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The Subliminal Message

The subliminal message I fished out from the pastoral visit of the Prelate of Opus Dei was that loving others in order to know and love God necessarily involves self-giving and sacrifice. No sacrifice, no love. No love, no God. This is what I saw in the Prelate.

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We just had some wonderful days recently when the Prelate of Opus Dei, Msgr. Javier Echevarría, visited

us, his spiritual children in the Philippines, last July 27 to August 1. The last time he visited was in 1998. The ten years that passed aged him quite conspicuously. I could not help but be moved to see him now bent a little.

Yet he moved about calmly, peace and joy radiating from his face, a smile playing in his eyes and lips, and his voice both gentle and forceful. Judging from his talks, I have no doubt whatsoever he has full control of his intellectual and spiritual faculties.

From Rome, he went first to Delhi, Hong Kong and then Sydney to take part in the just concluded World Youth Day with the Pope and, of course, to visit his spiritual children in Australia. It must have been quite a hectic time for him there.

I know that it's winter now in the land of Waltzing Matilda. Thus, for

him to come to the Philippines at this time must have required quite an adjustment for him. Still, I saw him without any trace of complaint and stress. Surely, he showed a youthfulness that transcended age and physical conditions.

In fact, as far as I could gather, he had a very punishing schedule here. His six-day stay was packed with events and activities—get-togethers, meetings, etc. I saw a day's itinerary of his, and I must say that outside of the meals, hardly any minute was left for him to relax. How could he do all of those, I asked myself.

I could attend in only two or three of the activities. I was made to man our place in Cebu most of the time, and all the events were held in Manila. There were requests for him to come to the south. But the people around him thought it was better for him just to stay in Manila.

I missed the breakfast I was supposed to have with him, because of the traffic. But he gave me a most tender embrace when we met in a corridor, and some very comforting and encouraging words. I really felt like a pampered son to a very loving father.

The meditation he gave one early morning made me pray a lot. How nice to hear him talking only about God, about Jesus Christ, and how we can see him, love him and serve him in this life through the people we meet everyday and through the ordinary events of the day!

His words made God close to me. They made talking to Christ easy. They brought me beyond the realm of reason alone, with all its theories and opinions, to enter the world of faith in the sublime language of love and piety.

For sure, they were not merely sweet and sentimental words. Rather, they were words of fire that went deep into the heart and soul, and with immense power to move us to another radical conversion, to greater dedication, to more selfless generosity.

How nice to pray like this, I again thought! And then I wished many others, if not all, can really talk to God like what I experienced during that meditation, without being unduly distracted by earthly issues.

At one point, his voice boomed saying that anything that disturbs our unity with others, weakens our unity with God. He was talking about concern for others, about fraternity and charity, and how this duty of ours is a requirement for our capacity to know and love God.

The corollary that rushed to my mind was that this task of knowing God,

which many of us are hard put in achieving, can easily be done if we just know how to care for one another, in all the different expressions of love—being nice and affectionate, doing acts of service, understanding, merciful, etc.

The way to God is not so much in having brilliant ideas. It is more in loving, the way Christ loved and commanded us to do.

The subliminal message I fished out from the whole event was that loving others in order to know and love God necessarily involves self-giving and sacrifice. No sacrifice, no love. No love, no God. This is what I saw in the Prelate.

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