

RECENT PUBLICATIONS



Alvaro del Portillo – The Power of Humility

Helena Scott & Ethel Tolansky
Catholic Truth Society, London. Booklet B758



Saxum: The Life of Alvaro del Portillo.

John Coverdale
Scepter, New York



Like Salt and like Light, Alvaro del Portillo.

Texts for prayer and spiritual reading
compiled by José Antonio Loarte
Scepter, London



Saxum. Remembering Bishop Alvaro del Portillo.

His life in pictures
30 min. DVD.
www.betafilms.org



- 1 With St Josemaría in 1972.
- 2 In Nigeria, 12 November 1989.
- 3 Blessing a sick person, 3 September 1988.

PRAYER

O God, merciful Father, you granted your servant Bishop Alvaro del Portillo 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 serve the kingdom of Jesus Christ. Deign to glorify your servant Alvaro, and through his intercession grant me the favour I request ... (here make your petition). Amen.

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be to the Father.

In conformity with the decrees of Pope Urban VIII, we declare that there is no intention of anticipating in any way the judgement of the Church, and that this prayer is not intended for public use. Those who obtain favours through the intercession of Bishop Alvaro del Portillo are requested to write to the Office for the Causes of Saints, Prelature of Opus Dei, 4 Orme Court, London W2 4RL

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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 Newsletter or the prayer card of Bishop Alvaro del Portillo.

Imprimatur:
Bishop Javier Echevarría
Prelate of Opus Dei

Álvaro del Portillo

Countdown to the Beatification on
27th September 2014

Decrees from
the Holy See
The Miracle
Favours obtained



Newsletter no.4
Centenary Issue (1914-2014)

3 EDITORIAL

4 DECREE ON THE VIRTUES

8 DECREE ON THE MIRACLE

11 INTERVIEW WITH THE MOTHER OF THE BOY WHO WAS CURED

13 FAVOURS OBTAINED THROUGH BISHOP ÁLVARO

The Venerable Álvaro del Portillo was born in Madrid (Spain) on 11 March 1914. He received doctorates in Civil Engineering, History and Canon Law. In 1935 he joined Opus Dei, and soon began to work very closely with Saint Josemaría Escrivá, the founder of Opus Dei. On 25 June 1944 he was ordained to the priesthood and two years later moved to Rome. Álvaro del Portillo's service to the Church was also shown in his dedication to the tasks which the Holy See entrusted to him and, especially, through active participation in the work of the Second Vatican Council. In 1975, after the death of Saint Josemaría, he was elected to head Opus Dei. On 28 November 1982, Pope Saint John Paul II established Opus Dei as a personal Prelature, and appointed him Prelate. On 6 January 1991, Saint John Paul II ordained him a bishop.

Early in the morning of 23 March 1994, a few hours after his return from a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, Our Lord called this good and faithful servant to Himself. That same day, the Holy Father Saint John Paul II went to pray before his mortal remains, which now rest in the crypt of the prelatic church of Our Lady of Peace, in Rome.

Álvaro del Portillo's Cause of Canonization was opened in Rome in 2004. On 28 June 2012 Pope Benedict XVI declared the heroic nature of his Christian virtues. On 5 July 2013 Pope Francis approved a Decree on a miracle attributed to the Venerable Servant of God Álvaro del Portillo. And on 21 January 2014 the Holy See issued a document confirming that Pope Francis had agreed to a request from the Prelate of Opus Dei, Bishop Javier Echevarría, for the Beatification ceremony to take place in Madrid on 27 September 2014.



E DITORIAL



On 5 July 2013 Pope Francis approved a Decree on a miracle attributed to the Venerable Servant of God Álvaro del Portillo. A year earlier, on 28 June 2012, Pope Benedict had declared that Álvaro del Portillo had lived the Christian virtues to a heroic degree. It was now only a matter of the Holy See announcing the date of the beatification. On 22 January 2014, the Prelate of Opus Dei, Bishop Javier Echevarría wrote a letter to the faithful of Opus Dei to let them know that on the previous day he had received confirmation "that the Holy Father Francis had granted the request I had made to him: that the ceremony should take place in Madrid, on 27 September 2014". "The reason for this," he continued, "is the large number of people wanting to come to the beatification of our beloved Venerable Don Álvaro. There is also the fact that this year is the centenary of his birth which took place in that city on 11 March 1914. In accordance with the practice that has been followed since Benedict XVI established that the Pope only presides over canonization ceremonies, the beatification will be



