



Society of Mary - Compañía de María - Société de Marie
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May 31, 2024

Biography of Death Notice N. 6

The Province of Spain recommends to our fraternal prayers our dear Brother **Rafael DELGADO GUTIÉRREZ**, priest, of the Marianist community of Cadiz, Spain, who died in the service of the Blessed Virgin Mary on May 29, 2024 in Madrid, Spain, at the age of 91 with 72 years of religious profession.

Rafael was born in the city of Cadiz on June 30, 1932. His father, whose name he inherited, died very young, when Rafa was 6 years old. At that age, he entered San Felipe Neri, the Marianist school in Cadiz. He remained in that school until he was 18 years old.

From there he went to the Marianist novitiate in Elorrio (Bizkaia), where he made his first profession on November 2, 1951. He spent the next three years at the scholasticate in Carabanchel (Madrid), where he began studying philosophy and literature. For the next 6 years he worked as a teacher at the school in Jerez de

la Frontera. At the same time, he was finishing his studies for a degree in History. In the midst of this period, on August 28, 1955, he made his perpetual profession. He went to the international seminary in Fribourg (Switzerland). He was ordained a priest there in 1965, just after the Second Vatican Council. Rafael enjoyed very much that intense time of study and living together with other Marianists. As a mature young man, he followed with interest the evolution of the conciliar reflections.

Recently ordained, he was sent as the only priest to found a new community in the neighborhood of Gamonal (Burgos), where he stayed for two years.

From there, he was sent to the recently founded parish of St. Simon and St. Jude, in the Orcasitas neighborhood of Madrid. Rafael spent 35 years of his life in this working class neighborhood, in two different periods. Many of its inhabitants, who came from the villages to the big capital, initially lived in shantytowns where even the basic needs of the people were enormous. Rafael, along with the other Marianists in the community, fought hard to improve the living conditions and guarantee the dignity of those people. Above all, he knew how to be a close, sharing and accompanying priest. One of the people who knew him at that time - she is now a grandmother, very dynamic and committed to the needy - said something very beautiful about Rafael in an interview in a Madrid newspaper. When the interviewer asked her if she knew of any "saints next door" that Pope Francis spoke of, this grandmother responded: *"For me Rafa is a real saint. He is the most consistent person I have ever met in my life. Rafa shaped my life, since I met him when I was 7 years old. He was the neighborhood priest."*

When Rafa finished his mission as parish priest in Orcasitas, he was already 77 years old. He asked the provincial council to be sent as a missionary to Guatemala, where two other religious of the province were living and evangelizing. Rafael was in Guatemala for 10 years, forming community with Martín Valmaseda, living in the territory of Cobán and serving numerous villages, sometimes walking for two days through the mountains to reach those small Christian communities. The trail of kindness and affection that Rafa left there is still indelible for many people, according to a Benedictine monk who is now a missionary there.

Due to the advanced age of both Marianists, and Martín's precarious health, the two returned to Spain in 2019. Rafael was 87 years old at the time, but he still

felt strong, physically and spiritually, so he made himself available to go to any community and mission of the Province. He went to the community of Burjassot, where the religious animate the life of a parish in a needy neighborhood. During the two years of his stay there, both the confreres of the community and the parishioners admired his vital energy, his evangelical simplicity and his human qualities.

When Rafael turned 89, he was sent to the community of his native Cadiz. The truth is that he was very happy and looked very healthy. However, a few months after being in Cadiz, this man with iron health, who had never had to see a doctor, was diagnosed with cancer. He was treated for two and a half years and was able to live a relatively normal life. However, in February of this year, 2024, the time came when the situation became terminal and he was transferred to the provincial infirmary in Siquem, to be properly cared for.

We thank God for Rafa's life, for the gift he has been for us and for so many others. We are grateful for the good he has done for those of us who have treated and loved him, even in the final months of his suffering. Recent and exceptional witnesses to this are the Marianist Brothers of Siquem and the health professionals who cared for him, admiring his faith and fortitude. May our brother Rafael rest in peace in the Lord.