

to be with Christ is to be close to the cross, and to be close to the cross is to be with Christ, which is the infinite happiness that he wants to bring us, asking us to learn how to renounce our "I," our ego. An "I" that, as St. Josemaría used to say, is the greatest friend that we have, and at the same time also our greatest enemy. So let us strive to reject everything that separates us from God and to carry this God of ours with us.

I don't want to end without asking you for something, and not only now, but constantly: that you accompany the Pope, that you love him with your whole soul, that you feel yourselves children of such a good common Father, and that you also accompany him on the trip he is about to undertake. He did not expect our Lord to place this burden on his shoulders. He has accepted it with full generosity, and this acceptance has led him to want to serve the souls who are awaiting him.

On this long, tiring trip that he is about to make, which requires a change of schedule with respect to Rome, he needs our affection and our prayer, and he needs our small sacrifices offered up for the Pope. I can tell you that he holds all of us in his soul, and looks for a generous response from each of us. He wants us to help him to carry the weight of the Church; remember what he said in his homily at the beginning of his Pontificate: my program is not to do my own will, but to do God's will.²

For with Mary, with the saints in heaven and (I say this with all sincerity and also with necessity) with the intercession of St. Josemaría, we pray for the Church, for the Pope, for the bishops, for priests, for seminarians, and for the people of God. All of us here are the Church! No one here is more a part of the Church than the others. You too are the Church and have the responsibility of wanting to sanctify yourselves in order to sanctify, to sanctify yourselves in order to help, to sanctify yourselves in order to fill this world of ours with God's joy.

May God bless you. I am now going to spend some time in prayer.

Rome

August 7, 2008

*At the closing of the sessions
of the Tribunal of the Prelature
on the Cause of Bishop Álvaro
del Portillo, Pontifical University
of the Holy Cross*

After the death of Bishop Álvaro del Portillo, the existence of a clear and consistent reputation for holiness was immediately evident. From all parts of the world we received hundreds of personally signed accounts of spiritual and material favors received through his intercession. Many people from all over the world, including persons who do not belong to the Prelature, are thus convinced that Don Álvaro is in heaven,

2. Cf. Benedict XVI, Homily at the Inaugural Mass of the Petrine ministry, April 24, 2005.

and point to his merits in their appeal to heaven to be heard in their personal needs.

The demonstration of a reputation for holiness: this is the first requirement for opening a Cause of Canonization. With full deliberation I decided, therefore, that his Cause should be opened. Once assured of this foundation, the Church has to decide if this reputation for sanctity is based on the reality (shown through legally certain evidence) of a life marked by the heroic exercise of the Christian virtues. In this case, the Church puts into operation the process needed to carry out a juridical, historical-critical, and theological investigation.

As you know, I asked our very dear Cardinal Ruini that he appoint a Tribunal of the Vicariate of Rome to hear my deposition and that of other witnesses, who lived particularly close to the Servant of God. The Tribunal of the Prelature was to carry out its own investigation in a parallel way, calling other witnesses to provide their testimony. The Tribunal of the Vicariate began its work on March 5, 2004, and that of the Prelature on March 20 of the same year.

In addition, in order to hear witnesses living far from Rome, the Tribunal of the Prelature asked other diocesan Tribunals to carry out their respective "investigative" proceedings. This was done during these years by the Tribunals of the dioceses of Madrid, Fatima-Leiria, Montreal, Pamplona, Quito, Sidney, Warsaw, and Washington, which are added

today to the Tribunals of the present process.

After four years of work, the Tribunal of the Vicariate ended its sessions on the past June 26. Today, on August 7, 2008, we are definitively closing the sessions of the entire investigation on the life and virtues of the Servant of God Álvaro del Portillo.

The acts will be sent at once to the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints. There, after study of their conformity with law, a copy will be given to the Postulator, so that he can begin drawing up the *Positio super vita et virtutibus*, which at the proper time will be examined by the Theological Consultors of the Dicastery we have mentioned. Later, a judgment will be made by the Cardinals and Bishops who are members of the Congregation. Afterwards, if the result of the examination of the documents is positive, they will proceed to the proclamation of the heroic virtues of Bishop del Portillo.

If this occurs, and if there is also a favorable conclusion to the canonical investigation of a possibly miraculous event, chosen among those attributed to his intercession, his beatification will take place, with the previous approval of the Roman Pontiff.

I ask your prayers for the successful conclusion of this path.

I would like now to say something more. I feel myself urged by an imperative commitment, which I now assume *coram Deo*. I cannot for-

get Don Álvaro's generous efforts throughout the various phases of St. Josemaría's Cause of Canonization. In particular, he wanted the *Positio* to reflect not only our Founder's heroic life, but also the depth, the internal harmony, the riches, and the newness of the spirit of Opus Dei. Thus he wanted to present to the Church a true and thorough portrait of this holy priest. Bishop del Portillo was moved by his filial love for St. Josemaría to pour his best efforts into this work.

