

people, transparently and respectfully, to face the possibility of generous self-dedication, which is exactly what the Pope describes. This apostolate includes witness that is fully aware of the other person's freedom and dignity, and enables the Christian heart to share in the divine and human love of Jesus. And when it does, that heart is filled with an uncontrollable desire to pass on the joy of the Gospel to others.

✠ Javier Echevarría
Bishop Prelate of Opus Dei

“Thank You, Holy Father,” on the first anniversary of Pope Francis’s pontificate, Various news agencies (March 12, 2014)

The conference for the centennial of Bishop Alvaro del Portillo’s birth, which we are beginning today, coincides with Pope Francis’ annual retreat and with the first anniversary of his election to the see of Peter.

Therefore I would like to begin these three days of reflection with the deepest gratitude to the Holy Spirit for his continual assistance to the People of

God. Naturally, we also want to thank Pope Francis for the apostolic dynamism he is spreading around him and his great concern to draw close to each person.

His encouragement is a spur to all Christians to strive to bring Christ’s love and mercy to the furthest corners of the world. Many people have seen in Pope Francis a priest who prays a lot and who is always ready to listen to those he is with. All this is a reason for great filial joy and thanksgiving to heaven.

A central point of the preaching of Alvaro del Portillo was precisely fidelity to the Church and love for the Pope. Wherever he went, Bishop del Portillo asked people to pray for the intentions of the Roman Pontiff. He was always moved by the desire to bring “Rome to the outposts of the earth” and “the outposts to the Pope,” as St. Josemaría said (*The Forge*, no. 638).

Following Venerable Alvaro del Portillo’s example, let us be closely united to the Pope and his intentions on his retreat in Ariccia, as he asked of us in his Sunday Angelus.

✠ Javier Echevarría
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