



Blessed Alvaro's tomb in the Crypt of the prelate church of Our Lady of Peace, Rome

Blessed Alvaro del Portillo

27
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Blessed Alvaro del Portillo was born in Madrid (Spain) on 11 March 1914, into a large and deeply Christian family. As well as graduating as a Public Works official, he obtained doctorates in Civil Engineering, History and Canon Law. In 1935 he joined Opus Dei. He lived his Christian vocation with great loyalty and faithfulness, through his work and everyday duties, and helped to draw fellow students, colleagues at work and many other people closer to God.

Ordained a priest in 1944, he was completely committed to his pastoral ministry. In 1946 he moved to Rome. His service to the Church was also marked by his dedication to many tasks entrusted to him by the Holy See, especially in the Second Vatican Council. On 15 September 1975 he became Saint Josemaría Escrivá's first successor at the head of Opus Dei.

On 28 November 1982 Pope John Paul II established Opus Dei as a personal Prelature, made up of lay faithful and secular priests, and appointed Blessed Alvaro its first Prelate. In 1991 the Pope ordained him a bishop. The way he governed Opus Dei was characterized by a deep communion with the Pope and the other Bishops, complete faithfulness to the Founder of Opus Dei and his message, and tireless pastoral zeal.

Early in the morning of 23 March 1994, the Lord called this good and faithful servant to Himself, a few hours after his return from a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, where with deep piety he had followed in the footsteps of Jesus in that land. That same day, Saint John Paul II went to pray before his mortal remains, which now rest in the crypt of the church of the Prelature, Our Lady of Peace, at 75 Bruno Buozzi Street, Rome.



Introduction



The Joy of a Christian Family

On 27 September 2014, Alvaro del Portillo, Bishop Prelate of the Prelature of the Holy Cross and Opus Dei, was beatified. He was the first successor and a most faithful son of Saint Josemaría Escrivá, founder of Opus Dei. The ceremony took place in Madrid, presided over by the Holy Father's representative, Cardinal Angelo Amato, Prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints.

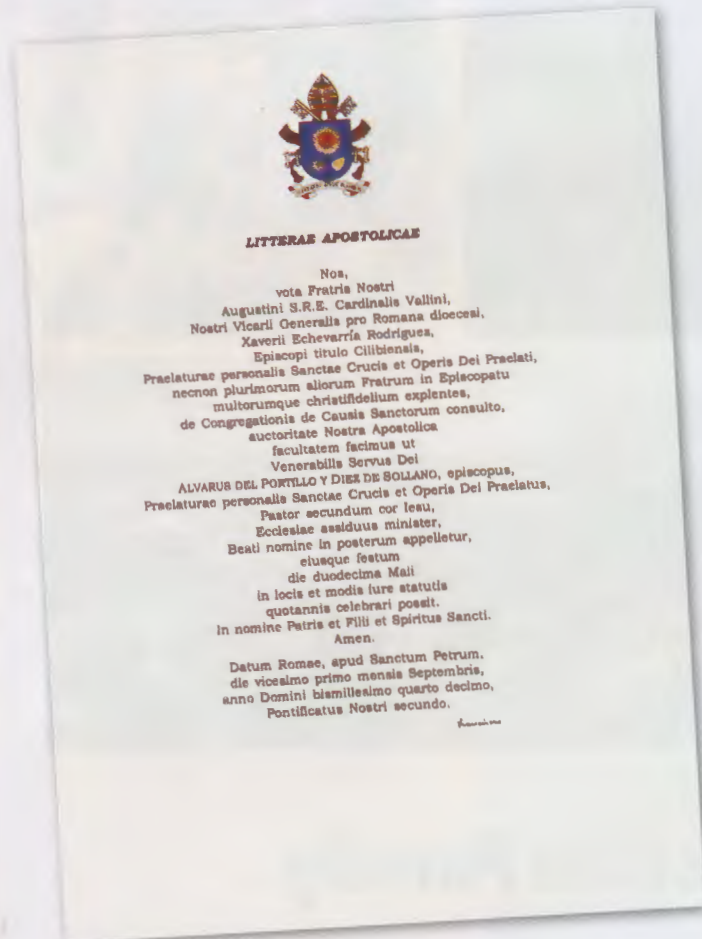
For the beatification, Pope Francis wrote a letter to the Prelate of Opus Dei, Bishop Javier Echevarría. After expressing his joy at this event, the Holy Father said that "Blessed Alvaro del Portillo is sending us a very clear message. He is telling us to trust in the Lord, that He is our brother, our friend, who never lets us down and is always at our side. He is encouraging us not to be afraid to go against the current and suffer for announcing the Gospel. He is also teaching us that in the simplicity and ordinariness of our daily lives we can find a sure path to holiness."

"The life of this good and faithful servant", the Prelate of Opus Dei has written, "is summed up in a full fidelity to God's plan for himself and his mission on earth. From here stemmed his

unfailing peace, the joy to which so many of us were witnesses. In stating that he now shares in the glory of the blessed, and holding him up as an example of a loyal follower of Christ, the Church reminds us of the path we have to follow to attain union with God, to which all of us are called, being happy already here below" (Letter from the Prelate to the faithful and co-operators of Opus Dei, 1 October 2014).

This day will never be forgotten by the very many thousands of people who took part in the beatification ceremony, by those who followed it on television and the internet, or by all those who were present at the Thanksgiving Masses celebrated afterwards in many places all over the world. ■

- 1 Cardinal Amato, the Holy Father's representative, at the beatification ceremony.
- 2 The ceremonies were marked by an atmosphere of recollection and prayer.
- 3 Participants from all over the world.
- 4 Looking towards the altar during the ceremony.



