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# Video of the Prelate in New Zealand

Highlights from the Prelate of Opus Dei's trip to New Zealand. From August 24-26, Msgr. Fernando Ocáriz traveled to New Zealand to spend a few days with the faithful of Opus Dei in that country and with the people and families who participate in the Prelature's mission of evangelization.

09/09/2023

**New Zealand**

Auckland (August 26)

## **Australia**

Sydney (August 20 to 23) Brisbane and Melbourne (August 16 to 19)

Sydney (August 13 to 15) Arrival (August 8)

## **Indonesia**

Indonesia (August 5 to 7)

## **Philippines**

Cebu (August 3 to 5) Manila (July 26 to August 3) Arrival (July 25)

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## **Saturday, August 26**

The Prelate of Opus Dei arrived at the Hyundai Marine Sports Centre at Okahu Bay just after 10am. He had landed in New Zealand on Thursday

night, and had spent most of Friday in Hamilton before returning to Auckland in the evening.

The MCs of the general get-together began by saying that this was a chance for everyone to relax and enjoy each other's company. They introduced the Father by explaining a little bit about Don Fernando's life including his love of tennis, and the earlier legs of his trip to the Philippines, Indonesia and Australia.

The gathering began with a traditional Maori welcoming ceremony, including a karanga (the welcoming call), the Father being given a korowai (ceremonial Maori cloak), and the attendees singing a waiata - a hymn to Our Lady. Later on in the gathering, there were other musical performances to entertain the Father.

In his opening remarks, Msgr Ocariz said he was grateful to be in this land

so far from Rome: “We are always very united together precisely because we are united in God.” He spoke of the ordinary life of our Lord in Nazareth, and how these seemingly ordinary activities were in fact the beginnings of the redemption of the world.

The Father told those gathered that the love of God leads us to love other people, and this brings joy. He said that God’s desire is for all of us to be happy - and that this is possible, even with suffering. We can have the joy that comes from uniting ourselves to Christ on the Cross. When we face difficulties, he said we should go to Our Lord to recover our joy.

Joe asked Msgr Ocariz about St Josemaria’s deep awareness of being a son of God. The Father recalled how St Josemaria would often say that being a child of God has to be the foundation of our spiritual life:

that this gives us certainty that the Lord loves us truly with a paternal love. His sense of divine filiation gave him strength and joy.

Nishali, a mother of five daughters, gifted the Father a Rugby World Cup All Blacks jersey. She asked him how to help her kids to grow in faith while also respecting their freedom. Msgr Ocariz told her that one aspect of educating children is our good example: because education that is fruitful is experienced. He said that kids have to see that parents are not imposing anything on them; but that they are happy for living out their faith.

When Monica from Wellington asked about discussing difficult topics with her kids, the Father told her to start with prayer as always. Then through friendship, show interest and talk with them about the ideas they've encountered – not investigating or

questioning, but with an attitude of affection - then transmit your own experiences to them. He said that we have to try and raise their feelings and thoughts to a spiritual level; and realise that God's will is never arbitrary. He always wants what is good for us. We have to transmit this idea of trust in God.

Ian told Msgr Ocariz about his 10 children and five grandkids, and how he feels that he struggles to live cheerfulness as well as his wife. The Father told him that joy is an obligation for us - even with worries, with family, with our work, and many other human things which can take away from our joy. The root of our joy is the love that God has for us; and we can be fully convinced with a deep faith that now, today, in each moment - even in a moment of difficulty - God, who is love, is with me.

Wayne asked how the family of Opus Dei in New Zealand could help each other and grow. The Father said that fraternity is the immediate expression of the commandment to live charity with one another. We need to pray for each other, to understand people's worth with their virtues and their talents, to rejoice in the good of others, and to make their difficulties and sorrows our own. This is authentic love. This, the Father remarked, is the way to serve the Church. He concluded by asking all to pray for Pope Francis and for his intentions.

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## **Sunday, August 20**

There were almost 2,000 people in the room, but somehow the Sydney gathering with the Father really felt like a joyful family get-together. The

hosts for the event, Caitlin and Greg, had everyone practising the distinctive national chant of “Aussie, Aussie, Aussie! Oi! Oi! Oi!” before Msgr Ocariz arrived at 11:30am to a roar of clapping and cheers.

The stage was beautifully decorated with custom-made artworks for the backdrop, featuring the iconic Sydney Opera House as well as beaches, flora and fauna. According to Felicia Chaplin, who helped to design the stage, the art was chosen for its fun and whimsical qualities – fresh and youthful to reflect a young nation. Charming native florals adorned the stage, such as waratahs, king proteas and billy buttons. The sofas and armchairs for those sitting on the stage had been chosen to create a homey and cosy feel, to reflect that this really was a gathering of family and friends.



Host Greg started off by telling the Father that everyone in the room wanted to give him a big hug, to which Msgr Ocariz responded by jumping up and giving Greg a big hug. He then proceeded to give some opening remarks, based on the Gospel of the day – the story of the Canaanite woman who persevered even when it seemed that Jesus wasn't going to heal her daughter, and how he applauded her on her faith.

The Father said that this was a lesson in perseverance in prayer – even when it feels that Our Lord doesn't hear us, it is certain that he is paying attention and that prayers are always valuable. Even when we don't see the results we want, nothing is lost even though it can seem that way humanly. He encouraged everyone to ask for more faith, and that this would lead to a joy that is founded

firmly on the assurance of God's love for each of us.