celebrated by the Prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, Cardinal Angelo Amato." Referring to the peace that the future Blessed brought to many people's hearts, Bishop Echevarría suggested that "we beg him now to obtain for us from God a deep *gaudium cum pace*, joy with peace, for our hearts and for those of all who have at any stage come into contact with Opus Dei's apostolate". The months leading to the beatification are an opportunity to follow more closely in Bishop Álvaro's footsteps: faithfulness to our Lord, the Church, the Pope, and St Josemaría, the Founder of Opus Dei. As we reflect on so many illuminating points in his life, and come to know his writings better, "let's try to imitate his love for God and other people, his desire to fulfil God's will always and in everything, his apostolic zeal and his capacity for serving others," as Bishop Echevarría recommends. ▲

- 1 Álvaro del Portillo, engineer, 10 April 1944.
- 2 Crossing the English Channel to Dover, with Mgr Javier Echevarría and Mgr Joaquín Alonso, 6 July 1980.
- 3 Blessing a sick person in Madrid, 24 November 1993.

CONGREGATION FOR THE CAUSES OF SAINTS

ROME

AND THE PERSONAL PRELATURE OF THE HOLY CROSS AND OPUS DEI

BEATIFICATION AND CANONIZATION

OF THE SERVANT OF GOD

ÁLVARO DEL PORTILLO Y DIEZ DE SOLLANO

TITULAR BISHOP OF VITA

PRELATE OF THE PERSONAL PRELATURE OF THE HOLY CROSS

AND OPUS DEI

(1914 – 1994)

DECREE ON THE VIRTUES

'A faithful man will be richly praised' (Prov 28:20). These words of Sacred Scripture highlight the outstanding virtue of Bishop Álvaro del Portillo, namely faithfulness: in the first place faithfulness to God, by prompt and generous fulfilment of His will; then to the Church and the Pope as well as to the priesthood, and further indeed to the Christian vocation in every moment and circumstance.

'Faithfulness maintained over time is the name of love', Pope Benedict XVI has said (*Homily* at the Shrine of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Fatima, 12 May 2010). The Servant of God was an example of charity and faithfulness to all Christians. He assimilated fully and without any exception, and

expressed in his life, the spirit of Opus Dei which calls everyone to seek fullness of love for God and neighbour through sanctification of the tasks and duties which form, as it were, the backcloth of our daily life. 'To sanctify work, sanctify oneself in work, and sanctify others through work': it may be rightly asserted that these words apply most fittingly to the diligent work of the Servant of God as doctor of engineering science, as priest and finally as Bishop. In whatever field of activity, he gave himself to the full, well aware that he participated in the salvific mission of the Church by faithful fulfilment of his daily duties. The Servant of God was born of pious and upright parents in Madrid on 11 March 1914, the third of eight children. He gained

doctorates in civil engineering, history and canon law. In 1935, when twenty-one years old, he joined Opus Dei and Saint Josemaría soon came to regard him as his most effective helper. On 25

June 1944 he was ordained a priest and thereafter spent himself in carrying out his sacred ministry. From the very day of his ordination he was the confessor of Saint

Josemaría. In 1946 he moved to Rome in order to help the Founder in the government and expansion of Opus Dei: as Secretary-General (1939–1946 and 1956–1975), Counsellor for Italy (1948–1951), Procurator-General (1946–1956) and Rector of the Roman College of the Holy Cross (1948–1954).

