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# **The Prelate in Ecuador: Suffering can be transformed into joy**

On Sunday, Msgr. Fernando Ocáriz met with families and friends of Opus Dei at Intisana School in Quito. Among other memorable moments, Andrés, a commercial pilot, asked him how to sanctify work and family, and Ángela requested prayers for an initiative to support women in vulnerable situations. On Monday afternoon, the Prelate will travel on to the final stage of his trip in Colombia.

08/12/2024

## The Prelate of Opus Dei in Ecuador

The Prelate of Opus Dei's journey through the countries around the Andes continued in Ecuador, where he stayed from 8 to 12 August, meeting with young people, families, and people involved in activities inspired by the message of St. Josemaría.

- Preparing for the trip
- 8 August: Welcoming the Prelate
- 9 August: With families and priests in Quito
- 10 August: Gathering in Guayaquil
- 11 August: Final gathering in Quito

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## Photo gallery

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### Sunday 11 August

Early in the morning on Sunday, people from different parts of Ecuador gathered at the Intisana School in Quito. When they arrived, they found a "Museum of St. Josemaría," an exhibition commemorating the 50th anniversary of his visit to the country.

To begin, a group of young people performed "Por tierras y mares," a song beloved by the founder of Opus Dei. Then the questions began. The first question led to an answer about the importance of personal interaction. "The apostolate of

friendship is about transmitting what is in your heart," the Prelate said, "from one person to another." He told them that leading by example is a service to their colleagues and a very effective apostolate.

Ecuador will host the International Eucharistic Congress next month, and Msgr. Ocariz was asked how to use this occasion to grow in love for the Eucharist. He encouraged everyone to fill their souls with gratitude because Jesus gives Himself to us as nourishment in the Holy Mass. When we receive Him, we identify ourselves with Him.

Before continuing to further questions, some siblings sang a song that alluded to God's loving embrace from heaven.

Andrés, a professional pilot, asked about the challenge of balancing family and work. Msgr. Ocariz advised him to always put his family

first. He encouraged spouses to dedicate time to what is most important, to ask God for guidance in their relationship, and to face the inevitable disruptions and difficulties with joy.

Ángela, another attendee, talked about the work of AFAC (Family and Community Assistance Foundation), which supports pregnant women in vulnerable situations. She mentioned that they have helped over thirty thousand people and welcomed more than five thousand babies from mothers who initially intended to have an abortion. She asked the Prelate to pray for them to continue this work.

Next, someone asked him to share a memory of St. Josemaría, and he told them that St. Josemaría was at once an extraordinary and a very normal person. His holiness was evident in the love he had for people and in

how attentive he was to others: "The holiness of St. Josemaría was in harmonizing the supernatural with the human."

## **Gathering with young people: transforming suffering into joy**

In the afternoon, he had two gatherings with young people at the Ilaloma retreat house. In the first, Stephanie shared that she was baptized and received her first communion at age 10. She then asked how she could continue growing in her spiritual life. Msgr. Ocáriz encouraged her to turn to "the Bread and the Word, prayer and the Eucharist; through these means, God responds with beautiful ideas."

When asked about the lack of time in a fast-paced world, he told them it was important to have a purpose and to find the right time for each thing, persevering even when we feel no desire to do what we need to. He

added that organization and flexibility help a lot with this.

In the final get together, Emilio talked about the difficult period he and his family went through due to a medical procedure that left him in intensive care. The Prelate explained that the cross of Christ brought redemption to the world, and our suffering can also bring great good to humanity. "We can think of the Lord on the Cross, who transforms suffering into joy."

On the morning of August 12, the Prelate headed to the airport to catch a flight to Bogotá, Colombia, where he will complete the final leg of his trip through the Americas.

## **Saturday, 10 August**

Families began arriving at the Torremar School in Guayaquil at nine in the morning on Saturday; they would meet Msgr. Fernando

Ocáriz a few hours later. An image of the school's shrine was displayed onstage.

Attendees came from different parts of Ecuador. The weather, slightly cooler than usual, enhanced the already-joyful atmosphere as they anticipated time with the Prelate.

Minutes before 11:30, the Delta School Chamber Orchestra performed several songs to welcome the Prelate, amid smiles and affectionate applause. After a rendition of "La Morenita," Msgr. Ocáriz thanked the young people. His opening words referenced a text from St. Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians: "God loves a cheerful giver." God wants us to be happy, the Prelate explained, and to be happy, we must love others and care for them without expecting extraordinary things: heroism lies in



constant generosity and daily perseverance.

