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# "How far can we go in love for our Lady?"

Photos and stories from Mons. Fernando Ocáriz's pastoral trip to Mexico.

12/06/2022

## **Saturday, November 12**

On his last day in Mexico, the Prelate met with families at the Expo Santa Fe. The participants welcomed him with the "Mexican wave" while waving colourful ribbons in the air. "We are cooperators of the truth,"

Msgr. Fernando Ocáriz said, speaking first of all Christians' evangelising task. "Jesus Christ himself said to the apostles: *I am the Truth*. Therefore, all apostolic work is cooperation with Jesus Christ." To be able to collaborate with God, "it is necessary to pray without faltering; constant prayer means directing the soul to Our Lord. Even sleep can be prayer when we offer it to God."

Luz Maria, a Mexican who came to know the Work in Taipei and continued her means of formation in South Korea, is now the principal of Meyalli College. "Going from diplomacy to education has been the best gift I have ever received," she said. The Prelate of Opus Dei encouraged her to have a universal heart: "Pray a lot, for the whole world, because the whole world is ours; it belongs to every person with a Christian heart. We can feel all the joys, all the sorrows, and all the

successes and failures of the world as our own.”

Another person present talked about the difficulties he experienced during the pandemic, including the sorrow of losing several family members to COVID. "Is it possible to be happy while suffering?" Msgr. Ocariz reflected: "Yes, it is possible with faith and God's grace. This faith in God's Love does not take away our suffering, but it makes it possible to be happy in the midst of sorrow."

The testimonies were very varied: Natalia, who is an actress, talked about trust in God; Claudia and Willy asked about the vocation of their children; Pedro recounted the story of his recovery from COVID through St. Josemaría's intercession; a family explained the tradition of the Christmas *posadas* in Mexico, and Viviana and Mario sang a well-known Mexican song. Fernando

asked about the Work's centenary, and the Prelate told him that "it is an occasion to meditate on the fact that everything has been done and everything is yet to be done.

Everything is done because the spirit has already been given to us by God, and everything is yet to be done in our own lives, in each one of us, in each one of us. The Work is already a reality, but the Lord wants it to spread, to reach many people. It is a true sea without shores."

As a final message, he encouraged everyone to be "joyful in hope and to forget more about ourselves in order to think of others." After greeting some families, he went to the Villa to say goodbye to our Lady of Guadalupe and then caught his flight back to Rome, after some full and pleasant days in Mexico.

**Sunday, November 11**

Msgr. Ocariz had a catechetical encounter with girls who receive Christian formation in centres of Opus Dei in Mexico City, Puebla, Morelos, Tlaxcala, the State of Mexico and Veracruz. Natalia and Fausta told some stories about their time in other countries, where they were able to help in the centres of the Work, while Jime and Alicia took advantage of the occasion to give the Prelate a picture of Blessed Guadalupe Ortiz de Landázuri: "We hope he will put it in some corner of his house."

Maria, who is in her last year studying nursing, said that she has opened TikTok and Instagram accounts to let others know about her adventures at work. She has received a lot of positive feedback. "It is God who acts through each one of us when we do not put up obstacles, when we work well and serve

others," said Msgr. Ocariz. "Serving with joy is a true apostolate".

Andrea and Maria performed a magic trick that surprised everyone present; Zyanya talked about her conversion and then played a piece on the violin; Isa asked about purity in dating, and Geraldine asked Father to speak to them about vocation and the gift of celibacy. "You have put it well: celibacy is a gift," the Prelate explained. "Sometimes, we can choose the easy thing. But it is good to think: what is God calling me to? How will I be happier?"

At the end of the meeting, two girls gave him a piñata with a gift from all of them. Before giving the final blessing, he encouraged them to pray for Pope Francis and reiterated his wish that each person would find "her own path, being faithful to what God wants for each one of them."

**Thursday, November 10**

The day included various meetings, among them with a group of elderly women, faithful of the Prelature who told him that, between them, they had been in the Work for 1,520 years. "We always have reasons to be happy," the Prelate told them, "because God loves us very much. St. Josemaría was always happy because, although he lived through situations of great suffering, he was deeply immersed in God." He also spoke to them about interior freedom, about doing things out of love for God, and about being available to do the Work. Stories were told about the difficulties during the pandemic, apostolic concerns, and family challenges.

## **Wednesday, November 9**

In his catechesis on this day, questions about joy and friendship arose: "The important thing is to smile inside," he explained. "We

should always be joyful, happy, because everything is an opportunity to meet the Lord.” In response to a question about caring for people, asked by Sofia, a nurse, the Prelate encouraged her to "ask the Lord to increase our charity, our capacity to love.”