He worked also on many tasks committed to him by the Holy See: in the Second Vatican Council he undertook the task of Secretary to the Commission *De disciplina cleri et populi christiani*, which was in charge of drafting the Decree *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, and he was additionally *Peritus* (expert) on the Commissions *De Episcopis et dioecesium regimini* and *De religiosis*. He was later appointed Consultor of the Sacred Congregation of the Council, *Qualificator* of the Supreme Congregation of the Holy Office and Consultor of the Pontifical Commission for the Revision of the Code of Canon Law; he was also a Judge in the Tribunal for causes coming under the competence of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, and Consultor of the same Congregation. He was, moreover, Secretary of the Commission



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2



3

- 1 Álvaro del Portillo with his parents and siblings, in 1921.
- 2 In 1937.
- 3 With St. Josemaría, during the catechetical journey across Spain and Portugal, November 1972.

for Secular Institutes in the Sacred Congregation for Religious and was co-opted to the body of Consultors of the Congregation for the Clergy, to that of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications and to that of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints. On 15 September 1975 he was elected first successor of Saint Josemaría in the government of Opus Dei, for the performance of which role it was his watchword to tread in the Founder's footsteps, and he spent himself in bringing to completion what Saint Josemaría had ardently desired and had taken care to prepare: namely, the obtaining of a canonical configuration that would properly correspond to Opus Dei's foundational charism. This goal was eventually achieved on



• During a homily on 26 June 1991.

28 November 1982 when Blessed John Paul II erected Opus Dei as a Personal Prelature and nominated Álvaro del Portillo its Prelate. On 6 January 1991 the Servant of God received episcopal ordination from the Roman Pontiff. Early in the morning of 23 March 1994, a few hours after his return from a pilgrimage to the Holy Places of our Divine Saviour, God called his Servant to himself. On that same day Blessed John Paul II visited his mortal remains, and after praying in silence, recited aloud the antiphon *Salve Regina*.

Álvaro del Portillo's pastoral zeal in governing Opus Dei for nineteen years looked especially to ever greater extension of the apostolate of the Prelature's faithful in the service of the Church: during those years the stable activity of Opus Dei was extended to twenty new countries. This pastoral care led the Servant of God also to undertake many journeys to strengthen the faithful of the Prelature and other men and women of all walks of life in their spiritual life and in the apostolate. While advancing this evangelizing work, he took care always to ensure that the apostolic activity of the Prelature be at the service of the individual particular Churches. A fruit, moreover, of his zealous concern for priestly forma-

tion was the creation of the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross in Rome, which Saint Josemaría had desired. He published writings in the fields of law, theology and spirituality, especially about the priesthood and the laity, among them: *Faithful and Laity in the Church; Consecration and Mission of the Priest; Una Vida para Dios. Reflexiones en torno a la figura de Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer; and Immersed in God*, an interview on the Founder of Opus Dei. The Servant of God's dedication to fulfilling the mission committed to him was rooted in a deep sense of divine filiation which led him to seek identification with Christ; he committed himself entirely with a trusting mind to the Father's will, filled with love for the Holy Spirit; he was constantly immersed in prayer, and strengthened by the Most Holy Eucharist and by a tender love for the Blessed Virgin Mary. He responded heroically in his bearing of illnesses – which he looked upon as the Cross of Christ –, in his imprisonment for some time during the religious persecution in Spain (1936–1939), and in his undergoing attacks on account of his faithfulness to the Church. He was a man of profound goodness and affability who communicated peace and serenity to

others. No one recalls any discourteous gesture on his part, any sign of impatience in the face of adversity, or any word of reproach or protest on account of difficulties: he had learned from God to forgive, to pray for his persecutors, to open his arms in a priestly manner, and to welcome all with a cheerful face and great kindness.

The Servant of God's love for the Church was manifest in his total communion with the Roman Pontiff and with the Bishops: he was always a most faithful son of the Successor of Peter, adhering without quibble to him and to his teaching. In describing the figure of this Pastor, moreover, mention must also be made of other characteristic features, such as his keenly-felt solicitude for the faithful of Opus Dei; his humility, prudence, fortitude, joy, and simplicity; his self-denial and his ardent desire to win souls for Christ, which he expressed also in his episcopal motto: *Regnare Christum volumus!* (We wish Christ to reign!) The Servant of God's reputation for holiness, already widespread in his lifetime, attained universal reach after his death. Between 2004 and 2008 two equally principal canonical processes regarding the life, virtues and reputation for holiness of the Servant of God were held at the Tribunal of the Vicariate of Rome and at the Tribunal of the Prelature, as well as eight rogatory processes in dioceses in Europe, North and South America and Australia.



• With Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger (1987).

