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The Prelate of Opus Dei in Barcelona: "May we be sowers of peace and joy"

Monsignor Fernando Ocáriz met with faithful of the Prelature in various encounters during his visit to Barcelona from August 5 to 7. He also visited the Basilica of Our Lady of Mercy, as St. Josemaría did on many occasions. On Sunday, August 7, in the afternoon, the Prelate of Opus Dei returned to Rome.

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Recover joy “looking at the Lord’s Cross”

In his encounters with the faithful and friends of the Prelature, Msgr. Ocáriz reiterated the importance of joy: “We have to be happy; we have, so to speak, the *obligation* to be happy. Sometimes it may not be easy because we face difficulties, sufferings of one kind or another, or setbacks, which humanly tend to take away our joy or make us a little sad. But then we have to react quickly, without waiting for it to come back on its own; we can always recover it by looking to the Lord’s Cross.”

Maria Carme, from Girona, asked a question about joy and the Prelate replied that “joy is a situation of the

soul produced by the awareness of the good. To recover joy after losing it, we have to think of the infinite good that we have, which is God with us. *Si Deus nobiscum, quis contra nos?* If God is with us, who can be against us? There are always reasons to be happy, no matter what happens, because God is with us.”

The Prelate made reference to the litany of the Rosary, in which we call our Lady “cause of our joy, the one who has given us Jesus, who is our joy.” How can we live joy? He gave an example: “The body ‘pulls’ the soul, just as the soul ‘pulls’ the body. We can smile when we are tired. When your joy begins to fade, smile. The gesture alone...”

“You remember,” he added, “that our Father [St. Josemaría] said that sometimes the most important mortification is to smile. Smiling is not a fiction; it is not a sign of

hypocrisy. It is a positive effort we make to show that we have the Lord within us and that we also have our Lady very present in another way.”

God wants to need our prayer and our love

“The Lord,” the Prelate of Opus Dei continued, “wants to need us, without needing us. Just as he wants our prayer, without needing our prayer. He wants us to ask him for things, as it says in the Gospel: *Ask and it will be given to you*. What need does our Lord have for us to ask him for things? In itself, none; he knows what we need much better than we do. But he wants to need our prayer, just as he wants to need our affection. It is obvious that, if this is the case, it is because it is good for us. And that is because of how much he loves us. Because praying, opening our souls, is very good for us.”

“It’s like this,” he went on, “God wants to need our love, our self-gift, our correspondence. And then there are so many direct motives for joy, because not everything is suffering. There are so many positive reasons to rejoice, to give thanks to God. And we must also ask for joy in the good things in order to give thanks to the Lord and, also, to pass it on. Try, even if sometimes we do not have much capacity, to be sowers of peace and joy.”

“Clama, ne cesses”

Msgr. Fernando Ocáriz recalled that 52 years ago, on August 6, 1970, the founder of the Work, St. Josemaría, received a divine locution: “*Clama, ne cesses!*,” words from the Book of Isaiah. He added that St Josemaría himself had insisted on the importance of prayer in a letter he wrote to his daughters and sons in June 1974: “Prayer: that is our

strength. We have never had any other weapon.”

“The most important and most effective thing,” the Prelate said, “is the Mass, because it is Christ's sacrifice, union with Him in communion. That is why the Mass is the most fundamental prayer,” and, he added, “work is also prayer.”

“Many times,” he continued, “prayer is petition, that *clama ne cesses!* but it is also simply, without words, looking at the Lord, knowing that we are contemplated by Him, knowing that we are loved by Him. In such a way that we can transform everything we do into prayer, and everything we think, everything.”

In this way we will be “sowers of peace and joy.” “May we not be people who make the staff nervous,” he said jokingly.

The motu proprio “Ad charisma tuendum”

Fernando, who works at the IESE, asked Msgr. Ocáriz about the recent motu proprio “Ad charisma tuendum,” which refers to Opus Dei and which, in the Prelate's words, “we filially accept.”

He encouraged us to “pray for the adjustments to the Statutes, as the Pope has requested,” which “refer above all to the Work's relationship with the Holy See.” As on other occasions during these days in Barcelona, Msgr. Ocáriz asked for prayers that, in this process, we may know how to be fully faithful to the charism of St. Josemaría, “as the Holy Father writes in the Motu Proprio.”

Apostolic celibacy

The Prelate also spoke about apostolic celibacy, in response to a question from Fr. Pablo, a priest who works with university students, about the difficulties that some people have in giving themselves to

God by living the vocation of numeraries or associates of Opus Dei.

“There is a key point, which is apostolic celibacy. There are many people, very good, very well prepared, who go to formational centres and have an interior life. And celibacy *is a drawback* for many of them. Perhaps — each person is different — in some way they have a vision of celibacy as pure sacrifice. It is true that it has a dimension of sacrifice, of renouncing something. Essentially every person tends naturally towards marriage. Celibacy has that dimension of sacrifice.”

“But we cannot stop there, just as, in fact, we do not stop in our ordinary lives. Not when it comes to discerning vocations to celibacy, either. We must know how to show the great gift: apostolic celibacy is a great gift of God. We must know how

to explain it, in its direct and positive dimension, in what is the fullness of giving — the fullness of one's own love — for Jesus Christ, for God, and from God to all souls. Apostolic celibacy well lived gives an enormous capacity to love. And this is what makes one happy, as St. Josemaría recalled: ‘To be happy, what you need is not an easy life but a heart which is in love.’ Celibacy is a gift we receive from God for a much greater love.”

Holy marriages

“Then you must keep in mind that it isn’t as if marriage is without sacrifice. Marriage involves a lot of sacrifice. And in many ways, many, marriage is harder than celibacy. It is enough to think a little about reality. Sadly, it is enough to see the number of divorces there are, above all marriage not very well founded in the sacrament. Because it is very

hard. At the beginning it seems like a romantic novel, but then, as the years go by, marital fidelity requires great effort. There are very holy Christian marriages, in the Work and outside of the Work; very holy Christian marriages, which are heroic.

“And what is best? The best thing is neither the one nor the other, but what God asks of each one of us. One has to consider things honestly before God, when thinking about vocation. What is best is what God asks of each person, that is the best thing for that person. And it is not one thing that is easier than another. Because it is in what God asks of us that he will give us the grace to be faithful and happy.”

The key is love

He responded to a question Eva asked about living the virtue of poverty with various ideas: doing

without superfluities, being detached from necessities, not complaining when we lack what we need... “The line between the superfluous and the necessary is not mathematical,” he pointed out, “it depends on the circumstances; we cannot give fixed rules.” He stressed the importance of one’s “personal conscience, in sincerity, before the Lord.” “The line depends very much on the refinement of the soul,” he said, adding: “It is a question of looking at it before the Lord with freedom, without boxing ourselves in.” He suggested some guiding questions: “Why do I complain; what causes me to react with displeasure? We need to see if the complaint is well-founded or only caprice. Love,” he concluded, “is the key.”

Pray for the Holy Father

The Prelate of Opus Dei concluded by reminding us that we must always be

happy and asked: “May you continue to pray for my intentions, for the Pope's intentions, for the whole Work, which belongs to each one of you, as well as to me.”

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