

Prayer

*O God, merciful Father,
through the Blessed Virgin,
you granted your Bishop, Blessed Alvaro,
the grace of being an exemplary pastor in the
service of the Church
and a most faithful son and successor of
Saint Josemaría, the Founder of Opus Dei.
Grant that I also may respond faithfully
to the demands of the Christian vocation,
turning all the circumstances and events of my life
into opportunities to love you
and to serve the kingdom of Jesus Christ.
Deign to grant the canonization of Blessed Alvaro,
and through his intercession grant me the favor I
request...
(here make your petition).
Amen.
Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be to the Father.*

Those who have obtained favors through the intercession of Blessed Alvaro del Portillo are asked to let us know by writing to us at the address shown on this page.
More information is available at www.alvarodelportillo.org



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We would be grateful if our readers would send us names and addresses of others who might be interested in receiving this Informative Bulletin or the prayer card of Blessed Alvaro del Portillo.

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Blessed Alvaro del Portillo

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Blessed Alvaro del Portillo was born in Madrid (Spain) on 11 March 1914, into a large and deeply Christian family. As well as graduating as a Public Works official, he obtained doctorates in Civil Engineering, History and Canon Law.

In 1935 he joined Opus Dei. He lived his Christian vocation with great loyalty and faithfulness, through his work and everyday duties, and helped to draw fellow students, colleagues at work and many other people closer to God.

Ordained to the priesthood in 1944, he was completely committed to his pastoral ministry. In 1946 he moved to Rome. His service to the Church was also marked by his dedication to many tasks entrusted to him by the Holy See, especially in the Second Vatican Council. On 15 September 1975 he became the first successor of St Josemaría Escrivá at the head of Opus Dei.

On 28 November 1982 Pope John Paul II erected Opus Dei as a personal Prelature, made up of lay faithful and secular priests, and appointed Blessed Alvaro as its first Prelate. In 1991 he ordained him a bishop. The way he governed Opus Dei was characterized by a deep communion with the Pope and the other Bishops, complete faithfulness to the Founder of Opus Dei and his message, and tireless pastoral zeal.

Early on the morning of 23 March 1994, the Lord called this good and faithful servant to Himself, a few hours after his return from a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, where with deep piety he had followed in the footsteps of Jesus in that land. That same day, St John Paul II went to pray before his mortal remains, which now rest in the crypt of the church of the Prelature, Our Lady of Peace, at 75 Bruno Buozzi Street, Rome.

Introduction



The Joy of a Christian Family

On 27 September 2014, Alvaro del Portillo, Bishop Prelate of the Prelature of the Holy Cross and Opus Dei, was beatified. He was the first successor and a most faithful son of Saint Josemaría Escrivá, founder of Opus Dei. The ceremony took place in Madrid, presided over by the Holy Father's representative, Cardinal Angelo Amato, Prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints.

For the beatification, Pope Francis wrote a letter to the Prelate of Opus Dei, Bishop Javier Echevarría. After expressing his joy at this event, the Holy Father said that "Blessed Alvaro del Portillo is sending us a very clear message. He is telling us to trust in the Lord, that He is our brother, our friend, who never lets us down and is always at our side. He is encouraging us not to be afraid to go against the current and suffer for announcing the Gospel. He is also teaching us that in the simplicity and ordinariness of our daily lives we can find a sure path to holiness."

"The life of this good and faithful servant", the Prelate of Opus Dei has written, "is summed up in a full fidelity to God's plan for himself and his mission on earth. From here stemmed his

unfailing peace, the joy to which so many of us were witnesses. In stating that he now shares in the glory of the blessed, and holding him up as an example of a loyal follower of Christ, the Church reminds us of the path we have to follow to attain union with God, to which all of us are called, being happy already here below" (Letter from the Prelate to the faithful and cooperators of Opus Dei, 1 October 2014).

This day will never be forgotten by the very many thousands of people who took part in the beatification ceremony, by those who followed it on television and the internet, or by all those who were present at the Thanksgiving Masses celebrated afterwards in many places all over the world. ■

1 Cardinal Amato and the Prelate of Opus Dei at the beatification rites

2 Miracle boy (Jose Ignacio Ureta) and his parents presenting a relic of Blessed Alvaro

3 Smiling South American ladies at the beatification

4 One of the many big families who came to the beatification

5 A happy pilgrim from Africa

Apostolic Letter



LITTERAE APOSTOLICAE

Nos,
vota Fratris Nostrī
Augustini B.R.E. Cardinalis Vallini,
Nostrī Vicarii Generalis pro Romana diocesi,
Xaverii Echevarría Rodríguez,
Episcopi tituli Ciliensis,
Praelatus personalis Sanctae Crucis et Operis Dei Praedati,
reorū plurimorū aliorū Fratrum in Episcopatu
militorūque christifidelium experientia,
de Congregatione de Causis Sanctorum consulto,
auctoritate Nostra Apostolica
facultatem facimus ut
Venerabilis Servus Dei
ALVARUS DEL PORTILLO Y DIEZ DE SOLLANO, episcopus,
Praelatus personalis Sanctae Crucis et Operis Dei Praedati,
Pastor secundum cor Iesu,
Societatis amicus minister,
Reali nomine in posterum appellatur,
eiūque festum
die duodecima Maii
in tota et modis iure stabitis
quocumque orbe fieri possit.
In nomine Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti.
Amen.
Datum Romae, apud Sanctum Petrum,
die vicesimo primo mensis Septembris,
anno Domini millesimo quarto decimo,
Pontificatus Nostrī secundo.

