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Video Highlights: The Prelate in Granada

The Prelate of Opus Dei recently made a pastoral visit to Granada, Spain. This article summarizes the various activities during his trip.

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23 November | 24 November | 25 November

23 November: Close to Our Lady

Monsignor Fernando Ocáriz arrived in Granada at around five in the afternoon on Friday. Right off the plane's runway, some families were awaiting him with a bouquet of white roses. The Prelate greeted John Paul, an eight-year old boy who will make his First Communion this year, and who welcomed the Prelate to the city of Alhambra.

The Prelate's first stop was the Basilica of Our Lady of Sorrows, the patroness of Granada. The pastor of the church, Fr. Blas Gordo, greeted Monsignor Ocáriz and joined him in praying before an image of Mary that the people of Granada have venerated since the arrival of the Catholic Monarchs in the 15th century. The Prelate thus was following in the footsteps of Saint Josemaria, and of the former Prelate of Opus Dei, Bishop Javier Echevarría, who visited Granada in 1996 and 2002.

The Prelate also greeted various members of the Work, including Emilio, who offered him two boxes of "*piononos*," a typical candy made in Granada and that was actually invented by Emilio's ancestors.

24 November: "We have to help strengthen freedom"

On Saturday, the sky cleared over Granada and the sun shone brightly over the snowy peaks of the nearby Sierra Nevada. With this landscape as a backdrop, the Prelate of Opus Dei made his way to the Monaita-Mulhacén School for a series of encounters with families and members of the Work from Granada and its neighboring cities: Málaga, Almería, Jaén and Melilla.

Before the encounters, Monsignor Ocariz greeted the directors of Attendis, an educational enterprise that is responsible for 21 schools in Andalusia and Extremadura. These

schools foster active collaboration between teachers and parents of students, inspired by the advice and encouragement of Saint Josemaria. Sandra Pérez, the general director of Attendis, gave the Prelate a plaque with the enterprise's new logo, and explained the meaning behind each symbol. The Prelate then greeted the people who take care of the cleaning and the cafeteria at the school, telling them that their work has a very direct educational impact on the students, and is therefore "just as important, or even more so, than that of the teachers."

That same morning, Monsignor Ocariz also had a get-together with over 1,400 people in the sports pavillion at the Monaita-Mulhacén school. At the beginning, the Prelate recalled the visits made to Granada by Bishop Javier Echevarría, and he encouraged those present to make themselves available to fulfill God's

will, being open to all men and women, with a universal outlook. As an example, he spoke about the life of Guadalupe Ortiz de Landázuri, a woman of Opus Dei who will be beatified next May 18. He also asked them to pray for the Pope, especially in these difficult moments for the Church.

Juan, one of those present, is a professional magician as well as an accountant. When telling the Prelate where his business was located, he took out a handkerchief that suddenly turned into a cane. Angel, a soccer referee, and Daniel, a professional diver who works in Arabia and Egypt, also had questions for Monsignor Ocáriz.

The Prelate encouraged everyone to put great care into the practices of Christian piety that help keep Christ at the center of our lives. There is always reason for hope, he said,

because, "a minimum of supernatural vision brings a lot of gladness, including when things get difficult."

The Prelate of Opus Dei also held an encounter with diocesan priests who participate in the activities carried out by the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross in the eastern part of Andalusia. Speaking about the situation of confusion in the Church and in society, he encouraged them to have firm convictions and to foster a supernatural outlook. He also asked them to give the good example of joy, "which can only come from being close to God," and to spread a hope-filled outlook.

In the afternoon, another gathering was held in Monaita-Mulhacén with people from all over Andalusia. The Prelate reminded them that holiness is God's plan for each one of them, which doesn't mean a material

perfection or trying to become people without defects, but rather the fullness of love, which leads us to give ourselves to God and to others. He brought up the example of Guadalupe Ortiz de Landázuri again, pointing to her availability to "be in what God wanted," whether it was going to Mexico or Rome, or taking responsibility for the domestic administration of different centers of Opus Dei.

"We have to help strengthen freedom," Monsignor Ocariz told those present, explaining that this is possible when we do everything "because we want to, putting love for God into it. When we feel free and act out of love is when we are truly happy."

A young woman, 27 years old, said that she is a millennial and that her life is immersed in social networks and the internet. She asked the

Prelate how she could find God amid all the noise that so attracts her attention. Monsignor Ocariz recalled how Saint Josemaria discovered the depth of God's presence in the bustle of the city while taking a tram, and he recommended taking special care of our encounters with God, especially in the Holy Mass. He said that these moments are like radiators that help us keep the warmth of God's presence all throughout the day.

25 November: "God wants our help to spread His Kingdom"

The last day of Monsignor Ocariz's pastoral visit to Granada coincided with the celebration of the Feast of Christ the King. The Prelate spoke with various groups of young people, reminding them that Christ reigns by respecting the freedom of each person. He also invited them to realize that the Christian formation

they receive through Opus Dei is meant to help them identify themselves with Christ.

"God wants our help to spread his Kingdom. We should feel this responsibility not as something that weighs on us but as a gift from God. This is the Christian vocation to holiness and apostolate." He also asked the young people to support the Pope with their prayer.

Among those who greeted the Prelate was Noor, a young Muslim whose mother was treated at the Clinic of the University of Navarre. Noor told Monsignor Ocariz that she felt very loved and welcomed by the people in the Work, and that she is now living in a residence run by Opus Dei. The Prelate invited her to pray to God, and even to direct her prayer to Jesus Christ.

Alex, a bronze medalist in Judo, said he wanted to give his medal as a gift

to the Father (which is how the faithful of Opus Dei call the Prelate), and he said he would have liked it to be gold or silver. The Prelate told Alex that, like a good athlete, he could always get up after falling. Another young fellow, named Fernando, said he had just finished his university degree in Physics at the University of Barcelona, as the Prelate himself did 60 years ago.

Mari Ángeles recently began working as a nurse, and Monsignor Ocariz encouraged her to do her work for God and with God. "Saint Josemaría has opened a great horizon for us," he insisted, "by proclaiming that work is a hinge upon which our whole spiritual life can revolve." He recalled how the founder of Opus Dei would sometimes begin his daily tasks with these words: "Lord, let's do this together."

Julia told the Prelate about how she distanced herself from God at a certain point in her life, but later on she realized that her life was empty and she decided to take up her Christian faith once again. "God won you over precisely when you were far from him, like Saint Paul," Monsignor Ocariz said. "We cannot pretend that we won't face difficulties. But the harder the environment is, the more our Lord depends on us."

At midday, the Prelate also visited the EFA Soto Center for Professional Formation, located in a rural area of Granada. Since 1967, this center has offered training programs designed to improve the living and working conditions of the local people. The school began as an association of families who came together to offer a joint contribution to help their neighbors. The Prelate thanked them for the work they do to make Saint

Josemaria's dream a reality: putting Christ at the summit of all human activities. He reminded them that agriculture is an important activity for society that also needs to be imbued with the joy of the Gospel.

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