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Words that stay in our heart

Highlights from the Prelate of Opus Dei's five-day visit to Madrid, with some words from one of his get-togethers that can serve as a summary of his entire visit.

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Pastoral visit of Monsignor Fernando Ocariz to Madrid

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"With the last General Congress a new stage has begun in the Work, which can help us to start again personally. It is a good opportunity for everyone to consider starting again, to realize, with more gratitude and responsibility, that the Work is in our hands. With the assurance that, even though Opus Dei is in our poor hands, it remains God's.

I remind you of the first conclusion of the last General Congress: to place Jesus Christ at the centre of our lives, both personally and apostolically, and in our work of formation. We need to go back to those words of Saint Paul that Saint Josemaría repeated to us so many times: "For me, to live is Christ."

Christ is the reference point in our struggle to be faithful. Our life does not involve a set of demands to be faithful to an ideal, to ways of doing

things, but above all being faithful to Christ.

That is why our apostolic work, like that of the whole Church, of which the Work is a small part, focuses on helping people to get to know Jesus, bringing them closer to Him through the Gospel.

Put great care into living fraternity well. This is expressed in that "shout" of Saint Josemaría: Love one another! We need to understand, forgive and learn to live with the limitations of others, for the same reason we do everything: for Christ. And thus we will see Christ's blood coursing through their veins.

Seeing our Lord in others helps us to forgive, to serve them. In human things, that affection also means loving freedom and spreading good humour around us, which is an expression of joy. Despite external

difficulties and personal mistakes, we always have reason to be happy.

Love for freedom is also expressed in fostering freedom of spirit. May we never feel coerced by anything. This freedom is not an absence of commitment, because the proper act of freedom is love, and one is free when loving. This is well explained by that well-known saying of Saint Augustine: "Love and do what you want." When there is freedom and love, what we do is what we want, and that is the most supernatural reason for acting the way we do and being the way we are.

Lately, I often recall some words of Saint Josemaría: "It isn't right to think that we can only do what we like joyfully." No. With faith and reason, we can freely fulfil, and love, our duties, even if they are not at times what we would most like to do.

I would also like to use this opportunity to encourage you to bring Christ to souls, even if the atmosphere is not conducive for doing so in the world that we love. But we must always foster a great hope. It is the Lord who does the Work, despite all the difficulties and our own limitations!

May we be very prayerful: "Joyful in hope, constant in prayer," says Saint Paul, because we are aware of our limitations, but also of God's strength. Ask for more faith in God's love for each person.

Finally, pray a lot for the Pope and for the Church. The weight of the whole Church and the world weighs on the Roman Pontiff. Pope Francis asks us to pray for him, because he feels that need, and we have to support him as much as we can."

Monday July 3

"You are caring for Christ's flesh"

The Prelate of Opus Dei visited this morning the Laguna Hospice in Madrid . After spending time with some of the sick people, he thanked the professionals working there and encouraged them to consider that by their work they are caring for the suffering flesh of Christ, as Pope Francis stresses.

The Prelate of Opus Dei visited this morning the professionals and patients at the Laguna Hospice. Moved and grateful for the work carried out by this centre that offers end-of-life care, he had the opportunity to greet and encourage many patients personally and comfort them with words of hope.

During the meeting with the health professionals at Laguna, he recalled his visit there in 2012 with the

former Prelate of Opus Dei, Bishop Javier Echevarría, and he expressed his gratitude for the affection they give to each patient.

In addition, he encouraged them to consider, as the Pope has recently reminded us, that with their work they are caring for the suffering flesh of Christ, also when their task requires more effort and fatigue sets in. "You need to see Christ in every person and in every moment."

Saint Josemaría's living impulse

The Prelate also suggested to the Laguna staff that they frequently go to the intercession of Saint Josemaría, since it was thanks to his spirit and his help from heaven that this palliative care centre was born in 2002, as a social work on the occasion of the centenary of the birth of the founder of Opus Dei. During his first years as a priest in Madrid the founder dedicated many hours to

the care and spiritual attention for seriously ill people, many of them without hopes of a cure.