We, acceding to the desire of our brother Cardinal Agostino Vallini, our Vicar General for the Diocese of Rome, and of Javier Echevarría Rodríguez, Titular Bishop of Cilibia, Prelate of the Personal Prelature of the Holy Cross and Opus Dei, and likewise of many other brothers in the episcopate and of many of the faithful, after having obtained the opinion of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, with Our Apostolic Authority concede permission for the Venerable Servant of God Alvaro del Portillo y Diez de Sollano, Bishop Prelate of the Personal Prelature of the Holy Cross and Opus Dei, a shepherd according to the Heart of Christ and a zealous minister of the Church, to be henceforth called Blessed, and for his feast to be celebrated on 12 May each year in places and ways established by law. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Given in Rome, from Saint Peter's, on 21 September in the year of Our Lord 2014, the second of our Pontificate.

FRANCIS

Ceremonies relating to the Beatification

26 SEPTEMBER

Eucharistic adoration in various churches in Madrid, as spiritual preparation for participants in the beatification ceremony of Alvaro del Portillo.

27 SEPTEMBER

Beatification of Bishop Alvaro del Portillo.

28 SEPTEMBER

Solemn Mass of Thanksgiving, celebrated by Bishop Javier Echevarría.

29 SEPTEMBER

Transfer of the coffin of Blessed Alvaro from the prelatial church of Our Lady of Peace to the basilica of Saint Eugene to be venerated by pilgrims in Rome.

30 SEPTEMBER, morning

Mass of Thanksgiving in the basilica of Saint John Lateran.

30 SEPTEMBER, evening

Mass of Thanksgiving in the basilica of Saint Mary Major.

1 OCTOBER

Audience with Pope Francis, in which he greeted Bishop Javier Echevarría, Prelate of Opus Dei, and pilgrims coming from all over the world for the beatification.

2 OCTOBER, evening

Eucharistic exposition and benediction, with singing of the *Te Deum*, in the basilica of Saint Eugene, before the return of Blessed Alvaro's coffin to the church of Our Lady of Peace. There, benediction was celebrated with the relic, and the mortal remains were transferred to the crypt of that church. ■

Pope Francis' Letter to Bishop Javier Echevarría on the occasion of the beatification of the Venerable Alvaro del Portillo

Dear brother,

The beatification of the Servant of God Alvaro del Portillo, faithful collaborator of St Josemaría Escrivá and his first successor at the head of Opus Dei, is a moment of special joy for all the faithful of the Prelature, and also for you, who were for so long a witness of his love for God and others, and his fidelity to the Church and to his vocation. I too wish to unite myself to your joy and to thank God, who embellishes the face of the Church with the holiness of her children.

His beatification will take place in Madrid, the city where he was born and spent his childhood and youth. Here his life began to take shape in the simplicity of family life, through friendship and service to others, as when he went to outlying districts to help provide human and Christian formation to so many people in need. And in this city, above all, there took place the event that definitively marked the course of his life: his meeting with St Josemaría Escrivá, from whom he learned to fall more in love with Christ every day. Yes, to fall in love with Christ. This is the path to holiness that every Christian has to follow: to let ourselves be loved by the Lord, to open up our hearts to his love, and to allow him to be the one who guides our lives.

I like to recall the aspiration that the Servant of God would often repeat, especially for personal celebrations and anniversaries: "Thank you; forgive me; help me more!" These words bring us closer to the reality of his interior life and his relationship with the Lord, and can also help to give a new impulse to our own Christian life.

In the first place, Thank you. This is the soul's immediate, spontaneous reaction on experiencing God's goodness. It cannot be otherwise. He always goes ahead of us. However hard we try, his love always gets there first, touches and caresses us first, He beats us to it. Álvaro del Portillo was aware of the many gifts God had given him, and thanked God for that manifestation of his fatherly love. But he did not stop at that: his recognition of Our Lord's love awakened in his heart desires to follow him with greater commitment and generosity, and to lead a life of humble service to others. Especially outstanding was his love for the Church, the Spouse of Christ, whom he served with a heart devoid of worldly self-interest, far from discord, welcoming towards everyone and always seeking in others what was positive, what united, what was constructive. He never spoke a word of complaint or criticism, even at especially difficult



An aerial view of the altar and the faithful attending the beatification

times, but instead, as he had learned from St Josemaría, he always responded with prayer, forgiveness, understanding and sincere charity.

Forgive me. He often confessed that he saw himself empty-handed before God, incapable of responding to so much generosity. But to admit our poverty as human beings is not the result of despair but confident abandonment in God who is our Father. It means opening ourselves to his mercy, his love, which is able to regenerate our life. His love does not humiliate us, nor cast us into the depths of guilt, but embraces us, lifts us up from our prostration and enables us to go forward with more determination and joy. The Servant of God Álvaro knew the need we have of God's mercy, and devoted a lot of his own energy to encouraging the people he met to go to the sacrament of Confession, the sacrament of joy. How important it is to feel the tenderness of God's love, and discover that there is still time to love!

Help me more. Yes, the Lord never abandons us, he is always at our side, he journeys with us, and every day he expects new love from us. His grace will not fail us, and with his help we can take his name to the whole world. The heart of the new Blessed beat with the desire to bring the Good News to all hearts. And so he travelled to many countries to foster new projects for evangelization, undeterred by difficulties, moved by his love for God and his brethren. One who is very immersed in God is able to be very close to other people. The first condition for announcing Christ to them is to love them, because Christ loves them before we do. We have to leave behind our selfish concerns and love of comfort, and go out to meet our brothers and sisters. That is where Our Lord is awaiting us. We cannot keep our faith to ourselves: it is a gift we have received to give away and share with others.