A special meeting of Theological Consultors which took place on 10 February 2012 gave unanimously a positive response to the query presented as to the heroic exercise of virtues and reputation for holiness of the Servant of God. On the proposal of his Eminence Cardinal Antonio Cañizares Llovera, and with myself, Cardinal Angelo Amato, as Moderator, the Most Eminent and Excellent Members of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints issued a favourable verdict at the Ordinary Session convened on 5 June 2012. An accurate report of all the above having been made to the Supreme Pontiff Benedict XVI by the undersigned Cardinal Prefect, the Holy Father, accepting and ratifying the votes of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, has today solemnly declared that: *Certainty has been reached regarding the theological virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity towards both God and neighbour, as well as the cardinal virtues of Prudence, Justice, Temperance and Fortitude and related virtues, in heroic degree, and also regarding the reputation for holiness, of the Servant of God Álvaro del Portillo y Díez de Sollano, titular Bishop of Vita, Prelate of the Personal Prelature of the Holy Cross and Opus Dei, in the case and for the purpose in question.* The Supreme Pontiff has ordered that this decree be published and that it be recorded in the acts of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints.

Given at Rome on the twenty-eighth day of June in the year of the Lord 2012. ▲

ANGELO Cardinal AMATO, S.D.B.
Prefect

L. + S.

✠ MARCELLO BARTOLUCCI
Titular Archbishop of Mevania
Secretary

CONGREGATION FOR THE CAUSES OF SAINTS

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BEATIFICATION AND CANONIZATION

OF THE VENERABLE SERVANT OF GOD

ÁLVARO DEL PORTILLO Y DIEZ DE SOLLANO

TITULAR BISHOP OF VITA

PRELATE OF THE PERSONAL PRELATURE OF THE HOLY CROSS

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(1914 - 1994)

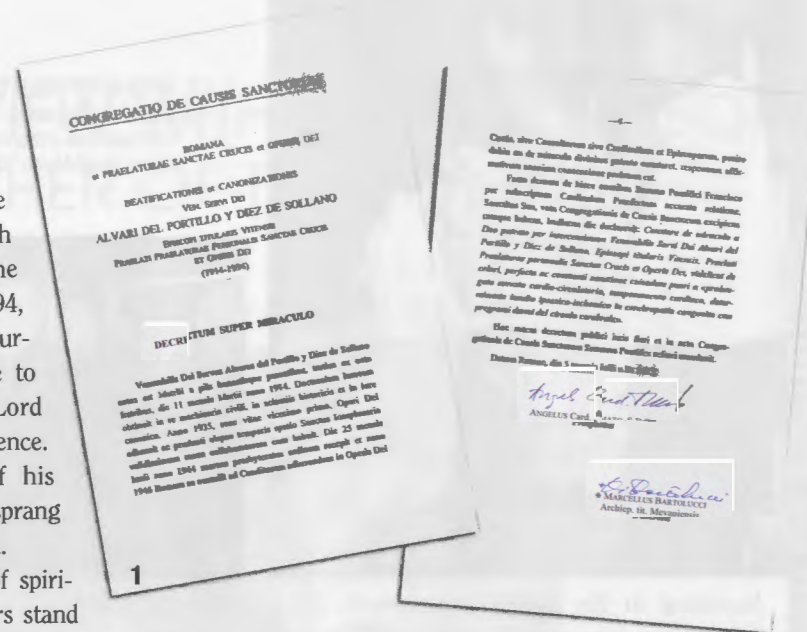
DECREE ON THE MIRACLE

The Venerable Servant of God Álvaro del Portillo y Diez de Sollano was born in Madrid on 11 March 1914 in a Christian home, the third of eight children. He obtained doctorates in Civil Engineering, History and Canon Law. In 1935, at the age of twenty-one, he requested admission to Opus Dei and came to be, after a prudent time, the closest collaborator of Saint Josemaría. On 25 June 1944 he was ordained a priest and moved to Rome in 1946 to assist Saint Josemaría in the government and expansion of Opus Dei. He generously carried out many tasks for the Holy See: Consultor for Departments of the Roman Curia, and during the Second Vatican Council, Secretary of the Commission *De disciplina cleri et populi christiani*, as well as *Peritus* for several Commissions. On 15 September 1975 he was elected the first successor of Saint Josemaría at