Mirka, an audiologist and young mother, spoke about how being around strong and united families while growing up had played a part in her faith journey. She asked the Father how to make a home Christ-like and inviting. He responded that they could do so by letting others participate in the joy of their family. He said that fostering true friendships was the key – which is a consequence of loving people and seeking their good.

Joe's question was about maintaining a pioneering spirit in retirement and the later stages of life. Msgr Ocariz answered that our spirit doesn't depend on age – if we love God, it will keep our souls young. He said that it is possible to increase this youthfulness by staying close to Jesus Christ. When we feel tiredness and

fatigue, we need to renew ourselves and go back to “being young” – because love is always young.

Amelia and Charlie, with five kids under age six and one son with Down Syndrome, spoke about how life can be chaotic. They asked how to help others to be open to life when most people seek a very comfortable existence. The Father’s answer was simple but very moving – to show others that they are happy. When people see their joy, it is the best proof that they are people of faith, and that it is worth being open to the plan of God. He also said that suffering could make them more united as a family; and give them a straight path to Jesus.

Mary-Louise told the Father about the challenges of living in regional NSW, and how she has to travel 200 kilometres to make it to the closest monthly recollection. Msgr Ocariz

encouraged her by reminding her that Opus Dei is not just buildings and centres – but that the people are Opus Dei, and that we can do the work of God wherever we are, using our difficulties as a means of praying for the apostolate of the future.

When Michael talked about the decreasing number of Christians in society, the Father said that while some laws and public opinion may be contrary to human life, we can't be pessimistic. We need to reject wrong ideas but never people – there are always good people even when the context might be difficult. Msgr Ocariz said not to get discouraged, and that God is counting on us even more than before.

Spread throughout the get-together were musical performances including “We Are Australian” and “My Island Home.” One of the hosts, Caitlin, asked the Father to pray for

her podcast, *Crash Course Catholicism*, which has provided many opportunities to reach the peripheries.

Before he left, the Father said that he was so appreciative to everyone for being there, and that it gave him so much joy. He finished by asking everyone to pray for the Pope, before greeting couples and families on his way out.

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## **Wednesday, August 16 to Saturday, August 19**

On Saturday 19 August 2023, the Father gathered with around 500 people in Melbourne. He began by commenting on the Gospel of the day, which was about being like little children. He said that St Josemaria encourages us to be childlike – with an infancy not related to age, but the

attitude of the soul in front of God. Like children, we can have trust and security in God, and truly believe in his love for us.

Renee, a mother of four, asked the Father how to help others to have flourishing marriages and families, especially in such a multicultural nation where so many couples have come from different backgrounds. He spoke about transmitting the Christian gospel through genuine friendship, and about sharing with others their personal experience. He added that it is very important to continue to be loving friends, even when others don't agree with how we live.

James, married with 10 children, told Msgr Ocariz that he often gets asked how they manage their family life - and asked how to help others overcome a fear of having kids. The Father said that others will see that

they are happy despite difficulties. And from a doctrinal point of view, transmitting life is a meaningful participation in the creative power of God.

Pia spoke about challenges of life: a husband who works long hours, the busyness of four kids, a home that is far from friends and formation. She asked the Father about seeing the good in every situation; and he told her that optimism is not in conflict with reality. He said that God is with us always and we never lack his assistance. When we have our little crosses, we can look at the cross of Christ and be united to him.

Angelo told Msgr Ocariz that he had been going through lymphoma cancer recently, but that he had really felt the prayers of others in Opus Dei; and was so grateful for his spiritual formation which helped him realise that his suffering had

meaning. He shared that after a scan the previous week, he is now cancer-free. The Father said that he was very happy that Angelo was cured – and also very happy to hear of the affection, unity and self-giving which he experienced. He quoted St Josemaria, saying that the day we live as strangers, we have killed Opus Dei – and that what makes one happy is not a comfortable life, but a heart in love.

The conversations in this large family gathering were complemented by some musical performances, including Spanish folk songs on the guitar, 14-year old Nicholas singing the national anthem, and a recent convert singing “I still call Australia home”.

A few days earlier in Melbourne, Msgr Ocariz also had the chance to gather with over 30 people from Perth who had travelled specifically



to meet him. He also gathered with young people from Melbourne who attend means of formation with Opus Dei - there were performances and stories about recent travels to World Youth Day in Portugal; as well as questions which addressed topics such as sharing faith with friends, discerning the calling of God in their lives, and understanding God's merciful love. The Father even became a fan of Aussie Rules football when he was presented with the scarf of a local team!

## **Wednesday, August 16**

Sydney, Brisbane and Melbourne all played host to the Prelate of Opus Dei, Msgr Fernando Ocariz, on 16 August 2023. Flying out of Sydney in the morning, he spent the day in Brisbane, before making it to Melbourne by night.

Formation activities of Opus Dei commenced in Queensland in the

1980s, co-ordinated by lay women and men of Opus Dei who made regular trips from Sydney. Now there are two centres in Brisbane: Merindah Study Centre for women and Aldridge Study Centre for men.

In Brisbane, Msgr Fernando Ocariz attended a gathering at Tierney Auditorium on 16 August 2023. He arrived early and was greeted in the foyer by a number of families. The get-together had three musical performances, including an Australian-composed piece on the piano.

