

# **Video and Stories: the Prelate of Opus Dei in Portugal**

Video and stories from Msgr. Fernando Ocáriz's time in Portugal. He met with families, got to know educational initiatives, listened to stories from the recent World Youth Day, and spent time with the people of Opus Dei in the country.

10/12/2023

## Lisbon (6-8 October) Fatima (5 October) Arrival (October 4)

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### **Lisbon (8 October)**

Monsignor Fernando Ocáriz's visit to Portugal continued on Sunday with various gatherings, formational sessions, Sunday Mass, and meditations.

One of these activities involved a gathering with dozens of priests from across Portugal, from Algarve to Minho. Clearly delighted, the Prelate emphasized at the start of the meeting, "I am very happy to see so many priests, of different ages, some younger, others older and with much experience. Ultimately, as Saint Josemaría said, we are all the same age as Jesus Christ, because our identity, especially during the Mass

and consecration, is to be Christ himself."

When discussing how a priest can reach the entire world through the power of prayer, Monsignor Ocáriz mentioned the terrible wars that have erupted in Israel and Ukraine: "When we see the news, let us not consider anything foreign to us, because everything is ours: there are souls in everything, and these situations are a sorrow for God and men."

Several priests spoke about the challenges in their priestly and parish lives, including being firm without being rigid, managing the challenges and opportunities of cellphones, improving their mission as confessors in the sacrament of reconciliation, dealing with the impact of unexpected daily difficulties, and finding strategies to

overcome routine when celebrating Mass.

One of the questions focused on the conflict between the theoretical clarity of the primacy of prayer and the whirlwind of life that can pull us away from this priority. The Prelate's recommendation was to bring order to one's day and tasks: "There are a thousand ways to organize one's life, but in any case, the most important thing in our lives is our relationship with Jesus Christ. Absolutely, it's the most important thing of all. Why? Because our ability to help others also depends on that relationship with Jesus Christ."

Some of the participants shared inspirational stories. These included a parish priest on the outskirts of Lisbon who decided to start perpetual Eucharistic Adoration and was surprised when around five hundred people volunteered to cover

all the shifts. Another story involved an Opus Dei priest who initiated a course for engaged couples, which now has over a hundred and forty people enrolled.

The Prelate also spoke about the love we should all have for the Pope. A manifestation of this love is setting an "example of unity with him and with the bishops because it's something fundamental in the Church. We share a supernatural vision: the Pope is the vicar of Christ, and the bishops are the successors of the apostles."

On Monday, in the early afternoon, Monsignor Fernando Ocáriz headed to Lisbon Airport to fly back to Rome. He said he was not saying goodbye because he always remains very close to everyone, especially those who are part of the family of Opus Dei. He expressed his gratitude for the days spent in the country and his

hope that Portugal would yield many fruits of the Holy Spirit.

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## **Lisbon (7 October)**

On Saturday, the second large family gathering of the Prelate's trip to Portugal took place. Around 1500 enjoyed the warm and relaxed atmosphere in the main hall of the University of Lisbon.

At the beginning of the event, Monsignor Fernando Ocáriz made brief remarks about how love transforms ordinary life into something extraordinary. He spoke about the efficacy of the Rosary, since it was the feast of our Lady of the Rosary. Echoing the teachings of Saint Josemaría, he reminded them that everything can be a form of prayer, including work, rest, and

leisure time when it is offered to God.

Later, the hosts, a young couple named Leonor and Francisco, gave the floor to some of the attendees. As is customary, they had stories to share and sought advice from the Prelate. Rita shared how she found God amidst great difficulties when she became a widow at a young age, and how her friends from Opus Dei and some priests had helped her greatly. There were also lighthearted moments, such as the story of the "happy chickens" from Fátima or the challenge from tennis instructor Tiago, who invited the Father to a tennis match.

There was also a beautiful musical interlude. Simão requested silence, and his wife Carmo, accompanied by two guitarists, captivated the audience with a *fado*, an Ave Maria written by the writer Fernando

Pessoa. The questions continued with Simão, who wanted to know how to help couples going through difficulties in their marriage. In response, the Father emphasized the importance of "nurturing love, not as a feeling received, but as an effort to make the other person happy, nourished by prayer."

