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The Prelate in Peru: Stories and Photos from the Trip

From 30 July to 8 August, Monsignor Fernando Ocáriz visited Arequipa, Piura, and Lima. At the same time of year, 50 years ago, St. Josemaría traveled to Peru to be with members and friends of Opus Dei there in 1974.

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The Prelate of Opus Dei in Peru

- 30 July: Arrival in Lima

- 1 August: Gathering with families in Arequipa
- 2 August: Gatherings with families and young people in Lima
- 3 August: At the University of Piura with families
- 4 August: Gathering with families south of Lima
- 5 August: At the sanctuary of Mary, Mother of Fairest Love

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Monday 5 August

On Monday, the Prelate of Opus Dei visited the Shrine of Our Lady, Mother of Fairest Love, in Cañete, where he also met with priests. Later, he visited the Condoray Institute.

In the morning, in one of the halls of the Shrine of Our Lady, Mother of Fairest Love (Cañete), he met with

priests from several Peruvian cities, including Lima, Chiclayo, Cañete, Ica, Huancavelica, Abancay, Callao, Chulucanas, Ayacucho, and Chosica.

The Prelate encouraged them to foster the virtue of hope in the face of global conflicts. He told them, "Right now, while we're conversing, we can pray without words. Let's pray for the Pope. The communion of saints is a wonderful reality."

"The more our hearts are immersed in Jesus, the more He will help us serve others better," he told the priests. "We ought to be convinced that our priestly ministry depends on God's grace and our correspondence through prayer and the Eucharist."

One of the attendees remembered Bishop Javier Echevarría, the previous Prelate of Opus Dei, who visited Peru in 2010. Msgr. Ocariz recalled how Don Javier revealed his priestly soul through small,

meaningful details. When someone came up to him, for instance, he would stand and listen no matter how busy he was. He was never in a hurry with people.

The Prelate urged them to share the extraordinarily positive meaning of the sacrament of confession. He also recalled the joy with which Blessed Álvaro del Portillo would go to confession, considering it the happiest moment of his week.

After the gathering, Msgr. Ocariz went to pray at the Shrine of Our Lady, Mother of Fairest Love, whose image was given to the Prelature of Yauyos by St. Josemaría. He prayed for all the priests and also offered a prayer in the shrine's crypt, where several priests of the Prelature of Cañete, Yauyos, and Huarochirí are buried.

Condoray was the venue for a gathering with families and women

of Opus Dei that afternoon. They told the Prelate about some recent initiatives for encouraging devotion to St. Josemaría in Peru.

The Prelate encouraged them to reclaim joy in everyday life: "St. Josemaría was someone who suffered greatly and yet was happy at the same time, sustained by the strength of grace."

Sunday 4 August

The Prelate of Opus Dei met with families and friends at the Polideportivo Legado in Villa El Salvador, located south of Lima. People from the capital, as well as from Chiclayo (770 km away), Cañete (a bit closer, about 2 hours by car), and other Peruvian cities attended the event.

Msgr. Ocáriz began by encouraging everyone to grow in their life of faith

and to give thanks for the immense gift of the Eucharist. "When our faith seems weaker, let us ask God: 'Lord, increase our faith!' And with faith will come hope and the ability to forget ourselves in order to better serve others."

A high school teacher who is also part of a rock band asked the Prelate how to reach beauty through God. Msgr. Ocariz said that "music is a path to finding God, because beauty comes from God's beauty and lifts the soul up. We catch a glimpse of God's infinite beauty in the beauty of music."

Shortly before the meeting concluded, one of the attendees gave him a statue of St. Joseph sleeping. Msgr. Ocariz reminded them that the Pope has a special devotion to St. Joseph. He encouraged everyone to pray for the Church, the Pope, and

the whole world, asking God especially for peace.

Saturday 3 August

On Saturday, Msgr. Fernando Ocáriz visited Piura, where more than five thousand people from various cities in northern Peru, including Chiclayo and Trujillo, gathered at the University of Piura for a conversation with families.

