

Articles, Interviews and Addresses

Interview granted to “Zenit,” Rome (January 22, 2014)

By H. Sergio Mora

1. Bishop Echevarría, how did you, as Prelate of Opus Dei, react to the news of the upcoming beatification of Bishop Alvaro del Portillo?

As you can well understand, with profound joy and giving thanks to God and to Pope Francis, from whom the decision came to proceed with the beatification of this bishop, who so loved and served the Holy Church. Those who knew him, or have seen the films of his catecheses, usually say that Alvaro del Portillo spread peace and drew people to God. At this moment, I ask him to obtain for us from God the peace of heart which was so much his, and that this celebration may help many people to draw closer to God.

2. Initially the beatification was set to take place in Rome. Why was Madrid chosen finally?

A few months ago, when the news was made known of the future beatification, several options were studied. Preference was given to central places in Rome outside Saint Peter’s Square, which the previous Pontiff decided should be reserved for can-

onizations presided over by the Holy Father. However, as the number of participants foreseen increased, it was thought that it would be difficult to organize that ceremony in the Eternal City, as we all would have liked, despite the generous willingness of the authorities from the Vicariate of Rome and the municipal government.

3. Where did this idea come from?

The Congregation for the Causes of Saints thought another possibility suitable, which I suggested as Prelate of Opus Dei: to hold it in Madrid, birthplace of the new Blessed; also because the year of his beatification will coincide with the centenary of his birth. The news is being made public today because the Holy See has just stated that the Holy Father accepted that suggestion and established that the beatification will be in Madrid on September 27. This option will also facilitate the participation of many people from Madrid who wish to attend the beatification but who, in the context of the present economic crisis, would have found it difficult to make the trip to Italy.

Madrid is the city where Don Alvaro met Saint Josemaría, joined Opus Dei and received his

priestly ordination. For thousands of people from countries all over the world, it will be an opportunity to visit the places related to the birth of Opus Dei, founded in Madrid on October 2, 1928 by Saint Josemaría. Moreover, the numerous faithful and friends of the Prelature who live in Madrid will be happy to assist in welcoming participants from other places. Although this news has been published in some of the media, I must specify that only now have we known of the approval received from the Holy See.

3. And for those who live in Rome or in Italy?

Rome is also the city of Don Alvaro, where he lived the greater part of his life (from 1946 to 1994) and where he worked as shepherd of the Prelature of Opus Dei.

We are studying with the competent authorities the possibility that, during the days following the beatification, Don Alvaro's body (which rests in the crypt of the prelatric church of our Lady of Peace in Rome) will be taken temporarily to the Basilica of Saint Eugene. Thus that those who so desire, certainly quite a large number of people, will be able to pray before the mortal remains of the new Blessed. Also being organized is the possibility that, on the Wednesday after the beatification, many faithful will have the opportunity to take part in Pope Francis' Wednesday audience, to show in this way their union with

the Roman Pontiff and their filial gratitude for the beatification.

4. What about the collection that has been announced to assist several social initiatives in Africa?

The moment I received news of the future beatification, the desire came to mind that it also be an occasion to help needy people. Specifically, to ask each participant for a small sacrifice, to offer a donation to assist four social services projects in the African continent that arose from the inspiration and direct impulse of Bishop del Portillo. *Harambee* (an NGO born on the occasion of the canonization of Saint Josemaría) was asked to coordinate this effort. I am sure that, from Heaven, Don Alvaro will look with joy at this "gift," which seeks to assist African initiatives for education and the fight against poverty.

**"Francis Gives Us
a Joyful Mission,"**
Catholic Herald,
London,
(March 7, 2014)

"We become fully human when we become more than human, when we let God bring us beyond ourselves in order to attain the fullest truth of our being. Here we find the source and inspiration of all our efforts