

# The Prelate in Puerto Rico

From 31 January to 3 February, Monsignor Fernando Ocáriz made a pastoral visit to the island of Puerto Rico, where he met with many faithful and friends of the Prelature.

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[Photo Gallery of the Prelate's Visit to Puerto Rico](#)

**Sunday, 3 February**

In his last day in Puerto Rico, the Prelate celebrated Mass in Monteclaro. In his homily he said that the source of our serenity is that we are close to Christ and we lean on his strength.

Afterwards, he met with the benefactors and directive boards of the Monteclaro Hospitality School and the Sonsoles and Summit Academy schools. He thanked them for all their efforts, and then some of them recounted anecdotes about the struggle to recover from Hurricane Maria on the island.

Before leaving, the Prelate blessed a Guayacan tree in the garden. This tree is native to the Antillas islands and is much appreciated for its tough and resistant wood. Monsignor Ocáriz said that this is what he hoped for from his daughters and sons in Puerto Rico.

When imparting his blessing he said that “we are never separate from one another because Christ himself unites us.” As he left Paloblanco, he went past a group of teachers, students and families wearing straw hats and playing maracas.

While waiting in the airport, he was able to spend time with a small group of people before getting on the plane. He expressed his great joy for the marvelous days he had spent there and said he would have liked to have been able to stay longer.

## **Saturday, 2 February**

A day of bright sun dawned, showing the island in all its beauty. Today was the feast of the Presentation of our Lord, and the Prelate gave a meditation and celebrated Mass in Paloblanco. He made reference to some words of Simeon in the Gospel reading: “Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace,

according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation.” We too need to have the desire to see God: “to see Him in the Eucharist, to see him in daily circumstances, to see Him in the people around us... Thus we will place Christ at the summit of human activities.”

At 11.30 am, in the conference center of Puerto Rico, he met with women of the Prelature and their friends. They told the Father that this is the fiftieth anniversary of the beginning of the apostolic work in Puerto Rico, and they asked him what he would like from them. “The important thing is what God wants from us, and what He wants is that we be faithful to our own vocation.”

In his get-together with younger people, a girl told the Prelate that she had recently been in Panama for WYD. She asked for advice on how to assist the desires of the Pope. This

was an opportunity to insist once again on the need to support the Pope with our prayer. The get-together was also marked by music and the signing of local songs.

In the late afternoon, hundreds of people once again had the opportunity to meet with the Prelate. He spoke to them about the need for supernatural outlook in moments of difficulty, pain and illness—anything that can cause us to suffer. That's when we need to have faith: "faith is needed for what we don't see; because at times we don't understand or see clearly. And nevertheless, there too we find God's love." One of those present, Hector, said he is trying with the help of others to bring forward two schools: Sonsoles and Summit Academy. He asked for advice on how to overcome all the challenges. Monsignor Ocáriz said that "the first means is to have faith." Then, that we shouldn't

become discouraged if some people respond negatively when asked to help out in these initiatives. He said jokingly: “if they don’t want to help, they are the ones who lose out.”

Maximo asked how they could defend the family and children. The Prelate said they shouldn’t fear the hostile environment around them in this regard. He told them an anecdote. A mother went shopping, taking her young daughter in a baby carriage. She met a friend who, knowing that this mother had more children at home, said that it was crazy to have so many children. The mother tried to explain to her that children are a gift from God, and the little daughter intervened saying: “well, you should know that we are planning to have more.”

Everyone was having such a good time that they wanted the get-together to continue. But the Prelate

said they had to finish, and at the end he asked them to pray for the Pope, who has so much work and so many difficulties to confront.

## **Friday, 1 February**

In the morning after Mass, Monsignor Ocáriz went to Puertorreal, a center in San Juan near the University, where human and spiritual formation is offered. There he had breakfast, and afterwards visited the kitchen to thank the people working there. He then spent some time with the young fellows living there, who told him some stories about their apostolic efforts with their friends at the University.

Early in the afternoon, he had a joyful meeting with some 20 families. A large number of children were there with their parents, and he gave them some candy, and some rosaries for the adults.

Afterwards, in Puertorreal, the Prelate met with priests and seminarians from various dioceses in the island.

He reminded them of the need to imitate Christ in order to be able to bring Him to others. The get-together became very lively when one of the priests started singing a local song accompanied by guitars and maracas. The Prelate ended by reminding them of the need to seek many vocations for the priesthood.

In the late afternoon, he had a get-together with about a hundred young fellows, who asked questions with a great spontaneity. Javi made everyone laugh with some magic tricks, and on finishing he asked the Prelate how we can know what God wants from us. The Prelate replied that "what God wants from us is first of all that we do what we have to do; that is, that we fulfill our duties." He

encouraged them to have a schedule so they could live order better: “if you have a plan of life, you’ll have more strength, serenity and joy.” Responding to another question, he said that to overcome discouragement we need to draw close to Jesus: “union with our Lord brings us joy. When selfishness takes control, we aren’t happy.”

At the end, David brought the Prelate a baseball bat and asked him to write some words on it as encouragement for the next 50 years. The Father wrote: “dream and your dreams will fall short.”

## **Thursday, 31 January**

The Prelate of Opus Dei arrived in San Juan, Puerto Rico, at 4 pm, for a pastoral visit that will last until Sunday the 3<sup>rd</sup>. Meeting him at the airport were the Regional Vicar of Puerto Rico, Monsignor Justiniano García, along with several families.

They brought with them a large banner that said: “Father, thank you for coming to Puerto Rico.”

They then made their way to Paloblanco conference center, about 45 minutes east of San Juan, where the Monteclaro Hospitality School is also located.

He had his first get-together at the Monteclaro School, with young women who are studying and training there. Besides telling him some anecdotes, they sang songs for him and danced a local folk dance.

After dinner in Paloblanco, one of the young men with him spoke about attending the recent World Youth Day in Panama. The Prelate said: “a good resolution for any young person who had the opportunity to be there is to pray a lot for the Pope.”

In the evening, he spent a special time of prayer in front of the Blessed Sacrament in the Paloblanco oratory.

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