I would like our affection for Don Álvaro to be no less. But, in addition to this affection, there is also another reason why we feel the duty that his Cause of Canonization proceed in a very rigorous way: the consideration of the role that he played in the history of Opus Dei. As St. Josemaría's first successor, Don Álvaro provides all those who follow him down through the centuries with an incomparable example of faithfulness. He guarded in all its integrity, without alteration, the spirit that God entrusted to St. Josemaría.

This is precisely his essential characteristic: Don Álvaro was above all a faithful man. A faithful man, that is to say, a man of faith: faith in God, faith in the Church, faith in the supernatural origin of Opus Dei, and therefore in the divine character of the undertaking God had asked him to take part in. From here stemmed his unshakable loyalty to the Founder, of whom he was for forty years the closest collaborator, and later, his first successor in the governing of Opus Dei.

You can therefore understand my joy at presiding here at the closing session of the canonical investigation of the life and virtues of our beloved Don Álvaro. I feel an immense debt to him, because by his conduct he taught all the faithful of the Prelature—priests and laity, women and men—that their path of fidelity to God and to the Church passes through faithfulness to the spirit of Opus Dei, which St. Josemaría transmitted to his children.

I would like to pause briefly to speak about today's date. Today is the anniversary of a very significant event in the history of the Work. On August 7, 1931, while celebrating Holy Mass, at the moment of elevating the Sacred Host, St. Josemaría felt deep in his soul, "with an extraordinary force and clarity," as he himself recalled, God's voice speaking to him through a verse from Scripture: "*Et ego, si exaltatus fuero a terra, omnia traham ad meipsum*" (Jn 12:32). And he understood with new depth the essential content of the vocation to Opus Dei—the sanctification of work—and the impact of the pastoral reality that stemmed from it. Let us follow his account: "And I understood that it will be men and women of God who will lift the cross, with the teachings of Christ, to the summit of all human activities . . . And I saw our Lord triumph, drawing all things to himself" (*Apuntes Intimos*, August 7, 1931, no. 217).

Don Álvaro perfectly incarnated this spirit: first as a student, later as an engineer, and finally as a priest—for many years—and as Prelate,

always offering his work to our Lord. When he was consecrated bishop, he chose for his coat of arms the motto: *Regnare Christum volumus!* We want Christ to reign! It is a summary of his path: he worked a lot and very well, always for the glory of God. It is thus that the faithful of the Prelature, with the human and supernatural quality of their activities in the world, contribute to the Church's mission: sanctifying the world through their professional work, raising it up to God, saving souls.

In this task the saints are our guide. As St. Josemaría was, and continues to be, so also was, and continues to be, Don Álvaro, his most faithful son. Without trying to anticipate the Church's judgment, we have and foster the conviction that he is in heaven, and we entrust ourselves with all our heart to his intercession.

The Church is built up in the Eucharist and thanks to the Eucharist. Opus Dei, "a tiny part of the Church," as St. Josemaría used to say, is included in this dynamic of grace. We have mentioned the sanctification of work, but it is God's grace, in first place, and therefore in a special way the Eucharist, that furthers its growth. Here also Don Álvaro, following our Founder's example, taught us to live as persons in love, making the Eucharist "the center and root of our interior life."

May Don Álvaro, with his unforgettable smile, his unshakable interior peace, his firmness in doing the good, and his deep humility, help us

to make Christ's life shine forth in the world through an unwavering apostolate that brings souls the joy of finding Christ. Remember his teaching and example: make the truth lovable, he always recommended to us.

Mary, present when Christ was raised up on the Cross, will be at our side, if we truly commit ourselves—with our limitations—to serve Christ according to the spirit left to us by our Founder, and so faithfully incarnated by Don Álvaro.

Vatican City October 14, 2008

*Intervention in the Assembly
of the Synod of Bishops,
L'Osservatore Romano*

In relation to the reflections in the *Instrumentum laboris* (nos. 24 and 41) on the Word of God in the life of believers, I think it is important to consider the lives of the saints. In them, the encounter with the Word of God through reading Sacred Scripture was not only an intellectual light, but radically changed their lives. How can we fail to recall that a passage from the letter to the Romans (13:13-14) played a decisive role in the conversion of St. Augustine, as he himself tells us in the famous episode of the "*tolle, lege*" (cf. St. Augustine, *Confessions*, 8, 12, 29-30)? I think that we, as shepherds, are called every day to put into practice the Bible and in particular the Gospel. We ourselves, and also our