

Video: Prelate's Pastoral Trip to Northwest Spain

On the last day of his pastoral visit to northwest Spain, the Prelate of Opus Dei celebrated Mass in the Cathedral of Oviedo with Archbishop Jesús Sanz and met with faithful and friends of the Prelature.

07/17/2022

Oviedo, July 6

“The new places from which the Gospel must be preached are not

only in the churches or sacristies. They are the street, the world of work, politics, culture, laws, the family, the whole rich and varied fabric of the life of ordinary people today.” These are words from the homily of the Prelate of Opus Dei during the Mass celebrated on Wednesday, July 6, in the Cathedral of Oviedo.

The Archbishop of the diocese, Jesús Sanz Montes, presided at the Mass, concelebrated by fifty priests and attended by some 1,500 people. Archbishop Jesús Sanz, when he learned of the Prelate’s pastoral visit to northwestern Spain, invited him to take part in a solemn concelebration in the Cathedral that has just commemorated the 1,200th anniversary of its dedication to the Savior and the twelve apostles.

After a private meeting lasting almost half an hour, the Prelate of

the Work and the Archbishop entered the Cathedral through the cloister. At the beginning of the ceremony, the Archbishop expressed his gratitude for the visit: “The fact that you have agreed to concelebrate with me and then address your fatherly words to us fills us with joy and we thank you from the bottom of our hearts.”

Archbishop Sanz emphasized “the ecclesial gift of Saint Josemaría’s charismatic legacy.” He added that “the presence of Opus Dei in our archdiocese is capillary,” and he alluded to the men and women who “exercise their various professions with great competence in a precious contribution to society and to the diocesan community in the field of teaching, health, the media, the judiciary and legal profession, the economy and business, with a long and fruitful etc.” The Archbishop of Oviedo expressed his condolences for

the recent death of José Ocáriz, brother of Don Fernando, for whom the Mass was offered.

The Prelate of the Work began his homily by referring to the Gospel of the Mass — a votive Mass of Saint Josemaría — about the crowd gathered at Jesus' feet to listen to his words: “Also today as then, Jesus is found on the shore of the immense sea of human history. Men and women of all times have a longing for God. Mankind continues searching for God – often unconsciously – and God never tires of searching for us.”

Following the Gospel passage, where Jesus gets on Peter's boat and asks him to put off from the shore, the Prelate urged those present “to bear witness with courage and without fear to the faith we profess,” and he outlined the features of the apostolic vocation of all Christians,

encouraging them to launch out into the deep with hope, without falling into an indolent pessimism: “All of you, and in a special way young people, have to take on and renew this mission to transform society, promoting all the positive aspects in our world today.”

Monsignor Ocáriz finished by asking for the intercession of the “Santina,” as Asturians affectionately call our Lady of Covadonga, their patroness, whom the Prelate of the Work visited on July 13, 2018, on the occasion of the Centenary of her canonical coronation.

The prayers of the faithful included a petition for those affected by war and those “discarded” from society, as well as for Archbishop Gabino Díaz Merchán, archbishop of Oviedo for almost 33 years (1969-2002) and president of the Spanish Episcopal

Conference between 1981 and 1987, who died recently.

At the end of the Mass, the Archbishop's farewell included the request that the Prelate of Opus Dei return soon. The ceremony ended with a warm and grateful applause from everyone present.

On Thursday morning, Monsignor Ocáriz preached a meditation and celebrated Mass for people from the Torla Association in Oviedo, dedicated to promoting activities of human and Christian formation for young people, and then left for Barcelona.

Valladolid, July 4 and 5

In the get-together on the 4th, the Prelate began by asking for prayers for the Pope and his intentions and also for the Church and for peace in the world. He later insisted on this point.

Many of the questions focused on practical solutions for the difficulties that arise in living one's faith today. Monsignor Ocáriz began by encouraging them to have great faith in God and also faith in God's love for each one of us.

Javier, a professor of Literature in Salamanca and a poet, told him some stories about the student residence in this city with such a long university tradition. The Prelate said he should encourage the students to seek a solid formation in order to be able to help many people: "Tell them to ask for light to have ideas on ways to help people; and also for the strength not to be concerned about what others may think."

