



Society of Mary - Compañía de María - Soci t  de Marie
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July 15, 2024

Biography of Death Notice N. 09

The Province of Spain recommends to our fraternal prayers our dear brother **Jos  Ignacio GARMENDIA LASA**, of the Marianist Community of Vitoria-Gasteiz, Spain, who died in the service of the Blessed Virgin Mary on June 28, 2024 in Beizama (Gipuzkoa), at the age of 73 and with 55 years of religious profession.

Among the Marianists Jos  Ignacio was called "I naki", the name in Basque (Basque language) of the Castilian "Ignacio".

He was born on April 16 1951 in Beizama, a town located in the geographical center of the province of Gipuzkoa, in a natural environment made up of forests and meadows. Today this town has a population of about 170 inhabitants, four times smaller than a century ago.

Iñaki was the third of twelve siblings, of whom nine are still alive. His parents were Alejandro and Josefa. The language of the family and the city is Basque.

The first obstacle he encountered when he entered the postulate of Eskoriatza at the age of eleven was the lack of knowledge of the Spanish language, with the consequent difficulty of communication. He overcame these initial barriers to such an extent that, twenty years later, he obtained the degree of Bachelor of Hispanic Philology.

Two things about Iñaki caused the admiration of his classmates and the attention of his educators from the beginning: his great physical strength, which he put at the service of whatever was asked of him, and his musical aptitude. This latter quality required many hours of learning and perfecting on the harmonium. The attraction for music would last throughout his life. In community, it was not uncommon that, as he left the common prayer in the chapel, he hummed something that had been sung.

For five years he was a postulant, the first three in Eskoriatza and the other two in Logroño. He recognized that the third year was when he began to discern his vocation. He made this decision to enter the novitiate with the help of the spiritual director, who was "a true father" to him.

At the end of a year as a novice in Elorrio, "trusting more in God than in his own strength and knowing that Mary will be at his side in difficult moments", he made his first religious profession on September 12, 1968.

He spent four years in the scholasticate of Zaragoza, where he continued his civil studies for three years. He dedicated the fourth to what was called the "fundamental year", established for a deepening of his faith and consecrated life.

In the 1972-73 academic year, Iñaki began his active life in the community of Eskoriatza, whose mission was to revitalize the pedagogical and pastoral areas of the Almen school, located in the former postulate. The nascent and socially committed cooperatives of Mondragón had acquired the land and, in the agreement with the Marianists, we were responsible for the direction, pedagogy and pastoral care of the center. The community to which Iñaki was assigned was made up of nine brothers, with an average age of 30.

From this point on, Iñaki's path was one of continuous change: Zaragoza, La Almunia de Doña Godina, the school of San Sebastián, the parish of Eguía, a second time in Almen and returning to the parish of Eguía.

In January 1994 came a huge leap: Colombia. He began in the parish of Perpetual Help, combined with classes at the Cisca school. Two years later, he was appointed regional administrator and regional councilor.

On his return from one of the triennial visits he made to Spain, an event occurred that marked his future. At the airport, with a very heavy suitcase, Iñaki fell to the ground injuring his spine. He was attended to by a passenger, who was a doctor. This doctor gave him instructions to follow so that would be allowed to take the flight and arrive in Colombia. Once there, a failed surgery on one of his legs and his problems with his left hip hampered his mobility. Since then, he had to walk with two canes. Fortunately, he was able to develop his great passion for driving the car and thus exercised his permanent service for the benefit of the brothers.

Five years after his departure to Colombia, he returned definitively to Spain. Another pilgrimage through different communities and different functions: a sabbatical year distributed between Almeria and Valencia, parishes of Burjassot and Vélez, return to education in Logroño, a year in the community of San Sebastián, seven years in the house of the novitiate and the former Provincial Administration of Zaragoza. As a brother who lived with him in the latter community says, "above all Iñaki was a person with a big heart, ready to do any service you asked of him. He never spared any effort. He never used as an excuse the pretext of his health."

His last change was to the community of Vitoria, where he was the car driver, totally dedicated above all to the needs of moving brothers already advanced in years. Everyone explicitly thanked him for his total availability at any time, distance or need.

It is not surprising that, in the face of so many different destinations, he longed for "a place to put down roots". This wish happened in the most unexpected way: on June 28 he was in the family farmhouse of Beizama, where he had gone to celebrate with his brothers and nephews the anniversary of his mother's death

and the town's feast, San Pedro. A great lover of nature, he went out to contemplate, admire and praise God for the priceless panorama that he saw. Given the steepness of the terrain and his mobility limitations, he must have slipped and hit his head against a concrete manhole that is there for the water. The death was immediate, and the coroner ruled him dead from "cranio-encephalic trauma."

Fulfilling the will that Iñaki had expressed, a part of his ashes were given to his family to be deposited at the foot of the image of the Virgin at the top of Mount Urraki. The other part of his ashes were buried in the Marianist cemetery in Vitoria, in the presence of and with the prayers of the community.

May our brother Iñaki rest in peace! May Mary, to whom he consecrated himself filially in life and entrusted himself for "the hour of death", lead him to the Father's house to *put down roots* there definitively.