Thank you, forgive me, help me! These words express the thrust of a life that is centered on God. It is the life of someone who has been touched by the greatest Love and who lives totally on that love; someone who, while experiencing their own human weakness and limitations, trusts in God's mercy and wants all mankind, their brothers and sisters, to experience it too.

Dear brother, Blessed Alvaro del Portillo is sending us a very clear message. He is telling

us to trust in the Lord, that he is our brother, our friend, who never lets us down and is always at our side. He is encouraging us not to be afraid to go against the current and suffer for announcing the Gospel. He is also teaching us that in the simplicity and ordinariness of our daily lives we can find a sure path to holiness.

I ask all the faithful of the Prelature, priests and lay-people, as well as all those who take part in its activities, to please pray for me. At the same time, I give them all my Apostolic Blessing.

May Jesus bless you, and may the Holy Virgin watch over you.

Faternally,

Franciscus

Rome, 26 June 2014



Yellow and white umbrellas marking out and sheltering priests giving Holy Communion

Pope Francis' words after the Angelus, 28 September 2014

Yesterday in Madrid, Bishop Alvaro del Portillo was declared Blessed. May his exemplary Christian and priestly witness stir up in many hearts the desire to draw ever closer to Christ and the Gospel.

- 1 Confessionals were fully occupied
- 2 There was a special atmosphere of prayer and recollection
- 3 A souvenir photo of Filipino volunteers at the beatification
- 4 Festive pilgrims from Africa
- 5 Elegant ladies from India
- 6 Jubilant young men at the beatification
- 7 Young boys also had a great time
- 8 Happy ladies from the US



Homily

Cardinal Angelo Amato, Representative of the Holy Father, Homily at the Mass of Beatification of Bishop Alvaro del Portillo, Madrid, 27 September 2014

1. "A shepherd according to the Heart of Christ, a zealous minister of the Church!" This is the portrait that Pope Francis draws of Blessed Alvaro del Portillo, a good shepherd who, like Jesus, knows and loves his sheep, brings back to the sheepfold those who have strayed, binds up the wounds of the sick ones, and offers his life for them.²

[After recalling some aspects of Blessed Alvaro's life, Cardinal Amato paused to reflect on his humility.]

5. However, there is one virtue which Bishop Alvaro practised in an especially extraordinary way, considering it as indispensable for holiness and apostolate: the virtue of humility, which is an imitation of and an identification with Christ, who is gentle and lowly in heart.³ He loved Jesus' hidden life, and respected the simple manifestations of popular piety, such as going up the Scala Santa in Rome on one's knees. Once, one of the faithful of the Prelature told him that he had visited that place but had walked up the Scala Santa normally, because, as he put it, he considered himself a mature and well-instructed Christian. Blessed Alvaro answered him with a smile that he had gone up the Holy Stairs on his knees, even though the place was somewhat stuffy because of the crowds of people and the poor ventilation.⁴ It was a great lesson in simplicity and piety.

Indeed, Bishop del Portillo was "infected", in the good sense, by the behaviour of Our Lord Jesus Christ, who did not come to be served, but to serve.⁵ For this reason, he often used to pray and meditate on the Eucharistic hymn *Adoro Te devote, latens deitas - O Godhead hid, devoutly I adore Thee*. Likewise, he used to meditate on the life of Mary, the humble handmaid of the Lord. He sometimes recalled a phrase from Cervantes' Exemplary Novels: "Without humility, there is no virtue worthy of the name."⁶ And

he would often recite an aspiration that is frequently used by the faithful of the Work: "Cor contritum et humiliatum, Deus, non despicias - a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise."⁷

For him, as for St Augustine, humility was the dwelling-place of charity.⁸ He would repeat some advice which the Founder of Opus Dei used to give, quoting St Joseph of Calasanz: "If you want to be holy, be humble; if you want to be holier, be more humble; if you want to be very holy, be very humble."⁹ Nor did he forget that a donkey was Jesus' throne during his entry into Jerusalem. Even his fellow-students, as well as stressing his extraordinary intelligence, underline his simplicity, the serene innocence that came from not considering himself better than others. He thought that his worst enemy was pride. One witness states that he was "humility personified."¹⁰

His humility was not harsh, showy, or ill-tempered, but affectionate and cheerful. His joy was based on his conviction that he himself was worth very little. At the beginning of 1994, the last year of his life on earth, in a meeting with some of his spiritual daughters, he said, "I say this to you, and I say it to myself. We have to struggle all our lives to become humble. We have the marvellous school of humility of our Lord, the Blessed Virgin Mary, and St Joseph. Let's learn from them. Let's fight against our own ego, which constantly rears up like a viper, ready to bite. But we are safe as long as we keep close to Jesus, who is the offspring of Mary, and is the one who will crush the serpent's head."¹¹

For Bishop Alvaro, humility was "the key that opens the door to enter into the house of holiness"; while pride was the greatest obstacle to seeing and loving God. He said, "humility strips away from us the ridiculous cardboard mask that presumptuous, self-satisfied people wear."¹² Humility is the recognition of our limitations, but also of our dignity as God's



children. The best praise of his humility was given by a woman in Opus Dei after the Founder's death: "The one who has died is Don Alvaro, because our Father lives on in his successor."¹³

A cardinal testifies that when he read about humility in the Rule of St Benedict or the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius, he felt he was contemplating a very high ideal, but one that was unattainable for ordinary human beings. But when he met and got to know Blessed Alvaro, he understood that it was possible to practise total humility.