In his opening remarks, the Father spoke about loving with freedom. The crucifixion of Jesus Christ, said Msgr Ocariz, was a moment when Christ showed one of the greatest acts of love in history, precisely because it was one of the greatest acts of freedom. His free decision to stay on the cross and die in this way

showed his love for, and desire to redeem, humanity.

The first person to speak to the Father was Joan, who was born in Brisbane and has spent 37 years helping to start Opus Dei in Nigeria. She spoke of the need for more vocations, and Msgr Ocariz responded by saying that if we want to be more, we have to be better – struggling to be holy, even with our defects.

When a father of young boys, David, asked how to make better use of time, the Father talked about the need for order and not giving into whims. He also mentioned the importance of rest, because well-rested people tend to make better decisions about their use of time.

A musician, mother of nine and a cooperator, Michelle asked about discernment on where to spend one's energies. The Father suggested

asking our Lord in prayer, advice from people who can help us, and then deciding with freedom and love.

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## **Sunday, August 13**

On Sunday, the Prelate of Opus Dei spent time meeting young people – students and young professionals – many of whom attend spiritual formation with Opus Dei. They were very excited to see the Father, as they often refer to him.

The Father mentioned how happy he was to return to Australia. His last trip was in 2008 when he accompanied the then-Prelate of Opus Dei, Bishop Javier Echevarria, to attend World Youth Day in Sydney.

Around midday, Msgr Ocariz gathered with young men at Warrane College, a university

residence which celebrated 50 years in 2021. The main common room was full of people from Sydney as well as Canberra, Brisbane and Perth.

The Father started by commenting on the Gospel of the day: Jesus calming the storm. He echoed Our Lord's words, "Do not be afraid!" These words came up again from actuarial student, Joe, who had just returned from World Youth Day in Lisbon and recounted Pope Francis saying the same.

Msgr Ocariz shared the words of St Josemaria: "May you seek Christ. May you find Christ. May you love Christ". He encouraged all present to identify themselves with Jesus Christ. "When we experience difficulties, don't be overcome by fear. God is always stronger," he said.

Oli shared with the Father that he has come back to practicing his faith

after moving to Warrane as a resident. Since then, he has shared this joy of returning to the sacraments to friends, who have in turn started to practice their faith more. The Father encouraged everyone to support each other, reminding them that this starts with first being supported themselves. The Father mentioned the importance of the sacrament of confession, with the absolution being a tangible sign of God's forgiveness.

Peter, who is studying Occupational Therapy, spoke about how he coordinates community service activities at a centre for men in the Hills area of Sydney. The Father spoke about the importance of being generous in reaching out to the sick, the poor and the lonely – of accompanying others and showing them that they are not alone.

The gathering also included three performances: jazz pieces on the clarinet and piano and one classical piece. To conclude, the Father was presented with a gift: an Australian cricket bat with stickers of three centres in Sydney: Warrane College, Nairana Study Centre and Mirrabooka Study Centre.

In the afternoon, Msgr Ocariz visited Creston College. The group of young women kicked off the occasion by dancing the “Nut Bush,” a popular Australian dance, before some had a chance to tell Msgr Ocariz a bit about themselves and ask him some questions. There was a performance of Bach's Double Violin Concerto in D minor - 1st Movement, as well as an Irish dancing performance, and a university student, Amelia, singing ‘The Voice’ by John Farnham – but not before she presented the Father with a packet of Tim Tams!

One question came from Katie, who spoke of her conversion story and then asked the Father: “How can I be faithful to my vocation?” He answered by telling her that the question was very important but the answer was very short. “Fall in love and you won’t leave him,” he said, quoting St Josemaria Escriva in *The Way*. He told her not to be fearful on this adventure of loving the Lord.

Claire, an Education student, asked Msgr Ocariz how to know that we’re doing what God wants from us. He responded by saying that often God doesn’t send a clear sign, because he wants us to be free. He could send an angel to announce a vocation, but that would feel forced. The Father said that the important thing was to realise that whatever God wants from each person is always the best thing for them – but they have to discover what it is.



Caitlyn and Abi then told Msgr Ocariz about an initiative called the DREAM Project, a mentoring program to help teenage girls who have come to Sydney as refugees. Every week volunteers run workshops and activities which aim to educate the girls on different career pathways and empower them to follow their dreams. The Father said it gave him a lot of joy to hear about this, and that he could see their happiness too – because being generous with others is the greatest happiness.

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## **Tuesday, August 8**

The Prelate of Opus Dei, Msgr. Fernando Ocariz, has touched down in Sydney to commence his apostolic trip from 8-26 August to Australia and New Zealand.

Many young families waited to greet Msgr. Ocariz this morning at Sydney International Airport with balloons, big smiles and banners on hand, such as one that read: “G’day Father! Welcome to Sydney, Australia.”

“It was a bit of a long wait and the kids were getting restless,” said Steph Sugiaman, who was there to greet him. “But it was worth it and everyone was very excited once we spotted him coming out of the exit. My son Theo seemed to understand how special the Father is... He shook his hand and very happily gave him a card and a little koala.”

Straight from his travels in the Philippines and Indonesia, Msgr. Ocariz will begin his Australian trip with some days of rest. After this he will spend a day in Brisbane before heading to Melbourne. He’ll finish the trip with a few more days in

Sydney before making his way to New Zealand.