Ignacio, an anesthesiologist who lives in Santander and who is the father of eight children, told him that he has been running an innovation company for health professionals for

twelve years. Along with other colleagues, during the pandemic he designed swabs for PCR tests using 3D printing and made them available as a free resource to every hospital in the world. They are now being manufactured in 40 countries and over a million models have been produced. He told the Prelate that this initiative stemmed from trying to live what he had learned from Saint Josemaría: to “sanctify work, sanctify oneself in work and sanctify others through work.”

Ramon, who is the director of a residence for the elderly, told the Father that his wife had recently given birth to triplets. When the doctor first told them the news, he asked if they wanted an abortion. “When my wife replied no, I think the doctor breathed a sigh of relief,” he said. The Prelate encouraged him to always defend life, confronting

“the law of the strongest,” without being aggressive.

Javier, who works in the court of justice in Asturias, told the Prelate that he regularly meets with his friends to discuss ideas and current events. They share concerns, but with very different outlooks and opinions. Monsignor Ocáriz encouraged him to truly love each person, and not simply seek to “convince them.”

Pablo, a nursing student in Palencia, told the Prelate that when he saw a series about Opus Dei, he searched the internet for information about the Work and liked the idea of striving to be a saint in the middle of the world through one’s work. He then wrote to the website of the Work to contact someone. “Six years later, this Easter, I asked for admission as an Associate, so I give a lot of thanks to God for this gift.”

Monsignor Ocáriz told him that the discovery of one's vocation is a great good and the good is diffusive by itself.

The last question was from Chema, the father of eleven children, who became famous when his entire family came down with Covid in March 2020, at the beginning of the pandemic. He recounted how the news of his family was picked up by the media and how it led to many anecdotes, "which could be summed up in the admiration that a large family gives rise to."

In the evening, some students from Valladolid, Palencia, Burgos and Salamanca who attend apostolic activities in centers of the Work entertained him with a festival, helping the Father to rest a bit.

July 5th

On July 5, two “dialogue” meetings took place, with questions formulated by the people there, in many cases preceded by their life testimonies.

In the morning, Valle, a researcher and the mother of three children, told the Prelate that a year and a half ago her husband left them. From the first moment she felt strongly supported by the people of the Work. Monsignor Ocáriz told her that he would pray a lot for her, for her children and for the conversion of her husband. And he added: “You are not alone. Divine Providence always accompanies us, even in suffering. You can turn sorrow and pain into something positive, and pass that on to your children.”

Cristina, mother of a family and a doctor, told him about her work with adolescent patients suffering from severe mental illnesses. She asked

him: “What can I do so that others find in me the look and welcome of Christ?” “May they always see you with a smile on your face,” he encouraged her, “so that they see Jesus in you.”

There was also time to sing some songs for him: a Castilian classic and a Mexican rondalla.

In the afternoon, the Prelate began by reminding them of the need to realize that each of us is loved by God: “We can rely on the strength and Love of God, who loves each person; we are loved personally by Him.” He recalled Saint John’s words: “we have come to know and believe the Love that God has for us.” He said that it is important to believe in the Love that God has for us, which sometimes we don’t see because our faith is weak.

Henar, mother and grandmother, is a professor of Classical Philology at the

University of Valladolid. She said that after undergoing a process of conversion to the Catholic faith, she felt the desire to make the Gospel known to her students: “Can you give me some ideas on how to continue helping my students to draw closer to the Truth?” Monsignor Ocáriz replied that “the Word of God will always be effective; it has a dynamic force that communicates the Truth. You can add your personal friendship.”

The topics of the conversation were quite varied. Young people who want to be successful in their vocational discernment and not get carried away by the relativism around them. Older people who ask about the art of caring and being cared for. Working women and mothers of families who sometimes find it difficult to know what their priorities should be. Before ending, María thanked the Prelate on behalf of

everyone for having shared this time with them.