We, acceding to the desire of our brother Cardinal Agostino Vallini, our Vicar General for the Diocese of Rome, and of Javier Echevarría Rodríguez, Titular Bishop of Cilibia, Prelate of the Personal Prelature of the Holy Cross and Opus Dei, and likewise of many other brothers in the episcopate and of many of the faithful, after having obtained the opinion of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, with Our Apostolic Authority concede permission for the Venerable Servant of God Alvaro del Portillo y Díez de Sollano, Bishop Prelate of the Personal Prelature of the Holy Cross and Opus Dei, a shepherd according to the Heart of Christ and a zealous minister of the Church, to be henceforth called Blessed, and for his feast to be celebrated on 12 May each year in places and ways established by law. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Given in Rome, from Saint Peter's, on 21 September in the year of Our Lord 2014, the second of our Pontificate.

FRANCIS

Ceremonies relating to the Beatification

26 SEPTEMBER

Eucharistic adoration in various churches in Madrid, as spiritual preparation for participants in the beatification ceremony of Alvaro del Portillo.

27 SEPTEMBER

Beatification of Bishop Alvaro del Portillo.

28 SEPTEMBER

Solemn Mass of Thanksgiving, celebrated by Bishop Javier Echevarría.

29 SEPTEMBER

Transfer of the coffin of Blessed Alvaro from the prelatric church of Our Lady of Peace to the basilica of Saint Eugene to be venerated by pilgrims in Rome.

30 SEPTEMBER, morning

Mass of Thanksgiving in the basilica of Saint John Lateran.

30 SEPTEMBER, evening

Mass of Thanksgiving in the basilica of Saint Mary Major.

1 OCTOBER

Audience with Pope Francis, in which he greeted Bishop Javier Echevarría, Prelate of Opus Dei, and pilgrims coming from all over the world for the beatification.

2 OCTOBER, evening

Eucharistic exposition and benediction, with singing of the *Te Deum*, in the basilica of Saint Eugene, before the return of Blessed Alvaro's coffin to the church of Our Lady of Peace. There, benediction was celebrated with the relic, and the mortal remains were transferred to the crypt of that church. ■

Pope Francis' Letter to Bishop Javier Echevarría, on the occasion of the beatification of the Venerable Alvaro del Portillo

Dear brother,

The beatification of the Servant of God Alvaro del Portillo, faithful collaborator of Saint Josemaría Escrivá and his first successor at the head of Opus Dei, is a moment of special joy for all the faithful of the Prelature, as well as for you, who were for so long a witness of his love for God and others, his fidelity to the Church and to his vocation. I too wish to unite myself to your joy and to thank God, who embellishes the face of the Church with the holiness of her children.

His beatification will take place in Madrid, the city where he was born and spent his childhood and youth. Here his life began to take shape in the simplicity of family life, through friendship and service to others, as when he went to outlying districts to help provide human and Christian formation to so many people in need. And in this city, above all, the event that definitively marked the course of his life took place: his meeting with Saint Josemaría Escrivá, from whom he learned to fall more in love with Christ every day. Yes, to fall in love with

Christ. This is the path to holiness that every Christian has to follow: to let oneself be loved by the Lord, to open up one's heart to his love, and to allow him to be the one who guides one's life.

I like to recall the aspiration that the Servant of God would often repeat, especially for personal celebrations and anniversaries: "Thank you; forgive me; help me more!" These words bring us closer to the reality of his interior life and his relationship with the Lord, and can also help to give a new impulse to our own Christian life.

In the first place, *Thank you*. This is the soul's immediate, spontaneous reaction on experiencing God's goodness. It cannot be otherwise. He always goes ahead of us. However hard we try, his love always gets there first, touches and caresses us first: He *beats us to it*. Alvaro del Portillo was aware of the many gifts God had given him, and thanked God for that manifestation of his fatherly love. But he did not stop at that:



28 September, a sea of umbrellas.

his recognition of the Lord's love awakened in his heart desires to follow him with greater commitment and generosity, and to lead a life of humble service to others. Especially outstanding was his love for the Church, the Spouse of Christ, which he served with a heart devoid of worldly self-interest, far from discord, welcoming towards everyone and always seeking in others what was positive, what united, what was constructive. He never spoke a word of complaint or criticism, even at especially difficult times, but instead, as he had learned from Saint Josemaría, he always responded with prayer, forgiveness, understanding and sincere charity.

Forgive me. He often confessed that he saw himself empty-handed before God, incapable of responding to so much generosity. But to admit our poverty as human beings is not the result of despair but of confident abandonment in God who is our Father. It means opening ourselves to his mercy, his love, which is able to regenerate our life. His love does not humiliate us, nor cast us into the depths of guilt, but embraces us, lifts us up from our prostration and enables us to go forward with more determination and joy. The Servant of God Alvaro knew the need we have of God's mercy, and devoted a lot of his own energy to encouraging the people he met to go to the sacrament of Confession, the sacrament of joy. How important it is to feel the tenderness of God's love, and to discover that there is still time to love!

Help me more. Yes, the Lord never abandons us, he is always at our side, he journeys with us, and every day he expects new love from us. His grace will not fail us, and with his help we can take his name to the whole world. The heart of the new Blessed beat with the desire to bring the Good News to all hearts. And so he travelled to many countries to foster new projects for evangelization, undeterred by difficulties, moved by his love for God and his brethren. One who is very immersed in God is able to be very close to other people. The first condition for announcing Christ to them is to love them, because Christ loves them before we do. We have to leave behind our selfish concerns and love of comfort, and go out to meet our brothers and sisters. That is where Our Lord is awaiting us. We cannot keep our faith to ourselves: it is a gift we have received to give away and share with others.