“It felt like meeting an old friend,” said Jessica Kwak, who was also at the airport with her husband and kids. “He seemed tired from the long trip but his eyes were still sparkling.” Her son Emmanuel was excited to give Msgr. Ocariz a kangaroo with an Australian flag.

James Tudehope said that it was a wonderful moment to experience, especially for the kids. “It's an experience they won't soon forget!”

Beverly Eguchi, her husband Junya and their young daughter Arisa also got up nice and early to be a part of this special welcome. “It was special to know that his arrival coincided with the Feast Day of St Mary of the Cross McKillop, an Australian saint,” said Beverly. “I felt his warmth, generosity and cheerfulness to greet many families who patiently waited

to welcome him to Sydney. It was beautiful to witness many children there. His parting words were, "See you soon!"

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## **Monday, August 7**

From Surabaya, the Father flew to the capital city of Jakarta. He visited the Nuncio and prayed in the chapel of the Apostolic Nunciature.

At 3:30 in the afternoon, the Father proceeded to the Hotel Aryaduta Menteng where a general audience was organized. Families introduced themselves to him as he climbed the staircase. Some boys and girls who participate in weekly activities of Family Catechism (FamCat) displayed handmade welcome cards as he passed.

The people started to sing *Rasa Sayange* (“Loving Feeling”) as the Father entered. Despite being a weekday, the hall was filled. Families and friends from various provinces of Indonesia, from the Philippines, as well as from Brazil and Spain were part of the 150 in attendance.

The Father began by thanking God for his being in Indonesia. He recounted the experience of St. Josemaria that took place on this same day, August 7th, in 1931. While celebrating the Holy Mass, St. Josemaría understood in a new way the meaning of the words from Scripture: “And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to myself” [Jn 12:32]. Msgr. Ocariz explained that “putting Christ at the summit of all human activities” means that one offers Him all one’s activities of an ordinary day. Christ then becomes the fundamental point

of reference and He makes everything holy.

Erna and Sunan gave the Father a framed ceramic of the *Bapa Kami* (“Our Father”). Another family gifted the Father with an image of Our Lady of Ganjuran, venerated in Central Java. Some girls from FamCat sang to entertain the Father. One performance was that of nine-year old Ivanka, who sang *Ave Maria* with a recorded piano accompaniment by her mother.

Tim hails from the ethnic group Malay Dayaks, who were formerly known as fearsome headhunters. Now, he said, he hunts for souls peacefully in his workplace. He asked the Father how he could show his friends that pursuing holiness is worthwhile even if it entails a lifelong struggle.

The Father told him that such effort was worthwhile. He explained that

holiness must not be seen as consisting of purely human perfection or having no defects. Rather, it consists of the “perfection of love.” What is important is to begin again each day in our struggle to love God. That love is a grace, he said. “We have to ask the Lord to increase our capacity to love Him and others.”

Lucia, a cooperator of Opus Dei since 1981, expressed her gratitude to the Work and her amazement at the power of prayer. She narrated how her daughter and her fiance agreed to attend a marriage preparation course offered by a group of supernumeraries in Sydney. She hoped that her daughter’s family would also be touched by Opus Dei.

“Have faith that prayer is always effective,” the Father said. Even if we do not see results, “nothing is ever lost in prayer,” he said..

Chari, a supernumerary, asked the Father to pray for the marriage courses that she and her husband, Stefan, organize in Indonesia. The first batch of 11 couples completed the online course, and she shared that this apostolic work has been a spur for Stefan and her to strengthen their own marriage relationship.

The Father encouraged Chari to pursue this undertaking, appreciating that by helping other couples in their married life, they themselves are the first beneficiaries.

Family was likewise Priyo's concern, which he aired the previous day in Surabaya. Priyo and his wife are both university lecturers and are involved in marriage counselling. He asked the Father how families could live the call to be a "domestic church." The Father talked about the family as the place where one encounters love.



A similar concern was raised by Joseph, who together with his wife were baptized in 2018. The Father underscored the importance of fostering friendship and personal relationships between parents and children. He reiterated that the principal responsibility for the children's education and formation lies with their parents.

Gerald, an architect, asked how to deal with his non-Catholic colleagues. The Father's reply was short, simple and clear: friendship and prayer.

After that last question, two children went up the stage to hand to the Father his *Kartu Tanda Penduduk* or KTP (Resident Identity Card) so that he could return to Indonesia any time. That gesture elicited a beaming smile from the Father. He asked the audience to continue praying for the Pope and gave them his blessing:

“May the Lord be in your hearts, in your families, in your intentions, and in your joys.”

People came away from these lively gatherings with their personal experiences and insights. A husband and wife seemed to speak for all when they said: “All the things that the Father spoke in the get-together were just the right words that we ordinary people must hear.”

After greeting some families and signing their family photos, the Father boarded his car for the airport. It was late afternoon and his flight to Sydney (Australia) was on that same night. Some faithful of the Prelature, cooperators, and friends followed his convoy to the airport. The Father was visibly happy to be one last time with his spiritual children in Indonesia.

“His final messages kept echoing in my mind,” one of them recalled, “that

the joy and enthusiasm of these days be converted into resolutions and real efforts of deepening one's interior life and expanding the work of evangelization in these islands.”

