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With Students and Young Professionals in Sydney

The Prelate of Opus Dei visited Sydney, Australia from August 13 to 15, 2023. He met young men and women at Warrane College and Creston College.

08/16/2023

Australia

Sydney (August 13 to 15) Arrival
(August 8)

Sunday, August 13

On Sunday, the Prelate of Opus Dei spent time meeting young people – students and young professionals – many of whom attend spiritual formation with Opus Dei. They were very excited to see the Father, as they often refer to him.

The Father mentioned how happy he was to return to Australia. His last trip was in 2008 when he accompanied the then-Prelate of Opus Dei, Bishop Javier Echevarria, to attend World Youth Day in Sydney.

Around midday, Msgr Ocariz gathered with young men at Warrane College, a university residence which celebrated 50 years in 2021. The main common room was full of people from Sydney as well as Canberra, Brisbane and Perth.

The Father started by commenting on the Gospel of the day: Jesus calming the storm. He echoed Our Lord's words, "Do not be afraid!" These words came up again from actuarial student, Joe, who had just returned from World Youth Day in Lisbon and recounted Pope Francis saying the same.

Msgr Ocariz shared the words of St Josemaria: "May you seek Christ. May you find Christ. May you love Christ". He encouraged all present to identify themselves with Jesus Christ. "When we experience difficulties, don't be overcome by fear. God is always stronger," he said.

Oli shared with the Father that he has come back to practicing his faith after moving to Warrane as a resident. Since then, he has shared this joy of returning to the sacraments to friends, who have in turn started to practice their faith

more. The Father encouraged everyone to support each other, reminding them that this starts with first being supported themselves. The Father mentioned the importance of the sacrament of confession, with the absolution being a tangible sign of God's forgiveness.

Peter, who is studying Occupational Therapy, spoke about how he coordinates community service activities at a centre for men in the Hills area of Sydney. The Father spoke about the importance of being generous in reaching out to the sick, the poor and the lonely – of accompanying others and showing them that they are not alone.

The gathering also included three performances: jazz pieces on the clarinet and piano and one classical piece. To conclude, the Father was presented with a gift: an Australian cricket bat with stickers of three

centres in Sydney: Warrane College, Nairana Study Centre and Mirrabooka Study Centre.

In the afternoon, Msgr Ocariz visited Creston College. The group of young women kicked off the occasion by dancing the “Nut Bush,” a popular Australian dance, before some had a chance to tell Msgr Ocariz a bit about themselves and ask him some questions. There was a performance of Bach's Double Violin Concerto in D minor - 1st Movement, as well as an Irish dancing performance, and a university student, Amelia, singing ‘The Voice’ by John Farnham – but not before she presented the Father with a packet of Tim Tams!

One question came from Katie, who spoke of her conversion story and then asked the Father: “How can I be faithful to my vocation?” He answered by telling her that the question was very important but the

answer was very short. “Fall in love and you won’t leave him,” he said, quoting St Josemaria Escriva in *The Way*. He told her not to be fearful on this adventure of loving the Lord.

Claire, an Education student, asked Msgr Ocariz how to know that we’re doing what God wants from us. He responded by saying that often God doesn’t send a clear sign, because he wants us to be free. He could send an angel to announce a vocation, but that would feel forced. The Father said that the important thing was to realise that whatever God wants from each person is always the best thing for them – but they have to discover what it is.

Caitlyn and Abi then told Msgr Ocariz about an initiative called the DREAM Project, a mentoring program to help teenage girls who have come to Sydney as refugees. Every week volunteers run

workshops and activities which aim to educate the girls on different career pathways and empower them to follow their dreams. The Father said it gave him a lot of joy to hear about this, and that he could see their happiness too – because being generous with others is the greatest happiness.

Tuesday, August 8

The Prelate of Opus Dei, Msgr. Fernando Ocariz, has touched down in Sydney to commence his apostolic trip from 8-26 August to Australia and New Zealand.

Many young families waited to greet Msgr. Ocariz this morning at Sydney International Airport with balloons, big smiles and banners on hand, such as one that read: “G’day Father! Welcome to Sydney, Australia.”

“It was a bit of a long wait and the kids were getting restless,” said Steph Sugiaman, who was there to greet him. “But it was worth it and everyone was very excited once we spotted him coming out of the exit. My son Theo seemed to understand how special the Father is... He shook his hand and very happily gave him a card and a little koala.”

Straight from his travels in the Philippines and Indonesia, Msgr. Ocariz will begin his Australian trip with some days of rest. After this he will spend a day in Brisbane before heading to Melbourne. He'll finish the trip with a few more days in Sydney before making his way to New Zealand.

“It felt like meeting an old friend,” said Jessica Kwak, who was also at the airport with her husband and kids. “He seemed tired from the long trip but his eyes were still sparkling.”

Her son Emmanuel was excited to give Msgr. Ocariz a kangaroo with an Australian flag.

James Tudehope said that it was a wonderful moment to experience, especially for the kids. "It's an experience they won't soon forget!"

Beverly Eguchi, her husband Junya and their young daughter Arisa also got up nice and early to be a part of this special welcome. "It was special to know that his arrival coincided with the Feast Day of St Mary of the Cross McKillop, an Australian saint," said Beverly. "I felt his warmth, generosity and cheerfulness to greet many families who patiently waited to welcome him to Sydney. It was beautiful to witness many children there. His parting words were, "See you soon!""

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(12/18/2025)