Thank you, forgive me, help me! These words express the thrust of a life that is centred on God. It is the life of someone who has been touched by the greatest Love and who lives totally on that love; someone who, while experiencing his own human weakness and limitations, trusts in God's mercy and wants all mankind, his brothers and sisters, to experience it too.

Dear brother, Blessed Alvaro del Portillo is sending us a very clear message. He is telling us to trust in the Lord, that He is our brother, our friend, who never lets us down and is always at our side. He is encouraging us not to be afraid to go against the current and suffer for announcing the Gospel. He is also teaching us that in the simplicity and ordinariness of our daily lives we can discover a sure path to holiness.

I ask all the faithful of the Prelature, priests and lay people, as well as all those who take part in its activities, to pray for me please. At the same time, I give them all my Apostolic Blessing.

May Jesus bless you, and may the Blessed Virgin watch over you.

Fraternally,

Franciscus

Rome, 26 June 2014



1

Pope Francis' words after the Angelus, 28 September 2014

Yesterday in Madrid, Bishop Alvaro del Portillo was declared Blessed. May his exemplary Christian and priestly witness stir up in many hearts the desire to draw ever closer to Christ and the Gospel.

- 1 Distribution of Holy Communion in Valdebebas.
- 2 Tomb of Blessed Alvaro in the crypt of Our Lady of Peace.
- 3 Many families attended the ceremony.
- 4 Pilgrims venerating the mortal remains of the new Blessed.
- 5 People from all over the world.



2



3



4



5



5

Cardinal Angelo Amato, Representative of the Holy Father, Homily at the Mass of Beatification of Bishop Alvaro del Portillo, Madrid, 27 September 2014

1. "A shepherd according to the Heart of Christ, and a zealous minister of the Church."¹ This is the portrait that Pope Francis draws of Blessed Alvaro del Portillo, a good shepherd who, like Jesus, knows and loves his sheep, brings back to the sheepfold those who have strayed, binds up the wounds of the sick ones, and offers his life for them.²

[After recalling some aspects of Blessed Alvaro's life, Cardinal Amato paused to reflect on his humility.]

5. However, there is one virtue which Bishop Alvaro del Portillo practised in an especially extraordinary way, considering it as indispensable for holiness and apostolate: the virtue of humility, which is an imitation of, and an identification with, Christ who is *gentle and lowly in heart*.³ He loved Jesus' hidden life, and respected the simple manifestations of popular piety, such as going up the *Scala Santa* in Rome on one's knees. Once, one of the faithful of the Prelature told him that he had visited that place but had walked up the *Scala Santa* normally, because, as he put it, he considered himself a mature and well-instructed Christian. With a smile, Blessed Alvaro replied that he had gone up the Holy Stairs on his knees, even though the place was somewhat stuffy because of the crowds and the poor ventilation.⁴ It was a great lesson in simplicity and piety. Indeed, Bishop Alvaro was "infected", in the good sense, by the behaviour of Our Lord Jesus Christ, who did not come to *be served*, but to *serve*.⁵ For this reason, he often used to pray and meditate on the Eucharistic hymn *Adoro Te devote, latens Deitas – O Godhead hid, devoutly I adore Thee*. Likewise, he used to meditate on the life of Mary, the humble handmaid of the Lord. He sometimes recalled a phrase from Cervantes' *Exemplary Novels*: "Without humility, there is no virtue worthy of the name."⁶ And he would

often recite an aspiration that is frequently used by the faithful of the Work: *Cor contritum et humiliatum, Deus, non despicies*⁷ – "a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise". For him, as for Saint Augustine, humility was "the dwelling-place of charity."⁸ He would repeat some advice which the Founder of Opus Dei used to give, quoting Saint Joseph of Calasanz: "If you want to be holy, be humble; if you want to be holier, be more humble; if you want to be very holy, be very humble."⁹ Nor did he forget that a donkey was Jesus' throne during his entry into Jerusalem. Even the fellow-students of his youth, as well as stressing his extraordinary intelligence, underline his simplicity, the serene innocence that came of not considering himself better than others. He thought that his worst enemy was pride. One witness states that he was "humility personified".¹⁰ His humility was not harsh, showy, or ill-tempered, but affectionate and cheerful. His joy was based on his conviction that he himself was worth very little. At the beginning of 1994, the last year of his life on earth, in a meeting with some of his spiritual daughters, he said, "I say this to you, and I say it to myself. We must struggle all our lives to become humble. We have the marvellous school of humility of our Lord, the Blessed Virgin Mary, and Saint Joseph. Let us learn from them. Let us fight against our own ego, which constantly rears up like a viper, ready to bite. But we are safe as long as we keep close to Jesus, who is the offspring of Mary, and is the one who will crush the serpent's head."¹¹ For Bishop Alvaro, humility was "the key that opens the door to enter into the house of holiness"; while pride was the greatest obstacle to seeing and loving God. He said, "humility strips away from us the ridiculous cardboard mask that presumptuous, self-satisfied people wear."¹² Humility is the recognition of our limitations, but also of our dignity as God's children. The best praise of his humility was given by a woman in Opus Dei after



the Founder's death: "The one who has died is Fr Alvaro, because our Father lives on in his successor."¹³

A cardinal testifies that when he read about humility in the *Rule* of Saint Benedict or the *Spiritual Exercises* of Saint Ignatius, he felt he was contemplating a very high ideal, but one that was unattainable for ordinary human beings. But when he met and got to know Blessed Alvaro, he understood that it was possible to practise total humility.