July 2nd

On Saturday, July 2, at noon, Monsignor Ocáriz's second get-together with people of Opus Dei in Galicia took place under a tent located in the sports area of the Colegio Mayor La Estila. Those present received the Prelate with loud applause. He expressed his joy at being with so many faithful and friends of the Work, and encouraged them to realize that "we all have the same spirit and we are all – each in our own place – closely united through the communion of saints." He recalled how Saint Josemaría was also filled with joy when he saw his sons and daughters and encouraged them to be more and to serve the Church, always "with the hope and certainty that God assists each one of

us with his strength and gives us the joy to go forward.”

In the course of the get-together, various topics arose: social media, the sanctification of work, friendship and the vocation of one’s children. There was also an opportunity to listen to the Braña family, three generations of whom had come to enliven the meeting with a potpourri of Galician songs.

Angela, who lives in La Coruña, told him how she had overcome two illnesses and expressed her gratitude for the care and affection of so many people. The Prelate, besides encouraging her to deepen in her understanding of the meaning of suffering, added that “sometimes we unwittingly tend to focus on something that worries us or that makes us suffer, and we forget that there is something positive in it. Nothing is ever completely dark.”

At the end, Teresa and her daughter Carmen, from Pontevedra, gave him some flowers called “alegrías” [“joys”]. Monsignor Ocáriz remarked that we need to make an effort to smile and banish long faces. He defined a sense of humor as “the ability to find the bright side of things and discover the amusing nuances that can help us laugh at ourselves.”

With the Archbishop in the Cathedral of Santiago

At five in the afternoon, the Prelate of Opus Dei concelebrated Holy Mass with the Archbishop of Santiago and eighty priests in the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela, which has recently undergone renovation. The songs were performed by the internationally renowned Montecastelo-Acacias choir from Vigo.

In his homily, the Prelate stressed the need to bring many souls closer to God: “You can make a pilgrimage in many ways. But making the Way of Saint James is usually more joyful and pleasant when accompanied by others. Something similar happens in Christian life, because the Church, the Body of Christ, is at the same time the People and family of God. Therefore it is good to remember that, on the path of life, we need to travel with all our loved ones, with the whole Church, with the whole world, with a broad and universal mentality. Saint Josemaría, before undertaking the first trip he made to the tomb of the Apostle in 1938, wrote to one of the young people he was in contact with: “In a few days I will pass through Leon on the way to Santiago, to gain the jubilee indulgence. I will remember to pray for you next to the Apostle. Try, in exchange, to pray for me: ask that I

may do everything He wants, no matter what the cost.”

The Prelate also recalled Saint John Paul II’s visit to the tomb of Saint James: “We ask our Lord for apostles willing to go to the ends of the world, but also to the nearby ‘towns and squares’ here in Galicia, and also throughout all of Europe, which Saint John Paul II at this same spot, next to the tomb of Santiago, urged to return to God.”

He ended his homily by asking “that the Apostle Saint James may assist us on our journey, close beside our Lady, so that our faith, hope and charity may be ever stronger and more joyful.”

Before the homily, a faithful of the Prelature read in Galician the request to the Apostle that is traditional in the Holy Years. She recalled that Saint Josemaría came to this holy place on several occasions

and that now his daughters and sons feel they are beneficiaries of those pilgrimages. “For 74 years since his stay here in 1938, the call to holiness in ordinary life has spread throughout Galicia. We who are now the second and third generation want to persevere in this exciting adventure. We are approaching the first centenary of the founding of the Work and we give thanks to God for the seed sown in our lives here in Galicia, which has enabled us to harvest fruits of holiness, for the good of the Church and the world. Thousands of faithful of the Prelature, cooperators and friends have entered this cathedral to honor God and ask for the intercession of the Apostle Santiago. We renew that same gratitude and request at today’s Mass, accompanied by the Archbishop and the Prelate of the Work.”

