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“We need to speak about Christ, not ourselves”

A summary of the five days Monsignor Fernando Ocáriz spent in northern Italy, with video highlights of the entire pastoral trip.

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25 August

At 11 am, Monsignor Fernando Ocáriz paid a visit to the archbishop of Milan, Cardinal Angelo Scola, accompanied by the Vicar of Opus

Dei for Italy, Fr. Matteo Fabbri. At the end, the Prelate went to pray in the cathedral. After spending some minutes in front of the tabernacle, he lit a votive candle to the *Madonna del'Aiuto* (Our Lady of Help), and then spent some time praying before the tombs of three archbishops of Milan: Blessed Ildelfonso Schuster (who knew Saint Josemaria and encouraged Opus Dei's apostolic work in Milan), Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini, archbishop from 1979 to 2002, and Cardinal Dionigi Tettamanzi, who died recently, on August 5.

Afterwards, Monsignor Ocariz had a get-together with faithful of the Prelature in the *Porta Vercellina* center. He also spent time with the women who care for the domestic management of the Torresscala university residence. "The vocation is a light that points out the way and strength that enables us to follow it

each day,” the Prelate said in one of the get-togethers. And he added: “The vocation to Opus Dei is not a part of one’s life that brings with it specific commitments: means of formation, apostolic activities, etc.” Rather, for those who follow this vocational path in the Church, “everything can and should be Opus Dei, since everything can and should be an encounter with God.”

Photo gallery:

In the final get-together of the day, the Prelate encouraged the people there to spread to others the joy of a personal encounter with Christ.

“Finding Christ in one’s work and family is inseparable from striving to bring this joy to others. It is impossible to seek sanctity without communicating it.” Monsignor Ocáriz encouraged those there, besides praying for people, to speak to them about God, to pass on to

them what is in our heart: “This is the apostolate of friendship and confidence. Friendship is the best way to help others to come to know Christ, by passing on what we have inside.” And citing Saint Josemaria he said: “We need to speak about Christ, not ourselves.”

He also reminded parents of the importance of fostering in their children the desire to serve others. “When children have the opportunity to help a poor person they are happy and discover something new. And we help to prevent them from being dominated by material goods.”

On August 26, in the morning, the Prelate ended his pastoral visit to northern Italy and traveled to Marseille, in France.

24 August

The Prelate met today with priests from several Italian dioceses. “We have been sent by our Lord, who wants to act through us as instruments of his. Let us work with faith and hope. Let us give ourselves generously to the others, without human calculations, placing Christ at the center of all our activities.” “We serve effectively the needs of the Church and the world,” Monsignor Fernando Ocáriz continued, “also when it seems to us that the fruit is slow in arriving.” The Prelate invited those present to pray for the Pope, “the visible foundation of the unity of the Church’s faith.”

Beauty of the Christian vocation

Monsignor Ocáriz also took part in several get-togethers with university students from various Italian cities. He urged them to care for the “beauty of the Christian vocation,”

which is a call “to identify ourselves completely with Jesus Christ,” an effort “that never ends.” “Let us place Christ at the center of our life,” the Prelate advised the young people there. God, who “loves each of us personally and infinitely,” counts on “our freedom in everything, especially in decisions on the direction of our life.” He also spoke about the topic of true happiness: “There is no surer way to be unhappy than to think about ourselves and our own comfort, while the surest way to be happy is to be generous with the others, because what brings true happiness is love, love for God and our fellow men and women.”

The Prelate also met with a large group of families, and dialogued with them about a number of different challenges: educating one’s children, caring for the elderly, accompanying young married couples, and ways to

confront setbacks and sufferings that can arise in families.

In his final get-together of the day, he invited the people there to view daily difficulties as “a gift of God.” *If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, ‘Give me a drink’ (Jn 4:10).* Monsignor Ocáriz encouraged them to seek out Christ’s face in each of these situations.

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23 August

In the morning, the Prelate celebrated the funeral Mass for Maria Dolores Jimenez, in San Gioachimo parish. She was one of the first faithful of Opus Dei who helped begin apostolic activities in Milan.

“We reflect today on the mystery of the life and death of God’s sons and daughters,” he said in the homily.

“Despite our sorrow, this light shines brightly for us today. And now we even dare to give thanks to God: thank you, Lord, because in the life of this daughter of yours you have made a ray of your own Life shine forth. Thank you because, even in these painful moments of separation, we learn how to live the truth of our life in this world: not as those who seek an ephemeral and superficial success, but as someone who knows that God never lets himself be outdone in generosity. It is worthwhile giving our life for the others!”

