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Video Summary of the Prelate in Colombia

From 13-16 August, Msgr. Fernando Ocáriz visited Colombia and met with many people. This video summarizes some of those gatherings.

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- Before the trip
- 13 August: Gatherings with priests, families, and young people

- 14 August: Get-togethers with university teachers and families
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-

Photo gallery

Friday, 16 August

On Friday, Monsignor Fernando Ocariz arrived in Medellín, known as the “City of the Eternal Spring.” Nearly three thousand people came to the City Hall for the afternoon gathering, where some years ago Blessed Alvaro del Portillo and Monsignor Javier Echevarría had also been present. Besides nearby

cities, people also came from Ecuador, Panama and Venezuela.

The Father thanked everyone there for coming and offered reflections on a phrase from the Letter to the Ephesians that is engraved in the oratory of the Timonel Cultural Center: “Let us with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy.” With humility and trust, we should never forget that, no matter what our circumstances, God’s love always awaits us, he said.

Susana, 23, a baker by profession, brought a cake to offer to the Prelate. She told him that, if he likes it, she will make him another one to take to Rome. After everyone stopped laughing, she asked for suggestions on how to do her work as well as possible.

“St. Josemaría told us that sanctifying our work means working well, not

offering God a sloppy job, things done poorly.” Before starting our work, “we can take a few seconds to say to our Lord: ‘I am doing this for you.’”

A husband and wife from Cali asked him about how to care for their family. “The key thing is affection, the way you treat your children. Love one another very much, as in the beginning; and throughout your life the husband should truly seek his wife’s good and the wife her husband’s good. Love each other truly.”

The Father insisted that it is very important to find ways to love people, which in turn is to love Christ. Selfishness, in contrast, does not bring happiness, only sadness. “Let us strive to be sowers of peace and joy around us.”

A diocesan priest from the Belén neighborhood of Medellín said he

was happy to be the pastor of the parish of St. Josemaría, and spoke about its recent growth in size and in the number of faithful. The Prelate reminded people that the parish is the nucleus of the Church and that from there we must strive to encourage everyone to get to know Christ better and come closer to Him.

Lucía, who is 90 years old and has been in the Work for over 50 years, asked how to help the new generations experience the joy of being in Opus Dei. “We have no other means to carry out the Work than prayer. Staying close to the Eucharist and offering God our work, transformed into prayer,” the Prelate said.

At the end, the Alcázar school choir sang a popular song by José Vásquez. This get-together marked the end of the Father’s trip to America. He will spend a few days at the Guaycoral

conference center before returning to the Eternal City.

From Medellin, the Father also wanted to send a message of closeness and affection to everyone in the Work in Venezuela and their friends, through Maria Gabriella Nicolichia, regional secretary, and Father Ignacio Rodriguez, vicar of that region. He said he was accompanying them in his prayer for that beloved country and expressed his desire to be able to come to Venezuela soon to see them and greet Our Lady of Coromoto. St. Josemaría arrived in Venezuela 50 years ago on August 15, 1974, leaving behind so many fond memories.

Thursday, 15 August

On his fourth day in Colombia, Monsignor Ocariz greeted several families and renewed the consecration of Opus Dei to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. In the afternoon, he met with about 350 young women who, amid music and songs, enjoyed the Father's company and advice.

Vicky began by reminding people that today was the 53rd anniversary of the Father's ordination, an announcement that was followed by loud applause. He responded by asking that this applause be turned into prayer for him.

One of the gifts he received was a holy card of Our Lady of Students, an image present in the Arboleda Center. Upon receiving it, Monsignor Ocariz said: "I will take it with me to help me study better."

Natalia was happy to have the opportunity to share with the Father a concern she has: How can I possibly do something for God, who is perfect and seems to have no need of us? He replied that God loves us so much that He wants to need us, to the point that what we do not do freely, He does not do in our place.

Daniela spoke about how the life of Pedro Ballester – a university student in Britain who died with a reputation for holiness in 2018 – has helped her understand her own father's death better.

Juliana and Majo, from Bucaramanga, spoke about their recent experience at a camp called “Back to Reality.” The camp offered young people the opportunity to spend several days without screens, helping them to learn to contemplate the beauty of nature and art.

The get-together was accompanied by a number of traditional Colombian songs and rhythms.

Wednesday, 14 August

On Wednesday morning, the Prelate blessed the image that presides over the new oratory of the University of La Sabana, a sculpture of the Immaculate Virgin Mary being raised to heaven by two angels.

The Father then met with more than 600 professors, reminding them that the university is not a collection of unrelated faculties or subjects, but rather a place where true unity is sought, where concern for one another and a positive interest in being open to everyone are evident.

The Father recalled that he had been there twice before and said that he was excited to see how much the university had grown.

Monsignor Ocáriz answered several questions from the teachers. He pointed to freedom as a fundamental value for all human beings and also for any university.

Referring to the encyclical *Spes Salvi*, he stressed that hope gives us optimism, serenity and broader horizons. We can sow hope, he said, only if we have hope.