the head of Opus Dei. On 28 November 1982 Blessed John Paul II erected Opus Dei as a Personal Prelature and named the Venerable Álvaro del Portillo Prelate. On 6 January 1991, Blessed John Paul II ordained him a bishop. His pastoral ministry was particularly marked by faithfulness to the spirit and message proclaimed by the Founder. He was unstinting in his efforts to extend the apostolic work of the Prelature in the service of the Church. During the nineteen years in which he directed the Work, it began stable apostolic work in twenty new countries. During those years he called more than a thousand faithful of the Prelature to the priesthood and fostered many initiatives in the area of social services. In order to realize a long-standing desire of Saint Josemaría, he founded the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross in Rome, and he encouraged many other

activities in the service of souls. He also travelled to all corners of the world and everywhere preached the Gospel with fortitude. Early in the morning of 23 March 1994, just a few hours after returning from a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, the Lord called him into His presence. Immediately, proofs of his reputation for holiness sprang up throughout the world.

Among these, reports of spiritual and material favours stand out, along with many cures attributed to his intercession. Especially worthy of consideration is the cure of an infant born on 10 July 2003 with congenital (bilateral) cerebral malformation, cyanotic heart disease (Tetralogy of Fallot) and an omphalocele. During his first few days of life the infant suffered repeated hypoxic-ischæmic cerebral lesions, and on 2 August he went into cardiac arrest for between thirty to forty-five minutes due to cardiac tamponade as a result of a massive haemorrhagic pericardial



1 First and last pages of the decree on the miracle.
2 During the visit of Pope St John Paul II to the Elis Centre Rome, 15 January 1984.



3 London 1959, with St Josemaría and Jesús Álvarez Gazapo, an architect.



- 1 During an ordination to the priesthood, June 1993.
- 2 Bishop Álvaro greeting a family who had come to welcome him back from a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, at Rome Airport on 22 March 1994, a few hours before his death.



According to the doctor's assessment, this ischaemic event ought to have caused grave neurological damage or even the death of the infant. However, from a functional point of view, the recovery was both complete and permanent.

The diocesan investigation of this cure took place in the ecclesiastical Curia of Santiago, Chile, between 5 August 2008 and 6 August 2009. On 15 January 2010 this Congregation decreed the juridical validity of that process. On 18 October 2012 the Department of Medical Advisors of the Congregation issued their assessment that medical science could not explain the cure. The Special Congress of Theological Advisors took place on 15 December 2012, and the Ordinary Session of Cardinals and Bishops on 4 June 2013, presided over by Cardinal Angelo Amato. Both of these bodies, those of the Advisors and of the Cardinals and Bishops, responded unanimously in the affirmative to the question of whether this was a miracle accomplished by God.

After having received from the Cardinal Prefect, whose signature is affixed to this decree below, a detailed report of what has just been stated, the Supreme Pontiff Francis accepted and rati-

fied the votes of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints and declared today, 5 July 2013: *The proofs of the miracle performed by God through the intercession of the Venerable Servant of God Álvaro del Portillo y Diez de Sollano, Titular Bishop of Vita, Prelate of the Personal Prelature of the Holy Cross and Opus Dei, are known, namely the rapid, complete and permanent cure of an infant with 'congenital cerebral malformation and cardiovascular lesions, who suffered a prolonged cardiac arrest secondary to cardiac tamponade which should have caused an anoxic-ischaemic injury to the brain'.*

The Holy Father has ordered that this Decree be made public and be recorded in the acts of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints.

Given in Rome on the fifth day of July 2013. ▲

ANGELO Card. AMATO, S.D.B.
Prefect

L. + S.

✠ MARCELLO BARTOLUCCI
Titular Archbishop of Mevania
Secretary

INTERVIEW WITH SUSANA WILSON, THE MOTHER OF THE BOY WHO WAS CURED

(The full text is available at www.opusdei.org.uk)



When was your son José Ignacio born? Were there complications at birth?

He was born on 10 July 2003. Well, in fact the problems started well before birth. Already in January 2003, when I was expecting José Ignacio, we were told his birth would not be easy as it was very probable that he would be born with an omphalocele (intestinal hernia). From that moment we entrusted ourselves to Bishop Álvaro, praying the prayer-card.

Had they not detected any problems with the heart?