“We look forward with awe,” he added, “at how much good will be coming to Indonesia following these memorable encounters with the Father.”

## **Sunday, August 6**

The morning sounds of Sunday in Surabaya — the roar of motorcycles on the streets in the early hours and the call to prayer from the mosques — greeted the Father on his first full day in Indonesia, and indeed it was a full day.

After preaching a meditation and celebrating Holy Mass in the morning at Darmaria Study Center for women, the Father went to visit His Excellency Msgr. Vincentius

Sutikno Wisaksono, who was confined in the hospital. Opus Dei is in Indonesia because Bishop Sutikono had requested that the Work begin in his diocese in Surabaya. (The good Bishop died a few days later, on August 10.)

In the afternoon, the Father made a brief stop at the diocesan seminary to greet the seminarians and priests. The Father was moved seeing a vibrant seminary in a predominantly Muslim country.

The day's highlight was the general audience with over 200 people at the Widya Mandala Catholic University Pakuwon campus. When he entered the hall, Msgr. Ocariz was met with a traditional dance from Jombang, East Java called the *Tari Remo*, performed by Maureen, a girl who attends the activities of Opus Dei in Surabaya. The dance is used to welcome guests and open an event.

The auditorium stage featured a simple but evocative Indonesian motif. The backdrop showed Mount Bromo, an iconic volcano in East Java. Inscribed on it were the words *semper fidelis, semper in laetitia* (always faithful, always joyful).

The Prelate began by speaking to them about the day's liturgical feast, the Transfiguration of the Lord. He encouraged everyone to be aware of and thankful for the blessings they receive and said that both suffering and joy are expressions of God's love and presence. "If God is with us, who can be against us?" he quoted St. Paul. Therefore, "Be not afraid." Faith will give us the strength and the happiness that will enable us to transmit the joy of the Gospel to others.

Two boys awarded the Father a Guinness World Record Certificate for being the first Prelate of Opus Dei

to visit Indonesia. He was also given a “*blangkon*”, a Javanese headdress, which symbolizes elegance and self-mastery.

Budiono, a civil engineer, asked the Father about how to sanctify professional work and convert it into a service to souls.

“Seeking holiness in work,” the Prelate said, “is at the core of St. Josemaria Escriva’s teachings.” We must seek to offer our work to God, he said. He talked of ways to remind oneself of God’s presence while working, like placing a small crucifix or a picture of our Lady on one’s work table and asking for strength to accomplish well the tasks given by superiors. Through work well done, we can help people become better Christians, the Father said. And if those around are not Christians, we can help them grow in human

virtues and be better persons, he said.

Felicia shared with the Father that her daughter in Portugal recently joined as an Associate of Opus Dei. The Father invited her to thank God for this gift to her family, and he reminded her that her role as mother has not ended. The Holy Mass and her prayers remain key to helping her daughter persevere in her divine calling, likewise for her own perseverance as a mother. “Prayer is our only weapon” he recalled Saint Josemaría saying.

The get-together concluded with the performance of a folk dance: *Tari Lengang Nyai*. The dance originates from an ethnic group in West Java and depicts agility and cheerfulness.

After a signature Surabaya song, the Father gave his blessing to everyone and asked them to pray for the Pope and Bishop Sutikno.

Dela and George, with their two children, had a private audience with the Father after the get-together. They are the first supernumeraries in Surabaya. The Father assured them of his prayers and reminded them to always unite their sacrifices and challenges in life to the cross of Christ. He also met with individuals who have generously helped to start the apostolic work of Opus Dei in Surabaya and expressed his sincere gratitude to them.

Komang and Louisa, recent university graduates, were the program hosts. Both are non-Catholic and said that they saw the Father as a gentle and kind person. They found the wisdom he shared universal and applicable to them personally. Komang, who is a Hindu, commented that the Father's messages struck him.

**Saturday, August 5**



This apostolic trip of the Father (as he is fondly called) is historic as it was the first time that a prelate of Opus Dei set foot in Indonesia, the world's largest archipelagic country with over 17,000 islands. Realizing the significance of this occasion, some faithful of Opus Dei, together with their families and friends, flocked to the airport carrying colorful banners with the words, "*Selamat Datang, Father!*" ("Welcome, Father!" in Bahasa Indonesia).

Msgr. Fernando Ocariz, the Prelate of Opus Dei, landed at Juanda International Airport in the late afternoon as the sun was setting over Surabaya, the second largest city in Indonesia. As soon as he came into sight the well wishers at the airport cheered and waved red-and-white Indonesian flags. After engaging them and posing for pictures, the

Father retired for the night. It was a whole day of travel for him.

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## **Friday, August 4**

First thing in the morning, the Prelate celebrated Mass in the oratory of the Banilad Study Center. There he met patrons of the Dayao center for women in Davao City who showed him the design of the definitive center in Davao, which the Father blessed. When he asked 'Can I go there? Will you invite me there?' there was a millisecond of shocked silence, followed by a thunderous "Yes, Father!"

He walked to the adjacent Banilad Center for Professional Development (BCPD), a technical-vocational school that has played a pivotal role in promoting women empowerment and providing livelihood skills to

vulnerable sectors of society like the Indigenous Peoples, the out-of-school youths, and persons with disabilities.

