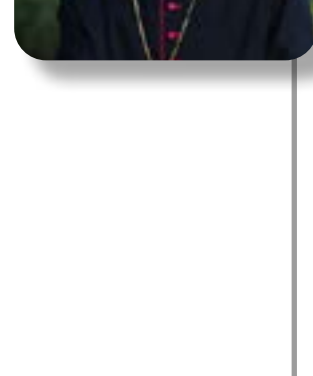


Please read the following letter from Monsignor Fernando Ocariz, the Prelate of Opus Dei, for an update on how efforts to mitigate the coronavirus epidemic may affect our spiritual lives.



My dear children: may Jesus watch over my daughters and sons for me!

Faced with the difficulties that, in greater or lesser degree, can arise in these moments with the growing pandemic caused by the COVID-19 virus, let us renew our confidence in Our Lord and resolve to confront this situation "with the strength of faith, the certitude of hope and the fervor of charity" (Francis, March 8, 2020). The situation varies in the different regions of the world, but the Communion of Saints leads us to make our own what affects the others, because "if one member suffers, all suffer with him" (1 Cor 12:26). In the face of any emergency, we unite ourselves in prayer to those who are going through critical moments, as now is the case with those gravely ill with the coronavirus, the people who have been forced to migrate to survive (the Syrian exodus during these days), families who have experienced a tragedy, etc.

COVID-19 has in some places produced an emergency situation that has altered the normal course of life and affected people's spirits. It is good to recall that God gives us his grace also to sanctify these circumstances of uncertainty. Let us help one another to confront these rapidly changing situations, knowing that when we are obliged to reduce our external work we find an opportunity to "grow on the inside."

In responding to the spreading pandemic, the civil authorities in each country are providing some norms for prevention and control. Faced with the effort and inconvenience that following these may entail, it is good to keep in mind Saint Josemaria's advice: "Love and respect the norms of behavior required for living in harmony. Have no doubt, either, that your loyal submission to duty can be the means for others to discover Christian integrity, which is the fruit of divine love, and to find God" (Furrow 322). For the good of the faithful, and of society in general, the ecclesiastical authorities too are giving or could give indications regarding the celebration of the Sacraments and pastoral care. We will receive these with gratitude and trust in our mother the Church. In this regard too, it is good to be very prudent and to suspend, when necessary, the planned activities of formation, without taking unnecessary risks.

We need to think especially of creative ways to keep alive our apostolic mission and service to others, when prudence and the dispositions of the civil and ecclesiastical authorities make it impossible to get together for activities. The first thing is to try to ensure that every person in the Work and your friends and family members know that they are closely accompanied. For example, we can phone them more often, including other relatives and friends whom we perhaps have not seen for some time. We should take advantage of all the possibilities that technology offers to carry on the means of formation (circles, talks, meditations, get-togethers, etc.), and share formational materials found on the internet. (People are working now on special material for www.opusdei.org, and there is other material that can be a help for the spiritual life: texts, audios, videos.) We can encourage people to meditate on the readings and prayers of the Holy Mass for weekdays in Lent (the Pope's daily Mass is being live-streamed at www.vaticannews.va). We can share experiences on how to further the apostolic work in these circumstances, etc. These are exceptional moments and it is even more necessary than ever to help one another and to practice charity, trying to ensure that no one feels alone.

To the extent possible given the circumstances and respecting the guidelines laid down by the civil authorities, living charity might mean taking on creative initiatives to help others (neighbors, fellow workers, etc.). Special attention should be given to those who are more vulnerable, especially the sick and elderly: while being prudent, we should do all we can for their spiritual and material care.

In places where the norms regarding social contact are even stricter, we should try to create a positive environment in the homes of the associates, supernumeraries and friends, and also in the centers of the Work. Let us try to discover the opportunities for friendship and fraternity that these circumstances offer us. Some attitudes and activities that can help in this regard are: facing hardships and unexpected annoyances with a sense of humor; not blaming anyone; thinking about a plan for reading and watching videos; planning games and entertainment so that the children or our brothers and sisters can have a good time; tackling projects that have been waiting for a more relaxed time; doing physical exercise at home, etc.

Let us be especially grateful to the health personnel who during these days are serving with a generous spirit of sacrifice. Let us be especially attentive to them, and try to support and encourage them in their work.

And especially, let us pray so that this period too may be an opportunity for us to draw closer to Our Lord, being "sowers of peace and joy" to those around us.

