

called Africa Harambee. This initiative has begun programs of human and social development in a dozen sub-Saharan African countries. Finally, in recent months, not far from Jerusalem, construction has begun on *Saxum*, an initiative in memory of Don Alvaro. This Latin word, *saxum*, or rock, was the nickname St. Josemaría gave to that son of his in the early days, when he realized that our Lord had placed him at his side as a strong support, as firm as a rock, in the task of building the Work that God had entrusted to him.

I ask all of you to pray that this project may soon come to completion. *Saxum* seeks to make known to those who travel to the Holy Land for religious or touristic reasons, the great spiritual riches of the places sanctified by the physical presence of our Lord. We want it to be an instrument through which pilgrims, tourists, etc., can have the opportunity for a spiritual conversion in their life.

Providence has seen to it that the buildings under construction are located close to the road to Emmaus—the one that Jesus walked along on the day of his resurrection, in search of the two disciples who had become discouraged and were returning to the “periphery” from which they had been rescued by our Lord’s call.

I will stop here. I am grateful for your patience and attention.

And I ask that you pray for me and for these apostolates of the faithful of the Prelature of Opus Dei. But I especially ask that you always pray for the Holy Father and his intentions. Thank you.

At the Presentation of the Book

Alvaro del Portillo:

Un uomo fedele

Rome

(September 18, 2014)

Your eminence, my dear journalists, dear friends:

The presentation of the biography of the soon to be beatified Bishop Alvaro del Portillo, written by Fr. Javier Medina, is taking place a few days before his beatification in Madrid, his native city. I cannot hide the emotion of this moment, which brings to mind so many recollections of a good and faithful pastor, who loved the Church and souls with his whole heart: a heart that, following the inspirations of the Holy Spirit, grew ever greater.

The rapid approach of September 27 reopens a question: What is the meaning, the importance of a beatification or canonization? Pope Francis, referring to the saints, answered in this way: “Our Lord chooses some

persons to make holiness better seen, to make it clear that he is the one who sanctifies . . . This is the first rule of holiness: Christ must increase and we must decrease” (Homily, May 9, 2014).

This is the mission to which the Church is called: to lead to heaven those she engendered to a new life in Baptism, through the action of the Holy Spirit. Therefore every beatification is an occasion of celebration for the People of God. As the moment draws near when Don Alvaro will be counted among the number of the blessed, it is only logical that our joy be manifested in gratitude to God, from whom all holiness proceeds.

A beatification cannot be reduced to the celebration of a person; rather it is above all an opportunity to praise God, to give him glory, and to thank him for his gifts. It is also an opportunity for conversion for each one of us: a reminder of the desire that Christ increase and we ourselves decrease.

The Venerable Alvaro del Portillo was, certainly, a man, a priest, and a bishop to whom God granted outstanding human and supernatural qualities. Nevertheless, I can give witness to the fact that his life was spent in an atmosphere of ordinary life, lived with a strong and joyful fidelity. He never tried to shine with a light of his own; rather, at

every moment, he strove to reflect the divine light, following loyally the spirit he had learned through the words and example of St. Josemaría, the founder of Opus Dei. Don Alvaro attained sanctity, with the grace of God and his own generous response, by putting into practice, in an extraordinary way, the ordinary life of a Christian.

His beatification reminds us—and here we find the significance of this act of the Church—that sanctity is attainable by all the baptized, if we respond generously to God’s grace. The Christian vocation spurs us to seek identification with Christ, each in the circumstances proper to their state and condition. And it requires that we make the effort to carry the Cross every day. For the great majority of people, this is an ordinary cross, which they need to carry joyfully in their family, in their social and sporting environment, in health and in sickness, in their work and rest. It is not a matter, therefore, of carrying out extraordinary acts, nor of possessing exceptional charisms; rather, following the Master’s example, it means accepting every day the things we find difficult.

The example of the saints and the blessed stirs up in us the desire to be like them, to belong forever to the great family of God, very close to Jesus and our Lady. As Cardinal Joseph

Ratzinger wrote, “To be holy does not mean being superior to others . . . Holiness is this profound contact with God, becoming a friend of God: it is letting the Other act, the Only One who can really make the world both good and happy.” (October 6, 2002).

Today I want to thank especially Cardinal Francesco Monterisi, Father Antonio Maria Sicari (who has written so many books on the saints and on sanctity), and Professors Emma Fattorini and Maria Vittoria Marini Clarelli for their presentations. A special gratitude also goes to the author of the book and to Dr. Cesare Cavalleri and all our good friends at Ares, the publisher of the book.

While we listen to their reflections, let us unite ourselves to the intentions of our Holy Father Francis. I suggest to everyone that we go especially to the intercession of the soon to be blessed Alvaro, so that all Catholics may live in close union with the Pope, in a unity of hearts and intentions, for the good of the Church.

At the Inauguration of the Academic Year, Pontifical University of the Holy Cross, Rome (October 7, 2014)

Your Eminence, Excellency,
professors, collaborators, students,
ladies and gentlemen:

We are participating in the inauguration of this academic year, which Providence has made to coincide with the feast of Our Lady of the Rosary. It is also the day following the anniversary of the canonization of St. Josemaría and a few days after the beatification of Bishop Alvaro del Portillo, which took place as you know on September 27. This is a very significant coincidence, since the new blessed was the first Grand Chancellor of our University. It was he, in fact, who urged its creation and supported its development, prompted by the great affection for the university that St. Josemaría had transmitted to him as part of his passionate love for the world.

Let us give thanks to the Most Holy Trinity for having given us Don Alvaro, whom we thank for his efforts to begin that Roman Academic Center which, after growing little by little, became the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross. It