

# In Vancouver

A summary of the days spent in Vancouver with Monsignor Ocáriz during his pastoral visit to Canada.

08/23/2019

## Saturday, August 10

In the morning, the Prelate met with a large group of members and friends of the Prelature in the Vancouver College theatre.

Teresa recounted the recent passing of a supernumerary and the example she gave, bearing her illness with

generosity. Minette told Mons. Ocáriz that her children are the ones who teach her forgiveness. Her five-year old daughter told her one day that she couldn't forgive a friend from daycare, and the seven-year old brother chimed in saying, "You have to forgive seventy times seven!" When the mother asked him if he knew what that meant, he replied that he hadn't yet learnt the multiplication tables in school.

Nicole, a director of Learning Resources in the Vancouver Catholic School system, asked for advice on how to guide the next generation in the proper use of freedom. The Prelate explained that freedom is the capacity not only to make a choice, but rather to choose the good. When we do so, we are touching the real purpose of freedom, which is to love.

Mons. Ocáriz met families and greeted some sick. To Zeny who is

blind and paralyzed, he made the sign of the cross on her forehead and spent some time in conversation; to Chichi, who is quite ill, he thanked her for what she has done for the apostolic work of Opus Dei over the years. He also greeted Sandra, who is terminally ill with cancer.

During a get-together at Vancouver College, the Prelate spoke about sharing the Gospel with others, taking his cue from Canada's motto *A mari usque ad mare* ("From sea to sea"), similarly to his predecessor, Bishop Javier Echevarria, during a visit to Canada 13 years ago.

Joe was in Toronto in 1988 when Blessed Alvaro del Portillo visited Canada, and on that occasion, he asked about Opus Dei's expansion to Vancouver. Joe attended the first recollection there in 1984 and has seen Opus Dei grow throughout the Lower Mainland. He asked the

Prelate how the supernumeraries can keep the Work growing dynamically as Saint Josemaria imagined it in the 1950s. In his answer, Mons. Ocáriz explained that the Work is people and that for Opus Dei to be dynamic, people need to be dynamic as well, a dynamism centered on their union with Jesus-Christ. In other words, he said, Opus Dei can only grow and expand through prayer.

Brian offered the Prelate a native carving of a salmon, a well-known symbol of Vancouver. Salmon are born in river beds and straight away swim to the ocean—the middle of the world. Then they return to the river to reproduce. The salmon’s journey, known as the “salmon run”, is a dangerous one during which the fish must overcome many obstacles swimming upstream.

Before the end of the get-together, Yesid offered to play a song he composed some years ago—the lyrics speak of searching for God. The Prelate gave him a hug and then gave his blessing to all those present.

Over the course of the day, Mons. Ocáriz met a number of families who came from Calgary, Edmonton and Vancouver to greet him.

## **Friday, August 9**

In the morning, the Prelate met Archbishop J. Michael Miller, bishop of Vancouver. Then he had a meeting with priests and encouraged them to grow in hope and to face the challenges the Church encounters. He stressed the importance of unity with the Holy Father.

In the afternoon, Mons. Ocáriz also met a group of young women at Crestwell Cultural Center. They greeted him by singing *A Million*

*Dreams.* The Prelate took advantage of the song to remind them that dreams can be good, and that what's fundamental is God's love, which is no dream: it is a reality that gives us faith and confidence.

Mary-Jo, who will begin University in the fall, asked for advice on how to talk with people who do not share her way of thinking. The Prelate encouraged her to be open, which does not mean thinking exactly the same way as another person, but rather to seek what's good for them, even when opinions differ. It implies interest for the other person, and to share what we have in our heart.

Isabel from Calgary, asked how to avoid falling into routine in her prayer life, seeing it as a boring duty rather than something she enjoys. She is never bored with friends, so why does she become bored while talking to God? The Prelate explained

it was because we are weak and we do not see Our Lord. We believe but do not see. It's a question of faith: thinking of Jesus as Someone rather than an idea, and as someone who loves us madly.

Among those present were staff members from Camp Misawannee, which was to begin that same day, right after the get-together. Bev and Sami, the oldest counselors, presented the Prelate with a green “Honorary Camper” T-shirt! At the end of the get-together, they took a selfie of the whole group with Mons. Ocáriz.

In the evening, a group of high school, university and young professional men coming from the Lower Mainland, Victoria, and Alberta enjoyed another get together with the Prelate.

Some students asked about how to bring their classmates to Christ. The

Father answered that the apostolic work is not just for some people, but for everybody. Those who receive formation have a responsibility: family, colleagues, classmates. Think: how can I be more effective, as an apostle? We are sent by Our Lord to help others, to live the Gospel. Think about the 12 apostles, preaching with all their efforts, and ending up in jail. All became martyrs, except St John, who suffered martyrdom in other ways. The Prelate encouraged the students not to be afraid or ashamed to go against the current when it is difficult or to go against whims or trends.

Mons. Ocáriz also answered a question from John Paul, encouraging him to think of Jesus Christ who sustains our battles, the triumphs of which we don't see immediately. This should lead us to the Eucharist, where we find our strength.

Nicholas presented an Inukshuk to the Prelate, a statue made of rocks in the shape of a person. For the Inuit, Canada's native people of the far north, the inukshuk is a marker to indicate places of importance. It symbolizes friendship, hope and safety.

After both meetings with young people, several families were received by the Prelate. One of the families was Marietta's, who arrived in Vancouver in 1973 and was the only faithful of the Prelature in the city at the time. Since then the Work has grown in the Canadian West. She was moved when the Prelate thanked her.

## **Thursday, August 8**

At 3:30 p.m. the plane arriving from San Francisco touched down in Vancouver. Mons. Fernando Ocáriz went through customs and was greeted by the Vicar of Opus Dei in

Canada, Mons. Fred Dolan, and several families.

Jonathan, Melissa and their young children had a banner prepared welcoming the Prelate and were smiling ear-to-ear as he approached.

Anna and James, both converts to the faith, and their seven young children also greeted the Prelate, with a "Welcome to Canada" sign. Anna presented him with a recently published book that includes her conversion story, as well as gifts of maple syrup and a small moose doll, a quintessentially Canadian animal.

Gabriel and Adna, with their four sons in tow (and a baby on the way) also came to welcome the Prelate. Gabriel is pursuing a doctorate in climate change at UBC.

The Prelate then travelled to Glenwood, one of the Opus Dei centres in Vancouver. After greeting

Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, he spent some time with Fr. Joseph Soria, a priest who suffered several strokes five years ago. They have corresponded regularly and Fr. Joseph was moved by the Prelate's affection.

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