6. What Cardinal Ratzinger said in 2002 with regard to the canonization of the Founder of Opus Dei can also be applied to Blessed Alvaro. Speaking of heroic virtue, Cardinal Ratzinger, who was at the time Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, said: "Heroic virtue does not mean precisely accomplishing great things unaided, but that in a person's life there appear things that he did not bring about, because he made himself transparent and available for God to act (...) That is holiness."¹⁴

This is the message that Blessed Alvaro del Portillo

hands on to us today. He was "a shepherd according to the Heart of Christ, a zealous minister of the Church."¹⁵ He invites us to be holy like him, living a holiness that is friendly, merciful, good-natured, meek, and humble.

The Church and the world need the great spectacle of holiness so that its pleasing fragrance can purify the noxious fumes of the many vices which are being praised so arrogantly and insistently.

Now, more than ever, we need an ecology of holiness, to counteract the pollution of immorality and corruption. The saints invite us to bring to the heart of the Church and society the pure air of God's grace, which renews the face of the earth. May Mary, Help of Christians and Mother of the Saints, help and protect us.

Blessed Alvaro del Portillo, pray for us. Amen. ■

1 The faithful in a section far from the altar

2 A Japanese family smiles for the camera

3 Grown-ups had a great time

4 It was a multi-cultural celebration as well

¹ Pope Francis Apostolic Letter for the Beatification of the Venerable Servant of God Bishop Alvaro del Portillo, Prelate of Opus Dei, 21 September 2014.

² Cf. Ezek 34:11-16; Jn 10:11-16.

³ Mt 11:29.

⁴ Cf. *Positio super vita, virtutibus et fama sanctitatis*, 2010, vol 1, p. 662.

⁵ Mt 20:28; Mk 10:45.

⁶ Cervantes, *Novelas Ejemplares*: "El coloquio de los perros" Cf. *Positio super vita, virtutibus et fama sanctitatis*, 2010, vol 1, p. 663.

⁷ Ps 51[50], 19.

⁸ Saint Augustine, *De sancta virginitate*, 51.

⁹ Saint Josemaría Escrivá quoted in Andrés Vázquez de Prada, *The Founder of Opus Dei*, vol. 1, p. 17, note 12.

¹⁰ *Positio super vita, virtutibus et fama sanctitatis*, 2010, vol 1, p. 668.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 675.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 705

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 908

¹⁵ Pope Francis Apostolic Letter for the Beatification of the Venerable Servant of God Bishop Alvaro del Portillo, Prelate of Opus Dei, 21 September 2014

Place
Stamp
Here

PRELATURE OF OPUS DEI
OFFICE FOR THE CAUSES OF SAINTS
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1112 NEW MANILA, QUEZON CITY
PHILIPPINES

----- FOLD HERE -----

Homily of September 28

Bishop Javier Echevarría, Prelate of Opus Dei Homily at the Mass of Thanksgiving for the Beatification of Alvaro del Portillo Madrid, September 28, 2014

This is my commandment: love one another as I have loved you (Jn 15:12). Dear brothers and sisters, these words of the Gospel echo today in my heart with new joy at the thought that the mass of people gathered yesterday in this very place, in close communion with Pope Francis, and together with all who accompanied us from the four cardinal points, was not so much a crowd but rather a family gathering, united for love of God and love of one another. This very love is strengthened today in the Eucharist, in this Mass in thanksgiving for the beatification of our beloved Don Alvaro, Bishop, Prelate of Opus Dei.

1. Our Lord, by instituting the Eucharist, gave thanks to God the Father for his eternal goodness, for the creation that sprung from his hands, for his mysterious plan of salvation. We give thanks for that infinite love made manifest on the Cross and anticipated in the Upper Room. And we ask our Lord: how can we learn to love as you have loved us, to love as you have loved Peter and John, each one of us, as well as Saint Josemaría and Blessed Alvaro? Contemplating the holy life of Don Alvaro, we discover our Lord's guiding hand, the grace of the Holy Spirit, the gift of love that transforms us. And we make our own that prayer of Saint Josemaría that the new Blessed repeated so often: "Give me, Lord, the Love with which you want me to love you,"¹ and that way I will know how to love the others with your Love, and with my poor effort. In my life, the others will discover the goodness of God, as was the case in the daily path walked by Don Alvaro: it was already here in this beloved Madrid that divine mercy could be seen in his solidarity with those who were most poor and abandoned.

Dear brothers and sisters, let us give thanks to God by asking him for more love. In the prime of his youth, when he was 25 years old, Don Alvaro was *saxum*, rock, for Saint Josemaría. From the depths of his humility, he responded by letter to the Founder of Opus Dei with these words: "In spite of everything, I hope that you can place your trust in one who, rather than rock, is clay without any solidity whatsoever. But, our Lord is so good!"² Our entire existence ought to be soaked in that trust in divine goodness. We prayed in the Responsorial Psalm, *I thank you, Lord, for your faithfulness and love* (Ps 137 [138]: 2). And our gratitude rises up to the Holy Trinity, because God continues to be with us, through his Word, Jesus Christ Himself (cfr. Col3:16), and through his Spirit, who fills us with joy (cfr. Jn 15:11; Lk 11:13) and enables us to cry out to God, filled with confidence, *Abba, Pater*: "Father! Daddy!"³

2. "The *trinity* on earth will take us to the Trinity in Heaven,"³ Don Alvaro, following the teaching and experience of the Founder of Opus Dei, would often repeat. Jesus, Mary, and Joseph bring us to the Father and the Holy Spirit. In the sacred humanity of Jesus we discover, inseparably united to it, his divinity.⁴ The Holy Family! With words from the first reading, we bless our Lord *who fosters men's growth from their mother's womb, and fashions them according to his will* (Sir 50:24). The sacred text tells us that even before our birth God loved us. This reminds me of a poem with which Virgil addresses a new-born: *Incipe, parve puer, risu cognoscere matrem*:⁵ "Little child, learn to recognize your mother by her smile." Upon birth, a child begins to discover the universe; in his mother's face, full of love, in that smile of hers that receives him, the new being just barely come

¹ Saint Josemaría Escrivá, *The Forge*, 70.

