

prayer, are the essential food for every soul.

Let's make a specific resolution as the fruit of today's celebration, entrusting our petitions to Saint Josemaría. But let's appeal to him with faith, persistently, in the conviction that—and I quote the Preface of the

Mass again—in answer to his prayers, God protects us and the whole Church. Like a good son, Saint Josemaría will deposit our petitions in our Lady's hands. And so, as Bishop Álvaro del Portillo liked to say, perfumed by our Lady's hands, our prayers will unfailingly arrive in God's presence, and he will hear them. Amen.

## Addresses

### Rome March 20, 2004

*At the opening of the Cause of Canonization of Bishop Álvaro del Portillo at the Tribunal of the Prelature, Pontifical University of the Holy Cross*

Allow me to begin with a personal recollection of our beloved Don Álvaro. It was March 17, 1994, less than a week before his sudden and saintly departure. From Jerusalem, one of the stages in the pilgrimage he was carrying out in the Holy Land, my predecessor sent some postcards to people for whom he had prayed with special intensity and affection during those days. One of them was addressed to Msgr. Stanislaw Dziwisz, the Holy Father's personal secretary.

Today, on re-reading that brief hand-written note of Don Álvaro, it takes on a special meaning in light of what was to happen a few days later: "My esteemed friend: in these holy places, I have prayed—we have prayed—a great deal for you, *vir fidelis*, with the request that you present

to the Holy Father our desire to be *fideles usque ad mortem*, faithful unto death, in the service of the Church and the Holy Father. One might say that our Lord listened closely to his words, *usque ad mortem*. A few hours after returning to Rome, this good and faithful servant, as John Paul II described him, was indeed called into God's presence.

This episode, which I have cited with the explicit permission of the recipient of that postcard, provides a very fitting framework for the ceremony that has brought us here today. For it has as its protagonist a shepherd who, right to the end of his life, left us an unequivocal testimony of faithfulness.

The procedures provided for by the current canonical legislation had already been in effect for some time, when the Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Gregis*, resulting from the Tenth Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, and dedicated to reflections on the figure and role of the bishop, first saw the light of day. In this document, the Holy Father recalls the perennial timeliness of the program set forth in the

fifth chapter of *Lumen Gentium*, with its proclamation of the “universal call to sanctity.” In this context the Pope offers reflections on the “pedagogy of sanctity,” which he had previously indicated as a pastoral priority for the new millennium (cf. Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, nos. 29-41).

In regard to this pedagogy, John Paul II emphasizes, among other things, a very specific application: “As a means of highlighting the witness of holiness, I urge my brother bishops to recognize and to call attention to the signs of holiness and heroic virtue which are also appearing in our own days” (Apostolic exhortation *Pastores Gregis*, no. 41). Then he sets forth the function of these initiatives that stem from the bishop’s pastoral ministry: “This will prove a sign of hope for everyone and a source of encouragement for the pilgrim People of God in its witness before the world to the permanent presence of grace in the fabric of human history” (Ibid.).

In another point of the document, he stresses that the Church has had bishops who were true saints, “who handed down to their people a particular legacy of admiration and affection... They are spiritual sentinels who from heaven guide the way of the pilgrim Church through time” (no. 25). And he recalls how, in order to keep always alive the memory of the faithfulness of eminent bishops in the exercise of their ministry, the Synodal Assembly recommended that they should be made known to the faithful and, if it seems suitable, that their causes of

canonization should be introduced (cf. Ibid.).

Reading these texts has confirmed for me that the path chosen by beginning my predecessor’s Cause of canonization is in full accord with the pastoral program recommended by the Pope. Indeed, all of the testimonies that have reached us, in the ten years since his death, have shown that Bishop Álvaro del Portillo has truly left behind him “a particular legacy of admiration and affection.”

