



01_Australian Tour Highlights

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0:00:00.3 Speaker 1: Are you dissatisfied with your spiritual progress, feeling stuck without knowing why even after deliverance, prayers or years of therapy, recover your dignity, find your purpose and discover the thrill of walking with God once again, explore spiritual consultations with Sonja at BibleStudyEvangelista.com click, Go Deeper on the home page, and then one-on-one and find out how to cooperate more deeply with the Holy Spirit's action in your life for the spiritual consultation. If you like having Bible study in your pocket and you have an iPhone or iPad, Why don't leave a review, search Bible Study Evangelista in iTunes and tell everyone how you're loving and lifting all you've been given. Here's Sonja.

[music]

0:00:53.1 Sonja: A new series of the Bible Study Evangelista show is here. Ignite. Read and study the Bible like never before. I'm Sonja Corbitt, the CATHOLIC EVANGELISTA, and I am back for, it's about two weeks now, a little over, from a tour in Australia centered around my book with Deacon Harold Burke-Sivers, Ignite. And I was there for 3 weeks and I am going to give you the highlights of that today in preparation for the series on the book. So you're likely going to want that book and I left in the show notes the links to get it whether you are here in the US or over in Europe or down in Australia. I have links for you to get the book, Ignite, Read the Bible Like Never Before, that Deacon Harold and I wrote together. And throughout the series, I'm going to share with you how to interpret, how to read and study and interpret what you're reading in the Bible. I couldn't believe that I have never done this before. And as I was trying to decide how to share the book tour with you, the speaking tour in Australia with you and also what to do for our next series. I went back in the archives and I just could not believe I had never done that before.

0:02:14.7 Sonja: Everybody needs a hermeneutic and I remember in seminary that was one of the number one things. It was probably the most helpful thing that I studied early on in seminary was a hermeneutic, how to study the Bible. And that's part of why Deacon Harold and I wanted to write Ignite, because when you're beginning, it's very easy to get lost in the genres and the minutia of what you're reading, because the Bible doesn't read like a narrative. It's not like a fiction book. It starts out that way and then you can get really lost in trying to interpret what you're reading. And we always want to read and study with the mind and the heart of the church so that we are connected to the best minds and the best theologians and the best interpretations and wisdom from the church over its 2000 something years of existence. And so that's why we wrote the book and that's what I'm going to share with you. I'm going to share with you some of Deacon's talks, some of my talks, and today what I'd really like to do is just spend some time telling you the highlights of the trip because it was the hardest thing I've ever done in ministry. I had no idea what to expect.

0:03:39.5 Sonja: I had the schedule that I had was what was posted on the Parousia website, and as I speak today, I am going to talk about Charbel. Charbel is the founder and creator of Parousia Media down in Australia and his mission is to help support and evangelize Australia, but not just Australia, to make available really good resources, particularly a structure and an order of study that can help people start and progress throughout their spiritual lives. And so it's a beautiful ministry. They operate on a shoestring budget. And Charbel, when I talk about him, I just want you to know who he is. He was the planner for the speaking tour, and he was juggling two of us. He had Deacon Harold and me there at the same time, and Deacon was in parts of the country and countries, and I was in parts of the country and then we met together in the last half of the 3 weeks and we spoke together on the book Ignite and so poor Charbel he was juggling two of us at the same time and actually he had just gotten off of a previous tour with Father Alar only three weeks before and so there wasn't a whole lot of time to do things like publicity and all that. But anyway, so my schedule is the same as what he had posted on the Parousia website and so I was consulting that every day to figure out where I was.

0:05:26.9 Sonja: The issue though, was that I didn't know the geography of Australia, so I had no idea how long it was gonna take to get from one place to the other, whether or not I was gonna need to catch a flight and that wasn't Parousia's fault or Charbel's fault. It's the nature of travel and speaking. You just cannot concentrate on things two or three days away. You have to concentrate on the thing that's in front of you at the time in order to give yourself fully to the process and the people whom you're meeting. So it was just so difficult because there were so many talks and I'm just gonna... I'll just start with the very beginning. So I flew out on the 5th of July. It was a 20-hour flight. I left Nashville and flew to San Francisco. That was a five-hour flight and then it was another 15 hours down to Australia where I landed at Sydney. Now the very first thing that I noticed besides the fact that I couldn't sleep sitting up for some reason the seat I couldn't keep the seat back. I guess I don't weigh enough to keep it back. It kept sliding upright.