² Blessed Alvaro del Portillo, Letter to Saint Josemaría, Olot, 13 July 1939.

³ Blessed Alvaro del Portillo, Pastoral Letter, 30 September 1975.

⁴ Blessed Alvaro del Portillo, Pastoral Letter on the occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the foundation of Opus Dei, 24 September 1978.

⁵ Virgil, *Eclogue IV*, 60.

to the world discovers a reflection of the goodness of God.

On this day, which our Holy Father Francis has dedicated to prayer for the family, we unite ourselves to the pleas of the whole Church for the *comunio dilecciónis*, the “communion of love,” the “school”⁶ of the Gospel that is the family, as Paul VI said at one point in Nazareth. The family, with the “interior and profound dynamism of love,”⁷ has great “spiritual fecundity,”⁸ open to life at all times, as taught by Saint John Paul II, to whom Blessed Alvaro was united by a filial friendship.

In giving thanks to Don Alvaro, we give thanks to his parents who received him into this world and educated him, who prepared in him a simple and generous heart to receive God’s love and respond to his calling. Don Alvaro did just that: he was a man whose smile gave glory to God, who *has done wondrous things* (Sir 50:24), and who chose him to serve the Church by spreading Opus Dei, as a faithful son of Saint Josemaría.

We pray that there may be many families that form “bright and cheerful homes, as was that of the Holy Family,”⁹ in the words of Saint Josemaría. We lift up our gratitude to God for the gift of the family, a reflection of eternal trinitarian love, a place in which each person knows himself to be loved for his own sake, just the way he is. And now we also give thanks to all the mothers and fathers that have gathered together here, and to all those persons that care for children, the elderly, and the sick.

Families: our Lord loves you, our Lord is present within your marriage, image of Christ’s love for his Church. I know that many of you dedicate yourselves with great generosity to helping other marriages along their path of fidelity, to helping many other homes march onwards in a social context that often times is difficult and even hostile. Keep at it! The whole world needs your work of witness and evangelization. Remember that, as beloved Benedict XVI said, “Faithfulness over time is the name of love.”¹⁰

3. *Be thankful*, Saint Paul exhorts us (Col 3:15). Blessed Alvaro, considering his indebtedness to Saint Josemaría, stated that “good use of gifts received is the best show of gratitude.”¹¹ In his preaching, in family gatherings, in personal encounters, in all places, he never ceased to speak about apostolate and evangelization. To abide in the love of God that we have received, we must share it with others;

God’s goodness tends to spread. Pope Francis said that “it is in prayer that the Lord makes us understand this love, but it is also through so many signs that we can recognize in our life, in the many persons he sets on our path.”¹²

It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you (Jn 15:16). Our Lord after having insisted that the initiative is always his and in the primacy of his love, sends us forth to spread his Love to all creatures: *I have appointed you to go and bear fruit that will remain* (ibidem). To bear fruit that also sets down deep roots, it is necessary to remain in the Lord. Jesus had just said so to his disciples: *Abide in me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me* (Jn 15:4).

The stupendous multitude of people these days, the millions of persons throughout the world, and so many who await us in heaven, bear witness to the fruitfulness of Don Alvaro’s life. I encourage you, brothers and sisters, to abide and grow in God’s love: through prayer, through the Mass and frequent Communion, through sacramental confession, so that, with the force of divine predilection, we may know how to transmit what we have received, and implement it through an authentic apostolate of friendship and confidence.

In the letter which Pope Francis wrote me on occasion of yesterday’s beatification, he told us that “we cannot keep the faith to ourselves, it is a gift that we have received to give it and share it with others;”¹³ and he also said that Blessed Alvaro “encourages us to not be afraid of going against the grain and suffering so as to proclaim the Gospel,” and furthermore that “he also teaches us that in the simplicity and in the daily affairs of our life we can discover the sure path of sanctity.”¹⁴

Along this path, together with many angels, we are accompanied by the Blessed Virgin. Mary is daughter of God the Father, Mother of God the Son, Spouse and Temple of God the Holy Spirit. She is the Mother of God and our Mother, the Queen of the family, the Queen of Apostles. May our Lady help us, as she did Don Alvaro, respond to the invitation of the Successor of Peter: “to let oneself be loved by the Lord, to open one’s heart to his love, and allow Him to guide our life,”¹⁵ a desire which Saint Josemaría entrusted on so many occasions to the Virgin of Almudena, so loved and venerated in this Archdiocese. Amen. ■

⁶ Pope Paul VI, Address in Nazareth, 5 January 1964.

⁷ Saint John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio*, 41.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Saint Josemaría Escrivá, *Christ is Passing By*, 22.

¹⁰ Benedict XVI, Homily in Fatima, 12 May 2010.

¹¹ Blessed Alvaro del Portillo, Pastoral Letter, 1 July 1985.

¹² Pope Francis, Address, Pope Paul VI Hall, 6 July, 2103.