Laguna strives to ensure that the elderly and sick who require palliative care feel closely accompanied, understood and loved right to the end of their life.

Sunday July 2

Faith, hope and “the security of the impossible”

Monsignor Ocáriz took part today in two get-togethers with members of the Work in Madrid. Among other things, he encouraged them to give priority each day to their families and to be protagonists in the effort "to bring the world to God" with daring and hope.

The Prelate encouraged those present to "ask Saint Josemaría to give all of us the security of the impossible," when faced with the challenges of daily life. He suggested that they foster this security both in drawing close to God and in their eagerness to bring the world to God with the testimony of their own Christian life.

He encouraged them to seek to make compatible family life, the demands of their work and their spiritual life, by foreseeing with order the unexpected, giving priority to their personal relationship with God and dedication to their family.

He also stressed the need to put Christ at the centre of the whole day, through prayer and drawing close to the Eucharist, "because from there comes the true strength to care for

the family, to sanctify work and to love people."

Love for freedom

Before an audience made up mostly of parents, Monsignor Ocariz recalled that "love for freedom is Saint Josemaría's inheritance." This love for freedom, he said, should be shown especially in the raising of children. He encouraged parents to be close friends of their children and to explain the why of recommendations, preventing paternal authority from being more a matter of demands than affection. The Prelate also encouraged them to pray for their children, "because prayer is always effective."

Saturday July 1

"Christian life is an epic poem"

The Prelate of Opus Dei had several get-togethers today with members of the Work. He reminded them that a Christian's life has to be grounded on love for Christ.

"Our life," he said, "is not a sugary novel, but an epic poem, always confronted with cheerfulness, because we rely on our Lord's help. We are never alone. Through the communion of saints we form one Body with Christ."

He also encouraged those present to fight against external difficulties, personal shortcomings and lack of time, leaning especially on the Eucharist.

A mother told him with great simplicity how difficult it was for her to accept the commitment to God of two of her daughters, but that now she is happy. She asked for advice to understand and help one's children when they decide to follow God's

call. Monsignor Ocariz stressed that a vocation is always a gift from God.

"It's only natural that you find it hard to be separated; it's only human, but you need to realize that God has got into their life and that this brings joy." He advised her to always continue to pray for her daughters, because a mother's prayers have great value in God's eyes.

A Portuguese girl told the Prelate that she went to study in Pamplona because her mother wanted her to have the best formation possible and that this changed her life. She will now be working in the family business in Angola, and she is a bit worried that she will be the only person in Opus Dei there. Monsignor Ocariz encouraged her: "you are not alone; you are with Him and with the whole Work through the communion of saints. God counts on you to start in that country and you will have all his help. Those are his plans for you.

Moreover, we will organise something to be able to accompany you."

Evangelising through personal witness

In the second get-together, held at 5.00 pm at the Retamar school, a member of a pop group said that she found it difficult to make the faith attractive to friends whose lives are distant from Christ. The Prelate insisted on the value of each one's personal witness for bringing others to Christ, and that sharing one's own experience "is much more effective than theoretical discourses."

Rosa Maria remarked that, after living through and overcoming a difficult family situation, she has been able to accompany other married couples in similar circumstances and help them to find meaning in their own situations. Monsignor Fernando Ocariz said that

only in "the light of faith can we understand the value of suffering" and encouraged her to show others the beauty of marriage as a reality that has always been part of God's plan for mankind.

Responding to a question about how to help people get involved in the effort to accompany other married couples in the formation and education of their children, the Prelate spoke about the need to help those who are engaged and also married couples to "learn how to love above and beyond one's personal feelings." He stressed that many marital crises come from not knowing how to love, including the defects of the other spouse. "This effort is very important," he added, "because if the family breaks down, society will break down."

He also pointed to the importance of work as a service to society, and

therefore the need to give it priority, to work well and gain prestige among one's co-workers.