0:06:30.8 Sonja: So I didn't sleep much and I actually took some valerian root and tried to sleep. And I thought I had. And that was one of the very first things I noticed. I woke up, thought I had slept, and looked at the time. The screen on the back of the seat in front of me, and it had a map there and it's tracking the trip and I'm thinking man I must be halfway there and I still had 12 hours to go. [laughter] So holy moly that was it was tough that the trip there was tough the trip back was tough but one of the things the first things that I noticed is that as we neared Australia it grew larger on the map or it seemed to and it was interesting because when we look at a globe or a map up here in America it seems biggest right or at least our area where we are it looks bigger on a map or on a globe and as we neared Australia, Australia just got bigger and what I noticed is it's about the same size as America if you don't add Alaska and I was really struck by that and turns out that's actually true it is about the same size if you were to flip it around it would just about fit so I landed in Sydney and Charbel picked me up at the airport and we went straight to the Harbor Bridge which is iconic of Sydney and the Opera House which is right there in the same vicinity.

0:08:04.0 Sonja: And that of course is also iconic and I used a picture of the Opera House for the series here. And so I landed in Sydney we went and got a bite to eat and then I spent that afternoon and the next day resting. So that would have... And I actually got there because it's so far ahead it's 15 hours ahead so it was actually the next day. It was Friday. I left on Wednesday got there on Friday. And so I spent Friday Resting and exploring the city through the generosity of Rita and her husband I occupied an entire floor of a 37 story building right in the heart of Sydney right up next to the Central Park and the Cathedral was just beyond the park and from... If you were on the

community you got to see that picture, I could see from the 33rd floor a part of the Opera House and the park and St. Mary's Cathedral and also Sydney Point Tower. In fact I could see all the way around the city because there were windows all the way around the the floor that I occupied it was an apartment or condo something like that and so it was absolutely gorgeous.

0:09:21.1 Sonja: It was beautiful and the views were spectacular, so I did my morning prayer right there in front of the window, in front of that Opera House and the park and the cathedral every single morning, and on the 8th, the Saturday after I arrived, I had a talk in the evening at 6 o'clock on spiritual gifts. So that was the very first talk on Saturday evening, so I had Friday and Saturday to sort of acclimate a little bit and prepare for my first talk on Saturday, and then Sunday, I had talks at 11:00 AM and 6:00 PM at two different churches in the vicinity of Sydney. So Sydney was sort of like a hub, and I would go out into the outlying areas of Sydney and do talks and then come back at least they're in that first part of the trip, Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, I re-filmed the fulfilled study for Parousia. They're going to offer that, they've licensed it down there in Australia, and they are going to offer the video package as well as the workbook in the book as a full study, and so I filmed that whole study, that was 14 talks over three days and I front loaded, most of it.

0:10:43.8 Sonja: So I did six talks Monday, five talks Tuesday and four talks Wednesday, which left open Wednesday afternoon from noon onward. And Maria, her mother, and Mary of Perusia were kind enough to take me sightseeing. And that's where I got to pet kangaroos and koalas and was exposed to the Kookaburras, some of the birds, the plants, lots of just neat flora and fauna of Australia that day. And they also took me to the Sydney Point Tower for dinner that evening and it was amazing. They actually had taken me to dinner the night before too. But I spent those three days with Mary and while Charbel went to meet Deacon Harold up in Papua New Guinea, or PNG as they call it for short.

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0:11:52.7 Sonja: You're listening to the Bible Study Evangelista Show. Bible Study spirits that taste like cake.

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0:12:02.4 Sonja: Let's go social. I'm no longer on Facebook, so come and connect with me in the new Catholic Evangelista community. Visit BibleStudyEvangelista.com and click Community on the menu, or scroll down to the radio notes and click the link to our community. We're sharing pics and prayers, love the word takeaways and insights on the daily readings, and everything else social. Come share with me!