This reality began to be evident immediately after his death on March 23, 1994. Since that day there have been eloquent signs of the widespread reputation for sanctity that has grown steadily. In addition, I soon began receiving signed accounts of spiritual and material favors attributed to his intercession, which now number in the thousands. I also received numerous written testimonies confirming the spread of Bishop del Portillo’s reputation for sanctity while still alive, and expressing the desire that his cause of canonization be quickly opened. Included among these testimonies are some 200 letters from bishops (among them 35 cardinals), from twenty-five countries.

Taking note of all this, and following the rules set forth in the Apostolic constitution *Divinus Perfectionis Magister*, I, no. 1, an ex officio investigation of the life and virtues of Bishop del Portillo was begun. I was quickly able to verify the consistency of the elements that little by little emerged from the Postulator’s work, in conformity with

the law of the Church (cf. *Normae servandae in inquisitionibus a Episcopis faciendis in Causis Sanctorum*, nos. 10-14). The reputation for sanctity of the first Prelate of Opus Dei has been attested to by a very ample array of solid documentary evidence.

When five years had passed since the Servant of God's death, I appointed two theological censors (cf. *Normae*, no. 13), whose opinions on the written works of Bishop del Portillo have emphasized their complete correspondence with the Church's teaching and the richness of the spiritual personality of their author. In addition, research into the archives (cf. *Normae*, n. 14) has brought to light beyond any reasonable doubt the Christian exemplariness of the life of Bishop del Portillo.

Together with the results of the edict that I promulgated on December 6, 2002, directed to all of the faithful of the Prelature of the Holy Cross and Opus Dei (cf. *Normae*, no. 11b), these investigations have enabled us to show the absolute lack of obstacles of any form against the Cause (cf. *Ibid.*, no. 12).

Thus, at the beginning of 2003, I sent to his Eminence Cardinal Camilo Ruini, Vicar General for the Diocese of Rome, a copy of the documents that led to my decision to introduce this Cause of canonization, with the proposal to set up a Tribunal of the Vicariate to examine some of the witnesses residing in Rome, among them, myself, some members of the Roman Curia and other members of the General Council of the Prelature who worked

closely with Bishop del Portillo for years. Other witnesses living here or in other places could be questioned by a Tribunal of the Prelature or by other Tribunals. Thus I would have the faculty to ask the respective bishops to undertake the investigative process required.

Cardinal Ruini accepted the proposal and, in accord with current laws (cf. *Normae*, no. 11 a), he submitted the question of the advisability of opening the Cause to the Bishops' Conference of Lazio. Having received an answer in the affirmative on June 10, 2003, he therefore (cf. *Normae*, no. 1 b), on July 4, 2003, published a decree inviting the faithful of the diocese of Rome to send information relative to the Cause and any unpublished manuscripts in their possession.

On December 21, 2003 the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints authorized that the instruction of the diocesan investigation be carried out *aequaliter*, that is, with the same level of competence, by the Vicariate of Rome's Tribunal and by that of the Prelature. Finally, on January 21, 2004, I was formally told that there were no objections to the Cause of the Servant of God Álvaro del Portillo on the part of the Holy See.

As a result, the Vicariate's Tribunal began its work this past March 5, while the Tribunal named by myself will do so within a few minutes. Before going on to the required swearing in, I would like to add a few brief considerations.

In the first place, I would like to

state that the fact that the canonical investigation began ten years after the death of the Servant of God instead of the five years foreseen as the minimum by the current norms, is not in any way due to negligence, but was due to the fact that until only a little over a year ago we were busy with preparations for the canonization of Saint Josemaría Escrivá. This work absorbed all our available energy. What great joy Don Álvaro would have experienced on hearing both the Holy Father and Cardinal Ratzinger in their Christmas greeting to the Roman Curia on December 21, 2002, cite this as one of the notable events of that year.