A professor shared an initiative inspired by the encyclical *Laudato si'* and asked for advice on how to foster development in Piura. The Prelate answered: "It is essential to have in our hearts a genuine interest in helping others. When we are truly interested, more initiatives and ideas on how to help come to us. We need to ask the Lord for light and strength."

Martha, a member of the university's cleaning staff, told a story about her devotion to St. Josemaría. Msgr. Ocáriz took the opportunity to remind them of one of the founder of Opus Dei's central teachings: "The most important work is the one done with the greatest love for God."

Several of the attendees' questions were about the spirit of service and volunteer initiatives, or how to help students beyond the academic field. The Prelate told them that "unity of life leads us to open our heart to everyone."

At the end of the get together, two professors from the Institute of Family Sciences talked about a recent study on the family. "Marriage is about love," the Prelate said, "and true love doesn't put the beloved 'on trial.' It is good to reflect on the essence of true love."

After giving a blessing to the whole group, Msgr. Ocáriz concluded the gathering with some reflections on joy and the many reasons we Christians have to be happy.

Friday 2 August

Msgr. Fernando Ocáriz continued the catechesis started by St. Josemaría at the Miralba Cultural Center, the very place where families and young people gathered to speak with the founder of Opus Dei in another get together fifty years ago,

This center, located in the University of Piura, was transformed into a large outdoor living room. During a meeting with young people, María José, who leads a social media initiative, asked him about the appropriate use of these tools. Msgr. Fernando Ocáriz emphasized the importance of communicating the need to live the virtue of sobriety and

to do as much good as possible in any digital initiative.

When one of the attendees asked about vocational discernment, the Prelate pointed out that "we all have a vocation, and we all need light to see what God asks of us. The Lord does not want to be too obvious so as not to restrict our freedom."

In the afternoon, during another meeting with young people, Jorge Mario, a medical student in his last year at the University of Piura, asked him how to bring his family and the patients he cares for closer to God spiritually. Msgr. Ocariz advised him to turn first to prayer, saying, "Pray for each person in every room, to bring them closer to God."

Thursday 1 August

Monsignor Fernando Ocariz entered Arequipa under a clear sky and

bright sunshine. The city is colloquially known as the “White City” because of the volcanic stone used in many constructions.

Upon arriving in Arequipa, the Prelate headed to the episcopal see to greet the city's archbishop, Bishop Javier del Río Alba. The day before, he had met the Archbishop of Lima, Bishop Carlos Castillo, and then went to the cathedral to pray to Our Lady of Evangelization, before whose image St. Josemaría also prayed in 1974.

At noon, the first meeting with families and young people began at the Convention Center of the Bar Association Club. Among the audience were people from Tacna, a city on the Chilean border, and Cusco, 500 km away through the Andes Mountains. The backdrop of the stage featured a panoramic view of Arequipa, highlighting its 17th

century cathedral and the Misti volcano. To the right, an image of Our Lady of Chapi, the city's patroness, oversaw the event.

After praying the Angelus with everyone, the Prelate reminded them that the Lord “has called all of us to be saints” and that holiness does not consist in having no flaws: holiness “is not the perfection of a museum, but the perfection of love.”

In response to a question from a supernumerary who introduced herself as “the eldest in Arequipa,” the Prelate replied, “the eldest, but not old, because the youth we carry within us is what counts; love is what gives us youth.”

Javier asked the Father how to help other married couples in their Christian life. “Unity between yourselves is the root of everything else,” the Prelate told him. “As the

years go by, try to seek one another's good."

At the end, Msgr. Ocariz encouraged everyone to live joyfully with their families and friends, in spite of any difficulties that may arise: "Always joyful, because we are children of God."

In the late afternoon, the Prelate traveled back to Lima, where he will meet with couples and young people on Friday.

Tuesday 30 July

The Prelate landed in the Lima airport on the night of Tuesday 30 July, having flown from Santiago de Chile. Johan and Cinthya, along with their five children, welcomed him and gave him some gifts and letters.

On Thursday 1 August, he will travel to Arequipa, where he will meet with numerous families.

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