[music]

0:12:26.7 S1: Sonja created the Love the Word Bible Study Method just for you. Based on Mary's personal practice and formulated for your personality and temperament. Get your Love the Word Meditations every Monday morning by signing up at BibleStudyEvangelista.com Now, here's Sonja.

[music]

0:12:55.2 Sonja: Thursday and Friday, the 13th and 14th, I traveled to Brisbane, to Toowoomba, and delivered four talks there, one in the evening and a couple the next day. And I met someone that I have known on Facebook for years, Veronica. And of course I'm not on Facebook now, but she has followed me since the very beginning. And I didn't actually make the connection at first. I just knew that she had followed me for quite some time. I knew her name was Veronica and I actually met several sisters in that same family. It wasn't until she gave me a card and I got back to, we'll say home, to the apartment and read it and saw her last name that I realized, oh my gosh, this is my Veronica! The one that I've known for years and years. And so that was a really cool surprise there. And it's funny, my husband coined this funny little joke for Toowoomba. It's spelled T-O-O-W-O-M-B-A. Toowoomba. It's in out right there around Brisbane.

0:13:56.5 Sonja: And when he heard where I was, he brought up the story of Jesus speaking to Nicodemus and Nicodemus saying, what do I have to enter two Wumba? T-W-O Wumba, right. So anyway he was making it funny, I thought that was funny. And that was Thursday and Friday and then I left to Wumba and flew down to Tasmania which I didn't learn until I got there that Tasmania is actually one of the biggest locations for satanic worship. And honestly it was interesting because I didn't feel creepy while I was there at all. It was beautiful actually. And I enjoyed my time there a lot because it was a retreat center. I got there on Saturday. I did a talk on Saturday evening and then several on Sunday morning throughout that afternoon. So I did four talks there at that retreat center and I had my own room and my own bathroom and it was more like a regular retreat weekend for me.

0:15:00.7 Sonja: So the pace was normal for me and it felt familiar. So that was a really comfortable part of the trip because it felt very familiar and the timing and the pace of the talks and it was just all very familiar. And when I finished on Sunday, it was the feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. And they took me to a local Carmelite convent and I was able to spend a holy hour at that convent. And I'm telling you, I needed it so badly. It was amazing. It was such a gift from Our Lady. And it was just such a gift. And remembering it actually, I had forgotten that until I went back to Parousia's website and the pictures that I had posted from my own community and I remembered it. And even now, even talking about it, it brings me to tears because it was just such a restful, it was about an hour and 30 minutes with the nuns who are completely cloistered so we didn't get to see them at all but adoration and silence and solitude and there at the Carmelite convent which I have close ties to and there was a picture of my patron saint St John of the cross there on the opposite side that I could look at and our lady of Mount Carmel was right there close to me a statue of her and then I got to meet the Mother Superior. She summoned me. [laughter] And I was like, oh my gosh.

0:16:31.7 Sonja: And so I got to meet her. She was very young and just so full of joy and perky and just so cute. And so we talked a little bit about my own formation as a Carmelite and the interruption of formal formation there because of my travel and things like that. And she said, honey, you are Carmeliting. You just go... You go do what you've been called to do and when it's time you can enter Carmel formally. And I just thought that was such a gift. That was the first full week. Then Monday and Tuesday I had evening talks that started at 7:30 at again churches that surrounded the Sydney area. And that was when I started to feel this sort of beckoning by St. Charbel.

0:17:14.0 Sonja: I'd encourage you to just go look him up. So St Charbel, it was very interesting. I had seen in my Magnificat, which I use every day for prayer, I had seen in the Magnificat before the

trip, I believe it was before the trip, a sort of snapshot of him, a biography of him in that magazine. And everywhere I looked in Sydney, particularly because a lot of the churches were Chaldean churches, Maronite churches, and their patron saint in large part is St Charbel. And I started seeing him everywhere and I just got this sort of pull, to find out about him. And it turns out he was a wonder worker and a hermit. And later on, after he was long dead a photo bomber. My trip was actually sandwiched with biographies and writings on St Charbel. There was one at the beginning and one at the end and I just found that very very interesting and of course, Charbel at Parousia, his name is Charbel's so he's named for that saint so I just felt really beckoned by him and also St Mary MacKillop whose feast day is August 8th. St Charbel's feast day is July 24th.