Before he was born, no. But afterwards the doctors,

in order to operate on his omphalocele as soon as possible, carried out various tests, and very soon detected that José Ignacio had a cardiac malformation with grave consequences for his circulation. At first the idea was to stabilise José Ignacio so he could be discharged from the hospital and bring him back for an operation a year later, but in view of the situation the doctors decided on a palliative operation, while planning for a further operation to complete the process later on.

The heart operation on José Ignacio took place on 30 July, twenty days after his birth. In the first 48 hours after the operation everything seemed fine. The doctors seemed happy.



• Cycling with his older brother.

After that the situation changed completely. On 2 August, around 2.30pm, we were asked to go immediately to the Intensive Care Unit for children in the University Hospital because José Ignacio was very sick. We thought the situation was extremely grave. We prayed all the way there. When we got there I asked to see my son and they told me that it was not possible as they were reviving him. I was so nervous I could hardly walk. I embraced my father-in-law who happened to be there at that moment, and started praying the prayer-card of Bishop Álvaro incessantly. I finished one and started another one straight away. We did nothing else.

We called several people and asked them to call everyone to ask them to pray to Bishop Álvaro del Portillo for José Ignacio.

The heart stopped for more than half an hour. The doctors thought he had died, because he did not react to cardiac massage or to anything else. But when they were on the point of giving up, José Ignacio's heart started beating again.

Does José Ignacio have a normal life now?

He lives the normal life of a child of his age, even though he has had to overcome difficulties which other children have not had to contend with. After all that happened to him, we thought that the only alternative was that he would die or, if he survived, that he would be lying in bed all the time. That's why for us everything that José Ignacio does can only be explained in the light of God and the inter-

cession of Bishop Álvaro. He is a great football player. He also likes tennis, and one teacher with whom he has played in our house in the country says that he is very well coordinated and enthusiastic. He never tires of dancing: he loves music, and goes round the house singing songs he has made up himself and dancing to all kinds of rhythms.

How would you describe your son's personality?

José Ignacio is a cheerful and enthusiastic boy, very motivated. I would also highlight his perseverance, his low tolerance of frustration, a great self-esteem and sociability.

In the family he is also a cheerful child, who tries hard and enjoys life. The birth of his younger brother, just over a year ago, filled him with happiness: he sings to him, talks to him, takes him in his arms, is concerned if he cries, and checks who goes near him, so as to protect him.

May I ask you what these events have meant for you and your husband?

They have meant a lot spiritually. And they have left a mark in other ways too, but above all it has been important on the spiritual plane. When we analyse our married life, we realise that for us the "adventure" of José Ignacio has been a process of deep conversion and getting closer to God.

Do you think that the story of José Ignacio includes a message that can be of interest to everyone?

It's a call to hope for all those living through difficulties. José Ignacio is a living testimony of the gift that God has made to us in bringing us to this world, and his perseverance shows us what it means to struggle day by day to give the best of ourselves whatever our circumstances in life. In times when the circumstances make life difficult, being close to God is what gives you strength to go forward. ▲



FAVOURS OBTAINED THROUGH BISHOP ÁLVARO'S INTERCESSION



The Difficult Times

Last year, a Newsletter on Álvaro del Portillo arrived in the house of my in-laws. We were going through financial problems. These were long years of looking for work, with four children to take care of.

I read the Newsletter and started praying for my husband and for all in the family. With my eldest daughter, I prepared a *curriculum vitae* of my husband without him knowing, and submitted it to a certain office. To our surprise, he was accepted the day after!

I also started to pray for the health of my eldest daughter. In the tests, everything went well despite the previous suspicion to the contrary. That Bishop Álvaro chose to help us in the worst moment of our lives is indeed a miracle. Thanks for the job for my husband and the good health of my daughter, Bishop Álvaro. C.G. (Paraguay)

I kept my vision

Twelve years ago, I was diagnosed with a choroidal neovascular membrane in the retina of my right eye. I

received focal laser treatment that resulted in a corresponding loss of part of my central vision.

A few months later, the lesion recurred. That time I received photodynamic therapy (PDT) which was the most up-to-date form of treatment available for my retinal problem. I received repeated PDT for the succeeding episodes of recurrence. Recently, my treatment has shifted to intraocular injections of VEGFs (Vascular Endothelial Growth Factors). In spite of this I continued to lose vision, and now had less than 15-20% vision remaining in my right eye.