The first to ask a question was Ángel, a young lawyer getting married soon. He asked the Prelate for advice about building a happy marriage and being faithful throughout life. Msgr. Ocáriz explained that marriage is based on a generous commitment to the other. “As the years go by, the more romantic aspects may diminish, but love remains, along with the deep desire for the good of the other person.”

One of the most touching moments occurred when Stephany shared how she has managed the challenge of her life with her first premature child and her second with Down syndrome. After ten years of praying to the Virgin Mary and St. Josemaría for her marriage, she will be getting married in the Church. In response to this demonstration of trust in God,

the Prelate encouraged everyone to be like the apostles who asked Jesus to increase their faith: “From natural evil, extract spiritual good,” he told them.

He also spoke about dedication to children as a primary duty and a source of personal growth that expands the heart. “The greatest treasure parents have is their children; the opportunity to build the souls of men and women.”

“Ordinary life,” he added, “is what God has placed in our hands to do good in the family, at work, in friendships, and in rest. Everything is a reason for love for God and service to others.”

The meeting was filled with artistic moments. Some students from Jacarandá and Montepiedra schools performed traditional love poems and dances from the Ecuadorian coast. They also presented a

*montubio* hat as a gift for the Prelate. Additionally, two artists painted a canvas live, capturing the event with palettes and colors, and a group of teachers from the host school sang other songs.

At the end, more than 2,000 people prayed the Angelus with the Prelate and received his blessing.

In the afternoon, he spent some time with families and friends at the St. Josemaría Escrivá Rectoral Church. During the conversations, they mentioned the social work being done in vulnerable areas. The Prelate encouraged them to move the hearts of those who go there to help and to bring joy to those in greatest need. “The Lord says, *what you do for the one who needs it most, you do for me,*” he concluded.

**Friday, 9 August**

Throughout the morning and afternoon on Friday, the Prelate of Opus Dei greeted several families who were waiting for him at the Ilaloma retreat house.

Grandparents, parents, children, and grandchildren participated in the conversation with the Prelate, sharing stories about their lives and families. Two of those present had greeted St. Josemaría at the Quito airport in 1974 from their father's shoulders when they were just little girls.

After one of the meetings, María José, holding her daughter Florencia, remarked that “although he had to greet many people, his actions were like those of a father who knows and appreciates each of his children, with the naturalness and trust that only come from an authentic and loving relationship.”

Later in the afternoon, Msgr. Ocariz met with around 40 diocesan priests and a few seminarians.

“The priests do not merely share ideas or doctrines, but Jesus Christ himself.” The Prelate emphasized the importance of the Eucharist as the center and root of the interior life: “Every person is worth the entire Blood of Christ; a single soul is worth all our effort,” he explained.

Fr. Eduardo, who lives in Lita (in the north of the country), where the majority of the population is indigenous Awa, shared how, since 2020, out of a population of 5,000 people, 600 have been baptized, and a significant number of marriages have been formalized. It was an opportunity to view this service to souls with optimism and hope.

In closing, the Prelate encouraged everyone to be instruments of unity, to foster priestly fraternity, and to

remain united in prayer for Pope Francis.

## **Thursday, 8 August**

Around noon on Thursday, 8 August, Msgr. Fernando Ocáriz stepped foot on Ecuadorian soil. Three families awaited him at the Quito airport with flowers, cards written by their children, and a handful of welcome signs.

Irene, who was there with her husband Alfredo and their three children, is Venezuelan and took the opportunity to thank him for his prayers for peace in her country.

One of the welcome signs contained a message with a formula that referenced the Prelate's background in physics:  $P=mxg$  (shorthand for "Father, many thanks for..." or "Padre, muchas gracias por..." in Spanish), with reasons for thanks below it: "Father, many thanks for

praying for us, for your joy, for visiting us, and for loving us.”

In the afternoon, he took part in a get together at the Solana Center. There was time for conversations, songs, and the presentation of a traditional dance from the Ecuadorian highlands. The expressions of gratitude for his presence were immediate, to which he responded: “Thanks be to God.”

He greeted several families the same day. In one of these conversations, Mauricio showed the Prelate a photo his father, Simón, had taken with St. Josemaría in Quito. Now, exactly 50 years later, Mauricio wished to recreate that same photograph with him.

Later in the evening, during a brief meeting at Ilaloma, several attendees told the Prelate about how they care for the elderly people they live with, some of whom are a bit ill and

limited. The Prelate thanked them for their efforts and encouraged them to continue maintaining charity, especially with those who need it most.

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## **Before the trip**

St. Josemaría arrived in Ecuador on 1 August 1974 with a message. After that trip, many Ecuadorians began their own journeys, bringing that message to life through their work and spreading it to different parts of the country, with the desire to improve the society in which they live.

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