0:18:30.0 Sonja: So while I was there, his feast day occurred and then St Mary MacKillop who is a patron saint, the first saint of Australia and so she established schools and orphanages for the poor both in Australia and New Zealand. But particularly St Charbel. Not as much St Mary MacKillop, but definitely St Charbel felt like he was sort of beckoning me during that time. After my talk on Tuesday night, I stayed over at Marymount Mercy Center, which was a retreat center because I was doing a day retreat the next day on Wednesday. So I did several talks on healing that day in Castle Hill at that Mercy Center, the retreat center. And it was interesting because there was no one there except for the superior of that, both the center and the order actually. And it was cold, it was cold in the building and of course, they said that it was winter the whole time I was in Australia, but it was a very mild winter. They actually acknowledged that as well. But that was good for me because I traveled with one carry on bag and I had bare legs except for my stockings.

0:19:41.0 Sonja: So the highs were usually in the 60s sometimes even bumped all the way to 70. But in the buildings because it was cooler overnight, all of the buildings, they didn't use the heat and so the buildings were cold. So every picture that you see me in on the community and on the Parousia website and the Parousia Instagram page and their Facebook page, I'm always in a coat. And that's why, because the buildings were cold and there was a little space heater in my room at the retreat center, and I had it full blast. And I actually even stole one from the next door room because there was nobody there in the center but me. So I pushed it into the bathroom across the hall and warmed up the bathroom and got that ready so that I could take a shower in there and not freeze to death. And when I got into the bed the very first night, this was the coolest thing ever. It was cold and I was tired and I was trying to acclimate still and just so much was going on. It was so busy I had very little down time and as equally introvert and extrovert, I need a lot of solitude and there wasn't a lot to be had because the pace was so fast and I'm constantly speaking and I'm constantly meeting people and.

0:20:54.2 Sonja: So when I got into bed that night I was actually not really looking forward to it because it was very chilly in the room even though the space heater had been cranked up. But when I climbed in the bed, sister had turned on the electric blanket and in Australia their electric blankets, they have electric blankets that are part of like a mattress cover. So when I got into that bed it was the most delicious feeling. It was one of those little things that God gives you to just help you bear up under some perseverance. And I was so thankful to her and also to God just for that little thing. It was absolutely delicious. And I said... They had one at the retreat center in Tasmania too. And I had said, then, I am going to get one of those things when I come back to America. I'm going to get one of those things and put it on my bed. And she was kind enough also... Sister Mary, she was kind enough to let me bring home a wool blanket. It was a small wool blanket, but very, very thick and Australian made, so it was authentically Australian. And she let me bring it home. And I absolutely love it.

0:22:08.7 Sonja: I got it home, I washed it. I cannot wait to use it this fall and winter. It's small, so it's probably not big enough for anything but a single bed, which is what it was on. But she let me bring it home and I can't wait. It is just a beautiful, that was actually my gift... Her gift to me, my gift to me as a keep sake for Australia, one of them. And then Wednesday evening, Deacon and I... That was the first time we actually came together and we spoke on the Ignite study. We did... He did a talk, I did a talk that sort of summarized our relationships with the Bible. And I spoke on Lectio Divina and he spoke on the Psalms. And I hope that that psalm talk is made available by Parousia Charbel, because it was fabulous. Deacon Harold talks about his relationship with the Psalms as a former monk and how they continue to be because... He prays the office every day. They continue for him to be very, very nourishing in the same way that Lectio Divina does for me. And so to hear him talk about the Psalms, that was really, really cool. So I hope I'm going to be able to link to that talk.

0:23:21.5 Sonja: And if I can, then just keep a watch on the Ignite series, because as we go through the chapters, he and I split the book up and he would do a chapter and I would do a chapter, we'd do a talk on the chapters. And so his chapters I'm hoping to provide as I go through the Ignite book here in the series, I'm hoping to provide for you his, some of his talks too. So just keep an eye in the show notes.

[music]

0:23:54.3 Sonja: You're listening to the Bible study Evangelista show. Bible study spirits that taste like cake.

[music]

0:24:02.9 S1: Did you know you can get Bible Study Evangelista Radio notes and podcasts delivered to your inbox every Monday morning? Redeem your Mondays. Join 1000s of your fellow listeners by subscribing at biblestudyevangelista.com. Now, here's Sonja.