Last 2 April, Saturday, I noticed a small grey shadow in my other eye. I went to my ophthalmologist on the following Monday and was diagnosed with a new choroidal neovascular membrane which was already covering a good portion of the left inferior quadrant and I noticed it visibly darker.

There was no available slot in the operating room for that week and I was given an appointment for the following Tuesday, the 12th. On Monday 11th, that stain covered the entire quadrant and it was not translucent. At this point, considering this dramatic development and with the experience of the right eye, I decided to begin to be ready to manage, as best I could, with the residual vision in the right eye, as long as it lasted. And I placed myself in God's hands: if he wanted me to serve him with no vision or almost none. A friend of mine gave me a prayer card of Bishop Álvaro with a relic from the clothes he had worn. From then on, my wife and I started a continuous novena asking for his intercession so that, if it was God's will, either I could keep some of the vision in my left eye or there might be a delay in the uncontrolled process.

On the 12th I had another VEGF injection and starting the following day I noticed a considerable improvement, since the stain had disappeared, though I had the vision somehow deformed in the quadrant affected.

After ten days, when the medication had its optimal action, I was supposed to have a new check-up and get a schedule for the second injection (the minimal treatment is to have 3 injections). The ophthalmologist was able to see clearly that the haemorrhage had disappeared, though the retina was still a little deformed.

Thus, she decided to delay the second injection. A few days later, I had recovered my sight completely, just as I had it before the incident.

During the second check-up, the ophthalmologist was pleasantly surprised since the retina was absolutely smooth, without any scars on the membrane and I had improved visual sharpness compared to my previous situation. She abandoned the idea of continuing with the treatment and gave me an appointment one month later just for a follow up check-up.

My experience with the right eye is that a membrane of this type needs at least 3 injections to dry up, and that I have never recovered completely what I lost and that the sharpness in the vision declines noticeably.

In short, a lesion that appeared terribly aggressive had eased completely with just one injection. So far, my left eye has improved after receiving another VEGF injection; it has showed no signs of activity after treatment and it has recovered 100% of what it had lost, and even more, I have gained in visual sharpness compared with before. It was 0.8, and now it is 1. I thank God continually, since I am convinced that through the intercession of Bishop Álvaro, and with the support of medical science, I received more than I could reasonably expect. My wife and I pray that the improvement continues through the intercession of Bishop Álvaro, placing ourselves completely in God's hands so that His will be done in either eye.

Five months have passed since I wrote the previous paragraphs. The situation of both eyes is stable and the vision of the left eye is very good.

P.C.J. (Spain)

A new job

My husband lost his job in December 2011 and, for months he was having no success in looking for a new one. I started praying the prayer card of Bishop Álvaro particularly during the week of June 10 to 14. I prayed nine prayer cards a day.

In August, my husband started with his new job. Not only did our Lord grant my request for him to find work soon, he was also blessed to get the same rank and salary in his new company. Thank you to our Lord and to Bishop Álvaro who interceded for us.

M.D.G.

Financial support for school

Early this year, I encountered a problem that affected my studies a lot. I was told by my aunt who is presently supporting my studies that she could no longer finance

me for the next academic year. I told this to the chaplain of the school and asked for his prayers. I was advised to pray through Bishop Álvaro. From then on I prayed with faith and devotion until one day I received the news that my two brothers were able to find a job. And the best thing about it is that they promised to support me until I finish.

E.B. (Spain)

Work and family peace

For many years I have been asking Don Álvaro to help me with the needs of my family, and I can say that I have always had my prayers answered. In some way or other, Don Álvaro has looked after what I asked him to do, and I have written about the incidents whenever they happened.

This time, for months – nearly a year – I had been asking that one of my brothers-in-law could find a job. He and my sister have seven children. His firm had gone bankrupt and he found himself in a very, very difficult financial situation, which had already begun to affect the peace of his home, especially because of the tension between the couple.

Whenever I asked them, I got a negative answer and worried faces. Things being that way, with great faith I asked Don Álvaro, in whom I have complete trust, for that intention: that the situation would not last any longer...

Recently, speaking to my family on Skype, my brother-in-law intervened, and, looking radiantly happy, told me: "You don't need to bother Don Álvaro any further for some time, I already have a job."

