maria remained speechless. There was never the danger that their confidences in the internal forum would interfere with our assessments.

## THE DECADE OF THE 40s

At the end of the war, Don José Maria started again the formative tasks at the Seminary of Madrid. The building was in the worst conditions, after having been looted and used as an artillery barracks during the war. However, in such big house without glasses in many windows and without doors in the cells, despite the intense cold of the first postwar winter, the shortage of food and other hardships of that period, good humor and fervor reigned among seminarians and their formators. D. José Maria was happy to see that, in the midst of so many lacks, the students had at their disposal the books of the Library, which to a large extent he had managed to save from the revolutionary barbarism in the time of the persecution.



1942-In the garden of the Seminary of Madrid with the rector and other formators

Those aspiring to the priesthood, who returned hopeful from the fight, formed a significant group that was enlarging. Ordinations in Madrid went to an average of thirty new priests per year. D. José Maria devoted himself to his mission with a tireless commitment and great good sense in the discernment of spirits. The example of his holy life, his profound conviction, the kindness of his humble person, and an immense love for the ideal of priestly holiness, inspired a serene confidence, which led



Madrid - 1948

the seminarians to open their hearts and gave them strength to the specific formation combat. Every day, at five o'clock in the morning, D. Jose Maria was praying in the chapel, to be at the confessional at six o'clock, when the community was coming down. With him ahead, the austere life of the Seminary became profoundly joyful. Thus, he formed an entire generation of priests willing for holiness.



1947

In this silent decade, D. José Maria rarely left the Seminary. Just for spiritual direction of the Nocturnal Adoration or to impart Spiritual Exercises where he was requested, seen his recognized aptitude to lead them. How many priests of the different Spanish dioceses would remember the enthusiasm for their priesthood that he transmitted to them in those batches! He also made quick getaways to take care of his nascent Religious Congregation, the Oblate Sisters of Christ the Priest.

The inspiration he embodied in some notes of March 9, 1936, outlining a «Plan for a Crusade 'Pro Sacerdotio'», was coming true. After some annotations on the promotion of Priestly Thursdays, he ended as follows: *As for me, more directly related to the Diocese of Madrid and its Seminary, I must devote myself to prayer; to study and to my formation of saint, wise and sagacious spiritual director, and consecrate myself completely to the direction of seminarians and priests. But as it deals with doing something permanent and stable, as the priesthood is, and therefore prayer and sacrifice for their sanctification must be continuous, and this is not achieved when the work is led by one person alone, I think we should pray our Lord and ask whether it is convenient to think about the foundation of a religious order of cloistered nuns, whose main purpose, if not exclusive, would be prayer and sacrifice for the sanctification of priests and seminarians. For this project -he said- I keep my sweetest dreams, because, after the spiritual direction of seminarians and priests, it might be "my work".*

The divine Providence had led him to become co-founder of that "work" after his encounter, during the war, with the Founding Mother of the future Congregation, M<sup>a</sup> del Carmen Hidalgo de Caviedes. When he heard what she felt as God's demand on her soul, with a prophetic vision and always alert to the signs of God's will, he told her: *My daughter; all this comes from God. It certainly does not exist, but it will exist'. In this way, he knew how to second the divine designs and lived with authentic passion his vocation-mission as a priest "pro eis".*



1945 - Cerro de los Ángeles. In the background, remains of the monument to the Sacred Heart destroyed in the war



With Mother M.ª del Carmen - 1950

As a parishioner and devotee of the venerable José Maria Garcia Lahiguera, I feel protected and supported in each of my prayers by our beloved Father. Therefore, as a testimony of the certainty of miracles and immense love of Venerable José M<sup>a</sup> to anybody who comes to beg him, I would like to thank the favors granted. Especially the grace of not having to go through surgery again after a retinal detachment. The optic nerve was clamped and I saw everything double. The afternoon before the intervention, suddenly I began to see well, and they did not have to intervene. That new surgery involved a great risk. I am grateful to D. Jose Maria for having listened to my prayers, protecting me and guiding my destiny. I continue to pray with fervor for him to take care of our loved ones and not stop helping us in all our efforts. Thanks for his intercession before the Lord.

Mila Soler—Valencia



Valencia - 1971

I get in touch with you to communicate a grace that D. José Maria Garcia Lahiguera has granted me. This time I asked him with great devotion about an exam my son had, that was very difficult and I knew that it was very important for his academic life. Numerous candidates entered and he was number one. I always trust that D. Jose Maria intercedes for the family wellness, as he always has done. Don José Maria is already a brother in our family and my children trust his intercession. I pray firmly that soon his holiness can be recognized, as he deserves. My mother, who is in heaven, always trusted him.

Ana Cascallana—León