On Wednesday, he also blessed the first stone of a school and greeted the board of directors of a school started and promoted by several families.

## **Tuesday, November 8**

In the morning, the Prelate met with the management team of the Universidad Panamericana and several members of the university community at the Bosque Real campus. Susana, a Cuban-Mexican, told how she discovered the Work through her work at IPADE, and Yazmin spoke about her work at the university in the area of social service. Msgr. Fernando Ocariz



encouraged those present to cultivate an environment of dialogue, based on respect, friendship and genuine interest in others.

In the afternoon, he went to the Cedros school to talk with young people from Puebla and Cuernavaca. Alejandro asked him about how to be better friends with his friends; the Prelate explained that, as he had probably already learned from experience, friendship grows when we take care of small details like spending time on activities the other enjoys, listening attentively, being punctual, etc. For a Christian, being a friend is being an apostle.

Another question had to do with chastity. "We might say," Msgr. Ocariz answered, "that there are two motives for wanting to be chaste: the first and most decisive is for love of God, because God wants it that way, and so it is good for us. The second

reason comes from human experience: impurity does not give joy; it leaves a bitter experience. Living chastity, knowing how to love with the body, increases people's capacity to love with all their human and spiritual capacities. Those who do not value purity tend to live a selfish life. It is not easy, but it is necessary to trust in God who gives us his grace."

Mariano said that he and a group of friends are preparing for World Youth Day in Portugal. Before the meeting with the Pope, they will walk parts of the Camino de Santiago. "I want to prepare myself spiritually for that moment: what advice can you give me?" The Prelate of Opus Dei told him that one way to prepare is by praying more for the Holy Father each day, praying for him and for the intentions he carries – there are many – so that many people will come closer to God and

there will be more unity within the Church.

Before concluding, he was asked about the most important virtues for young people. "All the virtues go together. It is necessary to grow in virtue harmoniously. Undoubtedly, the first is charity; but there are moments in life in which some acquire more importance. I advise you to be sincere: be sincere first with God, with yourselves and with others."

## **Monday, November 7**

The Prelate of Opus Dei travelled to Montefalco, a spiritual retreat centre located in the state of Morelos, south of the capital. He arrived shortly before noon.

There he received several groups of people. Paty told him about her niece, who is 4 years old and suffers from a serious illness. She wants to

learn more about the Catholic faith and is very pious. Mons. Ocariz said that the example of this young girl can help to reflect on spiritual childhood and abandonment to God: “Have confidence in the Lord; the same confidence that you placed in your father and mother.”

They also explained to the Prelate that in a parish in a distant area they were able to buy sacred vessels made of precious metal, thanks to collection among all the neighbours. The person who described the initiative asked when the Work would reach these areas far from the capitals: “The Work is there,” he said, “wherever you are. But we will develop more if you are faithful.”

## **Sunday, November 6**

In the morning, there was a general get-together at the Monterrey Arena. People came from the north of Mexico, the south of the American

Union and even from some Central American countries.

First of all, Mons. Ocariz asked for prayers for Pope Francis. He also recalled the importance of having faith in prayer and of loving the Lord very much, in order to identify ourselves with him.

Some people wanted to share their ideas, ask the Prelate questions, and tell him stories about everything from educational projects with the needy to surgical operations and a project to spread devotion to the Mother of God, entitled “Our Lady everywhere” [“La Virgen en todos lados”]. “We can always love our Lady more. She looks at us with love and we need to respond to that look,” the Prelate said.

Many topics were discussed in the catechetical encounter: the importance of the virtues in children’s education, rediscovering

friendship, having hope in adversity, and the gratitude we should have toward the migrants who strengthen our society.

The Prelate of Opus Dei spent time speaking about how suffering presents an opportunity to strengthen our faith, as long as we experience it united to the Cross of our Lord. Other topics included the need for prudence on social media, the value of celibacy as a gift from God, and marriage.

Finally, Mons. Ocariz concluded the gathering by reiterating the importance of praying together for the Pope. He asked for prayers for the whole Church, for the Work, and for himself.

## **Saturday, November 5**

On November 5, Mons. Fernando Ocariz answered questions from many young Mexican women in a

large encounter: “It is good to know and study one's faith, to be able to love Jesus Christ — who calls us to identify ourselves with him, in order to be happy — more. From knowledge comes love for the one who calls us to be *ipse Christus*, Christ himself.”