It also seems appropriate to explain the reasons that led me to ask the Cardinal Vicar of Rome to designate a Tribunal of the Vicariate. The investigative tribunals have only an informative function, that is, one of simply collecting evidence. After this step the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints intervenes and, in its various phases, in the first place evaluates the exhaustiveness of the process of investigation, ordering, if necessary, the required supplementary investigations. Later, and this is the essential point, the same Congregation gives the judgment it deems fitting. The definitive decision is the exclusive competence of the Holy Father. Although all this is perfectly well known, I preferred that a Tribunal external to the Prelature, and one that is universally esteemed for its rigor, should have the task of questioning persons in the Curia, as well as myself and the other members of the General Council of the Prelature.

I would like the Tribunal which today begins its investigation to also carry out its work with the most scrupulous observance of the procedures fixed by law, in their most rigorous interpretation.

Permit me to share with you a personal memory, which in no way seeks, even indirectly, to anticipate the Church's future judgment about the virtues of Bishop del Portillo, nor to condition the work of anyone who has been called to carry out a task of canonical investigation. For me Don Álvaro was always an example of fidelity to the spirit of Saint Josemaría. During the Founder's lifetime, two Causes of canonization of members of the Work were opened: for Isidoro Zorzano and for Montse Grases. Whenever the conversation turned to this topic, Saint Josemaría never failed to remind us that sanctity consists in the faithful fulfillment, out of love, of one's daily duties. The spirit of the Work, he said, leads us to try to sanctify ourselves in a life that is hidden, without any spectacle, doing the work of three thousand while making the noise of three.

When he began to work on preparations for Saint Josemaría's Cause of canonization, Don Álvaro, faithful to this teaching, never omitted an opportunity to point out to us that the purpose was not to seek human glory for Opus Dei, but the good of the Church, the edification of souls. This was the goal that he always had present. Don Álvaro was certain that the Cause would contribute to spreading knowledge of the Founder, of his spiritual writings and his message of sanctification in

work. He was sure that many conversions would take place, people returning to the practice of the faith, all types of vocations... And indeed the history of that Cause can be summed up as an uninterrupted series of grace-filled events, such as those just mentioned. This is the principal reason why the Church elevates to the altars so many of her exemplary children: for the good of souls.

I also trust that the Cause of canonization of Bishop Álvaro del Portillo will bring many tangible benefits to Christians. I am sure that through his life many people will discover the fatherly face of God, smiling on them, encouraging them, forgiving them.

At the end of his address at the opening ceremony for the diocesan part of the investigation to be carried out by the Vicariate of Rome's Tribunal, Cardinal Ruini invoked the protection of Saint Josemaría for the Tribunal's work. With all my heart I also entrust the work of this Tribunal to the intercession of the one of whom Bishop del Portillo was the most faithful son.

## Pescia May 13, 2004

*Message for the inauguration of the chapel dedicated to St. Josemaría in Pescia, Italy*

In the first place I want to express my deep gratitude and an affectionate and fraternal greeting to Bishop Gio-

vanni De Vivo of Pescia, to your pastor Father Alessandro Pasquinelli, to the civil authorities, to the faithful of the parish of Our Lady of the Martyrs, and to all who have wanted to be present at this ceremony. I express my regrets that I have not been able to take part except with my heart.

It is a source of great happiness for me to see the ever more widespread devotion to Saint Josemaría in Italy and throughout the world. My joy is even more intense when I see devotion to this saint, at whose side I had the undeserved privilege of working for twenty-five years, so deeply rooted in the land of Tuscany. Saint Josemaría truly loved Tuscany and prayed a lot for this region, not only during the brief periods that he spent here, or the many trips that provided him with the opportunity to travel through its provinces, but also because, knowing the deep Christian roots of this land, he desired—or better, he desires—that this land be an auspicious setting for the spread of the message of sanctity that God inspired in him on October 2, 1928—a message directed to all men and women of good will. The fruit of his prayer, and above all of divine grace, were evident in the thousands of Tuscans who on October 6, 2002 took part in the canonization of the Founder of Opus Dei, and before this, in the numerous commemorative gatherings on the centennial of his birth. All this bears witness to a sincere veneration for the “saint of the ordinary,” as John Paul II described him in his audience in St. Peter's Square.

In particular, the living presence of devotion to Saint Josemaría in the