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“Be Students who Seek to Serve”

As part of a two-week pastoral visit to South America, the Prelate recently had a get-together with 7,000 people at the University of Piura (Peru), a corporate apostolate of Opus Dei. He spoke about family, the Pope and university studies.

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In his opening remarks, Bishop Echevarría thanked all those present for their warm welcome on this his second visit. His first visit had been

in 1996. After that he engaged in a two-way conversation with those present on several different topics: family, daily work, university life and the role of women in society.

Strengthening the Family

The Prelate, who is also the University of Piura's Chancellor, lamented the fact that at present there are many people who wish to discredit the value of the family in society. To counteract this tendency, he recommended that they recall that in the House of Nazareth "*they didn't speak of me or mine, but rather of yours, and that Jesus, Mary and Joseph were continuously concerned for the other.*"

Along these lines, Bishop Echevarría recommended that married couples should "*be concerned about their marriage and look after their children.*" He added that as Christians we should "*go about everywhere*

giving thanks to God for our home and for the concrete details of daily life. In this way we will always be seeking ways to make family life more pleasant. You should understand that 'family' means wanting to truly love each other, wanting to be united constantly together so that no one feels alone."

The Prelate urged those present not to be discouraged when faced with the continuous attacks against the institution of the family: *"You should not get discouraged when the family is attacked, because those who attack are envious of the wonders of a home where husband and wife complement each other, love each other and glory in the children God sends them. May you truly love each other!"*

"Even though there may not be abundant economic means," he added, *"you should not lose your cheerfulness; the riches of the country*

and of the Catholic Church lies in children.” **Making Good Use of the University**

With regard to the lives of the students, he replied to a question from a university student by mentioning words of St Josemaría: *“be Christian women and men, all of a piece.”* According to the Father, university students should go to the university in order to be professionally trained, but knowing well that there is complete harmony between science and faith.

Likewise, he encouraged the students to appreciate the efforts both of their parents and of their instructors for them to become professionals seeking to do good. *“May you make good use of the opportunities you have to study, may you truly appreciate the efforts of your parents, the time your professors dedicate to you, the services of the office*

personnel. ... The University goes forward on account of these people who are happy to dedicate their lives so that you can move ahead.

Consequently, be consistent with your position as students and never forget that we live because of God and for God.”

Personal Responsibility

The Prelate used the opportunity to remind the students that their country's progress is very much linked to their effort in their daily study: *“Peru depends on your personal responsibility, on how you study and work, on how well you become friends of everyone else, and on how well you make sure that your formation also reaches those younger than you. Pray, so that more young people with the necessary intellectual capacity can attend the University of Piura and can then contribute to lifting up the society in this country.”*

The Chancellor affirmed that St. Josemaría expects a lot from the students of the University of Piura. ” *From heaven he expects a lot from you. Above all it is God himself who expects you to be very professional men and women, who aim to be the best, not because you have merely human ambitions, good as those ambitions may be. He wants those human ambitions to pass through your desire to be properly formed so that you can serve this land of Peru and all those people who are awaiting you.*” **Hunger for Humanity** In the evening, during a meeting with the university authorities, the Father asked the instructors and administrators to make the effort not to be satisfied with what they are already doing but to go further still. “ *Be aware,*” he said, “ *that you are dealing with the intellects of people so that those same people can render a service to humanity, and above all, to the Church. Work hard so that these*

men and women leave here with a sense of responsibility, and have a desire, in the first place, to be of service to Peruvian society.”

At the same time he encouraged them to make the campus into “an authentic seed-bed of formation and of people who will give formation. And also a seedbed of consistent Christian life... Have a hunger for humanity: have a hunger to have influence; have a hunger to reach all the points of the compass with your work well done, but also with the clear idea that the “everyday” is a constant occasion of encounter with God, because there is where he awaits us and his Providence always reaches to the last detail of the “everyday.”

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