Luisa, from Sinaloa, asked how best to prepare for World Youth Day in Lisbon. “Listen and meditate on the Pope's words. And also, have a lot of fun!” They also gave him a lantern from the city of Culiacán: “This makes me think about how we must all be lighted lanterns, to give light to others and illuminate their lives.”

Karina told him how she discovered her vocation to the Work as an assistant numberary shortly after the death of 11 Mexican women of the Work in a car accident in 2016. “To follow one's vocation,” the Prelate recalled, “prayer is necessary, asking

for lights from the Lord and asking for advice. The important thing is not to wonder what is easier or more difficult: every vocation is easy and every vocation is difficult. It is easy with God's grace, and it is difficult because all vocations involve effort. Celibacy is a great gift from God that gives us the ability to love a lot.”

Lilly, Paula and Lucia played a piece on a traverse flute. A question also arose about how to take care of our faith and be consistent: “Faith is a gift from God. Faced with some environments that oppose Christian doctrine, first of all, we must not be afraid, but remain serene, and, at the same time, be prudent. The first prudence is to ask God for help. The apostles themselves, having Jesus present, asked him: *Lord, increase our faith.*”

The team behind @opusdeitips, an Instagram account that publishes



content about St. Josemaría's message, asked how to transmit divine filiation to young people. "The content you produce, which explains what divine filiation is, is already a great help. Then transmit the experience of the joy of knowing oneself to be a child of God to those close to you."

Finally, the Prelate told all of them: "I am counting on you. You cannot limit yourselves to receiving Christian formation; you also do the Work with us."

## **Friday, November 4**

After celebrating a Mass attended by many families at the Liceo de Monterrey school, Mons. Ocáriz spoke with a group of women. Maru, an odontologist, told some stories about her profession, and Sofi talked about the friends she has made in the university. Some of them, who had come from the United States

nearby, asked him to pray for the apostolic work in their country. The Prelate reminded them that, in Opus Dei, we feel at home in whatever country we are in, “if we take care of the family atmosphere and treat each other charitably.”

He spent part of the afternoon with a group of young people who participate in the Christian formation offered in various centres of Opus Dei in northern Mexico. The participants came from Hermosillo, Culiacán, Chihuahua, Torreón and Monterrey. They spoke about faith, apostolate, vocation, setbacks, joy, hope and other issues and concerns that the young people brought up in their anecdotes and questions.

The Prelate encouraged them not to tire of deepening their formation and to attend means of formation actively, not merely receiving classes, but seeking to apply the teachings of

the Catholic faith in their lives, in their daily tasks and personal dreams.

Paul was the first to speak; he told how the arrival of a brother with cerebral palsy has helped him and his family to love one another better and to be more generous. “In some way,” the Prelate told him, “you are seeing God's love present there, and it has strengthened something very important: the union and generosity of the family. Sometimes things that appear to be misfortunes are in reality a blessing from God, although it is not always easy to see them that way.”

Eugenio then asked, “How can we overcome our fear of difficulties?” Mons. Ocariz responded, “Our security is rooted in God; we are never far from God's hand, or left to our own devices.” He quoted St. Paul: “If God is for us, who can be against

us?’ Many times, what we need is more faith, to ask the Lord to increase our faith.”

Another young man from Monterrey, also named Eugenio, was able to tell the Prelate about how he rediscovered the Lord and came closer to him through to the catechesis and activities he found in Sillares, a centre of Opus Dei. “The goal of formation,” Mons. Ocariz replied, “is each person’s identification with Jesus Christ. We need to receive it not only to have some information, of greater or lesser interest, but to help us get to know the Lord better, to love him more, and to act and feel more like he does.” He explained that God wants us all to be holy, but it is up to each person to discover the concrete plan God has for him or her.

Gerardo, from Culiacán, and José Pablo, from Chihuahua, asked how to

bring their friends and siblings closer to God. “Let them see the joy you have when you strive to live an authentic Christian life. Also, pray a lot for your friends and deepen your friendships.”

Sergio, from the Roda Club, asked how to distinguish human vision from God’s inspirations in us. “Think as you pray, talk to God, ask him. And ask for advice from someone who can help you. God will respect your freedom, but that freedom reaches its true meaning when it is always directed toward love, love for God and, through God, for others.”

Just before finishing, some young people from Monterrey sang the “Corrido de Monterrey.” The Prelate gave his blessing to all, encouraging them to be faithful and joyful apostles.