The BCPD students welcomed the Prelate with a popular Cebuano song “I Love Cebu,” the lyrics of which were changed into “We love Padre.” He was beaming with joy as he listened and watched them dance. After the performance, the students approached him for the traditional “Mano Po” greeting (forehead on the hand of one’s parent).

Members of the Management Staff alternately explained to him the various social programs of the school, a number of which are supported by international agencies. The Prelate met and blessed some Badjao women who finished Bread and Pastry Production in BCPD. He asked them to pray for him, which they all agreed to do.

They showed him the printed architect's perspective of the BCPD dream school in Minglanilla, Cebu. He wrote on it: "With my blessings" and signed his name.

The school gave him a toque with a logo of BCPD and declared him as the "Master Chef of BCPD." They also gifted him with a small backpack, an invitation for him to come to Cebu for another visit.

The Prelate encouraged them to continue their work in the school so that more women, families, and communities benefit from their various social programs. Before he left, the Prelate posed for the final photo with the BCPD Patrons, Board members, faculty members, staff, and mentors.

The general get together on Friday afternoon, a lively and moving hour-long family gathering, was the

highlight of the Prelate's brief stay in Cebu. Read more about it [here](#).

In the early afternoon, the Father visited Ben (the director of the CITE Technical Institute, who has been ill for several weeks) at the University of Cebu Medical Center.

After Mass at Lahug Center, the Prelate left for the airport, but not before taking a group photo at the main entrance, recreating a photo taken with Bishop Javier Echevarría at the same place in 1998.

The Prelate's less than 48-hour stay in Cebu was short and intense, with many activities and encounters with his spiritual children and their families and friends. What characterized all of it, as one onlooker commented, was the family warmth that was "warmer than the sun in Cebu."

**Thursday, August 3**

Msgr. Fernando Ocariz landed at the Mactan Cebu International Airport shortly before noon. “Bienvenido!” and “Welcome to Cebu, Padre” read the tarpaulin signs carried by the well-wishers. Some Cebu families with their children met him as he entered the private reception area. A boy dressed as Datu Humabon and a little girl dressed as Queen Juana gave him gifts. Humabon and Juana were the first converts to Christianity in 1521.

A good number from the various cities in the Visayas and Mindanao came to the airport to welcome the Prelate. The last time the Prelate came to Cebu was in 1998. They practically filled the reception area and all wanted to personally greet him. At the background, young women from Iloilo sang Spanish songs familiar to the Father, providing a jovial family atmosphere.

The Father was visibly pleased with the reception. He engaged one well-wisher after another with a constant smile. He listened to their little messages, thanked them for their gifts, and obliged every request for a photo, signature, and blessing. Those warm and familiar 20 minutes set the tone for the Father's stay in Cebu.

At his residence in Lahug, the Father met with more families. They shared their family stories and some gave him personally crafted gifts. Some children had their small messages for him and gave him drawings and sketches. He blessed the children on their foreheads. He gladly acceded to their requests to sign their mementos and take photos with him.

The Father received guests in his residence after lunch and dinner. They came from Iloilo, Bacolod, Cagayan de Oro, and Davao, sharing

with him stories about the apostolic activities where they lived.

In the mid-afternoon, Msgr. Ocariz visited PAREF Springdale school. He was welcomed by members of the Board of Trustees for PAREF schools in Cebu, PAREF Springdale management staff, teachers, and their families. Springdale is a private grade school and high school for boys.

He was shown the school quadrangle, which is presided by bronze relief sculpture of the Holy Family designed by renowned Cebu artist, Celso Pepito. The Director of the school pointed out that the child Jesus in the relief is dressed as the Santo Niño of Cebu. Two boys entertained him with a violin number and a song.

The Father proceeded to the meeting hall in Springdale where about 25 priests were eagerly awaiting him.



Among them was Bishop Isabelo Abarquez of Calbayog (Samar), who brought 5 of his priests. Present were clergy from Cebu, Butuan, and Leyte.

The Prelate spoke to them about the dignity of the priestly ministry, telling them that priests are Christs on earth. He touched on the importance of diocesan priests living a deep fraternity among themselves, and providing support to priests who at times may feel lonely in their ministry.

Responding to a member of the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross who asked “how to be good sons of St. Josemaria,” his advice was to be very natural and not to be afraid to ask our Founder for things. And then to strive to be faithful to the spirit he has left us.

At the end of the get together, he asked for their blessing.

The *Santo Niño* (Holy Child) holds a special place in the hearts of Filipinos, particularly those from Cebu. The Prelate of Opus Dei visited the *Basilica Minore* of the *Santo Niño* of Cebu in the late afternoon. He was welcomed by the *Hermano and Hermana Mayor*. Also there to welcome the Father were families in their *Sinulog* attire and well-wishers from Davao, Cagayan de Oro, and West Visayas. The Father went out of his way to meet them before entering the Basilica.

While traversing the wide esplanade, some ladies asked him to bless an image of Sto. Niño to be placed in their Center in Davao. A group of ladies from Bacolod asked the Father to bless a seedling to be planted in their new Center. A young couple asked him to bless the mitten and booties of their first child to be born in December.

The Augustinians are the custodians of the basilica. Father Ion escorted the Prelate to the second floor of the Augustinian Convent to pray before the original statue of the *Santo Niño*, the one gifted to Juana by Ferdinand Magellan in 1521. He laid flowers at the base of the image.

