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Conference at Northwestern University draws 800

On June 29, about 800 persons gathered near Chicago for a Centennial Conference on “The Vision of Blessed Josemaría Escrivá for a Christian Life Lived to the Full.”

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The conference, sponsored by Shellbourne Conference Center, took place at Northwestern University and featured talks by Dr. Scott Hahn, Dr.

E. Joanne Angelo, and Dr. John F. Coverdale. In addition, participants chose from a number of breakout sessions on topics such as “Christian Marriage,” “Evangelization and the Media,” and “The Devotion of Blessed Josemaría to Our Lady of Guadalupe.” Two of the 13 sessions were offered in Spanish.

At the beginning of the day Rev. Arne Panula, vicar of Opus Dei in the United States, read a letter to conference participants from the prelate of Opus Dei, Bishop Javier Echevarría. Bishop Echevarría expressed his hope that reflecting on the life and teaching of Blessed Josemaría would inspire those present to be “sowers of peace and joy,” and he assured them of his “prayer and affectionate support.” At the conclusion of the letter, the participants were able to “meet” Blessed Josemaría himself through a brief video presentation.

In the day's opening talk, entitled "Passionately Loving the Word," Dr. Scott Hahn, professor of Scripture at the Franciscan University of Steubenville, discussed Blessed Josemaría's love for the Word of God. Dr. Hahn stressed Blessed Josemaría's insistence that each person must enter into the pages of scripture, becoming another character in the scenes of the Gospel. Next, Dr. E. Joanne Angelo of Tufts University brought a psychiatrist's insight to Blessed Josemaría's teaching on divine filiation, the realization that every Christian is a daughter or son of God.

Following a catered outdoor lunch, participants divided into smaller groups to attend their breakout sessions. Among the most popular of these sessions was a first-hand look at the history of Opus Dei in the United States, presented by Maria Valdeavellano and John A. Gueguen.

Finally, Dr. John F. Coverdale, a historian and professor of law at Seton Hall University, gave the last plenary talk. His topic, drawn from his new book *Uncommon Faith*, was the “trial by fire” that the first members of Opus Dei underwent during the Spanish Civil War.

As the conference drew to a close, Rev. Peter Armenio, vicar of Opus Dei in the Midwest, reflected on the day’s events. He encouraged those present to see in the celebration of Blessed Josemaría’s birth “an opportunity and a challenge to follow Jesus Christ more closely.” Fr. Panula then closed the conference with a prayer, and participants enjoyed a concluding outdoor reception accompanied by a live jazz band.

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