6. What Cardinal Ratzinger said in 2002 with regard to the canonization of the Founder of Opus Dei can also be applied to Blessed Alvaro. Speaking of heroic virtue, Cardinal Ratzinger, who was at the time Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, said: "Heroic virtue does not mean precisely accomplishing great things unaided, but that in a person's life there appear things that he did not bring about, because he made himself transparent and available for God to act ... That is holiness."¹⁴

This is the message that Blessed Alvaro del Portillo hands on to us today. He was "a shepherd according to the Heart of Christ,

and a zealous minister of the Church."¹⁵ He invites us to be holy like him, living a holiness that is friendly, merciful, good-natured, meek, and humble.

The Church and the world need the great spectacle of holiness so that its pleasing fragrance can purify the noxious fumes of the many vices which are being praised so arrogantly and insistently. Now, more than ever, we need an ecology of holiness, to counteract the pollution of immorality and corruption. The saints invite us to bring to the heart of the Church and society the pure air of God's grace, which renews the face of the earth. May Mary, Help of Christians and Mother of the Saints, help and protect us.

Blessed Alvaro del Portillo, pray for us. Amen. ■

1 Cardinal Amato incensing the relic of Blessed Alvaro.

2 A general view of the altar.

3 A prayerful multitude.

4 Distribution of Holy Communion.

¹ Pope Francis, Apostolic Letter for the Beatification of the Venerable Servant of God Bishop Alvaro del Portillo, Prelate of Opus Dei, 21 September 2014.

² Cf. Ezek 34:11-16; Jn 10:11-16.

³ Mt 11:29.

⁴ Cf. *Positio super vita, virtutibus et fama sanctitatis*, 2010, vol. 1, p. 662.

⁵ Mt 20:28; Mk 10:45.

⁶ Cervantes, *Novelas ejemplares*: "El coloquio de los perros". Cf. *Positio super vita, virtutibus et fama sanctitatis*, 2010, vol. 1, p. 663.

⁷ Ps 51[50]:19.

⁸ Saint Augustine, *De sancta virginitate*, 51.

⁹ Saint Josemaría Escrivá, quoted in Andrés Vázquez de Prada, *The Founder of Opus Dei*, vol. 1, p.17, note 12.

¹⁰ *Positio super vita, virtutibus et fama sanctitatis*, 2010, vol. I, p. 668.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 675.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 705.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 908.

¹⁵ Pope Francis, Apostolic Letter for the Beatification of the Venerable Servant of God Bishop Alvaro del Portillo, Prelate of Opus Dei, 21 September 2014.

Some words from the Prelate

Bishop Javier Echevarría, Words of thanksgiving at the Beatification Mass of Bishop Alvaro del Portillo Madrid, 27 September 2014

At the end of this solemn celebration, I should like to express my deepest gratitude to the Blessed Trinity for giving the Church this gift today. Today's ceremony, raising Bishop Alvaro del Portillo, the successor of Saint Josemaría Escrivá, to the altars, reminds us anew of the universal call to holiness, so vigorously proclaimed by the Second Vatican Council. The earthly life of Blessed Alvaro shows us that the thorough fulfilment of one's duties is a valid path for personal sanctification, a path that leads to full union with God, to which we should all aspire.

I give thanks too to the Blessed Virgin Mary, through whose maternal mediation all gifts from Heaven come to us. I ask the Mother of God and our Mother to continue to intercede for us all, for each and every one of us, so that we may travel the path to holiness right to the end. We pray to her in a special way for our sisters and brothers in various parts of the world who suffer persecution and even martyrdom for the faith.

My gratitude goes too to the Holy Father Francis, for his fatherly message, for showing his closeness to us in this way and for his clear advice in our spiritual struggle. With deep gratitude I should like to thank Cardinal Angelo Amato, Prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, who, in the Pope's name, has presided over the beatification with such dignity and affection. I ask all of us to show our thanks with daily, constant, and intense prayer for the Roman Pontiff and his intentions, for bishops and for priests ...

I can imagine the joy – a part of the accidental glory that is theirs – which Popes Saint John XXIII and Saint John Paul II, as well as the soon-to-be-Blessed Paul VI, must have in heaven: Blessed Alvaro served them with full fidelity and filial affection. And my thoughts turn too to Saint Josemaría Escrivá and his special joy at seeing this most faithful son of his proposed as an intercessor and example for all the faithful.

I give special thanks to the members of the choir and orchestra, who have helped us to live the sacred liturgy more deeply, and to all here present: with your responses and your singing you have intoned a magnificent symphony directed to Heaven.

I will never be able to express my gratitude sufficiently to those who have devoted hours and hours of cheerful work to preparing this celebration. I am particularly grateful to the media professionals, who have made it possible for many people around the world to be involved in this ceremony from their countries.

I also give special thanks to those who with their prayer and sacrifice have prepared the abundant spiritual fruits of these days. Specifically, to the sick and to those who for various reasons have not been able to join us physically. Nevertheless, spiritually, they have been very close to us, offering their illnesses or occupations. To all, thank you very much! May the example and intercession of the new Blessed prompt us to walk tirelessly, filled with Christian joy, along the path to holiness. ■

Cardinal Antonio María Rouco, emeritus Archbishop of Madrid Words of thanks at the Beatification Mass of Bishop Alvaro del Portillo

I wish also to express my gratitude to our Holy Father Francis who wished this beatification to take place in our beloved Archdiocese of Madrid because I feel it is not too much for me to say that the Blessed del Portillo, who was born in this city, belongs especially to us and blesses us especially from heaven. And thanks to those deep roots he had, he was able to be a citizen of the world, of the five continents to which he had travelled and which are marvellously represented in this praying assembly ...

I should like to recall that in my personal dealings with Blessed Alvaro, for example during the Synod of Bishops in 1990, I was able to note how much he stood out for his goodness, his serenity and his good humour. "In the Communion of the Church": yes, Blessed Alvaro reminds me of my episcopal motto, *In Ecclesiae Communionem*. He loved the Church, which is why he was a man of communion, of union and of love.



