

A Withered and Anointed Hand of a Priest.

Dear Brothers,

I am pleased to share the highlights of the recently concluded Argentina/Bolivia District meeting, which concluded with the Ordination to Priesthood of Deacon Cesar Atahuichi, MS, in Cochabamba, Bolivia, on January 20, 2024. The event was followed by a delightful meal for more than 450 people, courtesy of the MMA Province, and enriched with cultural programs. I felt honored to represent the province together with Fr. Robert Ippolito.

The Ordination Mass, attended by over 450 people, included La Salette Laity from Brazil (6), Argentina (3), and Bolivia (26). Additionally, La Salette Laity held a three-day regional meeting in Cochabamba.

On Sunday, January 21, Fr. Cesar celebrated his first Holy Eucharist, joined by fellow La Salette priests, brothers, and a congregation filled with parishioners. A modest reception followed, marking a significant moment as Fr. Cesar, a native of Cochabamba, is the sole priest administering the parish in Bolivia.

During both the Ordination Mass and the First Mass, gratitude and prayers were extended to Fr. James Weeks, founder of the parish in Cochabamba and Fr. John Higgins, whose fraternal influence played a pivotal role in Cesar's vocation to La Salette and the priesthood.

At the District meeting, held from January 17-19 in Bolivia and chaired by Anthony Skalaba, the newly appointed District superior from Poland Province, all District members were present except for Fr. Fernando Altimiranda, who was in Brazil for a program. The meeting focused on fostering hope for the future while acknowledging the past with gratitude. The nine members shared their experiences of healing and comfort over the past months, recognizing the brokenness and moving forward with a renewed commitment.

I was honored to participate in the District meeting, make presentations, and have separate meetings with the District's Administrative members. The liturgy for the Ordination and the festive celebrations infused hope and inspiration, setting the tone for a renewed commitment among the District members.

Looking ahead, the District is undertaking significant changes, including examining its religious identity, community life, formation program, financial sustainability, and asset management. A five-year plan is being formulated, aiming for emerging and responsible leadership, administrative independence, and economic stability, with the plan scheduled for presentation at the General Chapter in April 2024.

The Ordination of Fr. Cesar served as a poignant reminder of the unexpected and unprecedented journeys the District members are called to undertake. Fr. Cesar's challenges

and his inspiring journey with a withered hand exemplify God's calling to religious life, priesthood, and qualification despite imperfections.

Fr. Cesar entered the world prematurely at just seven months, facing an early challenge when, at eight months old, an accidental push from his cradle bed led to a fall that left his left side paralyzed for several years. Over time, his body began to recover, yet his left hand remained withered. Despite these early adversities, his resilience shone through. His childhood was marked by hardship as his father abandoned the family, placing the responsibility of raising nine children solely on his mother. Cesar's journey is a testament to his strength and the indomitable spirit that emerged from adversity.

Observing Father Cesar elevate the chalice at his first Mass, consecrate with a single hand, and distribute the Body of Christ reinforced the conviction that the Lord calls and empowers us, embracing our imperfections. His withered hand, akin to a facet of our identity, stood as a visible, transparent, and supportive symbol, signifying the essential humanity required to transmit God's grace. This poignant experience brought tears to my eyes as I acknowledged my imperfections, prompting a call to recognize the gifts of each member of the Province and uplift others with the strength of God's hand.

The radiant joy emanating from the God-given perfection in Cesar was palpable as he joyfully clapped hands with the congregation, surpassing the enthusiasm of any other priest on the altar. The profound silence of his withered hand, harmonizing with the singing of the "Gloria," amplified the joy of his priesthood, touching the hearts of all present. May this uplifting spirit extend its journey to our hearts, communities, and places of ministry, spreading the essence of joy and inspiration.

As we reflect on this profound experience, may the inner joy of God-given perfection, as expressed through Fr. Cesar's priesthood, resonate in our hearts, communities, and places of ministry.

Fraternally,

William Kaliyadan, M.S.  
January 21, 2024











Fr. Cesar's Mother and Family