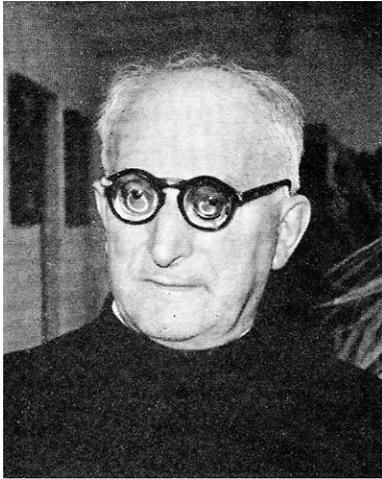


Marianist Moment:

Fr. Vicente López de Uralde



Born in Vitoria, Spain, 1894, died Sept. 15, 1990 in Cádiz, Spain.

From 1928 until his death, he served the people of Cádiz.

Nicknamed “the confessor of Cádiz,” Fr. Vicente dedicated the greatest part of his time to the ministry of the sacrament of penance with the children and adults who would approach him for reconciliation with God. This work was a priority in his priestly life, a “priestly zeal that consumed him.”

Fr. Anoveros asked him, “Why does half of Cádiz confess with you?” He responded with his familiar good humor: “It might be because of my blindness, Bishop, and if I were deaf, perhaps the other half would come, too.”

Vicente attended Our Lady of the Pillar Elementary School in Vitoria, a school founded by Mrs. Felicia Olave, the aunt of Fr. José Maria Salaverri, SM. Fr. Salaverri’s father, Emilio, was one of Vicente’s lifelong friends. Vicente professed first vows in 1911, perpetual vows in 1917, studied theology at the Marianist Seminary at Fribourg and was ordained in 1925. He served as a teacher and chaplain in Marianist and public schools in Cádiz.

The citizens of Cádiz were particularly moved by Fr. Vincent’s extreme kindness, an expression of the theological virtue of charity, which left a mark so commendable that they called for the Provincial Administration to open the Cause for Sainthood due to his fame for holiness and heroic virtues. This praise was affirmed by Fr. Francisco Armentia, Provincial in Madrid (December 1955) suggesting that he so exercised his ministries at the Church that he merited the famed holiness that he enjoyed.

His own testimony of priestly ministry is noted in a letter to Fr. Zubigaray: “To celebrate and celebrate with priestly enthusiasm and gratification that holy ministry. I will work totally for the salvation of your souls. That is the goal of this most beautiful life of service and sanctification of souls, through God.”

Historian Carlos Aranda remarked that because of more open priestly dedication, beyond the schools and chores to the faithful, Fr. Vicente preceded the time of renewal of the Second Vatican Council, and he inspired Marianist Spirituality, both in learned actions as well as in the pastoral practice.

Fr. Alonso Thibinger, Fr. Vincent's director of postulancy, described him as childlike and ingenuous, "calm, and radically good, mature without egoism." Fr. Enrique Torres, Madrid's Provincial during Fr. Vincent's postulancy, knew him well. He appreciated his sense of humor and admired his spiritual maturity, his wise equilibrium and harmony between the transcendent and the temporal so that he genuinely reflected the life of Christ.

Fr. Antonio Dorado recognized his spiritual maturity, stemming from a disciplined character and strong spirit and evidenced by his loyalty, respect for justice and faithfulness to one's word. The gentleness with which he treated others, his charity in conversation and example reflected the very human qualities of Jesus, which bridge and unite humankind with God. His charity and kindness extended to his fellow religious and those who sought his counsel, including children, adolescents and the young people at school.

Fr. Vincent's exemplary priestly ministry was significant after the Spanish Civil War. In that decade and in the 1940's the Provincial Fathers Gondejuela and Florentino Fernandez noted that "the work in the confessional is what occupies the greatest part of his day" and that he has become "the confessor of half the city and community."

To some, Fr. Vicente reminds them of the Curé of Ars, who spent up to 16 hours a day hearing confessions. Reconciliation was a priority in his priestly life. He carried out this ministry without evil gesture, but with a gentle, open attitude that sought to guide the faithful in a Christian manner. He understood the interior situation of the penitents, listened with patience, and left much peace in their souls. "Forgive, forgive everything" was his motto, and such was his compassion toward the penitent that he would say, "it was never necessary to give large penances; three Ave Marias at most, and the rest should be prayed by the confessor," remembers the Marianist religious Fr. Joaquin Arroyo. He had a great faith in God, a deep devotion to the Blessed Mother and transmitted kindness that allowed everyone to approach him with confidence and serenity.

Religious would seek his counsel, too. He would give the nuns advice that helped them live community life and help with family problems. The community recognized him as a "completely prudent priest, in his speech and his treatment of all the sisters of the monastery. He was fair in his treatment of all and did not make exceptions of anyone."