1 The sectors furthest from the altar.

2 The 80 confessionals were in use for hours before the ceremonies and also all through them.

3 A 200-member choir sang at Valdebebas.

Homily of 28 September

Bishop Javier Echevarría, Prelate of Opus Dei, Homily at the Mass of Thanksgiving for the beatification of Alvaro del Portillo, Madrid, 28 September 2014

This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you (Jn 15:12). These words of the Gospel echo today in my heart with new joy at the thought that the vast crowd gathered yesterday in this very place, in close communion with Pope Francis and with all who accompanied us from the four corners of the globe, was not so much a crowd but rather a family gathering, united out of love of God and love of one another. This very love is also strengthened today in the Eucharist, in this Mass in thanksgiving for the beatification of our beloved Bishop Alvaro, Prelate of Opus Dei.

1. Our Lord, by instituting the Eucharist, gave thanks to God the Father for his eternal goodness, for the creation sprung from his hands, for his mysterious plan of salvation. We give thanks for that infinite love made manifest on the Cross and anticipated in the Upper Room. And we ask our Lord: How can we go about things to love as you have loved us, to love as you loved Peter and John, each one of us, and also Saint Josemaría and Blessed Alvaro? Contemplating the holy life of Blessed Alvaro, we discover God's guiding hand, the grace of the Holy Spirit, the gift of a love that transforms us. And we make our own that prayer of Saint Josemaría that the new Blessed repeated so often: "Give me, Lord, the Love with which you want me to love you,"¹ and in that way I shall know how to love the others with your Love, and with my poor effort. The others will discover in my life the goodness of God, as was the case in the daily path walked by Blessed Alvaro:

already here, in this beloved Madrid, divine mercy could be seen in his solidarity with those who were most poor and abandoned. Dear brothers and sisters, let us give thanks to God by asking him for more love. In the prime of his youth, when he was 25 years old, Alvaro was *saxum*, rock, for Saint Josemaría. From the depths of his humility, he responded by letter to the Founder of Opus Dei with these words: "What I aspire to, in spite of everything, is that you may be able to have confidence in one who, rather than rock, is clay without any solidity whatsoever. But, God is so good!"² That assurance of God's goodness should imbue our entire existence. We prayed in the Responsorial Psalm, *I thank you, Lord, for your faithfulness and love* (Ps 137 [138]: 2). And our gratitude rises up to the Holy Trinity, because God continues to be with us, with his Word, Jesus Christ Himself (cf. Col 3:16), and with his Spirit, who fills us with joy (cf. Jn 15:11; Lk 11:13) and enables us to turn to God, calling him, with complete confidence, *Abba, Pater*: "Father! Daddy!"

2. "The 'trinity on earth' will take us to the Trinity in Heaven,"³ Blessed Alvaro would often repeat, following the teaching and experience of the Founder of Opus Dei. Jesus, Mary, and Joseph bring us to the Father and the Holy Spirit. In the sacred humanity of Jesus we discover, inseparably united to it, his divinity.⁴ The Holy Family! With words from the first reading, we bless our Lord *who fosters men's growth from their mother's womb, and fashions them according to his will* (Sir 50:22). The sacred text tells us that even before our birth God loved us. This reminds me of

¹ Saint Josemaría Escrivá, *The Forge*, 70.

² Blessed Alvaro del Portillo, Letter to Saint Josemaría, Olot, 13 July 1939.

³ Blessed Alvaro del Portillo, Pastoral Letter, 30 September 1975.

⁴ Cf. Blessed Alvaro del Portillo, Pastoral Letter on the occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the foundation of Opus Dei, 24 September 1978.



Thanksgiving Mass in Valdebebas, 28 September

that poem in which Virgil addresses a new-born child: *Incipe, parve puer, risu cognoscere matrem*.⁵ "little child, learn to recognize your mother by her smile." At its birth, a child begins to discover the universe; in his mother's face, full of love, in that smile of hers that receives him, the babe newly born into the world discovers a reflection of the goodness of God.

On this day, which our Holy Father Francis has dedicated to prayer for the family, we unite ourselves to the pleas of the whole Church for the *communio dilectionis*, the "communion of love," that "school"⁶ of the Gospel that is the family, as Paul VI said in Nazareth. The family, with the "interior and profound dynamism of love,"⁷ has a great "spiritual fecundity,"⁸ open to life at all times, as taught by Saint John Paul II, to whom Blessed Alvaro was united by a filial friendship.

In giving thanks to Blessed Alvaro, we also give thanks to his parents who received him into this world and educated him, who prepared in him a simple and generous heart for receiving God's love and responding to his call. That was Blessed Alvaro: a man whose smile blessed God, *who has done wondrous things* (Sir 50:22), and who counted on him to serve the Church by spreading Opus Dei, as a faithful son of Saint Josemaría.

Let us pray that there may be many families that form "bright and cheerful homes, as was that of the Holy Family,"⁹ in the words of Saint Josemaría. We raise our hearts in gratitude to God for the gift of the family, a reflection of the eternal trinitarian love, a place in which each person knows himself to be loved for his own sake, just as he is. Now we also give thanks to all the mothers and fathers who have gathered together here, and to all those who care for children, the elderly, and the sick.