Before going to *Castello di Urzio*, a conference center near Milan, the Prelate greeted a number of families. “He reminded me,” says Cristina, who lives in La Spezia, “that I am not ‘in the Work,’ but rather that ‘I *am* the Work’ in my city, in my neighborhood, in my family.” One request that the Prelate made to

everyone he met was to pray for Pope Francis: “The Pope has on his shoulders a tremendous weight: problems, difficulties, complex situations that he has to try to resolve in an environment that is often hostile to the Church, and even persecution. He is very grateful for everyone’s help, and therefore constantly repeats: ‘Pray for me!’ This isn’t just a nice phrase he repeats unthinkingly. He truly needs our help, because the Church isn’t the responsibility just of priests, but of everyone, and he is the visible head of the Church.”

In Castello di Urzio, Monsignor Ocáriz had a get-together with some people of Opus Dei who are spending some days there receiving classes and resting. He reminded them of the importance of reading the New Testament frequently, from the gospel of Saint Matthew right to the Apocalypse. “When you finish, start

again with Saint Matthew, because we will always have new lights to discover, even though we know these texts.”

He stressed the importance of a coherent Christian life. “Living out the Gospel in the place where each one should fulfill his or her own duties, always brings with it benefits for society as a whole. Living as Christians in the middle of the world: this is truly a revolution, without any form of violence.” He also stressed the importance of receiving human and Christian formation, whatever each one’s cultural level may be.

The Prelate also pointed out that “a Christian, a person of Opus Dei, should never feel alone, not even in the middle of the Sahara desert, because if we live united to Christ, we will be united through the communion of saints to everyone, no matter where we are.”

In another get-together that day, Gabriella, one of the first persons of Opus Dei in Italy, asked the Prelate: “What can you tell us about old age?” “It doesn’t exist!”, Monsignor Ocariz replied jokingly. “The important thing is the youthfulness of our soul, which only love can give.”

21 and 22 August

The Prelate arrived in Milan late in the afternoon on August 21 and went directly to the vigil wake for Maria Dolores Jimenez, who had died just a few hours before. Maria Dolores was one of the first faithful of Opus Dei to begin its apostolic work in Milan.

On the 22nd, in the morning, Monsignor Ocariz celebrated a Mass that was attended by the directors of the regional Advisory of Opus Dei in Italy. In his homily for the feast of the

Queenship of Mary, he reminded the women present that “our Lady is Queen of the world and the universe, and is always carrying out her role as mediatrix. Mary is the one who distributes all of heaven’s graces. However great the difficulties we may face, our Lady is always by our side.”

Afterwards, he met with a large group of young women who receive spiritual formation in the centers of the Prelature in northern Italy. Eleonora, a 28 years old pastry chef, asked Monsignor Ocáriz for advice on how to bring friends who are distant from God back to the faith. “Rather than discussing or debating about God,” he replied, “the important thing is to be a good friend. By friendship, you show others affection and let them see what is in your heart. You can tell your friend, for example, that after

going to confession you feel a great joy—if that’s true for you, of course.”

Turning our life into an act of love

The Prelate also had an opportunity to greet a number of families, who asked him to pray for some specific intentions of theirs. He in turn asked all of them to foster a strong unity among the spouses and with their children, and to try to be good friends with other families.

In the afternoon, in another get-together, he reminded the people there of some words of Saint Josemaria, who said that he was leaving the faithful of Opus Dei as an inheritance “love for freedom and good humor.” “A person who does things because he feels obliged can’t be happy. Freedom of spirit means doing everything out of love. If ever you don’t feel free, try to react and turn everything you do into an act of love.”

He also had a chance to visit the parish church of San Gioachimo, which the archdiocese of Milan entrusted to the pastoral care of priests of the Prelature three years ago. The current pastor, Fr. Marco Busca, drew his attention to the special characteristics of the baptismal font, pointing out that the Ambrosian rite—the liturgical rite followed in the diocese of Milan—allows baptism by immersion.

The Prelate invited the families present there to thank God for the opportunity to serve the Church in diverse ways, by helping out in the parish. He also reminded them of how much the Holy Father needs their help to bear the weight of the whole Church. Finally Monsignor Ocariz asked them to pray for Cardinal Angelo Scola, and for his successor as Archbishop of Milan, Monsignor Delpini.

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