¹³ Pope Francis, Letter to Bishop Javier Echevarría, Prelate of Opus Dei, on the occasion of the beatification of Alvaro del Portillo celebrated in Madrid on 27 September 2014.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

Veneration of the mortal remains of Blessed Alvaro

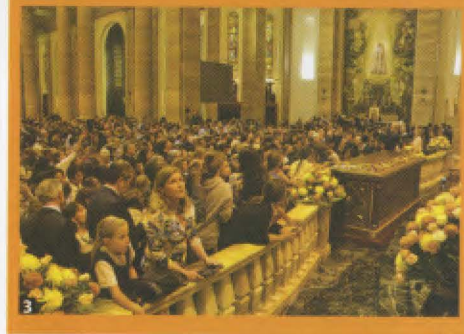
Rome, 29 September: Transfer of Blessed Alvaro’s mortal remains to the Basilica of St Eugene

At 6:00 pm the coffin with Blessed Alvaro’s mortal remains was taken from the crypt of the Prelatic Church of Our Lady of Peace to the nearby Basilica of St Eugene, where it remained over three days to facilitate the veneration of the faithful. Many people from Rome and from all over the world were there waiting to venerate the Blessed, whose coffin was carried to the sanctuary in a solemn procession presided over by the Prelate of Opus Dei.

After a liturgy of the Word, Bishop Echevarría addressed some words to those present. “I think that we all would have liked to have carried the coffin to thank Blessed Alvaro for his life of dedication and service to the Church, his interest in each one of us, and his love each day for the will of God.”

The Prelate added: “We are in the presence of the mortal remains of a man, of a priest, of a friend who abandoned everything into God’s hands, and who was, therefore, always tranquil, happy. He was a great communicator of peace. Let us ask him sincerely: help us to be witnesses of God’s love for us.” At the end of the homily, Bishop Echevarría blessed those present with a relic of the new Blessed.

From then on, and up to 2 October, one Mass was concelebrated after another, next to the mortal remains of Blessed Alvaro del Portillo. During those days, some 40,000 faithful from all over the world came to the Basilica of Saint Eugene to accompany and pray before his mortal remains. Widespread popular devotion in the Church to the new Blessed is a proof that Blessed Alvaro, by his words and above all by his example, has touched the lives of hundreds of thousands of men and women who have recourse confidently to his intercession before God, and who look upon him as a model of Christian virtue. ■



1 Transfer of the remains of Blessed Alvaro to the Basilica of St Eugene

2 The Prelate incensing the wooden casket of Blessed Alvaro at the entrance of St. Eugene’s

3 The faithful flocked to St Eugene’s to venerate the remains of Blessed Alvaro

Rome

Rome, 30 September: Thanksgiving Masses



On the morning of 30 September, a Mass of Thanksgiving was celebrated in the Basilica of Saint John Lateran. In his homily, Cardinal Agostino Vallini, Vicar General of the Holy Father for the diocese of Rome, recalled that Blessed Alvaro del Portillo strove for sanctity in his daily activities. "The new Blessed believed deeply and intensely that God, in Jesus, loves us, gives us life, introduces us into his family, the Church, cares for us and guides us with fatherly affection so that we may attain our true good. He fell in love with Christ and let himself be loved by Him. He opened his heart and abandoned himself completely in the Lord. This is how he lived, and he also consecrated his priestly life to this ideal, teaching us that in every moment, both in the little things of each day and in the most difficult and painful situations, our intimate disposition should be that of trying to discover God's will and of striving to carry it out generously.

This is our Christian vocation, which is a vocation to the holiness to which we are called; a holiness accessible to everyone in the simplicity of daily life. Those who knew him testify that he transmitted the urgency of loving God. With great refinement, he tried to get each person to face his or her own

responsibility to love God and souls." That same day, in the evening, a Thanksgiving Mass was said in the Basilica of Saint Mary Major. Cardinal Abril y Castelló emphasized the new Blessed's apostolic zeal, making reference to the Gospel of that day: "And I have other sheep that are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will heed my voice. So there shall be one flock, one shepherd" (Jn 10:16). We can say that this zealous concern of Our Lord beat strongly in the pastoral heart of the new Blessed. His thoughts were for everyone. And so, by his teaching, prayer, and example, he encouraged his sons and daughters to work in the most varied environments, finding the opportunity there to present the figure of Jesus to the people with whom they live. Indeed, as Pope Francis said, 'every Christian is a missionary to the extent that he or she has encountered the love of God in Christ Jesus.' He encouraged many Christians to respond to their vocation to be light for the world, letting themselves be illumined by the Lord." ■

- 1 & 2 Thanksgiving Mass in St. John Lateran
- 3 Cardinal Abril giving his homily at the Thanksgiving Mass in St. Mary Major
- 4 The faithful at the thanksgiving Mass

Saint Peter's Square Audience with the Holy Father 1 October

Some 15,000 people of those who had come to Rome after celebrating the beatification in Madrid, attended the audience with Pope Francis on the morning of 1 October. They wanted to show their union with the Holy Father and their gratitude for the beatification.

The Holy Father encouraged them to turn to the new Blessed's intercession in their search for holiness: "I greet the Spanish-speaking pilgrims, who have come from so many countries. I also greet Bishop Javier Echevarría, Prelate of Opus Dei, along with the faithful of the Prelature present here to give thanks to God for the beatification of Bishop Alvaro del Portillo. May his intercession and example help you to respond generously to God's call to holiness and apostolate in ordinary life, in the service of the Church and all mankind. Thank you very much and may God bless you." ■

SOCIAL INITIATIVES

For the beatification of Bishop del Portillo, the Harambee Africa International Association organized a collection of funds for four social initiatives that arose under the impulse of Saint Josemaría's first successor as head of Opus Dei.

1. The creation of a mother-and-baby center dependent on the Niger Hospital and Diagnostic Center in Enugu, Nigeria.
2. The expansion and improvement of three medical centers and the training of nursing personnel at the *Centre Hospitalier Monkole* and the *Institut Supérieur en Sciences Infirmières* in Kinshasa, Congo.
3. A program to fight infant malnutrition at the *Centre Rurel Ilomba* in Bingerville, Ivory Coast.
4. A scholarship fund for African priests and seminarians to receive formation at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross.