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## **Thursday, August 3**

After heartfelt farewells, Msgr. Ocariz departed for the airport at 9:30 in the morning, concluding his stay in Manila. "We are all united! Even when I am already in Australia, we are always united," he said to a group in the house. His parting words were in English: "Please pray for me as I also pray for you."

His next destination is Cebu, where more exciting events and gatherings await him.

## **Wednesday, August 2**

In the morning, Msgr. Ocariz visited some sick faithful of the Prelature in their centers. Shortly before noon, he made a visit to the National Shrine of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary (La Naval) in Quezon City to pray.

Msgr. Fernando Ocariz arrived at the University of Asia and the Pacific (UA&P) at 4:30pm. Students and faculty members welcomed him at the main entrance with cheers, drums, banners, and a dragon mascot. University faculty, staff, alumni, former officers and families lined the way to the meeting halls. He engaged the many who requested for a selfie photo, a blessing, or an “abrazo.”

He first met with the officers of Educhild, who narrated stories of their programs aimed at promoting strong marriages and families, and guiding single young professionals.

They also shared the challenges faced by Filipino families today. “We should teach persons how to love, in order to help married couples deal with the difficulties they are encountering,” he said. He emphasized the importance of fostering love, understanding, and forgiveness within families. The Father advised them to seek to be genuine friends with those going through difficult situations.

He moved to the adjacent hall to meet with the UA&P Board of Trustees, Management Committee, unit heads, and some alumni. University President Winston Padojinog had warm formal greetings for Msgr. Ocariz, the Honorary Grand Chancellor of the University. The Prelate outlined key characteristics of governance in the University. The Christian spirit imbues it, with sanctification of work as the first condition. It is carried out

with a sense of service, giving primacy to the human person. It requires justice and charity, which are requisites of sanctified work.

He then talked about unity. The university is not an aggregate of separate and independent units. He commented on the value of collegiality, that we need one another, and that we count on the opinion of others. Lastly, he acknowledged the faculty members serving in governance posts, that they are doing so with a spirit of service and sacrifice.

UA&P gave him a replica of the President's chain with medallions of various UA&P seals. He received books published by UA&P. The Alumni Association gifted him with the new version of the *becas* of all the Schools, made of handwoven cloth.

**Tuesday, August 1**

Msgr. Ocariz was at the University of Asia and the Pacific for a 10 am meeting with Bishop Oscar Florencio, the Military Ordinary of the Philippines. Bishop Florencio, a former student of Msgr. Ocariz in Rome, expressed his gratitude for Opus Dei's spiritual help to the priests of the military ordinariate.

They proceeded to a get-together with diocesan clergy. Present were Bishop Stephen Lee from Macau, several monsignori, and around 50 priests. The Prelate encouraged them to be men of prayer and to make the celebration of the Eucharist the center of each day. He told them to be very happy with and thankful for their vocation to the priesthood, which is a gift not only for themselves but for everyone around them.

After meeting the clergy, the Prelate met with officers and directors of the

various schools under the Parents for Education Foundation (PAREF) system. They shared stories of their schools and the efforts to spread among parents, teachers, and children his message about the centrality of Jesus Christ. Msgr. Ocariz encouraged them to continue their valuable work, stressing the significance of reaching out to parents, who play a crucial role in their children's lives at home.

In the afternoon, the Father met with several families. Each shared their stories of evangelization. They all showed him their family pictures and presented him gifts. He thanked them for helping Opus Dei in the Philippines and asked for their prayers.

## **Monday, July 31**

In the morning, Msgr. Ocariz met with those doing their seminar at the



Tagaytay Conference Center and received guests there.

At 4:00 pm he visited the Dualtech Training Center, a technical vocational school in Canlubang. He blessed the ongoing construction of the Excellence Activity Center in the campus, a facility for human and professional formation of students and industrial workers in the vicinity.

He toured the facilities and met some students. One of them presented him with a sorting machine that he had invented. He gave a short address to the management and staff of the school and spoke to them about sanctifying their work.

Back in Manila, in the early evening, the Father paid his respects at the wake of a faithful of the Prelature, a lady architect who had designed several centers in the country.

## **Sunday, July 30**

At 10:30 in the morning, Msgr. Ocariz had a gathering with families, members of Opus Dei and their friends at the Mall of Asia Arena. This was the highlight event of the Prelate's trip, with 7,000 in attendance.

In the afternoon, the Prelate visited the Tagaytay Conference Center, a retreat house and seminar facility in Mendez, Cavite.

Read more about this gathering [here](#).

## **Saturday, July 29**

Msgr. Ocariz met with some of the older members of Opus Dei and visited those who are ill in some of the centers.

In the afternoon, he visited Punlaan School, a pioneer in Dual Training for women in the fields of Cookery,

Baking, and Food and Beverage Services. The management welcomed the Father in their newly-inaugurated 7-storey building in San Juan. Punlaan is the flagship school of the Foundation for Professional Training, Inc. (FPTI), which has other technical training schools in Laguna and Cebu.

Present during the visit were the officers and management of FPTI as well as those of other women-empowerment NGOs established by members of Opus Dei and their colleagues in different parts of the country.

The Father told them that effectiveness will come from taking care of the quality of the work they do. Then, as St. Josemaria taught, to always have supernatural outlook in everything. It is God who helps us. Further, he told them that success

lies in living fraternity well, with spirit of service.

