



## Javier Leach Albert, S.J. 1942-2016

Javier Leach Albert, a priest of the Society of Jesus, was born in Valencia, Spain, on January 7, 1942 in a deeply religious family. His brother became a Jesuit and his sister became a nun.

Javier studied in Barcelona, Zaragoza, Frankfurt am Main, Madrid, and was ordained to the priesthood on July 14, 1973 in Valencia. He went on to receive a doctorate in mathematical logic in Freiburg im Breisgau in 1977, and pronounced his last vows as a Jesuit in Zaragoza in 1982. He lived a fruitful life of 74 years, of which 56 were spent in the Society of Jesus and 43 of them as a priest. He was both an academician and a priest close to the Ignatian spirituality he learned as a Jesuit.

He began teaching at the Complutense University in Madrid in 1977 (a public research university; full professor at the School of Information Science) and his tenure lasted until 2012. He was very active with the Christian Life Communities (national director 1984-86). He was the European coordinator of the *Jesuits in Science* group (2001-2006, and 2014-2016.) He was the founding head and Chair of the Department of *Science, Technology and Religion* at the Pontifical University *Comillas* in Madrid from 2003 to 2012.

We were all shocked and surprised by Javier's death. Alberto Cano, a Jesuit doctor from Javier's community, offered this story about his latest illness: "For several months Javier had been experiencing digestive discomfort. He was given several tests in which, at first, no injury could be seen. He traveled to the USA to participate in a seminar and there he began to feel ill. He was taken to a hospital, where a CT scan revealed multiple tumor lesions spread throughout various organs. From the USA he returned to Spain to complete a medical study. A few days later he was diagnosed with colon cancer and a metastatic spread to the lungs, liver, peritoneum and multiple nodes. The prognosis was not good but it was thought that the final outcome was not so imminent. The plan, therefore, was to begin treatment with intravenous chemotherapy. He was given chemotherapy sessions for a week and the following day he was transported to the infirmary at Alcala. Little by little, he began feeling worse again: abdominal pain, vomiting, and lack of appetite. The suspicion was that the main tumor, which was at the beginning of the large intestine, continued to grow and was obstructing the passage of the digestive bulk. Soon the illness worsened and the final outcome occurred."

Javier's life seems to have had three main axes: the life of a loyal, devoted, and generous companion of Jesus dedicated to the formation of generations of young Jesuits, a vocation of accompaniment in which he shared with the laity the treasure of Ignatian spirituality through the Christian Life Community (CLC), and a commitment to science, and more specifically to the link between science, philosophy and theology.

The essayist **Tomas de la Torre Lendinez** mentions four traits of Javier Leach that he always admired and appreciated: “his humble genius, his lucid kindness, his unconditional availability, his passion for transmitting that doing science is a fantastic activity and that a scientist can believe in the God of Jesus Christ with the simplicity and depth with which he believed.”

Most of his 56 years as a Jesuit, Javier lived in Jesuit houses. By assigning him to live in houses of formation, the Jesuit Superiors always valued his ability to be a good companion, his humility, his good temperament, his capacity for listening, his sense of humor, his wisdom, his intelligence, his deep faith, and the fact that he always represented, without a doubt, the incarnation of a fine son of Saint Ignatius Loyola.



Sources: Fr. Paul Gabor, S.J., Fr. Miguel Campo, S.J., Fr. Pedro Suarez, S.J.