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A Resumé of the Pastoral Visit of the Prelate of Opus Dei to Canada

We offer a brief description of the events around the visit of Bishop Echevarría to Canadian cities including Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver.

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Montreal, 18 September, 2006.
Bishop Javier Echevarría arrived at
Trudeau International Airport in
Montreal on Thursday September

14th. Soon after arriving he met with several families from the Montreal area. The following day, September 15th, he visited the Manoir de Beaujeu, a recently expanded conference centre used for retreats and workshops. There he consecrated the chapel and had get-togethers with more families, encouraging them to be very faithful to each other and make the home a place of affection and peace. In the evening he also met with a large number of priests coming from different dioceses, including Ottawa, Quebec City, Longueuil, Montreal, as well as some nearby US dioceses in Vermont and Massachusetts. He thanked them for the generosity in their ministry and encouraged them to love the Holy Mass and be very available to the faithful, especially in the sacrament of reconciliation. He told them how well he remembered St. Josemaria's habit of always

recollecting himself in prayer before celebrating any Mass.

On Saturday the 16th the Prelate met with university students from Montreal, Quebec City, Ottawa, and Kingston. A first year accounting student asked how he could bring Christ into his studies. Msgr. Echevarría underlined the importance of honesty and coherence in studies, and compared the spiritual life to the daily work of bookkeeping, where one could see daily the pluses and the minuses in one's struggle to be more a man of God; at the end of the day, a good act of contrition where you ask forgiveness for all those minuses puts you again at balance with God who always forgives. He also encouraged a recently baptized student from China to know his faith deeply in order to bring the light of Christ to his country.

About 1300 people were present later that day for the main gathering that took place in the Theatre Maisonneuve at Place des Arts in downtown Montreal. He began by saying that he was very happy to be in Canada which he said is a vast country with enormous resources and great potential. Saint Josemaria had sent the first members to this country in 1957. The Founder of Opus Dei had immense hope in the goodness of the people here, and prayed for Canada often.

“St. Josemaria was a great friend of this country. He prayed a lot for you. I cannot describe the intensity of his prayers, because he began praying even before I was born,” he said. Responding to a question about how to juggle the numerous responsibilities of life, including work, family, home with the corresponding temptation of not having time for God, the Prelate

spoke about the importance of finding God in the little things of each day. “Sometimes we may be tempted to think that God wants us to undertake big extraordinary things that require heroism. That may happen, but the vast majority of our life is made up of very ordinary events at home, at work, with the family and with friends. God is not disinterested in these apparently mundane trivialities of everyday. If we do them with love of God and an upright desire to serve others, we will have sanctified them.”

He compared God’s love to that of parents who are touched by gifts from their children even if it is something like half-eaten candy. God is pleased with our conversation with him, the bishop said.

Julie Gaudreau, a young professional woman from Saint Hyacinthe told the Prelate that in Quebec, many

people think one has to go into foreign lands in order to help others, yet there is plenty to do here. She told him about a tutoring program she had begun in a school with many immigrants and that it was in thinking of others that one ends up truly happy. The Prelate encouraged her in her work and said that sadness is indeed the dregs of selfishness. He said we should write this in large letters. He guarded the audience against a common attitude in many people at the end of a long and tiresome day: they come home and plunge themselves in the newspaper, mute and without even a smile or a kind word for their spouse. This is not just a homey unimportant detail, he said, it is very important for the couple. He urged husbands and wives to “love each other crazily.” He advised busy parents to keep a photo of their family on their desks. “Look at the picture and fall in love more and

more everyday.” With this example, the Prelate honed in on the essential point: the need to stay on the same wave length as those around us, particularly those most intimate to us in the family. This positive attitude will make families full of that cheerful warmth that should characterize Christian homes.

At the end of the gathering he invited the people there to pray for the Pope daily and to read the Catechism of the Catholic Church and its accompanying Compendium recently published by Pope Benedict XVI.

On September 17th a gathering with the Prelate at Roy Thompson Hall in Toronto brought together 1700 people.

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