**Thursday, November 3**

On Thursday, Mons. Fernando Ocariz visited the Liceo de Monterrey, a school whose Christian formation is entrusted to the Prelature. The students asked him many questions, and the need for an active relationship with Jesus in the Tabernacle, keeping him company, came up repeatedly. After a few of them sang a song and played guitar, the Prelate encouraged them to be joyful always and to show that joy by “singing always, if only on the inside.”

## **Wednesday, November 2**

On November 2, the Prelate continued his tour of Mexico. In Monterrey, in the north of the country, he met with a group of his daughters at Los Pinos, a centre where many spiritual retreats are organised. He began by speaking about the desire all Christians need to have, to want ever deeper

formation. Chayo and Mariana told some jokes, and the Prelate took the opportunity to encourage those present to keep their good humour. Ana Lucía asked how to cultivate deep friendships: "Be genuinely interested in each person," said Mons. Ocariz, "and always take care of the closeness that comes from prayer."

Then Angie welcomed him in Tarahumara, an indigenous language, and asked him to come back soon. Someone else asked what would be needed for Opus Dei to have a greater presence in the Sierra Tarahumara. "St. Josemaría always said that if we want to be more, we have to be better, starting with you, with your work and your prayer."

Edith told him about her recent Baptism, first Communion and Confirmation, and sang a popular Mexican song accompanied by

guitar. The questions and stories went on. Before leaving, the Prelate told them: "We are not saying goodbye, because we are always very close."

## **Tuesday, November 1**

The Prelate of Opus Dei spent a large part of the morning visiting the sick and speaking to couples who promote various educational initiatives (Lar, Forsa and FAPACE). He also visited the Los Altos school, where he was able to talk with some of the students.

Afterwards, he had a meeting at the Universidad Panamericana Campus Guadalajara with people who work in schools, at the university, and at the Ipade business school. Mons. Fernando repeatedly mentioned the importance of each person's work in those institutions. "The work done by the rector of the university," he said, "is not better than the work done by



someone who only gives one class a week, because, as St. Josemaría used to say, the best work is that done with the most love for God.”

## **Monday, October 31**

In the morning, Mons. Fernando met with a group of his daughters to discuss the professional and apostolic challenges they encounter among their colleagues and friends. In the afternoon, he went to pray to the Virgin of Zapopán, in Jalisco.

## **Sunday, October 30**

On the second day of his visit to Guadalajara, the Prelate held an encounter with university students at the Panamerican University.

On behalf of all the young people from Cauda Club, Alvaro gave Mons. Ocariz a World Cup album with photos of the young men who come to receive Christian formation at the

centre, instead of the athletes' photos. Alvaro then recounted how he began to teach catechism to young children. Since he was not sure if he was explaining it well, he asked the Prelate how to explain God's love to someone who seems uninterested. "It depends on the circumstances," he answered, "there is no magic formula. It is always necessary to accompany formation with prayer, your prayer. Sometimes it is not easy to teach because you do not know the person or child, but that is why you ask the Holy Spirit for the gift of tongues; you ask him for light so that the message of faith reaches the other person."

Diego then asked, "How can we know what God is calling us to?" and the Prelate told him that the Lord's will is not usually shown in an obvious way, "so it is very important to pray, to ask for light and strength to decide. Sometimes we know that he is calling

us, but we do not want to follow him.” The Prelate spoke about celibacy, noting that it is a great gift for those who receive this call: “Apostolic celibacy is a gift of immense love for God and, through God, for the whole world.” He said that it would be a mistake to see celibacy as a great sacrifice, and recalled the words Jesus spoke to his apostles many times throughout the Gospels: “Do not be afraid.”

Between questions, there was time for short performances. José Andrés, who lives in the Altovalle university residence, sang the song "Cuando Sale La Luna." Santiago worked a magic trick that the audience applauded.

Poncho, a boy from Aguascalientes, and José María, from San Luis Potosí, asked similar questions about how to bring their friends closer to God. The Prelate spoke about the importance

of friendship and prayer in the apostolate: “It is a matter of knowing how to transmit, through your care and affection, what you carry within, which is the true joy of a personal relationship with God, which does not limit our lives, but multiplies our happiness.” Quoting St. Josemaría, he reminded them that, “to be happy, what you need is not an easy life but a heart which is in love.”

Later, the Prelate spoke with some young women who receive Christian formation in centres of Opus Dei. They welcomed him with the song “Cielito lindo,” and he began the conversation by reflecting on how fortunate it is to be able to attend classes to learn about the Catholic faith, deepen in the spiritual life, and draw closer to Christ.

