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News from Ivory Coast

During his recent visit to the war-torn country, Bishop Javier Echevarría insisted: "Love one another more. Be concerned about all the men and women in Ivory Coast and pray for everyone."

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"All you Ivorians have to be closely united to one another, always very closely united. So that, if conflicts have taken place, you will put them behind you, and build up this land

that is your responsibility. Love one another more, love each other a lot . . . Be concerned about all the men and women in Ivory Coast and pray for everyone.”

Bishop Javier Echevarría, Prelate of Opus Dei, was in Ivory Coast from July 7 to 12. There he met with hundreds of faithful of the Prelature, cooperators and friends.

In Abidjan, Bishop Echevarría greeted the Archbishop and also held two get-togethers: the first with several hundred students and the second with more than 1,500 people, mostly fathers and mothers of families.

He stressed the importance of the family and raising children well, and insisted on everyone's responsibility to help the country move forward, seeking solutions to its social problems, especially among those who are suffering special need.

A question by Adele N'Douba, a professor on the faculty of medicine at the University of Abidjan, led to a long reply by the Prelate on the importance of reconciliation:

“Always love one another! My children, here in Ivory Coast, you have to forgive one another. St. Josemaria, who became a saint by struggling each day, used to tell us: I haven’t had to learn how to forgive because God has taught me to love. So if you truly love, if you love all Ivorians, if you love those in your family and your neighbors, you will find it easy to forgive; you will see in the other person a sister, a brother, someone you have to help. “So forward, my children! God wants our lives to imitate Christ’s life, who went to the Cross in order to forgive us. May you too sacrifice yourselves in order to forgive everyone and help to build up again this great country of Ivory Coast.””

In Yamoussoukro, on Sunday the 10th, the Prelate also met with several groups. In the evening, he had a get-together with over seven hundred people. One of the young women there, Dr. Philomene Agoussi, spoke in the name of everyone:

“Thank you Father, because you are truly a Father. During the war you called us every day to encourage us to keep going. You have also set aside your age and our hot climate here to come to see us and give us hope.

“You can’t imagine how much we appreciate your trip and how much it helps us, in this political crisis that is also for many people a crisis of faith. You have taught us that, despite all the difficulties, we can’t exchange our faith, our divine filiation and eternal life, for a plate of beans, for an earthly good.”

In the course of the get-together, the Prelate once again returned to the topic of forgiveness:

“What you tell me makes me very happy. Let us be men and women of peace, men and women of forgiveness. Remember what our Lord told the first twelve apostles, who didn’t have much formation, which can also happen to us, when they asked Christ to teach them how to pray. He told them: ‘When you pray, say: Our Father who art in heaven...’ And you remember how it ends: ‘Forgive us, as we forgive those who have offended us.’”

On the following day the Prelate visited the Walé Medical Center started by faithful of the Prelature, with the assistance of cooperators and friends, which is trying in to help solve the lack of adequate health care for many Ivorians without financial means.

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