[music]

0:24:20.2 Sonja: If you're tired of being harassed by anxiety, fear and depression, if you're ready to end the constant drama and pain in your relationships and circumstances, if you're sick of pain and disease and constant fatigue in your body, you need the Sacred Healing Masterclass. It's packed with practical tools for healing, anxiety and woundedness. 10 hours of Biblical Catholic teaching on healing for the heart, soul, mind and body, and the latest science in physics, neuroscience, and somatic psychology. Healing is your promise and inheritance in Christ. Go to Biblestudyevangelisa.com Homepage and click on the Sacred Healing Masterclass for details on how you can be healed. You will experience healing through this Masterclass, and what you learn will dispose you for love, heart, soul, mind and strength for the rest of your life.

[music]

0:25:23.3 Sonja: The Marymount Mercy Center was actually where I stayed when I was filming the first several days of work, Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday of that week when I got there. And then of course, the retreat. We came back to the retreat center on Wednesday, the day retreat for me.

And then Deacon actually stayed there. He stayed there for a couple of days because he had a talk on Thursday. I had one at 07:30 PM. And he had one at 05:30 PM I was at Our Lady of Lebanon, a church in the vicinity. He was at the retreat center there in Castle Hill, and we did talks then that evening, and I believe it was Thursday of that week that I met Petra. And Petra became sort of my guru. She drove me around all over the place, and she ended up staying with me at the apartment, which was fun, and so we sort of spent the rest of the time that I was in Australia together. And so I got to meet her and become friends with her. And that was also the day, or at least Wednesday, the retreat day. That was the day I met Alli. Alli again, she is on the community and has been there for some time, well, since I think I actually began the community.

0:26:42.2 Sonja: And we got to meet, we got to meet for the first time, which was miraculous, honestly, because she's in Australia and I live in the United States. And so the fact that we got to meet up, that was very, very cool. And so just making lots of friends and it was tough to leave them. It was really tough to leave them, to be honest. So that was Wednesday and Thursday, and then Friday, Deacon and I, we actually ended up together. This was the kickoff, really, of the "Ignite", part of the tour, where I had been doing other talks mostly, and Deacon had also been doing other talks. But now we came together on that last Friday, that weekend, to do the Ignite book and the talks surrounding that book together. So on Friday night, we did the same talk that we had done the previous Wednesday evening.

0:27:38.0 Sonja: So he did a talk on the Psalms, and I did one on Lectio Divina. We actually did that same talk in Toowoomba as well. When we met up there. And then that kicked off the Ignite tour, I mean, as far as, like, the book for the book itself. And then Saturday, it was a full day retreat, and we took the chapters of the book in Ignite. We divided those up, as I mentioned, and we just took turns we took turns delivering talks on those. And that's what I'm going to do in this series. I'm going to offer you chapter by chapter in the Ignite book. I'm going to lead you through a hermeneutic for how to interpret and study the Bible and how to read it so that you don't get lost and you know your way around in a general way. Everybody I think if you're going to read and study the Bible, everybody needs a tool like this so that you have a good map or a primer with which to begin, so you don't get lost and you don't get frustrated. We don't want anybody to get frustrated trying to read the Bible, but it can be very frustrating, as St Peter actually said about Paul's writings. So that was Saturday and then Sunday, Sunday morning and Sunday afternoon, we did those talks. And then Sunday night was our last talk on Ignite.

0:28:58.2 Sonja: And again, he delivered his talk on the Psalms and I delivered my talk on Lectio Divina that night at another church, a different location. So all of these different locations, we were everywhere doing all kinds of talks. I figured it up and I did 37 talks in 20 days while I was there in Australia. That's a record for me. And I was glad to hear from Charbel that it was... This tour was not only the longest, but also the biggest as far as geography, which I mentioned earlier. But what I loved about that was that this was my first trip and so I didn't... Even Deacon said, this is the longest I've been away from home, this is my longest international trip. And even he, by the end was exhausted and he has been to Australia at least eight times. So I didn't feel so bad that I was so whipped, because I was whipped. And there were... So the masses, I forgot to even tell you about the masses. Oh, my goodness. So the first different kind of mass that I attended was at one of... It was a Chaldean mass and this would be a Coptic sort of original Christian mass, original Christian language. So thankfully, they had the Syriac language alongside of the English, so that, I mean, I couldn't pronounce it, but just listening to it and I posted on the community, I tried to record one of the masses and I did, but the sound didn't come out very well.