- 1 Pope Francis at the Oct 1 general audience in St Peter's Square
- 2 Pope Francis and the Prelate of Opus Dei with the Ureta family
- 3 Indonesians in the audience with Pope Francis
- 4 Youthful ladies from Australia & New Zealand
- 5 A souvenir photo of Filipino students after the papal audience

Return of Blessed Alvaro to the Crypt

Rome, 2 October: Blessed Alvaro's mortal remains are returned to the crypt of the Prelatic Church of Our Lady of Peace

The days of veneration of Blessed Alvaro's mortal remains in the Basilica of Saint Eugene were concluded on the evening of 2 October. The last act was a Solemn Exposition of the Holy Eucharist, with singing of the Te Deum. During the liturgical celebration Bishop Echevarría spoke a few words in which he emphasized the desire to "give all the glory to God, totally united to the Pope and letting ourselves be guided by Jesus." A large congregation of women and men, of all ages and social backgrounds, and many children too, filled the church and took part in the ceremony with deep recollection and great emotion.

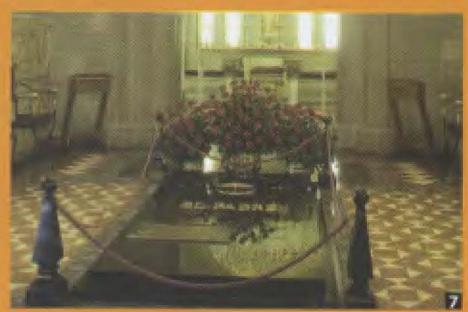
Immediately afterwards, the coffin containing the body of the Blessed was transferred from Saint Eugene's to the Prelatic Church of Our Lady of Peace. Hundreds accompanied the cortege along Bruno Buozzi Street which links the two churches. Besides this many other thousands of people followed the ceremony through the Opus Dei website.

In Our Lady of Peace, Bishop Echevarría, the Prelate of Opus Dei addressed words of gratitude to the first successor of Saint Josemaría: "Blessed Alvaro, thank you for all that you have done. Thank you for your generosity. Thank you for

your unbreakable fidelity to God and to others even amid difficulties... Thank you, because we want to tread in the footsteps left by your fidelity, in the footsteps of your service to God, of your apostolic zeal, taking advantage of every opportunity as you did... Thank you and may we never cease to thank you."

The Prelate then blessed those present with a relic *ex sanguine* of Blessed Alvaro and the coffin was taken to the crypt of the church, to the same place where it had rested since his death in 1994. His tomb also bears the dates of Saint Josemaría's life, since it was there that the Founder of Opus Dei was buried from 1975 until 1992. This fact also emphasizes "the virtue most characteristic of Blessed Alvaro, that is, his fidelity" (Decree declaring the heroicity of his virtues, 28 June 2012). ■

- 1 The casket of Blessed Alvaro being brought out of St. Eugene's
- 2 The faithful waiting outside St Eugene's for the transfer of Blessed Alvaro's remains
- 3 Blessed Alvaro's remains being brought to the Prelatic Church of St Mary of Peace
- 4 The casket in St Mary of Peace
- 5 The Prelate blessing the faithful with a relic of Blessed Alvaro
- 6 Veneration of the relic of Blessed Alvaro
- 7 Blessed Alvaro's tomb in the Crypt of the Prelatic Church of Our Lady of Peace, Rome



Favours of Blessed Alvaro

Blessed Alvaro and my cow

I hoped to attend the beatification of Bishop Alvaro in Madrid, Spain on 27 September 2014. I had paid only one installment, and the second was already due. I looked for ways and means of raising the money but all in vain. Then I remembered a cow which for the past three months I had advertised for sale but with no ready buyer. One morning in June, I woke up and during my morning prayers I asked Bishop Alvaro to intercede for me. I told him that I was going to my farm in Mtwapa and that therefore he should ensure I get somebody to buy the cow at Ksh 40,000. During the morning Mass, I repeated my prayer request through Bishop Alvaro. On my way to the farm I felt an urge to talk to a nearby butcher about my intention to sell my cow. He did not show any interest in buying it. I was very disappointed and I proceeded to the farm. In the evening, when I started preparing to leave the farm, at about 5:00 pm, I heard someone calling out to me from the gate. He told me that he had been informed about my intention to sell the cow and that he wanted to buy it. We negotiated the price and he paid Ksh 40,000. The cow was loaded onto his pick-up and off he drove. I could not believe it. I found myself thanking Bishop Alvaro for the "miracle". I posted the Ksh 40,000 for the beatification trip to Nairobi. We should ask Blessed Alvaro for assistance not only in spiritual but also in material needs.

C.O. (Mombasa)

We were able to pay the workers

We were making repairs in a student residence and we needed to pay the salaries of the employees. This was the second difficult month. The previous month, we had used up our reserves and emptied our bank accounts. We had two days to find 7,000 euros. I prayed to God through the intercession of Bishop Alvaro. After dinner, I asked N. if he could help us. He had not been able to until then. This time he answered "Yes", and said he could give us the 7,000 euros we needed to pay the employees. I thank Bishop Alvaro for this favor.

C.V. (Helsinki)

What are we doing here

Juan travelled to Rome to attend a conference, representing an association of hotel managers of which he is the president. He was accompanied by the secretary of that entity who lives in Madrid. Once they had got to their hotel he asked his friend if he would not mind if he went out for a while to make some visits. His friend offered to accompany

him. Then Juan explained to him that he wanted to go to the Prelatic Church of Our Lady of Peace in Villa Tevere where he always went to pray whenever he travelled to Rome. His friend, who did not know much about Opus Dei, thought it a good idea and they went together...

