

A man of constant prayer - Bishop Javier Echevarría, Prelate of Opus Dei

He encouraged the faithful to be the Tabernacle of Christ, to have self-dominion and to love one another

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The Prelate of Opus Dei, an institution of the Catholic Church, flew to Taiwan from Japan on April 21 for a four-day pastoral visit. In a marathon style of visits and

preaching, he prayed for every single person, including passersby. He is very approachable: a person who prays constantly and who, above all, is a bearer of Christ.

Opus Dei started its apostolic work in Taiwan in 1985. The first successor of the Founder, Prelate Alvaro del Portillo had visited Taiwan in 1987. The present Prelate, Javier Echevarría, is on his second pastoral visit to Taiwan after his first in 1996.

In this trip, Bishop Echevarría specially visited his old friends Archbishop John Hung, Archbishop Joseph Ti Kang and Bishop Joseph Wang; expressing his admiration for the development of the Catholic Church in Taiwan. At the same time, he was deeply concerned about the Catholic Church in Mainland China. He said that he and all the members of the big family of Opus Dei were praying unceasingly for the future

development of China. He especially invited the faithful on the Mainland to trust in God, trusting Him as children do.

This Spanish Bishop fulfilled the teaching of loving one another to the letter. On the same evening he arrived to Taipei, he held get-togethers with the women students of Wen Shan Residence and with the men of Cheng Jung Study Center. He urged all the students and members to be prayerful souls, to have self-dominion, to love one other, to strive for sanctity without fearing tiredness. With his rather tight schedule and the jetlag, perhaps the one most exhausted should have been him, but he was always smiling and bestowing his blessings upon those he met.

Bishop Echevarría has a profound devotion to Our Lady. While visiting He Shan Residence in the Wen Shan

District, when he learned that a pilgrim image of Our Lady of Wan-Jin was stationed in the nearby Church of the Resurrection, he wanted to venerate our Lady. When he arrived, Benediction was being celebrated with the church full of faithful; Bishop Echevarría immediately fell on his knees and knelt before the Blessed Sacrament for 10 minutes. He also prayed before the statue of Our Lady of Wan-Jing for a long time. The affection he has for the Blessed Sacrament as well as for Our Lady touched everyone present.

That which everyone most eagerly awaited was the general get-together, held at the International Conference Hall of the Taipei Youth Center at 7:30 p.m. on April 23rd. Even before seven, the Hall was crowded with more than 300 persons. Bishop Echevarría reminded all Christians of their divine calling to pursue

sanctity in the middle of their ordinary life, further urging them to be the Tabernacle of Christ and souls of prayer. The constant challenge for the lay faithful is to work together with all people of good will towards promoting and developing a culture which respects human dignity. Hence he stressed that when any honest job or upright profession is carried out whole-heartedly, with all one's strength and fulfilled lovingly, God is made present: one can find God and can serve the others. The manner in which he spoke being extremely amiable, and from the way those who had questions to ask addressed him as "Father"; it was not difficult to see that in the big family of Opus Dei, they truly love one another.

With reference to the financial tsunami that has hit the world, someone asked Bishop Echevarría about "the meaning of suffering". He expressed his solidarity with those

who suffered, and also emphasized that suffering is part of everyone's life. The Founder of Opus Dei, St. Josemaría Escrivá, had spent countless hours willingly by the bedsides of those who were suffering, accompanying them. He encouraged everyone not to close in on themselves, but to convert all suffering into occasions to trust whole-heartedly and to share in God's divine love. He also spoke in detail about the inseparable union between suffering and the Cross, reminding us that it was not possible to always remain with Christ on Mount Tabor; most of the time, we have to be on the road to Calvary: loving our family members and fulfilling our duties formed part of the Cross.

That same day, April 23rd, was the anniversary of St. Josemaría's first Holy Communion when he was 10 years old. Bishop Echevarría pointed

out that when St. Josemaría was still a child, he already realized the importance of the Eucharistic Sacrament: God assumed human nature, He walked the paths of the earth and manifested his selfless Love so that we may live. He remains in the Bread and we become one Body in Him. Therefore, we should consider ourselves as followers who have to spread His love and His help, imitating the spirit of St. Paul, and looking after the needs of the others. Those who are baptized have the special grace and strength to serve with a spirit of sacrifice, becoming in this way Christ bearers.

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