0:30:32.9 Sonja: But, oh, my word, it was absolutely gorgeous. And then while I was in Tasmania, I attended a traditional Latin mass which I've been to before, but it was in this teeny weeny little absolutely gorgeous chapel. It was very old, lots of very dark, big wooden beams and the little stained glass windows and we were all crammed in these little bitty wooden pews and the priest and the altar was just, I mean, 4 feet ahead of me. And he was, of course, doing all the traditional Latin prayers and saying the mass. And what was really cool in this mass, which I had never experienced before, was that the canter was singing while the priest was saying parts of the mass. And of course, most of the women there were veiled. And actually, in all of the masses that I attended, that was the case and I loved that myself. But the traditional Latin mass there in Tasmania, it was just utterly gorgeous in such a reverent and quiet way that all those traditional Latin masses are. But it was so small and intimate too, in this absolutely gorgeous chapel and the canter, and just, it was just fabulous.

0:31:54.2 Sonja: And of course, it was cold in there too, so we all had on our coats and I don't know why, but the window was open. They had the window open and I was freezing, but that's just me, because when I left Tennessee, it was 100 degrees. And when I got down to Australia, it was 60, so which was nice because it was 100% humidity here too. And of course, down there, there wasn't any, or hardly any. So that was the Chaldean mass and then the traditional Latin mass. And then I attended the Maronite Masses. And that's where St Charbel is so prominent is the Maronite Catholic Churches. And that was a new thing for me. I had never been introduced to Maronite Catholics or their Mass and again, it was the Syriac language and it felt and looked and sounded very, very Jewish, it remind... That whole experience. And Petra herself is Lebanese and so is Charbel. And so they took me to these absolutely fabulous Lebanese restaurants where, oh my gosh, I have looked while I was... When I came home, I started looking right away. I got to know how to make some of these foods, not just the Lebanese, but also some of the Australian foods that everybody's used to eating. And oh my goodness, just, it was just fabulous. The food was fabulous, but also the Masses. The Masses were utterly glorious, all of it.

0:33:27.2 Sonja: So if you have a chance, I posted part of one in the community, but if you have a chance, do a little browser search on the Maronite Catholics and just listen and look and watch, because that is how it started out. The church, the Mass, that's how it was. This is the Mass that Jesus and the disciples and the early Christians would have celebrated. And it's like being in heaven, like being transported. It's just amazing. I also got to meet Charbel's father, Armando, who took me to the airport so that I could travel over to Toowoomba... I mean to Tasmania. And we had a little snafu there with the books Charbel sent me with a box of books in a case that was made for camera and audio equipment. He filled it full of books so that we had books to sell. And it weighed about 40 pounds more than I did. And I'm carry on only usually. So here I was, it was like trying to drag a dead body through the airport. And I got to the desk and it weighed too much to even be put on the plane, so even paying for it, they wouldn't take it. So I ended up having to leave it there at the airport and Armando came back to pick it up and so I got to meet him, make friends with him.

0:34:47.7 Sonja: And then, of course, Mark from Parousia and Miguel, Miguel was... He did all the filming, and he's working on the production side of the filming. So I met such, such good people. And I will carry you all in my heart forever? And perhaps I'll get back to Australia. We'll see. But I will carry you in my heart forever? And one of the interesting things there were lots and lots of really cool things while I was there but one of them was, Australians drive on the left side of the road which wasn't scary or anything at all. Until you went around a round about, and then there's

traffic coming at you from the left. And I'm sitting in the passenger seat on the left, and I'm like, oh, my gosh, we're about to get hit. But everybody's driving on the left side, so that was kind of funny. And Petra is a great driver, so I wasn't the slightest bit scared with her. And she drives a lot like me, only much more safely, so I love that. Thank you, Petra.

[music]

0:35:53.0 Sonja: You're listening to the Bible study Evangelista show. Bible study spirits that taste like cake.

