

St. Manuel González García: Bishop of the Abandoned Tabernacle



It is the saints who understood to the very depths of their being the love of the Eucharistic heart of Jesus who waits for each one of us in the tabernacles of the world. One of these saints is St. Manuel González García, whose feast day is on January 4th.

He was born in Seville, Spain, on February 25, 1877, into a devout and prayerful family.

He secretly applied and was accepted to the seminary in

Seville at 12 years of age. His parents saw it as God's will for their son.

St. Manuel was ordained a priest on September 21, 1901, and his first assignment as a priest would radically change the course of his life and his priestly ministry.

He was sent to a church in the parish of Palomares del Rio, a region where most people had fallen away from the faith and were bitterly divided along political lines. The priest he was replacing had essentially abandoned the parish because the community was too difficult to lead.

When he arrived at his new parish, St. Manuel found a church building in disrepair: dirty, cobwebs and dust everywhere, altar linens that had not been cared for and the tabernacle where Our Lord resided was abandoned.

He knelt down in prayer — after fighting every instinct in his body and mind to flee — and he fixed his gaze on Christ, who dwelt within the lonely tabernacle before him.

St. Manuel wrote:

My faith was looking at Jesus through the door of that tabernacle, so silent, so patient, so good, gazing right back at me....His gaze was telling me much and asking for more. It was a gaze in which all the sadness of the Gospels was reflected; the sadness of "no room in the Inn"; the sadness of those words, "Do you also want to leave Me?"; the sadness of poor Lazarus begging for crumbs from the rich man's table; the sadness of the betrayal of Judas, the denial of Peter, of the soldier's slap, of the spittle in the Praetorium, and the abandonment of all. All of this sadness was there in that tabernacle, oppressing and crushing the sweet Heart of Jesus and drawing bitter tears from his eyes.

On that afternoon, in that moment in which I was before the tabernacle, I saw that my priesthood would consist of a work of which I had never before dreamt. All my illusions about the kind of priest I would be vanished. I found myself to be a priest in a town that didn't love Jesus, and I would have to love him in the name of everybody in that town. I would dedicate my priesthood to taking care of Jesus in the needs of his life in the tabernacle: to feed him with my love, to keep him warm with my presence, to entertain him with my conversations, to defend him against abandonment and ingratitude, to give relief to his Heart with my holy sacrifices, to serve him with my feet by taking him wherever he is desired, and with my hands by giving alms in his name, even to those who do not love him, and with my mouth by speaking of him and consoling others in his name, and by crying out to those who do not want to hear him, until finally they would listen and begin to follow him. This would be a beautiful priesthood!

He is a saint for our time of unbelief in the Real Presence. He writes:

Very often I hear questions coming from wounded priestly and apostolic hearts. These questions are as follows: What can be done to turn those who are Christians merely in name into real Christians? How can we make them live their Christian faith and morals? What can be done

to make them come back to a holy and fruitful Christian austerity? In a word, how can we convert this world which after twenty centuries of Christianity is obstinately going back to the most corrupt and degrading paganism? The answer to these heartfelt questions can be found in one word: Go to the tabernacle! Priests, go to the tabernacle! Let us draw power from the tabernacle! Nobody goes to the Father except through His Son, Jesus.

He asked to be buried next to a tabernacle, "so that my bones, after death, as my tongue and my pen in life, are saying to those who pass: there is Jesus! There it is! Do not let him abandoned!"

St. Manuel was canonized by Pope Francis on Oct. 16, 2016.

Adapted from <https://catholicexchange.com/st-manuel-gonzalez-garcia-the-key-to-eucharistic-renewal/> and <https://www.ncregister.com/blog/st-manuel-gonzalez-garcia-bishop-of-the-abandoned-tabernacleSt>.

