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In Chicago

A brief video summary of the days Monsignor Fernando Ocáriz spent in Chicago, the second stop on his pastoral trip to the United States and Canada.

07/24/2019

Monday, July 15

On Monday morning the Prelate, Monsignor Fernando Ocáriz, visited Metro Achievement Center, an educational program for girls, whose spiritual formation is entrusted to

Opus Dei. Metro serves low-income families in the Chicago area through after-school and summer programs that provide academic support and character development, as well as programs for parents.

He was greeted warmly by groups of students, volunteers, and families as he toured the building and saw the programs in session. High school students in the apprenticeship program for engineering showed him some of the projects they were working on. The Prelate spent some time with the families of Petra and Ernestina, two women who started Metro 30 years ago. Petra shared some stories of its beginnings and expressed her gratitude for all the formation she has received from Opus Dei.

Following the Metro tour, the Prelate visited Midtown Center for boys. Midtown provides after-school and

summer programming to Chicago's under-served youth. Students take part in academic enrichment classes, sports, character development classes, and individual mentoring. Parents receive support in their role as the primary educators of their sons through seminars and individual counseling.

After being greeted by some of the full-time staff, he went out to the sports area where a large group of the program's students gave him a warm welcome. Monsignor Ocáriz met with each of Midtown's 18 summer advisors, volunteers from universities across the country who mentor Midtown's 400 summer students. He also met with the family of Melissa Villalobos, whose medical cure was approved as a miracle for the canonization of John Henry Newman.

The Father then visited St. Mary of the Angels Church, which is adjacent to Midtown. The parish was entrusted to priests of Opus Dei in 1991 by the then Archbishop of Chicago, Cardinal Joseph Bernardin.

Sunday, July 14

In his second full day in Chicago, the Prelate of Opus Dei had two large meetings at Northridge Preparatory School in Chicago, encouraging those present to make Christ the center of their lives.

Monsignor Fernando Ocáriz had two large meetings at Northridge Preparatory School in Chicago. The first meeting was with about 200 young men, mostly high school and college students. The Prelate began by explaining that the spiritual guidance they receive from Opus Dei

is not simply for their own benefit, but to help them help others.

“You are receiving formation in centers of the Work: circles, meditations, conversations with priests or with lay people. It is vital to remember that this formation is not only for you personally. All Christians participate in the apostolic mission which the Lord has given to the whole Church. All responsible Christians must have the conviction that the formation we receive is not only to perfect ourselves, to know more doctrine, to acquire more virtues, to be happier; we must also transmit this to everyone we can.”

Joe, a graduate of Northridge, asked Monsignor Ocariz how to share our faith in the university environment. The Prelate said the key is genuine friendship, going beyond the superficial in our personal relationships. “When there is true

friendship, you can communicate what you have within: your own thoughts, desires, and personal difficulties as well.” With a true friend, one can share what is proper to friendship – not imposing something, or trying to teach something the other person doesn’t know, but simply acting as a true friend.

Another student, Matt, asked about how to overcome timidity in responding to a possible vocation. The Prelate replied that “it is natural to have a certain fear or uncertainty before embracing a definitive direction for one’s life. What is needed is to sincerely seek God’s will, asking our Lord for light in the prayer and seeking advice from people who can provide good counsel.” The Prelate added that “ordinarily, God does not let us see a vocation with complete clarity” because He wants to respect our

freedom. Consequently, we should ask God for the grace to want to do his will, confident that “whatever God asks of us is what will make us happiest.”

In the second meeting with about 600 men, Monsignor Ocariz began by referring to the words of the Apostle Saint Paul that all things were created for Christ, “for Him and in Him.” Therefore, the Prelate said, we should center our entire life on Jesus. “Our prayer, our life, our spiritual life, our life of work, our family life, our apostolic life – everything should center on Jesus Christ,” he said. “Everything is for Him; the whole meaning of life, of creation, of history, is based on this truth.” The Prelate said that this foundation on Christ “is where we draw the strength to be his co-operators, to have Him present in us, to identify with Him. All the apostolic work

must focus on this. It is about bringing others to Jesus Christ.”

Brian, a journalist, asked the Prelate about responding to the contemporary epidemic in the use of pornography. Monsignor Ocariz warned against surfing the Web without a specific purpose, yielding to curiosity. “We need to possess the clear idea that sexuality, the human body of the woman and the man, is something tremendously good, created by God, for the transmission of life. ... Nobody becomes happier by succumbing to pornography,” he said. “On the contrary, impurity produces sadness. Only acting with moral rectitude gives joy.”

Doug, a marriage therapist, asked how to help couples turn the difficulties of marriage into a path of holiness. “As St. Josemaría used to say to couples, in marriage it is necessary to love each other more

every day,” the Prelate responded. “One must love the other person as that person is, with their defects, because we all have defects. When the defects are not offenses against God, we have to accept them with joy, with understanding, loving people as they are.”

The Prelate ended the get-together by calling on those present to pray for the Pope and the Church, remembering that “the Church is Jesus Christ.”

Saturday, July 13

On Saturday July 13, Monsignor Fernando Ocariz spent his first full day in Chicago at Willows Academy, where he had several gatherings with women of the Prelature and friends.

The Prelate began his first full day in Chicago, the second leg of his visit to the United States, at Willows Academy, speaking and answering questions in two different gatherings with members of the Prelature as well as students who receive Christian formation. The women hailed from many Midwestern states, including Minnesota, Missouri, Wisconsin, Indiana, Kansas, Iowa, Michigan, and even as far away as Colorado.

After a rousing song and applause to welcome him, Mary, whose parents helped begin Willows Academy, asked the Prelate how we, like Fr. Joseph Muzquiz (who began the apostolic work of Opus Dei in Chicago 70 years ago), could bring about the next “revolution” of spreading the Gospel message. The Prelate replied that the important revolution “is the revolution of each day that we have to carry out, each

one of us in our own lives. And a revolution means to turn around, to turn, in some way, the other way around, and this turning around means turning more to Christ. This is the great revolution that we can carry out each day, and that requires a constant revolution.”

The Prelate urged them to rely on God’s strength in the face of difficulties, particularly those that the Church is confronting today. “We shouldn’t give in to pessimism when we see difficulties, confusion or problems in the Church. The Church is made up of people who are weak, and we ourselves are weak. But the Church is above all the strength of God. The Church is Jesus Christ present in his word, present in the sacraments, present with all his salvific strength.”

Maripaz, the mother of a family, asked the Prelate about the

importance of working to create a pleasant home and family atmosphere for others. “One very direct way of understanding the importance of work in the home is to think about our Lady. The greatest created human person, the mother of God, what did she do during her entire life? She cared for the home of Joseph and Jesus. Even humanly speaking, the atmosphere of a family is necessary, an atmosphere where each person feels at ease. This allows each person to grow. A family atmosphere not only makes things pleasant for others but it is formative; it forms the person, also in the spiritual sphere because the material and the spiritual are very closely united.”

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the-important-revolution-is-that-of-
each-day/ (08/05/2025)