

Francisco Gárate, the second of seven children, was born in a modest family of country people on February 3, 1857 in a farm-house near Azpeitia, not far from the castle of Loyola. When he was 14, he went to Orduña (Vizcaya) to work as a house-boy in the College of "Nuestra Señora de la Antigua" which was under the direction of the Jesuit Fathers. In 1874 he entered the novitiate which the Jesuits, at that time exiled from Spain, had established at Poyanne in southern France. On February 2, 1876 he pronounced his first vows in religion and then in 1877 he was appointed infirmarian in the College of Santiago Apostol a La Guardia (Pontevedra). He remained in this post for ten years looking after the health of the boys and taking care of the sacristy. His personal interest and his loving solicitude for the sick soon won him the admiration of all.

After pronouncing his final vows on August 15, 1887, Brother Garate was assigned to Deusto (Bilbao) in 1888. There he became the doorkeeper of the College of Higher Studies-the University. He filled this post uninterruptedly until his death on September 9, 1929. Father General Wladimir Ledochowski, describing the characteristic qualities of this Brother, highlighted that which struck everybody who had anything to do with him. "Admirable discretion, exercised in the testing conditions of more than 41 years' service in a busy doorkeeper's lodge where he had to deal with people of every age and social standing; humility adorned with a natural charm; and charity which, by a kind of spiritual instinct, perceived and anticipated the service that was needed". These are the qualities he showed in bearing the burden of his day: with equal considerateness and the same smile he received both the needy poor and the rich; he treated everybody with the same cordial warmth; with unflinching and uncomplaining dedication he went up and down the stairs of the huge building that housed the University, carrying messages for the Fathers and Professors or looking for students.

One of those who remembers him from his own student days tells us how he saw, esteemed and loved Brother Garate: "...For everybody he found just the right word, a kind gesture, a concern that showed his sincere interest. He was always open, welcoming, kind, respectful towards everybody. But this was always simple and natural. There was nothing in him that smacked of the artificial or insincere, and still less of the naive, credulous or foolish. The young people understood him perfectly. They used to say of the doorkeeper of Deusto: Brother 'Finuras' (Brother Courtesy) is a great saint--but he's also shrewd!".