Here are a few testimonies from his penitents:

The Carmelites from the convent in Cádiz remember that in the confessional he was "very hospitable and understanding with the penitent," "he had much patience," "and he showed a temperate character," so that the sisters approached Confession "with much tranquility and confidence" because he transmitted to them "much interior peace" and he left "much peace in the heart."

"All of us who approached him to receive the sacrament of penance or to ask for some advice would become spiritually fortified and with interior peace." "Fr. Vicente was given by God the gift of counsel. Many were the people who would approach him, asking for his advice and orientation, as much for spiritual life as for ordinary life." "He invited us penitents to love God more and to look at our own faults."

"He spends more than eight hours a day in the confessional. He is the most sought-after confessor in the city. He is totally given over to the work of his ministry. And he doesn't leave off contact with the children. At six in the morning he is already seated in the confessional, and remains so until 11 o'clock. And the same from 7 until 10 at night. He is the most significant confessor in Cádiz."

The respected Marianist priest was a kind confessor for the faithful, but for himself he proved a demanding penitent. His community superior, Fr. Manuel Mateos Jimenez, revealed that "since I was his confessor, he showed great patience with me. The delicacy of conscience that was considered 'healthy scrupulousness' would make him come to reconcile in the Sacrament about his past life. He was a friend of general confession."

On the occasion of his golden priestly jubilee, during the Eucharist celebrated April 25, 1975, Fr. Dorado praised, ",,, the work of God realized through this generous priest who has known how to consecrate his life in an exemplary way, to educate children, and to dedicate himself to the confessional, always with simplicity, humility, and much love of his neighbor."

At the Sunday Eucharist on his 90th birthday, January 22, 1984, the celebration began with the reading of a heartfelt letter from Bishop Antonio Dorado in which was read, "I can't let go unmentioned the incomparable service that he has given to the city of Cádiz, with a truly enviable constancy, from the seat of his venerable confessional.

Thanks, Fr. Vicente, for your youthful spirit that doesn't know tiredness, and hasn't permitted one instance of disillusion, disenchantment, or despair. Thanks for your exemplary life."

Finally, in the homily given during his funeral, the prelate defined Fr. Vicente as an "outstanding member of the Society of Mary," with "innocent hands, a clean heart and an exemplary priestly life."

Fr. Vicente's spiritual qualities found expression in the exercise of his priestly ministry to the sacrament of reconciliation, the spiritual direction of souls, the gift of spiritual counsel to the sick and dying, material help to needy families, and the evangelizing of children and youth through school and religious education.

"His memory is for us an incentive and a challenge. It is possible to live a holy life without extraordinary acts very much like the work of Mother Teresa of Calcutta, who professed that doing the ordinary with an excellent love, love that comes from God and ends with your brother, especially the most needy. May God concede that each of us be faithful to our mission and to find in Fr. Vicente an inspiring example, and why not his intercession from his home in heaven."

The process for canonization of Fr. Vicente López was initiated by His Excellency Antonio Ceballos, the Bishop of Cádiz at the request of Fr. Antonio Gascón on Sept. 25, 2008. This is the 14th process for the canonization of a Marianist.

As a witness to the Cause, Fr. Dorado offers this:

"Fr. Vicente López was a 'priest who believed in God.' I mean that he believed what he said and always lived with an attitude of humility, faithfulness to praying, fervent celebration of the Sacred Eucharist; for him, the priesthood was not a "job" but a true vocation. The greatest part of his time was dedicated to the exercise of the sacrament of penance with the children and adults who approached him for reconciliation with God. This working in his priestly life strengthened in him his prudence and discretion in the treatment of people.

"Never was he heard speaking badly of anyone and he was a person much loved by all. He wasn't given to spiritual extremes, celestial visions or the gift of healing. He was a very humble man who lived much gratitude to God for all of the gifts and graces the He gave to him. But it was easy to discover that in his smile and in his serene face that God was present in his life. It seems to me that the Christian life of this Servant of God was well defined in the expression of a writer from Cádiz, Jose Maria Peman, who offered in one of his writings that "the most eminent virtue is to do simply that which we have to do."

Prayer for the Glorification of Vicente López

God, our Father,
You have called Vicente López de Uralde
To serve your Church as a Marianist priest,
Under the maternal protection of the Virgin Mary,
And you made him a merciful pastor
For the reconciliation of sinners.

Grant that we, following his example,
May bear witness to our faith
With a compassionate and merciful heart,
And through his intercession grant the graces
We humbly beg of you through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Fr. Jose Zubigaray, a collaborator from the Church of San Felipe, wrote the biography of Fr. Vicente in 1992 (*Father Vicente López de Uralda – Outstanding Qualities*) at the request of Fr. Francisco Armentia, Marianist Provincial in Madrid. The descriptive reflections in this article are based on that biography.

Based on the following articles:

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