

## BISHOP ALVARO DEL PORTILLO

John O'Connor, OSA

*At the death of Mgr Alvaro del Portillo the well-known Italian journalist, Vittorio Messori, wrote: 'He was indeed a father, as he is called in Opus Dei. . . . It was easy to see that he had been a civil engineer. Behind the episcopal garb there was a man of the world.'*

*Father Kolvenbach, the Superior General of the Jesuits, thanked God 'for the gift and the untiring service which the deceased Prelate has given the Church and the world' and he was relying on his intercession from heaven, 'also on behalf of the Society of Jesus.'*

*We offer our readers an appreciation of the recently deceased Prelate, and one of his last writings giving support to the International Year of the Family.*

**T**he unexpected death on 23 March last of Bishop Alvaro del Portillo brought sadness worldwide to the friends and members of Opus Dei. Many mourned the passing of a holy priest and good friend, and perhaps the esteem in which he was held was best highlighted by the thoughtful visit of the Holy Father to pray beside his remains, but the sadness was genuinely felt by people from all walks of life all over the world.

### His life in Opus Dei

Since the death in 1975 of Blessed Josemaría Escrivá, who founded Opus Dei in 1928 and was beatified in 1992, Mgr del Portillo had been head of this dedicated spiritual organization, with the title of Prelate since 1982. But Bishop del Portillo's association with Blessed Josemaría went back almost to the beginnings of the Work. In 1935 he joined Opus Dei—a predominantly lay organization of Catholic spirituality and evangelical asceticism so dear to our Holy Father—which in great simplicity and enthusiasm, in example and teaching, brings the loving message of the Christ of the Gospels

the day of his death. And for the record, he sent his condolences in the following telegram to Mgr Javier Echevarría, then Vicar General of Opus Dei, now its new Prelate:

On hearing of the sudden death of Mgr Alvaro del Portillo, Prelate of Opus Dei, I would like to express to you and to all the members of the Prelature my heartfelt condolences. While gratefully recalling before our Lord the zealous priestly and episcopal life of the deceased, his constant example of fortitude and trust in divine providence, as well as his fidelity to the See of Peter, and his generous ecclesial service as a close collaborator and worthy successor of the Blessed Josemaría Escrivá, I offer my fervent prayers for his soul. May our Lord receive this good and faithful servant into his eternal bliss, and I impart a special heartfelt apostolic blessing on all those who have enjoyed the benefits of his pastoral devotion and lofty spiritual and intellectual endowments.

#### **In conclusion**

Here may we extend our sympathy to all the members of Opus Dei in Ireland, who follow the dream and the counsel set out for them in modern times by Blessed Josemaría Escrivá, and by their second caring pastor, the now lamented Bishop Alvaro del Portillo. After his faithful and dedicated life, may he savour the joys of heaven with his lifelong friend who is now named among the blessed.

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