This job, in fact, opens up many opportunities for improving professionally and – little by little and with a great effort – for paying off his debts and for slowly recovering his financial situation.

I give many thanks to Don Álvaro for this great favour. X.X.

Two beating hearts

My husband and I have been married almost six years. We married fairly young: he was 23 and I was 25. Our greatest desire was to start a family. From the beginning we were willing to accept all the children that God wanted to send.

One year went by. Then another. And the children didn't come. We began to think that perhaps there was a problem. The relevant medical tests were carried out, but everything was in perfect order. We didn't know to whom to turn, which saint to pray to. We visited many

shrines of our Lady. Our request was always the same: "Give us a child! Please grant us a child!"

After praying so much for a child, our faith began to weaken. I asked our Lord each day at Mass for more and more faith, and he gave it to me. With Don Álvaro's prayer card in hand, I thought of beginning a novena. I knew that our Lord wanted my husband and me to be united, so I asked my husband to pray it with me. We prayed the Novena to Don Álvaro with great faith. When the time came and we tested for a pregnancy, it was negative. Two days later, without knowing that it was 23 March, the day that Don Álvaro went to be with our Lord forever, the test came back positive. We could hardly believe it.

At first we thought there was some mistake. A few days later we went to the doctor, and saw with our own eyes that the gift that had come to us from heaven was twice what we had expected. There were two little beating hearts. We were expecting twins!

C.M.R. (Spain)

The baptism of my cousins

I have four cousins who were preparing for adult Baptism during the Easter Vigil. However, when the day was about to arrive, my uncle – their father and the real decision-maker of this traditional Chinese family – due to lack of knowledge of the faith, suddenly did not agree with the plan. This was a hard blow for my cousins. Also, the baptism in that Vigil during the Year of Faith was supposed to be a very good catechetical opportunity for the Parish. They called me for advice. After our conversation, I prayed to Bishop Álvaro every day as the day approached. A few days before Holy Week, my uncle had a change of heart and finally agreed. The whole rite went very well and they were very happy.

M.H.C. (Manila)

In a blizzard

My parents pray for me and my family daily. They are the parents of seven, and grandparents of 32 and great-grandparents of seven. They received the prayer card of Don Álvaro from a dear friend and the day they started praying it was the day my "miracle" happened. They had been praying for my family's financial well-being but the favour came in a different way.

I have two little boys. My oldest who is now almost nine was four at the time. He had been sick and was running a high fever. I decided I needed to take him

to our paediatrician's office, which is 20 minutes away. There was a very bad snow storm. We started down a major highway and about half way there my son, who was sitting directly behind me in his car seat, began to have a seizure. I had never seen or heard of a febrile seizure before, so I had no idea what was happening.

He was screaming and convulsing. I began screaming and trying to reach him. There were cars on each side of me and I know I wasn't paying attention to where I was steering. I was just trying to reach my son. He fell unconscious and I thought he had died. I grabbed my cell phone which I knew was completely out of battery power but I dialled 911 anyway. The call went through and I stayed connected to 911 for 20 minutes. Many cell phones do save a charge for an emergency call but I don't think they are meant to last that long.

I continued down the highway, screaming, trying to reach my son, talking on the cell phone and swerving all over on a snow-covered highway. It is still a bit fuzzy, but I know there were cars all around us, and somehow we didn't hit anyone. I was able to get to where the ambulance could meet me safely.

Febrile seizures are not serious but I didn't know that at the time. I'm convinced it was Bishop Álvaro who helped me get safely to where I needed to be. My son was fine and we went home later that day.

P.T.G. (United States)

Because he wants to!

My husband and I have a beautiful family. We have eight children and have always tried to teach them to have faith in and love for God.

When my sixth child turned sixteen, he began a "spiritual rebellion". I know that adolescence is a time to question everything. And the period of crisis can help a person grow and mature, including in their faith. However I began to be concerned when my son refused to go to Sunday Mass and to confession. I started to pray to Don Álvaro to help my son return to God. After a few months, my son went to confession and received Communion. Now, he not only goes with us to Mass every Sunday without complaining, but when he stays with a friend for a weekend he takes him to Mass as well!

G.G. (Argentina)