

The Prelate's Visit to Bari, Italy

In 1954, St. Josemaría prayed at the tomb of St. Nicholas in Bari, asking his intercession at a time of grave financial need. Fifty years later, the Prelate wanted to make a return visit to Bari.

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When he arrived on May 13, Bishop Javier Echevarría went first to the basilica of St. Nicholas. Kneeling at the tomb, he prayed for the needs of the Church and of Opus Dei throughout the world. Then he went

to the crypt to greet the basilica's rector.

The same day, the Prelate spoke with a hundred students at the Levante University Residence in a question and answer, family-style get-together. Among other subjects, he spoke about Pope John Paul II: "I'd like you to say a special prayer for him. You surely remember that the assassination attempt occurred on this day in 1981." Bishop Echevarría cited the words of pardon the Pope spoke as soon as he could: "With all my heart, I forgive that brother who tried to take my life." Later in the 40-minute get-together, there was a musical interlude when an engineering student who also studies in the conservatory played a section of Mozart's flute concerto.

Several times, Bishop Echevarría reiterated that he had come to Bari to

visit with his children and their friends in a familial, unofficial way.

The following day he paid a morning visit to the Archbishop of Bari, Francesco Carucci, and then went to Miralta High School where he was warmly received by the students, teachers, and staff. In a meeting with the school's directors, he spoke informally about educational and apostolic topics. In an hour-long afternoon gathering of nearly a thousand persons at Miralta, he heard the personal stories and concerns of various participants and spoke some words to them. Here are two samples of the conversation:

“Father, what are we to do when problems arise?”

“If you read the Gospel slowly, you will discover that we are on close terms with God, his children. Even when Jesus was tired, He would give himself completely to a soul. By

facing difficulties joyfully, trying to show everyone charity, affection, you'll find peace all around you because you'll have it in your heart."

"Father, next Friday is the sixth anniversary of our marriage."

"Congratulations."

"Thank you, Father. How can I put into my relationship with God the same enthusiasm, the same self-sacrifice, the same joy and care that I have for my husband?"

"You must always try to take better care of your husband and show him more joy and love because what you feel for him—and he for you—is a prayer to God. That means you have to take better "care" of yourself, too, so that you stay ever young and more beautiful every day. Smile just as you did when you were courting, presenting yourself in the way you know he likes, making plans he will

like. And keep in mind that the most important Person in your life is God. Stay very close to Him.”

After several more engagements, the Prelate returned to Rome on May 15.

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