Your Father blesses you with all his affection,

Fernando

Rome, 14 March 2020

From the Prelate

Monsignor Fernando Ocariz, the Prelate of Opus Dei, issued a pastoral letter in November, 2019, in which he extolled the value and beauty of friendship, a virtue that is often underrated in today's society. What follows is the second installment of three brief summaries of his letter.

In this section of his letter, the Prelate describes friendship, emphasizing its connection to charity, especially through understanding others. Quoting St. Josemaria, he encourages us to "... understand the intentions of our friends, even though we may never come to share them or accept them." We should see each person as someone loved by God, discovering the good in them, loving and affirming them just as they are. We are called to carry an environment of friendship with us wherever we go, growing in joyfulness, optimism, and refinement, helping people to feel welcomed, and making life more pleasant for them. Thus, we should struggle to improve our own character, so we can achieve the virtues necessary for friendship.

Noting that certain ways of expressing oneself can hinder friendship, Monsignor Ocariz cautions us against being overly emphatic about our own opinion, making sure that we distinguish what is a matter of opinion from what is not, and realizing that many topics don't necessarily have only one solution. He also reminds us that offering our friendship entails being willing to take a risk - there is always a possibility that it may not be returned, so we should be willing to take the first step without expecting anything in exchange.

Closing this section of the letter, the Prelate urges us to imitate the boundless love expressed in Christ's friendship: No one has greater love than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends (Jn 15:13).

Faith & Reason

Each month, an amazing opportunity takes place at Beverly Cultural Center - the Faith and Reason series, which invites participants to go deeper in the Catholic faith and learn how it is relevant to everyday life. Please scroll down to read more.

90 Years of Women Seeking Sanctity

February 14, 2020 marked the 90th anniversary of women in Opus Dei, observed by the presentation of a short video on nine faithful members who blazed a path for women in the Work. The Prelate offered a meditation on what the date means to the faithful. Please scroll down for more.

Family Enrichment

As part of a series of talks on parenting skills, Julia Boles made a case for helping children learn responsibility by teaching them to use their God-given freedom well. Please scroll down for a summary of her talk.

Girls' Club Corner: Orange County

Through fun activities, service and friendship the Orange County girls' clubs have grown from one to three groups and from one generation to the next. Please scroll down for details.

Faith & Reason



Each month, an amazing opportunity takes place at Beverly Cultural Center - the Faith and Reason series, which invites participants to go deeper in the Catholic faith and learn how it is relevant to everyday life. They explore growing closer to God through the sacraments, how to pray, the morality of human actions, why Church history is important to understand today's culture, and several other topics. Fr. John Meyer and Lisa Limtiaco alternate teaching these classes in a way that enables the participants to communicate truth more effectively. Participants also grow in their own faith and learn to live their faith in their work and family life. Being able to apply truths of the faith to current issues is more important than ever in today's environment. Those who attend have the chance to ask deeper questions and to clarify certain points of the faith.

The classes also provide a forum for dialogue and friendship among the women attending. Two of the women who have been attending regularly had been roommates in college. They lost touch for over 20 years until last year, when they unexpectedly discovered each other at the Faith and Reason classes! They loved the fact that their paths crossed again in their desire to learn more about Christ and the Church. Many of the participants are young mothers who are eager to pass on the faith to their growing families.

We hope you can join us starting next month!

~ Lisa Limtiaco

Click here more information on the Faith and Reason series. (<https://www.walnutgrovecenter.org/seminar-faith-and-reason>)

UPCOMING EVENTS

To aid all of us with social distancing in light of the coronavirus, activities in our area will be canceled at least through the end of March. We will keep you informed as necessary regarding April and beyond, contingent on future health and safety recommendations by authorities.

SUMMER ACTIVITIES FOR GIRLS

AVANTI WEST
June 22-27, 2020
Seminar on leadership, service and friendship for girls entering 9th and 10th grades
Apply at <https://www.asterstudycenter.org/copy-of-lbssp-application>

PATHFINDER SUMMER CAMP
July 5-11, 2020
Girls entering 5th - 9th grade
Apply at <https://www.southernhillinc.org/camp2020>

LONG BEACH SERVICE PROJECT
July 19 - 25, 2020
High school girls plan and run a day camp
Apply at <https://www.asterstudycenter.org/lbssp-application>

LIVING ESSENTIALS INTERNSHIP
August 2 - 8, 2020
Paid internship in the hospitality industry for high school girls
Apply at <https://www.asterstudycenter.org/le-application>

