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Centennial Conference in Boston

Despite forecasts of heavy snow, nearly 400 people attended the Centennial Conference on the teachings of St Josemaría Escrivá at Bentley College near Boston recently.

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The conference featured keynote speeches by Dr. Laura Garcia of Boston College and Dr. Michael Pakaluk of Clark University. Four

simultaneous workshops on professional work, education, family life and the culture of life were held between the keynote addresses, and Fr. Richard Rieman, a priest of the Prelature of Opus Dei and its first United States member, spoke during lunch.

William Bowman opened the conference by reading a welcome from the Prelate of Opus Dei, Bishop Javier Echevarria. “Following so closely on the canonization of Josemaría Escrivá a few weeks ago, your conference will reaffirm the universal message of St. Josemaría, to seek holiness in everyday life.” He went on to quote Pope John II who at the end of the canonization ceremony in St. Peter’s Square said, “Take to heart the lesson of the new Saint: that Jesus Christ should be the inspiration and goal of every aspect of your daily lives.”

Dr. Garcia gave the first keynote address about the culture of life in the family. “Our lives are spent in family relationships and friendships of many kinds, and these must be the very material of our growth in holiness and likeness to Christ.” She emphasized that the foundation of family life is relationship between husband and wife. “For married persons, giving oneself to God is realized in and through giving oneself to one’s spouse.” She noted that one of St. Josemaría's favorite expressions was “May you seek Christ; may you find Christ; may you love Christ.” She went on to say that “the prayer of a married person must be: ‘May I seek Christ in my spouse, may I find Christ in that face; may I love Christ in that heart.’”

Following her talk the participants then attended one of the four breakout sessions that explored how the teachings of St. Josemaría Escrivá

can be applied in specific arenas of everyday life. Frank McNamara, a lawyer and a former U.S. Attorney; Karen Bohlin, Executive Director of Boston University's Center for the Advancement of Ethics and Character; Paul Swope, Development Director of The Caring Foundation; and Rosemary Cook, a mother of nine and a teacher, chaired the four sessions.

Fr. Richard Rieman gave the luncheon address. He noted that he had lived in Rome with Msgr. Escrivá for four years, and had learned to appreciate the humor and joy of the new Saint. "He was always smiling, and used to sing in the car on the way to various destinations. His happy spirit was a constant reminder of the importance of cheerfulness to the Christian vocation."

In the second keynote address, Professor Pakaluk spoke about

personalism and friendship. He noted that St. Josemaría and Pope John Paul II shared the belief that Christians should seek to have a very personal relationship with Jesus Christ. He quoted from St. Josemaría, who said, “Get to know the Sacred Humanity of Jesus, and He will place in your soul an insatiable hunger, an ‘uncontrollable’ yearning to contemplate His face.”

He emphasized the importance of relationship between Christ and the Christian, modeled on the relationship between each person of the Holy Trinity. “There are three important points about this reciprocity in our relationship with Christ,” he noted. “First, it involves shared knowledge. Second, it involves a real union with Him. Third, it implies that we are real cooperators with him, co-redeemers.” He pointed out this

intimacy with Christ was the root of the spiritual life of St. Josemaría.

Bill Bowman

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