Families: God loves you. God is present within your marriage, which images Christ's love for his Church. I know that many of you dedicate yourselves very generously to helping other marriages along their path of fidelity, to helping many other homes march onwards in a social context that is often difficult and even hostile. Keep at it! The whole world needs your witness and evangelizing work. Remember that, as our beloved Benedict XVI said, "Faithfulness over time is the name of love."¹⁰

3. *Be thankful*, Saint Paul exhorts us (Col 3:15). Blessed Alvaro, thinking of how much he owes to Saint Josemaría, has stated that "the best show of gratitude is a good use of gifts."¹¹ In his preaching, in family gatherings, in personal encounters, in all places, he never ceased to speak about apostolate and evangelization. If we are to keep alive the love of God that we have received, we must share it with others; God's goodness tends to spread. Pope Francis has said that "it is in prayer that the Lord makes us understand this

love, but it is also through so many signs that we can recognize in our life, in the many people he sets on our path."¹² *It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you* (Jn 15:16). Our Lord, having insisted that the initiative is always his, in the primacy of his love, sends us forth to spread his Love to all creatures: *I have appointed you to go and bear fruit that will remain* (*ibid.*). To bear fruit that in its turn puts down deep roots, it is necessary to remain in the Lord. Jesus had just said so to his disciples: *Abide in me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me* (Jn 15:4).

The stupendous multitude of people of these days, the millions of people all over the world, and so many who already await us in heaven, bear witness to the fruitfulness of Blessed Alvaro's life. I encourage you, brothers and sisters, to abide and grow in God's love: through prayer, through Mass and frequent Communion, through sacramental confession, so that, with the force of divine predilection, we may know how to transmit what we have received, and to implement it through an authentic apostolate of friendship and confidence.

In the letter which Pope Francis wrote to me on the occasion of yesterday's beatification, he told us that "we cannot keep our faith to ourselves: it is a gift we have received to give away and share with others."¹³ And he added that Blessed Alvaro "is encouraging us not to be afraid to go against the current and suffer for announcing the Gospel," and that "he is also teaching us that in the simplicity and ordinariness of our daily lives we can discover a sure path to holiness."¹⁴

We are accompanied along this path by the Blessed Virgin, together with many angels. Mary is daughter of God the Father, Mother of God the Son, Spouse and Temple of God the Holy Spirit. She is the Mother of God and our Mother, Queen of the family, Queen of the Apostles. May our Lady help us, as she did Blessed Alvaro, to respond to the invitation of the Successor of Peter: "to let oneself be loved by the Lord, to open one's heart to his love, and to allow him to be the one who guides one's life,"¹⁵ a desire which Saint Josemaría entrusted on so many occasions to the Virgin of the Almudena, so loved and venerated in this Archdiocese. Amen. ■

⁵ Virgil, *Eclague* IV, 60.

⁶ Pope Paul VI, Address in Nazareth, 5 January 1964.

⁷ Saint John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris consortio*, 41.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Saint Josemaría Escrivá, *Christ is Passing By*, 22.

¹⁰ Benedict XVI, Homily in Fatima, 12 May 2010.

¹¹ Blessed Alvaro del Portillo, Pastoral Letter, 1 July 1985.

¹² Pope Francis, Address, Pope Paul VI Hall, 6 July 2013.

¹³ Pope Francis, Letter to Bishop Javier Echevarría, Prelate of Opus Dei, on the occasion of the beatification of Alvaro del Portillo celebrated in Madrid on 27 September 2014.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

Veneration of the mortal remains of Blessed Alvaro

Rome, 29 September: Transfer of Blessed Alvaro's mortal remains to the Basilica of Saint Eugene

At 6.00 pm the coffin with Blessed Alvaro's mortal remains was taken from the crypt of the prelatial church of Our Lady of Peace to the nearby Basilica of Saint Eugene, where it remained over three days to facilitate the veneration of the faithful. Many people from Rome and from all over the world were there waiting to venerate the Blessed, whose coffin was carried to the sanctuary in a solemn procession presided over by the Prelate of Opus Dei.

After a liturgy of the Word, Bishop Echevarría addressed some words to those present. "I think that we all would have liked to have carried the coffin to thank Blessed Alvaro for his life of dedication and service to the Church, his interest in each one of us, and his love each day for the will of God."

The Prelate added: "We are in the presence of the mortal remains of a man, of a priest, of a friend who abandoned everything into God's hands, and who was, therefore, always tranquil, happy. He was a great communicator of peace. Let us ask him sincerely: help us to be witnesses of God's love for us." At the end of the homily, Bishop Echevarría blessed those present with a relic of the new Blessed.

From then on, and up to 2 October, one Mass was concelebrated after another, next to the mortal remains of Blessed Alvaro del Portillo. During those days, some 40,000 faithful from all over the world came to the Basilica of Saint Eugene to accompany and pray before his mortal remains. Widespread popular devotion in the Church to the new Blessed is a proof that Blessed Alvaro, by his word and above all by his example, has touched the lives of hundreds of thousands of men and women who have recourse confidently to his intercession before God, and who look upon him as a model of Christian virtue. ■

1 Basilica of Saint Eugene on 29 September.

2 Blessed Alvaro's coffin in the Basilica of Saint Eugene.

3 Saint Eugene's in the days after the beatification.



Rome, 30 September: Thanksgiving Masses



On the morning of 30 September, a Mass of Thanksgiving was celebrated in the Basilica of Saint John Lateran. In his homily, Cardinal Agostino Vallini, Vicar General of the Holy Father for the diocese of Rome, recalled that Blessed Alvaro del Portillo strove for sanctity in his daily activities. "The new Blessed believed deeply and intensely that God, in Jesus, loves us, gives us life, introduces us into his family, the Church, cares for us and guides us with fatherly affection so that we may attain our true good. He fell in love with Christ and let himself be loved by Him. He opened his heart and abandoned himself completely in the Lord. This is how he lived, and he also consecrated his priestly life to this ideal, teaching us that in every moment, both in the little things of each day and in the most difficult and painful situations, our intimate disposition should be that of trying to discover God's will and of striving to carry it out generously. This is our Christian vocation, which is a vocation to the holiness to which we are all called; a holiness accessible to everyone in the simplicity of daily life. Those who knew him testify that he transmitted the urgency of loving God. With great refinement, he tried to get each person to face his or her own responsibility to love God and souls."