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0:36:01.0 S1: If you love having Bible Study in your pocket, you can become a Friend of the show. Click on the yellow Friend of the Show button on Biblestudyevangelista.com and become a supporter of any amount and any frequency. Now here's Sonja.

[music]

0:36:32.6 Sonja: If you want a more complete summary of the highlights of the trip. As far as Deacon Harold is concerned, Charbel did a really good summary that I'll post in the show, notes that you can kind of look at from his point of view. And then that very last night, on Sunday evening, we were headed to Our Lady of Lebanon, the church there, and we stopped by Rita's home, which was in another apartment building across the way. Actually, it overlooked the Olympic Stadium, the stadium complex there. But I mention it because she was kind enough to provide dinner for us before we went to that talk that night. And we were able to pray over her son. And I want to just ask you to stop and say a prayer for Ethan. He has an illness that they're not really sure what's happening. And he's 15, I believe she said 14 or 15. And we were able to pray with him, I and Deacon and Charbel, and of course, the family and Petra and Rita, of course, his mother. So pray for Ethan right now. Please just take a moment. And now I'd like to spend a little bit of time answering some of your questions I asked on the community. What do you want to know? What do you want to know about my trip to Australia? And Lisa said, I want to know how Catholics in that country are feeling about living their faith and how they compare to us here in terms of the challenges they face.

0:37:58.0 Sonja: Well, they face some of the same challenges, the wokeism, that kind of stuff, and I think they're feeling it more because it's much more big brother down there in a lot of ways, so one of the things I noticed was there were a couple of people who told me that they had been ticketed for a passenger who was either not wearing a seat belt or was not wearing it properly, and they weren't pulled over by a policeman, they actually got caught on camera because there are cameras at intervals on the highways, and so they time you between cameras to know if you're speeding and they take pictures, and if you or a passenger are not wearing your seatbelt or not wearing it properly, you are fined \$1200. \$1200. And we know about their lock bounds, we know about their quarantines and how they quarantined people in areas and how they mandated the shots and those kinds of things, and they're also experiencing a lot of this wokeism in their schools, in their Catholic schools, and so they're experiencing a lot of the same things, but it's much more controlled there in a lot of ways, one of the really good things was that the food supply is a much better quality, it's not as industrialized as it is here, and so the food is of much better quality, and I found that very interesting, and I have brought that home and sort of been exploring ways to perhaps incorporate

some of that into my own life, sourcing my meat and beef from local places, those kinds of things.

0:39:41.2 Sonja: Anyway, so the Australians have a very lively, vibrant, deep faith, and you would have to, would you not, living in these sorts of controlled environments, and it's not totally controlled or anything like that, but it is much more controlled than we experience, especially in rural America, and so part of what is so important about what I was doing there is offering and what Charbel does there, through Perusia is offering support to the Catholics there, helping to evangelize, but also helping to support the faith of the Catholics that are there. Mary Joe asked for a day-by-day account, and so I did most of that, she asked for blessings and lessons, so lots of little blessings, one of them, I shared a lot of those on the community, but one of them was definitely the morning I was doing morning prayer in front of that huge wall of windows in the apartment. Thank you again, Rita.

0:40:44.3 Sonja: And a huge flock of cockatoos, now they're wild there, and at first I thought they were either doves 'cause they were white or seagulls 'cause it's on the harbor there, the city, Sydney is right there on the harbor, so I thought maybe it was seagulls 'cause they were so far away down in the park, well, they came swooping right up the side of the building, right in front of my face as I was doing morning prayer, and they were cockatoos and I couldn't believe it.

0:41:12.2 Sonja: That was another one of those little blessings, there were a lot of them, but that was one... And of course, the food was one, the weather was one, the people and the friends that I made, that was of course definitely a blessing, the electric blankets were a blessing, the days that I had rest, those were a blessing. The apartment itself was a blessing, the place was stocked with food and drink and coffee and everything, it was just so many things and then lessons. What did I learn? As far as lessons. Well, many things, but definitely that I am tougher than I thought, and I didn't die.