During the short program at the auditorium, some Punlaan students presented the Father with a tiny seedbed, explaining that “*punlaan*” is the Tagalog word for “seedbed.” They let the Father plant some seeds of *banaba*, a medicinal plant, and told him that they hope to become sowers of peace and joy in their work of service to the hotel and restaurant industry.

## **Friday, July 28**

In the morning, Msgr. Ocariz visited some of the sick and elderly faithful of the Prelature in the centers.

Earlier he celebrated Mass at the Stella Orientis Oratory of the University of Asia and the Pacific, a corporate undertaking of Opus Dei in the Philippines.

## **Thursday, July 27**

In the morning, Msgr. Ocariz received some families in his residence in New Manila. The families shared their family stories and showed him pictures, which he blessed. He gave rosaries to the adults and candies to the children.

He met with 40 delegates from PAREF Southridge school who were about to leave for Lisbon for the World Youth Day from August 1 to 6. They came in their official jackets and gave him a jacket labelled “The Father.”

He told them to live fraternity and charity among themselves and with those from other countries. He reminded them that they would certainly encounter difficulties along the way and that they should offer those up for the Pope. He then gave them the blessing for the trip.

In the afternoon, the Prelate was back at the University of Asia and the

Pacific for an audience with the men students and young professionals who attend activities of formation in the centers of Opus Dei. He told them that in their activities, they must seek Christ. And if one is friends with Christ, it will be easy to make friends.

They asked him advice about how to love people who don't share the same beliefs, how to be resilient amid trials, and how to discern God's will. A string chamber orchestra of three young men provided musical numbers.

"What struck me the most during our get-together with the Father was that in these times, we must not let our emotions control us, but instead use the means - to strive and to persevere - in mastering ourselves, upholding virtues, and being gracious to others," said one student. He recalled that "the Father emphasized that the world needs

young people who know how to listen and to communicate with love and care; to avoid arguing to impose one's views on others, and instead to pray for them."

## **Wednesday, July 26**

First on the Prelate's agenda for the start of this apostolic trip to the Philippines was a pilgrimage to the National Shrine of Our Lady of Mount Carmel in New Manila. Bishop Alvaro del Portillo did the same thing in 1987, as did Bishop Javier Echevarria in 1998.

The Superior of the Carmelite Fathers welcomed him at the Shrine. Msgr. Ocariz prayed the Rosary with Fr. Julio Dieguez, the Regional Vicar of Opus Dei in the Philippines, at his side. A small group of faithful who were already at the church that morning accompanied them, petitioning for the apostolic fruits of this trip.

In the afternoon, Msgr. Ocariz had an audience with 300 women students and professionals who attend activities of formation regularly in centers of Opus Dei in Metro Manila, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal, Iloilo and Bacolod. It was held at the University of Asia and the Pacific (UA&P). They received him with enthusiasm and energy.

Rocio, a graduating student, asked the Prelate how to combat the spread of liberal ideologies and trends such as the cancel culture. Another asked about how to give priority to one's prayer life in the face of her hectic academic life. A young lady asked in Tagalog how to be resilient in the face of painful family situations.

The common thread in the Father's replies was: learning to love. He advised them to reactivate their love for God, to be an instrument of unity, and to be forgiving.



Responding to the concern of one on how to do things as best as one can without giving in to a perfectionist mindset, Msgr. Ocariz advised her to change the mindset, but that this does not mean that one will not strive to do things the best way he/she can. "What perfects things is love."

The Prelate told them to take seriously the formation they receive in the centers. In a world that sometimes seems hostile to the things of God. "*Adelante, sin miedo*," (Forward, without fear), he challenged them.

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## **Tuesday, July 25**

Msgr. Fernando Ocariz, the Prelate of Opus Dei, arrived in Manila this afternoon, beginning a twelve-day apostolic trip to the Philippines. His

plane arrived on schedule at 4:30 pm, and the Prelate was met by Father Julio Dieguez, the Regional Vicar of Opus Dei in the Philippines, and a handful of families.

Ronnie and Richelle Balbieran introduced their five children (photo above). Paul and Denice Price and their five children also greeted the Prelate: “Welcome to the Philippines, Father!” Paul said, and the Prelate replied, “Thank you! Pray for me as I will pray for your family.”

Msgr. Ocariz then travelled to New Manila, Quezon City, where he will be staying.

On 26 and 27 July, he will meet with young people at the University of Asia and the Pacific. There he will speak with young men and women preparing to travel to World Youth Day in Lisbon, Portugal.

He also wants to visit sick and elderly people throughout Manila, and has scheduled trips to some apostolic undertakings of people of Opus Dei, including Punlaan in San Juan and Dualtech in Canlubang. He will meet with the people running the Educhild family programs and the PAREF schools.

Around 9,000 people are expected to attend the encounter with friends and families on 30 July at 10:30 am.

On 3 August, Msgr. Ocariz will fly to Cebu to meet with people who take part of Opus Dei's formational activities there. He will visit Banilad School for Professional Development and the Center for Industrial Technology and Enterprise, both technical schools and social projects that provide job training for underprivileged youth in the Visayas and Mindanao.

On 5 August, the Prelate will fly to Indonesia and then travel to Australia and New Zealand.

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