That same day, in the evening, a Thanksgiving Mass was said in the Basilica of Saint Mary Major. Cardinal Abril y Castelló emphasized the new Blessed's apostolic zeal, making reference to the Gospel of that day: "And I have other sheep, that are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will heed my voice. So there shall be one flock, one shepherd" (Jn 10:16). We can say that this zealous concern of our Lord beat strongly in the pastoral heart of the new Blessed. His thoughts were for everyone. And so, by his teaching, prayer, and example, he encouraged his sons and daughters to work in the most varied environments, finding the opportunity there to present the figure of Jesus to the people with whom they live. Indeed, as Pope Francis said, 'every Christian is a missionary to the extent that he or she has encountered the love of God in Christ Jesus'. He encouraged many Christians to respond to their vocation to be light for the world, letting themselves be illumined by the Lord."

- 1 & 2 Holy Mass in Saint John Lateran.
- 3 Mass of thanksgiving in Saint Mary Major.
- 4 Cardinal Abril giving his homily at Saint Mary Major.

Saint Peter's Square. Audience with the Holy Father, 1 October

Some 15,000 people of those who had come to Rome after celebrating the beatification in Madrid, attended the audience with Pope Francis on the morning of 1 October. They wanted to show their union with the Holy Father and their gratitude for the beatification.

The Holy Father encouraged them to turn to the new Blessed's intercession in their search for holiness: "I greet the Spanish-speaking pilgrims, who have come from so many countries. I also greet Bishop Javier Echevarría, Prelate of Opus Dei, along with the faithful of the Prelature present here to give thanks to God for the beatification of Bishop Alvaro del Portillo. May his intercession and example help you to respond generously to God's call to holiness and apostolate in ordinary life, in the service of the Church and all mankind. Thank you very much and may God bless you."

- 1 Audience with the Pope.
- 2 Going to the audience with the Pope.
- 3 The Holy Father greets Bishop Javier Echevarría.
- 4 Pope Francis greets some of the pilgrims.
- 5 Saint Peter's, 1 October, audience with the Pope.

SOCIAL INITIATIVES

For the beatification of Bishop del Portillo, the *Harambee Africa International Association* organized a collection of funds for four social initiatives that arose under the impulse of Saint Josemaría's first successor as head of Opus Dei.

- 1. The creation of a mother-and-baby centre dependent on the *Niger Hospital and Diagnostic Centre* in Enugu, Nigeria;
- 2. The expansion and improvement of three medical centres and the training of nursing personnel at the *Centre Hospitalier Monkole* and the *Institut Supérieur en Sciences Infirmières* in Kinshasa, Congo.
- 3. A programme to fight infant malnutrition at the *Centre Rurel Ilomba* in Bingerville, Ivory Coast.
- 4. A scholarship fund for African priests and seminarians to receive formation at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross in Rome.



Return of Blessed Alvaro to the Crypt

Rome, 2 October: Blessed Alvaro's mortal remains are returned to the crypt of the prelatric church of Our Lady of Peace

The days of veneration of Blessed Alvaro's mortal remains in the Basilica of Saint Eugene were concluded on the evening of 2 October. The last act was Solemn Exposition of the Blessed Eucharist, with singing of the *Te Deum*. During the liturgical celebration Bishop Echevarría spoke a few words in which he emphasized the desire to "give all the glory to God, totally united to the Pope and letting ourselves be guided by Jesus". A large congregation of women and men, of all ages and social backgrounds, and many children too, filled the church and took part in the ceremony with deep recollection and great emotion.

Immediately afterwards, the coffin containing the body of the Blessed was transferred from Saint Eugene's to the prelatric church of Our Lady of Peace. Hundreds accompanied the cortege along Bruno Buozzi Street which links the two churches. Besides this many other thousands of people followed the ceremony through the Opus Dei website.

