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A Man of Constant Prayer

An article published in Chinese in the Taiwan Catholic Weekly on the Prelate's recent pastoral trip. He encouraged the faithful to be a Tabernacle for Christ, and to love one another

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The Prelate of Opus Dei, a part of the Catholic Church, flew to Taiwan from Japan on April 21 for a four-day pastoral visit. In a marathon round of visits and preaching, he prayed for every person he met, including

passersby. He is very approachable: a person who prays constantly and who, above all, is a bearer of Christ.

Opus Dei started its apostolic work in Taiwan in 1985. The first successor of the Founder, Bishop Alvaro del Portillo, had visited Taiwan in 1987. The present Prelate, Javier Echevarría, was making his second pastoral visit to Taiwan after his first in 1996.

On this trip, Bishop Echevarría made time to see his old friends Archbishop John Hung, Archbishop Joseph Ti Kong and Bishop Joseph Wong. He told them of his admiration for the development of the Catholic Church in Taiwan. At the same time, he expressed deep concern for the Catholic Church in Mainland China. He said that he and all the members of the large family of Opus Dei were praying unceasingly for the future

development of China. He especially invited the faithful on the Mainland to trust in God, as children trust.

This Bishop lives the teaching of loving one another to the letter. On the same evening he arrived to Taipei, he held get-togethers with the women students from Wen Shan Residence and with the men from Cheng Jung Study Center. He urged all the students and members to be prayerful souls, to have self-dominion, to love one another, to strive for sanctity without fear of becoming tired. With his tight schedule and the jetlag, perhaps the person most exhausted should have been himself, but he was always smiling and bestowing his blessings upon those he met.

Bishop Echevarría has a deep devotion to our Lady. While visiting He Shan Residence in the Wen Shan District, when he learned that a

pilgrim image of Our Lady of Wan-Jing was present in the nearby Church of the Resurrection, he wanted to venerate our Lady. When he arrived, Benediction was being celebrated with the church full of faithful. Bishop Echevarría immediately fell on his knees and knelt before the Blessed Sacrament for 10 minutes. He also prayed before the statue of Our Lady of Wan-Jing for a long time. The love he has for the Blessed Sacrament as well as for our Lady touched everyone present.

Many people were eagerly awaiting the general get-together, held at the International Conference Hall of the Taipei Youth Center at 7:30 p.m. on April 23rd. Even before seven, the Hall was crowded with more than 300 persons. Bishop Echevarría reminded everyone of their divine calling to pursue sanctity in the middle of their ordinary life, urging

them to be a Tabernacle for Christ and souls of prayer. The constant challenge for the lay faithful, he said, is to work together with all people of good will towards promoting and developing a culture which respects human dignity. He stressed that when any honest job or upright profession is carried out wholeheartedly, with all one's strength and love, God is made present: one can find God there and serve the others. His manner of speaking is very amiable, and from the way those asking questions addressed him as "Father," it was not difficult to see that in the big family of Opus Dei, people truly love one another.

With reference to the financial tsunami that has hit the world, someone asked Bishop Echevarría about "the meaning of suffering." He expressed his solidarity with those who suffered, and also emphasized that suffering is part of everyone's

life. The Founder of Opus Dei, St. Josemaría Escrivá, had spent countless hours willingly by the bedsides of those who were suffering, accompanying them. Bishop Echevarría encouraged everyone not to close in on themselves, but to convert all suffering into occasions to trust whole-heartedly and to share in God's love. He also spoke in detail about the inseparable union between suffering and the Cross, reminding us that it was not possible to always remain with Christ on Mount Tabor; most of the time, we have to be on the road to Calvary. Loving our family members and fulfilling our duties brings us the Cross.

That same day, April 23rd, was the anniversary of St. Josemaría's first Holy Communion when he was 10 years old. Bishop Echevarría pointed out that when St. Josemaría was still a child, he already realized the

importance of the Eucharistic Sacrament: God assumed human nature. He walked the paths of the earth and manifested his selfless Love so that we may live. He remains in the Bread and we become one Body in Him. Therefore, we should consider ourselves as followers who have to spread His love and His help, imitating the spirit of St. Paul, and looking after the needs of the others. Those who are baptized have the special grace and strength to serve with a spirit of sacrifice, thus becoming Christ-bearers, the Prelate said in conclusion.

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