As on previous occasions, the Prelate ended by asking for prayers for the Pope and the Church.

Friday June 30

"Fostering and transmitting hope" to overcome the culture of complaining

Monsignor Fernando Ocáriz today met with members of the Work.

During the get-together he encouraged people to put Christ at the centre of their lives. In the morning he visited the Los Tilos school and the parish of San Alberto Magno, in the district of Vallecas.

The Prelate of Opus Dei was in Vallecas today, where the first stop was the Los Tilos school.

We was received there by the Board of Directors and a number of families.

He also greeted many of the teachers. Marta, a nursery school teacher, told him that many girls came to school without knowing who Jesus is and here they have learned to pray, "not only simple vocal prayers, but also to tell him about their personal concerns."

Another teacher told him that she had asked her students for prayers for his pastoral visit. Monsignor Ocariz thanked her, and said that prayer is his strength.

Several people told him about the widespread devotion to Blessed Alvaro in the school and how, each morning, they pray his prayer card

asking for the cure of a student with lymphoma, a teacher in a coma and a seriously ill priest who worked in the school from its beginnings. The girl with lymphoma is now recovering and is almost completely well. The Prelate blessed the photo of the sick teacher and greeted the sick priest personally, who had been able to travel to school in a wheelchair.

Afterwards, Monsignor Ocáriz visited the neighboring parish of Saint Albert the Great, where Venerable Isidoro Zorzano is buried. Together with the faithful present in there, he prayed aloud his prayer card and asked them to go to his intercession and to pray that the miracle that would allow his beatification arrives soon. He also prayed a special prayer for priestly vocations, "so necessary for the whole Church."

Centrality of Christ

In the afternoon, in an encounter with members of Opus Dei, Monsignor Ocariz stressed the importance of the centrality of Jesus Christ in all aspects of one's life: social relations, profession, family, friendships, etc. He asked them to encourage others to read the Gospel: "God has become visible in Jesus, and his life is present in the Gospel."

During the get-together, some of those present asked him for advice. A young doctor asked how to help others understand the meaning of suffering. Monsignor Ocariz replied that the reality of suffering is a mystery, especially suffering that is not the result of freedom. But we catch a glimpse of its meaning when we look at the Cross. In any case, God is so great that he does not fit in our head, but he fits in our heart. And through faith, we realize that God's love is behind everything.

Faced with the question of how to overcome a contagious environment of complaining due to the deterioration of society, he stressed that we cannot be naive and fail to see reality, but that the world is not built up with a culture of complaining, and we need to have hope in order to transmit it to others.

Thursday June 28

The first pastoral trip of the Prelate of Opus Dei to Spain has started in the south of Madrid. Monsignor Fernando Ocáriz visited the Fuenllana and Andel schools, and the parish of Saint Josemaría, where he asked for more prayers for Pope Francis on the feast day of Saints Peter and Paul.

At around 11.00 am, Monsignor Ocáriz arrived in Fuenllana, a school with almost 1500 students. The

Prelate encouraged them in their work, and thanks the teachers for "always giving priority to families."

Later, he visited the Andel school in Alcorcón. There he was received by the Board of Directors and the heads of the Parents' Association. He also greeted the teachers and thanked them for all their work and and their efforts to improve professionally.

Ignacio, a student at Andel who has just finished his third year of secondary school, offered him a school pennant. Pablo, a year younger, presented dozens of letters written by his fellow students thanking him for his visit to the school and promising to pray for him, and asking him to pray for them and their families.

More prayers for the Pope

The Prelate also went to the parish of Saint Josemaría, part of the diocese

of Getafe, and took advantage of the feast of Saints Peter and Paul to ask people to pray for Pope Francis, "who carries on his shoulders the weight of the whole Church and the world."

He has also encouraged those present to deepen in their knowledge of the writings of Saint Josemaría, since these provide a lot of light for our daily Christian lives. Answering a question about the importance of teaching others about the faith, he suggested asking the Holy Spirit for help in presenting the Gospel in a way that is understandable to all.