At the end, Professor María Ximena gave the Prelate a “thinking stool,” a sample of the artisan tradition of the Sikvani ethnic group (an indigenous community in eastern Colombia), and a symbol of wisdom and authority.

From all corners of Colombia

“People here have come not only from Bogotá, but from Bucaramanga, Manizales, Barranquilla, Cartagena, Fundación, Valledupar, Cali,” the presenter was saying when someone

added: “And also from Venezuela,” triggering a loud applause from the audience.

A drum set, played by young university students, opened the meeting with families with a lively rhythm.

The Prelate reminded people that August 15 is the great feast of our Lady and recommended that we reflect on what the Mother of God tells us at the wedding in Cana: “Do whatever he tells you.” If we have recourse to our Lady, we will find our lives being transformed and Christ will lead us forward.”

Patricia, who celebrates her birthday on the day of the Assumption, asked the Prelate to pray for her since she will be retiring soon from her job and requested advice for this new stage in her life. “We never retire, we just change jobs. There is always so much to do in the world, with our

family and friends,” Monsignor Ocariz said.

Mauricio said he told Blessed Alvaro some years ago that, if it was God's will, he would like to be able to move from Bogotá to Ibagué, along with his family, to help bring forward the apostolic work in that city. Today his house in Ibagué is “the center of the Work there,” Mauricio told the Prelate, and although a number of families are taking part in the activities, he would like things to go faster and needs to have patience. The Father invited him to reflect on the reality that each person is worth all the blood of Christ. He also encouraged him to ask God for the gift of patience, especially in his eagerness to bring forward good projects.

María Paula has a podcast with three friends called “Conflictuadas,” in which complex questions are raised

about matters of faith and life today. Through this apostolate they have been able to reach thousands of people, believers and non-believers. But sometimes she feels discouraged, she confides, and has doubts about how to help people more effectively. The Prelate suggested that she continue to delve deeper into the Gospel and foster strong friendships.

An hour had gone by and it seemed time to end, but the Prelate made everyone laugh when he said that there was also “unforeseen time.” This enabled the get-together to continue for a while longer.

Interspersed with the questions were a medical student playing the harp, a couple performing a typical Colombian dance, and a song by one of the university choirs, which made the encounter even more colorful and lively.

Tuesday, 13 August

The Prelate's first gathering of the day was with about sixty priests, and it began with a reminder of the need to support the Church and the Pope with prayer.

He encouraged the priests not to neglect their own religious formation, to broaden their efforts in family ministry (in which God raises new vocations for the Church), and to ask the laity to participate more in the media.

“We must be sowers of peace and joy. We need to recognize that we are children of God and to contemplate our divine filiation,” he said, while also encouraging them to live their priestly commitment with the joy of being apostles of Jesus Christ.

One of the attendees asked the Prelate for his blessing because he

was going to be ordained a priest in two days; another shared that he was celebrating the 63rd anniversary of his ordination that day; and yet another gave thanks for the formation he receives from Opus Dei, which helps him grow in his spiritual life and fidelity to the Church and the Pope.

In the afternoon, before meeting with young people, the Prelate met with some families and blessed the last stone of a new school building for 5-9 year old students. “St. Josemaría taught us that we should finish our work well, and this building is a testament to that,” he told them.

Later, around 400 young people from Medellín, Bucaramanga, Armenia, Manizales, Pereira, the Caribbean Coast, Chía, and Bogotá gathered with Monsignor Ocariz in the school’s library.

The gathering began with "Qué bonita que es la vida" (How Beautiful Life Is), a *vallenato*—a musical genre from the Colombian Caribbean—performed by a group from Bucaramanga. The song served as a prelude for the Prelate to speak about the need to draw closer to God, to bring friends closer to God, and to maintain joy and gratitude towards God, even when difficulties arise. "Also amid difficulties, we can be sure that God is near, and we can give thanks to Him."

Daniel, who attends activities at Monteverde in the Kennedy neighborhood of Bogotá, shared that on 25 August, he will be baptized and receive his first communion. He asked how he can prepare to receive these sacraments well. The Father suggested that he should continue to grow spiritually with perseverance, in all circumstances of life, especially through devotion to the Eucharist.

The young people brought up various topics about professional life, work, marriage, celibacy, and formation in general. At the end, they sang another *vallenato* titled "Tú tienes la llave de mi corazón" (You Hold the Key to My Heart), with everyone joining in for the chorus.

Preparing for the trip

After his visits to Chile, Peru, and Ecuador, the Prelate is now visiting Colombia. This trip takes place within the framework of the 50th anniversary of the journey that St. Josemaría made to several countries in America.

On that occasion, after passing through Ecuador, St. Josemaría made a brief stop at the Bogotá airport on 15 August 1974. Due to his precarious

health and the high altitude of Bogotá, it was not advisable for him to stay long, so he remained on the plane for only a few minutes before continuing his journey to Caracas, Venezuela.

St. Josemaría had planned to visit Our Lady of Chiquinquirá, but he was unable to do so. In 1983, Blessed Álvaro del Portillo, the first successor of St. Josemaría, visited our Lady on his behalf.

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