Rosita told him about her conversion process, which unfolded thanks to the accompaniment she received in

Jaltepec, her high school. There she discovered the value of the sacraments and decided to receive her First Communion and Confirmation a few months ago.

The participants' questions centred on the difficult environment in the state. The Prelate encouraged them not to lose hope, but to recognize that God is a Father who takes care of us. Recalling one of St. Josemaría's ideas, he told them that "it is possible to cry; it is possible to suffer; but it is not possible to be sad."

Before concluding, Jimena gave him a Madonna that had been painted by all the girls who participate in the catechesis.

## **Saturday, October 29**

On his first day in Guadalajara, the Prelate of Opus Dei met with faithful and friends of the Prelature. The encounter opened with the song

“México, lindo y querido,” sung to mariachi music.

Commenting on the Gospel of the day, Mons. Ocáriz spoke about humility, highlighting how St. Josemaría taught that this virtue leads us to recognize our failings while also revealing our greatness as children of God.

A married couple celebrating their 56th wedding anniversary asked how to grow in faithfulness. “Fidelity,” the Prelate replied, “is in loving each other more and more each day. All of us [*“Toditos y toditas”*], as they say here in Guadalajara, have defects. We have to love each other as we are.”

Since the World Cup is coming up, a family went up to the stage to give the Prelate a jersey of the Mexican soccer team with his name on the back. At the end of the encounter, Daniela sang "Paloma Querida",

accompanied by Álvaro on the violin, while two girls dressed as Catrinas (one of the most representative icons of Mexican culture on the Day of the Dead) gave him a bouquet of flowers.

## **Friday, October 28**

The Prelate went to Aguascalientes, a city in north-centre Mexico, where he took part in a catechetical encounter with many people in the San Marcos Convention Center.

Francis, who described himself as “the youngest man in the room,” at 105 years of age, was among the people who spoke to the prelate. His daughter recounted her father’s great devotion to the Holy Rosary, and the Prelate invited everyone to “pray and turn to Mary with greater devotion.”

The Prelate also noted that the Christian spirit cannot be imposed: “Rather, it must be transmitted,

because it is what we have in our hearts... Not giving lessons, but transmitting joyfully.” Mons. Ocariz also spoke about the importance of the Holy Mass, and again invited everyone to be very united to the Pope and to pray for him.

Another question came from Gonzalo Quesada, a father and event (particularly wedding) planner from Querétaro. He said that he takes advantage of these celebrations to encourage the future spouses and to share advice about how to remain united and grow in love over time. He asked the Prelate how to continue talking to God throughout the day; he advised him to consider how Jesus waits for him in every moment of prayer and pious practice, because “He, in his greatness, has wanted to need our affection.”

Someone else spoke about the help a friend received after a car accident,



through Blessed Alvaro's intercession. The friend is now in good health. Mons. Ocariz thanked God for this favour and invited everyone to have faith in prayer and to believe that God hears us when we ask him for anything: "His actions are always effective, even when we do not see the results, because prayer is never lost."

Michelle Raymond, director of the Art and Culture department at the Universidad Panamericana, shared how she worked with students on a musical based on *Les Miserables*, and some of the students involved performed "One Day More."

The meeting continued with a question about living chastity while dating, and another, from a young girl, about the name of the Prelate's guardian angel. Some young women sang a song to the tune of "Pescador" (composed for Pope John Paul II's

visit to Mexico), changing the lyrics to refer to the Prelate's visit.

The meeting ended with another song, "Pelea de gallos," which is an emblem of Aguascalientes. It was sung by two professors from the Universidad Panamericana while a young cowboy swung his lasso.

## **Thursday, October 27**

The Prelate's first day in Mexico was also his birthday. He greeted some Mexican families in the morning, and they took the opportunity to wish him a happy birthday.

In the afternoon, he went to the Basilica of Guadalupe to celebrate Mass ([read the homily here](#)). During the homily, he invited those present "not to allow room for pessimism or discouragement," but to "strengthen our spirit through faith in the assistance, in the presence of God in us, knowing we are children of God

in Christ Jesus; children of a God who is Love and who knows everything and can do everything.”

He asked the many faithful in attendance to accompany Pope Francis and the whole Church through prayer and reminded them that Mexico, “which has received so many blessings from God, has a special responsibility to be salt and light for all the continents, beginning with family homes and workplaces.”

At the end of the Mass, all those present sang “Morenita mía,” recalling St. Josemaría Escrivá’s visit to the Old Basilica of Guadalupe in 1970, when the song was also sung.