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The Father in Auckland

In Auckland, the Father gathered with a crowd of 300 - his last general get-together for this pastoral trip.

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On Saturday 26 August 2023, the Prelate of Opus Dei arrived at the Hyundai Marine Sports Centre at Okahu Bay just after 10am. He had landed in New Zealand on Thursday night, and had spent most of Friday in Hamilton before returning to Auckland in the evening.

The MCs of the general get-together began by saying that this was a chance for everyone to relax and enjoy each other's company. They introduced the Father by explaining a little bit about Don Fernando's life including his love of tennis, and the earlier legs of his trip to the Philippines, Indonesia and Australia.

The gathering began with a traditional Maori welcoming ceremony, including a karanga (the welcoming call), the Father being given a korowai (ceremonial Maori cloak), and the attendees singing a waiata - a hymn to Our Lady. Later on in the gathering, there were other musical performances to entertain the Father.

In his opening remarks, Msgr Ocariz said he was grateful to be in this land so far from Rome: "We are always very united together precisely because we are united in God." He

spoke of the ordinary life of our Lord in Nazareth, and how these seemingly ordinary activities were in fact the beginnings of the redemption of the world.

The Father told those gathered that the love of God leads us to love other people, and this brings joy. He said that God's desire is for all of us to be happy - and that this is possible, even with suffering. We can have the joy that comes from uniting ourselves to Christ on the Cross. When we face difficulties, he said we should go to Our Lord to recover our joy.

Joe asked Msgr Ocariz about St Josemaria's deep awareness of being a son of God. The Father recalled how St Josemaria would often say that being a child of God has to be the foundation of our spiritual life: that this gives us certainty that the Lord loves us truly with a paternal

love. His sense of divine filiation gave him strength and joy.

Nishali, a mother of five daughters, gifted the Father a Rugby World Cup All Blacks jersey. She asked him how to help her kids to grow in faith while also respecting their freedom. Msgr Ocariz told her that one aspect of educating children is our good example: because education that is fruitful is experienced. He said that kids have to see that parents are not imposing anything on them; but that they are happy for living out their faith.

When Monica from Wellington asked about discussing difficult topics with her kids, the Father told her to start with prayer as always. Then through friendship, show interest and talk with them about the ideas they've encountered – not investigating or questioning, but with an attitude of affection - then transmit your own

experiences to them. He said that we have to try and raise their feelings and thoughts to a spiritual level; and realise that God's will is never arbitrary. He always wants what is good for us. We have to transmit this idea of trust in God.

Ian told Msgr Ocariz about his 10 children and five grandkids, and how he feels that he struggles to live cheerfulness as well as his wife. The Father told him that joy is an obligation for us - even with worries, with family, with our work, and many other human things which can take away from our joy. The root of our joy is the love that God has for us; and we can be fully convinced with a deep faith that now, today, in each moment - even in a moment of difficulty - God, who is love, is with me.

Wayne asked how the family of Opus Dei in New Zealand could help each

other and grow. The Father said that fraternity is the immediate expression of the commandment to live charity with one another. We need to pray for each other, to understand people's worth with their virtues and their talents, to rejoice in the good of others, and to make their difficulties and sorrows our own. This is authentic love. This, the Father remarked, is the way to serve the Church. He concluded by asking all to pray for Pope Francis and for his intentions.

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