After the final blessing, Archbishop Julian Barrio thanked the Prelate and everyone present in the cathedral: “In a special way I want to thank Monsignor Fernando Ocáriz, Prelate of the Work, who has wanted to be with us this afternoon, accompanied by so many faithful of the Prelature. On my part, it has also been a great satisfaction to be able to meet with you and see your affection. I will pray for you and for your intentions and concerns. In a special way today I remember the faithful of the Work whom our Lord has called to his presence. In a particular way we want to entrust to God Don José, brother of Monsignor Ocáriz, whom our Lord called to his presence last night. May the Apostle Santiago, with the intercession of our Holy Mother Mary and Saint Josemaría, accompany them to the definitive Gate of Glory.”

Never lose hope

On Sunday morning, July 3rd, the Prelate had his final get-together in Santiago, with over 700 people taking part.

After greeting those present, he referred to the Gospel of the Sunday Mass and reminded them that “God loves us immensely. And He wants us to collaborate with him, to be instruments in his hands.”

Mar, the mother of 12 children and a writer, asked the first question. She gave the Prelate her latest book and spoke about the “coffee with friends” that, thanks to the social media, they have organized with people from more than 50 cities. She also told him that she is celebrating the 25th anniversary of her marriage.

Monsignor Ocáriz congratulated her and said he would pray for her family.

Celia, who works as a psychiatrist in Santiago, asked for advice on how to

treat with affection people who we encounter each day but who are distant in their way of thinking. The Prelate reminded her that we can find the strength we need in the Eucharist.

Jessi is from Uganda and works at the Las Acacias school in Vigo. She told Monsignor Ocáriz about her conversion to Catholicism thanks to the affection and good example of a friend of hers. She asked how she can help her friends to free themselves from prejudices about the Catholic faith. Once again, the Prelate reminded them how true friendship brings people closer together and thus misgivings are overcome, because it is one's own life that is shared, not as someone giving a lesson but through our affection and friendship.

Rebeca, the mother of five children and a doctor from Vigo and also a

member of the board of directors of a youth club, asked for advice on how to provide better formation for young people, despite the difficulties that arise due to one's work schedule and family responsibilities. The Prelate encouraged her to work with order. And he added that they should never lose hope: "Whatever is sown remains deep in the soul... and it rises to the surface again."

The last question was asked by Rosa, a writer and professor in Vigo, and the foster mother of two Ukrainian children. In his reply, the Prelate asked everyone to pray for peace in Ukraine and also for the end of other wars that may go unnoticed.

First day of the Prelate's trip to Galicia, Castile-Leon and Asturias

On the first day of his pastoral trip, July 1st, the Prelate of Opus Dei met with people at the Colegio Mayor La Estila, a corporate work of Opus Dei

in Santiago de Compostela. He greeted directors and parents of several schools and the directors and families of the EFAs (Agrarian Family Schools) of Galicia, whom he heartily thanked for their work and the signs of affection they showed him.

Monsignor Ocáriz began by reflecting on the day's liturgy, and encouraged those present to consider the need, "the hunger for God," that so many people have.

Arturo, a retired but still quite active journalist, told him about various communication initiatives. The Prelate reminded him that one keeps up a youthful spirit through one's work and by seeking the presence of God at all times.

Giancarlo, a medical student from Venezuela, told the Prelate his story. He emigrated to Spain with his parents due to the difficulties they experienced in their country. He

decided to attend the university in Santiago, where his whole family came to live. He contacted the La Estila university residence and found the human environment there very helpful for his studies. He began to take part in the formational activities offered by the residence and eventually asked to join Opus Dei as a supernumerary member.

Joe Luis, who helps coordinate the activities at a youth club attended by his son, asked for advice on how to get other parents more involved. Monsignor Ocáriz reminded him of the importance of trying to form a deep friendship with all of them, whatever their ways of thinking and attitudes. Friendship, he said, is the solution for everything.

During the get-together, Adrianey introduced Ovidio, whose work involves raising sheep and goats. Recently he had been awarded two

prizes for the best specimens of the Galician breed. Ovidio offered these prizes to the Father amid general applause.

Before ending the get-together, Monsignor Ocáriz encouraged everyone to pray a lot for the Pope and to be faithful to his teachings. He told them that the Pope's workload is very heavy and he faces many misunderstandings.

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