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Opus Dei prelate to Catholics: Make ordinary life conversation with God

The Prelate of Opus Dei, Bishop Javier Echevarria, met with a gathering of people in Montreal (Quebec)

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MONTREAL, Canada (CCN) – Be faithful in the small things and transform ordinary life an ongoing

conversation with God so you can share Christ's love with your brothers and sisters.

That's the message the prelate of Opus Dei, Bishop Javier Echevarria, brought to a gathering of about 900 in Montreal's Place des Arts on Sept. 16 as part of a North American tour including visits to New York, Toronto, Vancouver, San Francisco and Houston. On Sept. 17, he addressed about 1500 people at Roy Thompson Hall in Toronto.

"We have to feel the joy of knowing that we are sons and daughters of God," Echevarria said in Spanish. "This is a treasure. We cannot let it not have an impact on our lives and souls."

Head of a worldwide personal prelature founded by St. Josemaria Escriva in 1928, Bishop Echevarria told the gathering how much Escriva

had prayed for Canada as he began the apostolic work here.

“St. Josemaria was a great friend of this country. He prayed a lot for you. I cannot describe the intensity of his prayers, because he began praying even before I was born,” he said. Bishop Echevarria worked closely with Escriva prior to his death in 1975. Pope John Paul II canonized him in 2002.

A part of the Catholic Church, Opus Dei has about 80,000 members worldwide, with about 600 members in Canada, though it ministers to a wider circle than its members through recollections, spiritual direction and faith formation. The movement is made up of ordinary men and women pursuing the sanctification of daily life while at work or in their homes. Two percent are priests.

On a stage furnished to resemble a living room, stressing the family nature Opus Dei, Bishop Echevarria responded to selected audience questions on how to balance the demands of work and family with devotion to Christ. They also asked about how to make God personally present and how to find time for devotions when everything in the world draws us away.

“God is the being who is closest to us,” he said. “The word of God tells us how much He is interested in us and concerned with us.”

God is in us, he said, and he is concerned about every detail of our lives. He compared God’s love to that of parents who are touched by gifts from their children even if it is something like half-eaten candy. God is pleased with our conversation with him, the bishop said.

“We have to talk to him,” he said. “He’s not a being way off in the clouds. He is with us.”

As a friend, however, Jesus “asks us for things,” he said. Jesus noted when he was not greeted with a kiss, he said. He urged members to be more cheerful, to have more interest in others.

Bishop Echevarria told a story about an Opus Dei member who had a repetitive job making screws in a machine that had to be watched carefully or it would break. With this thumb and machine oil, the man would make the sign of the cross on each screw he fed into the machine. The man wanted Christ to be with him in his work, he said.

“In our life everything is of importance,” he said. “The Lord is in all these things. There is nothing where he does not count.”

Ordinary people can come to him just by taking care of little things well, he said, noting the “hidden life of Christ” during the 30 years preceding his public ministry where God’s son, too, led an ordinary life.

The prelate urged members to read the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and the *Compendium of the Catholic Church*, to “form” their faith. He said these works would help them find ways to “transform daily life by offering it up to God.”

He urged husbands and wives to “love each other crazily.” He advised busy parents to keep a photo of their family on their desks. “Look at the picture and fall in love more and more everyday.”

Taking care of children and family is more important than riches, he said, and husbands “have to have time in the home.”

St. Josemaria wrote that sadness happens when we seek only our own good, he said. That leaves us isolated from each other. “Sadness is the result of selfishness,” he said.

There are so many people needing our help, our clear gaze of affection, he said. He said service to others is the remedy for a consumer culture that focuses on accumulating material goods and external concepts of beauty. Service to others creates inner beauty, he said, urging them to visit the sick and show concern to the poor.

Bishop Echevarria encouraged members to avail themselves of the sacraments, especially reconciliation or confession on a regular basis.

“It cleans our soul and brings joy back to our soul and brings us to a good relationship with God,” he said, calling it the “nourishing our soul.”

Deborah Gyapong // Canadian Catholic News

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