0:41:52.7 Sonja: I'm much more introverted than I thought I was, and it's always both a blessing and a lesson to experience the church from another culture's point of view, the Australians tend to see us Americans as sort of a big brother or a big sister, and I definitely got that feel myself while I was there, it was very interesting and I started to think that, but then it was actually articulated by people there that they sort of see us and I wish they wouldn't, honestly, 'cause following us is gonna be the blind leading the blind, is it not? In so many ways, but I think they were speaking more along the lines of possibly the faith, but our countries are both pretty young, and so they really look to us in a lot of ways, and particularly in nurturing their faith, and I found that very humbling to be honest, they are all just very faithful, very hungry for the word of God and for good teaching, teaching of truth, they, father are lauded so well there because he speaks the truth, does he not?

0:42:58.2 Sonja: And that's what they're looking for, that's what they want, that's what the whole church all over the world is looking for and wants, and so that was part of the privilege of being there and being able to share the truth, particularly from the scriptures. Mitchell wants to know what issues did you have to face personally on the tour, and how did you feel you grew from the tour? Hoping that you did feel that. I did feel that. I felt like the difficulty of that trip was necessary. It always is, suffering is always necessary for there to be fruit, the grain of wheat has to die, and that was in the readings this week, was it not? So the grain of wheat has to die, and there were many, many, many instances in which I died to myself while I was there, and that's all good for me, and it's good for my ministry and my efforts to support the people anywhere I'm speaking in present. So how did I grow? I hope I grew in humility. I definitely knew a grew in perseverance and endurance in a lot of ways, as I said, I'm much more introvert than I thought I was.

0:44:07.8 Sonja: And I also need... I need things like a run sheet, I need to know the schedule, I need to know the timing, I need some detail in order to feel comfortable, and so I was off balance quite a bit, and that worried me a lot because I was worried that I was not going to be able to give the best of myself while I was there, but I also know that in our weakness, God's strength and power is made perfect, so I didn't worry too much about it. I'll tell you, I was... I found some interesting stuff happened with my hair, I found while I was there, I had switched before I left, I had switched to another gel for my hair, and I found the very best way to get good hair and keep it for quite some time, so that was... That's not really a lesson necessarily, but that was one of those little blessings. Sydney particularly, but also Australia as a whole, they're very multicultural. And they do very well with that. That was part of what I loved about being in Sydney was it was so multi-cultural and everything was so close as it is in a city, everything was available within walking distance, so I was able to just explore alone and kinda be alone and just go look around and experience things, and it was very safe, it was very clean, a very clean city, all the areas that I visited were.

0:45:28.4 Sonja: Lily wants to know what is a way that we can specifically pray for the people of Australia, and I would say that we take our cues from Charbel there, who is... He is asking and he's almost desperate for our support, both financially and prayerfully for the dissemination of the truth, the truth of the Church, the truth of God, the truth of the Scriptures, and that we who are able help support him in that effort, financially, particularly, but also in prayer. Dora wants to know, is faith on the rise or is it on decline, and I would say it is similar to here, where evil is on the rise and faith is... It's on the decline, but it's also being purified, it's more pure, it's more concentrated, and that's what happens during the purification, is it not the evil rises, but the holy get holier. And that's what I saw there. It is a secular society and so is ours, and that's probably part of why, but there the masses were very traditional, the ones that I attended and everywhere I went, the masses were very traditional, sometimes more traditional than even the traditional Latin Mass.

0:46:47.1 Sonja: And when I say that, I mean the Chaldean and the Maronite Catholic masses, they were more traditional than anything we've even ever known because we are not Lebanese, we're not from that Coptic Christian area, and that Coptic Christian faith. So there are some highlights of the trip, and next week we will start the Ignite study proper, you're gonna wanna get your book and I have provided links for you to do that in the show notes. I want to say hi to Carie and her daughters, Amelia, and I believe Michelle, who let me stay at their houses, I want to thank Australia and all of you Australians for such a beautiful faith field trip that I will never, never forget. I wanna remind you of our next monthly Friend of the Show Meet Up, that will occur on August the 21st. We are starting the Gospel of John, don't miss it.

[music]

0:47:41.1 Sonja: I'll see you next week.

0:47:51.5 Sonja: Thank you for listening to the Bible Study Evangelista show. Find out more at biblestudyevangelista.com.