Then it was Armando's turn. He had worked as a volunteer at the World Youth Day. Armando asked about maintaining the desire to educate the people around him so that Opus Dei continues being a great form of catechesis. The Father told him that "helping people to live in accordance with right doctrine is even more important than conveying doctrinal information and helping them understand it, and it is a challenge experienced in the context of personal friendship." Gonçalo also told a story. He did not ask any questions at the end, but expressed

gratitude to the persons who had helped his father live his final moments well, both humanly and spiritually.

Monsignor Ocáriz concluded the gathering by asking everyone to pray fervently for the Pope and imparting his blessing to those in attendance.

Similarly, the morning gathering on Saturday concluded with a group of girls who receive formation in different centers of Opus Dei. The discussion was highly participatory and lively, with numerous musical interludes. One of the participants asked the Prelate to convey the gratitude of the Portuguese people for the Pope's presence at the World Youth Day when he meets him again. Unexpectedly, and causing much amusement for Monsignor Fernando Ocáriz and everyone present, a Minion (a well-known character from children's movies) entered with

a volunteer kit to offer the Prelate as a gift.

Various questions were raised regarding the challenges these young women face, from, "Father, we want to talk about God in university settings without people thinking we're trying to impose our values. What do you advise?" to, "What should we do when faced with difficult questions? What else can we do besides receiving a good education?" and "Father, I'm about to start leading catechism classes. What advice can you give me so that they aren't just another lecture?" The Prelate's response was prompt: "Listen and take it to heart! Every week, set a practical purpose to strive for..."

At the end of the encounter, following a university tradition for solemn, special moments, the cloaks of those in traditional dress were

spread on the stage for Monsignor Ocáriz to walk over as he exited.

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## **Lisbon (6 October)**

The Prelate met with a number of people on Friday, 6 October, including a group of young people who regularly participate in Opus Dei activities. Their questions covered many topics, from advice about distinguishing God's voice from one's own to asking what the Prelate asked our Lady for in Fatima. Msgr. Ocáriz advised the young people to follow the path of friendship, explaining that prayer is a dialogue with God, not mere introspection, and that it requires surrender to God's love and trust in the sacrament of Confession.

Before this, some members of the management team and collaborators

of the AESE Business School also had the opportunity to greet Msgr. Ocáriz. One of the topics discussed was the World Youth Day in Portugal, in which AESE collaborated with the organization while the Pope was in Lisbon. The Prelate received a whistle, a symbol of the Portuguese Navy, which is meant to guide the helmsman of the vessel when it is blown.

The day began with Monsignor Fernando Ocáriz's visit to the Mira Río and Planalto schools, which receive pastoral assistance from Opus Dei. At both locations, the Prelate had the opportunity to personally meet some parents, teachers, employees, and students. In Planalto, he blessed an image of Our Lady and received a rugby team jersey with his name on it.

The visit to Mira Río concluded with some remarks from the Prelate,

during which he emphasized that education never ends: "Throughout our entire life, we must continue to educate ourselves to become better, better individuals, and, above all, to identify more with Jesus Christ. That is the ultimate goal of all education."

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## **Fatima (5 October)**

The first encounter took place in Fatima the next day. More than two thousand people gathered with Msgr. Ocáriz, who began the conversation by commenting on the text of the Mass that day and asking for prayers for the Pope.

Then some of the other people present spoke: "Father, what can we do when we live in places without regular Masses? How can we form friendships in the world of business when we work remotely and always

meet over Zoom? How can we help families in crisis strive to continue building their families up?"

These and other similar questions came from people struggling to live their faith in ordinary life, including Rita y Fernando, who own a hardware store, Zé Rui, who studies fine arts, and his mother Cecilia, Gabriela, a goldsmith, Olga, deputy director of a prison, and Inês and Francisco, parents of a large family. The Prelate responded to all of them, giving advice or reflecting on their words. The answer to all the questions can be summarized in a single sentence: "We need to pray!"

Two children gave Msgr. Ocáriz a replica of a soup tureen that was made famous during one of St. Josemaria's trips to Portugal because the founder explained that broken tureens, bound together by iron, were still useful and even more

beautiful than before. That was how he thought of himself in front of God.

In the afternoon, the Prelate prayed in the *Capelinha*, one of the places where our Lady appeared, and met with a group of couples who give classes about the family. When someone thanked him for the visit, Msgr. Ocáriz answered joyfully, "I'm not visiting, I'm at home!"

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## **Arrival (4 October)**

The Prelate of Opus Dei, Fernando Ocáriz, arrived in Lisbon late in the afternoon of 4 October. Three families were waiting at the airport to welcome him to Portugal.

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