They prayed before the mortal remains of Saint Josemaría and then went down to the crypt to pray before the tomb of Bishop Alvaro. Juan told him that in a few weeks Bishop Alvaro was going to be beatified in Madrid, and encouraged him to pray to him for the cure of his wife who had been suffering from cancer for some time. His friend was very grateful for the visit and said he would pray with his wife for the cure of the cancer.

A few weeks later, Juan received a call from his friend who, deeply moved, told him that after the last medical tests, his wife had been cured of her cancer. He had no doubt about the intervention of Bishop Alvaro.

On 27 September, while Juan was on one of the buses going to Valdebebas, he received a call from his friend. He told him that he had woken up early that morning and remarked to his wife: "What are we doing here?" And they had decided to go to Valdebebas to take part in the beatification in thanksgiving for her cure.

J.P. (Barcelona)

A kidney injury

In November 2012, R.R. went to a clinic for a heart check-up. This involved a radiological test that ended up damaging his kidneys, and they were not working for two months. The doctors said his kidneys would never recover.

But we prayed to Bishop Alvaro and to the great surprise of the doctors his kidneys began to function again. He is very grateful to Bishop Alvaro because he has not needed to go on to permanent dialysis and his kidneys are back to normal. A year has now passed and R.R. is perfectly well.

M.M. (Chicago)

Sale of a small school

A year ago my mother began to encounter many difficulties in running a small school where she had been working for twenty years. The economic situation in our country had worsened and she found herself having to close it down. Another problem is that she did not have enough money to pay the staff, and carrying out the whole process of closure required a lot of money. We (my mother and I) began to ask for a quick solution through the intercession

Worldwide devotion

of Bishop Alvaro. There were days when my mother was so short of money that she hardly had enough to eat. The months were going by. All the members of our family were concerned. But despite all the problems, we were sure that Bishop Alvaro was going to help us.

A few weeks ago, someone turned up who said he wanted to buy the school buildings, the school having now closed down. An initial agreement for the sale was reached, but it was not finalized. On 1 September 2014, they reached a final agreement and the property was sold – it was thanks to Bishop Alvaro's help.

To avoid becoming discouraged, each day I watched the video of the cure of Jose Ignacio, whom Blessed Alvaro had helped. Blessed Alvaro is a faithful friend, a companion, a true father who never leaves us.

I am thankful for this very special help and his daily company in my struggle.

I.M.M. (Rome)

A thrombosis in my eye

Together with my greetings, I am writing to communicate to you that, through the intercession of Blessed Alvaro del Portillo, I have obtained the favor that I asked of him. This was the complete cure of a thrombosis in the right eye.

Here is a brief summary of what happened to me. On Monday, 29 April 2013, I went to see an ophthalmologist about a reduction of vision in my right eye. After a careful examination he diagnosed a thrombosis of the vein in the lower part of the retina. He said that this occurs more often to people above the age of 75 and that there are very few cases in people of my age (40). He also said that treatments for it are limited and those that exist are not completely effective. To be more certain, he asked me to have a series of tests, and these confirmed the diagnosis.

The doctor asked me to return in a month, saying he could not do much at the moment as the center of the eye was a bit inflamed. He also asked me to see a hematologist for some tests to try to determine the cause of the thrombosis.

During that month I prayed a novena with Bishop Alvaro del Portillo's prayer card. On the second visit to the ophthalmologist, he checked the vision in my right eye and was surprised that I could now see without any difficulty and that the vision in my right eye was again equal to that in my left eye.

I am very grateful for Blessed Alvaro del Portillo's intercession.

S.C. (Santiago de Chile)

Lost & Found Land Title

Some years ago, my sister gave me for safe-keeping a land title our mother left us. I filed it somewhere in my room and forgot about it. When my room got flooded and I developed allergies, I got rid of virtually all books and papers in my room upon my doctor's recommendation; however, I made sure that the said document would not be among them.

Early this year, my sister called to ask for the land title. I looked at everything in my room and, to my horror, I found no trace of the document. Distressed at not finding it after 3 days of futile search, I earnestly asked for Blessed Alvaro's assistance in getting it back. When I mentioned the matter to the people at home, my younger brother told me that, since a few years ago, he had been keeping in his drawer a small envelope which he found in a trash bin. He was minded to throw it away but hesitated because it seemed to contain an important document. He looked for the envelope and gave it to me and sure enough the land title I was looking for was inside. Only Blessed Alvaro saved me from further distress and the complication which reconstituting the content of the title entailed.

J.E. (Makati)

A successful operation

I would appreciate some more pictures of Bishop Alvaro. I feel he had an influence in the successful outcome of a breast cancer operation which my daughter had last Monday! I was in Dublin the day before she was diagnosed with cancer. On my way to a Dart station, I was given directions from a complete stranger. As she walked along with me she gave me a picture of Bishop Alvaro. I gave it to my daughter. She prayed to him and so did I. My daughter is coming home today.

J.F. (Ireland)

Two favors in a row

I am writing to give thanks for the intercession of Bishop Alvaro del Portillo. First of all, because my family was able to buy our first house, as getting a subsidy was very difficult because of the complicated application process and all the paperwork involved. Second, when I resigned from the hospital where I had been working I was told they would not pay me for my final month of work. I had been more than six months without getting this payment. But thanks to Bishop Alvaro's intercession, after praying for a week, the problem was resolved.

A.N.D.G. (Colombia)