LIGHTS! CAMERA! ACTION!
August 3 - 11, 2020
Media-literacy program for rising high school seniors and college students
Apply at <http://www.westfieldresidence.org/lca-application>

SPIRITUAL RETREATS*

April 17, 8:30a - April 19, 2020, 2:45p
Mary & Joseph Retreat Center, Rancho Palms Verdes

October 23, 8:30a - October 25, 2020, 2:45p
Double Tree Irvine Spectrum

November 13, 9:30a - November 15, 2020, 2:45p
Double Tree Irvine Spectrum

For Young Professionals:
December 10, 8:00p - 13, 2020, 11:00a
Palomar Mountain

*<https://www.walnutgrovecenter.org/retreats>

90 Years of Women Seeking Sanctity

February 14, 2020 marked the 90th anniversary of Opus Dei.

To observe the occasion the Prelature presented a short video on nine faithful members who blazed a path for women in the Work <https://opusdei.org/en-us/video/14-february-2020-a-path-traveled-by-many/>

Additionally, the Prelate offered a meditation on February 14. He began by thanking God for the blessings of the past 90 years, noting, "You need to give thanks (we all do) because on that 14 February 1930 each of you was in the mind of God, part of his plans, from all eternity.... We are also grateful thinking of the thousands and thousands of women of Opus Dei who are in heaven, having reached the goal.... Referring specifically to the founding of the women's section and the gratitude that we should have especially on this day, our Father said to his daughters: "The best way to be grateful is to be happy, calm, serene, balanced; praying, working, smiling, and being grateful that in the Work we are never alone."



Blessed Guadalupe Ortiz

The Prelate continued with the following words of encouragement: "May we truly be Opus Dei, with the certainty and faith that You are determined to see it carried out, no matter how many difficulties may arise, no matter how great our own personal weaknesses may be.... We have to be truly concerned about the others, to see and take care of them, which is to take care of the Work.... May we realize that nothing we do for the Work is useless: everything is effective, and not just in the small things of our immediate work, but rather for something much greater.... We must always be convinced that our work is never useless before God: it is always effective and always useful (1 Cor 15:58)."



Dora del Hoyo

Ninety years of women across the globe, transforming the circumstances of their lives into occasions for loving God - may God bless us as we continue along the path! Where will we, our daughters, and our friends be in ten years, at our 100th anniversary?

~ Jane Reckart

Family Enrichment

Our mission at Family Enrichment Los Angeles (FELA) is to offer educational programs to strengthen marriages and help improve family life. We truly believe in our motto, "building stronger families, building a better tomorrow." Our programs provide opportunities for husbands and wives to enhance their communication and parenting skills through group discussions that promote effective ways of raising children to become healthy adults.

Each year we offer courses addressing issues which arise for parents of children at specific stages of development. In the fall of 2020, we will offer a course called First Letters designed for parents of children between the ages of 4 and 7. We hope you will join us at future Family Enrichment events, to build stronger families and a better tomorrow.

~ Nora Urrea

For more information visit www.familyenrichmentla.com



"Orange You Glad We're in Orange County?"

It is a story we hear over and over again.

Little girls meet for the first time at a girls' club. At first, they are shy and barely talk to each other. They get together monthly for a virtue talk and enjoy learning how to cook, sew and do crafts. They learn, play and have fun together. Months turn into years and before they realize it, they become the best of friends.

When the Irvine girls' club started eight years ago, for several months there were only two girls who attended the meetings. Then slowly, it took off, as more and more friends joined in, until the house was full of happy girls.

Today, there are three girls' clubs in Orange County: one in Irvine for 1st-3rd graders, one in Huntington Beach for 4th-6th graders, and one in San Juan Capistrano for 3rd-8th graders. The mission of each club is to help families instill virtues into young girls so they can be exemplary and dependable daughters, sisters, students and leaders of their homes and communities, to help the girls develop good habits and grow into women of character.

Another aspect of our clubs is fostering the spirit of service. A couple times each year, the girls visit a retirement home. They sing, play music and converse with the residents. The residents think the girls are wonderful and that they belong to a professional choir! They look forward to these visits every year.

Many friendships have formed in the clubs throughout the years. Also, as the girls grow, they learn to give back. The girls who listened to the talks years ago are now the ones who counsel, mentor and give talks to the younger ones. It is through the giving of themselves that they learn what it means to love.

~ Mia Macatula

To find a girls' club near you, go to <https://www.southernhillinc.org/girlsclubs>