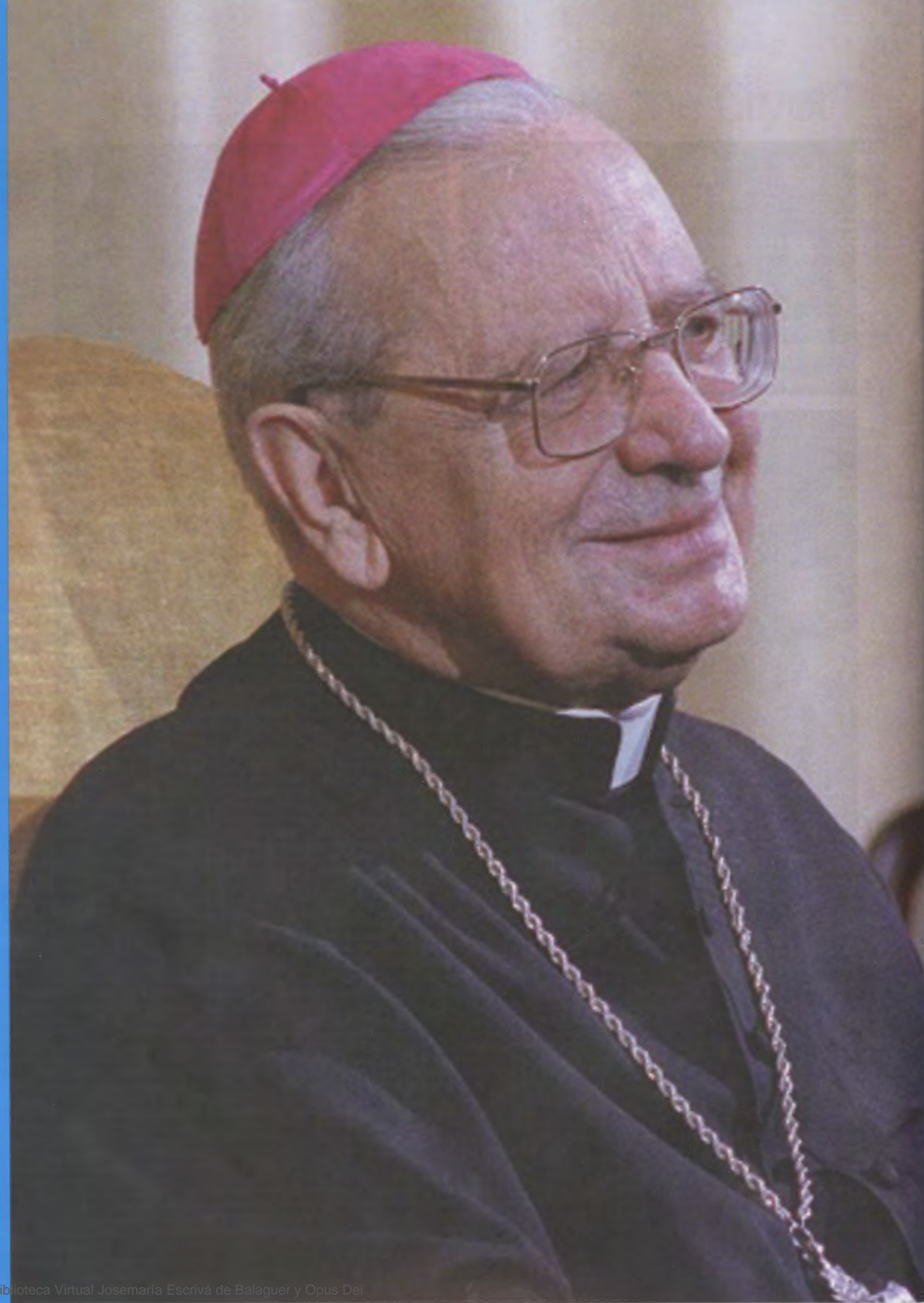
In Our Lady of Peace, Bishop Echevarría, the Prelate of Opus Dei, addressed words of gratitude to the first successor of Saint Josemaría: "Blessed Alvaro, thank you for all that you have done. Thank you for your generosity. Thank you for

your unbreakable fidelity to God and to others, even amid difficulties ... Thank you, because we want to tread in the footsteps left by your fidelity, in the footsteps of your service to God, of your apostolic zeal, taking advantage of every opportunity as you did ... Thank you and may we never cease to thank you."

The Prelate then blessed those present with a relic *ex sanguine* of Blessed Alvaro and the coffin was taken to the crypt of the church, to the same place where it had rested since his death in 1994. His tomb also bears the dates of Saint Josemaría's life, since it was there the Founder of Opus Dei was buried from 1975 until 1992. This fact also emphasizes "the virtue most characteristic of Bishop Alvaro del Portillo, that is, his fidelity" (Decree declaring the heroicity of his virtues, 28 June 2012). ■

- 1 Departure from Saint Eugene's.
- 2 Journey back to 75 Bruno Buozzi Street.
- 3 Blessing with the relic of Blessed Alvaro, 2 October.
- 4 Prelatic church of Our Lady of Peace.
- 5 Veneration in Our Lady of Peace.
- 6 Veneration of the relic of the new Blessed.
- 7 Praying in the prelatric church.





Favours of Blessed Alvaro

Blessed Alvaro and my cow

I hoped to attend the beatification of Bishop Alvaro in Madrid, Spain on 27 September 2014. I had paid only one instalment, and the second was already due. I looked for ways and means of raising the money but all in vain. Then I remembered a cow which for the past three months I had advertised for sale but with no ready buyer. One morning in June, I woke up and during my morning prayers I asked Bishop Alvaro to intercede for me. I told him that I was going to my farm in Mtwapa and that therefore he should ensure I get somebody to buy the cow at Ksh. 40,000.

During the morning Mass I repeated my prayer request through Bishop Alvaro. On my way to the farm I felt an urge to talk to a nearby butcher about my intention to sell my cow. He did not show any interest in buying it. I was very disappointed and I proceeded to the farm. In the evening, when I started preparing to leave the farm, at about 5.00 pm, I heard someone calling out to me from the gate. He told me that he had been informed about my intention to sell the cow and that he wanted to buy it. We negotiated the price and he paid Ksh. 40,000. The cow was loaded onto his pick-up and off he drove. I could not believe it.

I found myself thanking Bishop Alvaro for the "miracle". I posted the Ksh. 40,000 for the beatification trip to Nairobi. We should ask Bishop Alvaro for assistance not only in spiritual but also in material needs.

C.O. (Mombasa)

We were able to pay the workers

We were making repairs in a student residence and we needed to pay the salaries of the employees. This was the second difficult month. The previous month we had used up our reserves and emptied our bank accounts. We had two days to find 7,000 euros. I prayed to God through the intercession of Bishop Alvaro. After dinner I asked N. if he could help us. He had not been able to until then. This time he answered "Yes", and said he could give us the 7,000 euros we needed to pay the employees. I thank Bishop Alvaro for this favour.

C. V. (Helsinki)

What are we doing here?

Juan travelled to Rome to attend a conference, representing an association of hotel managers of which he is the president. He was accompanied by the secretary of that entity, who lives in Madrid. Once they had got to their hotel he asked his

friend if he would not mind if he went out for a while to make some visits. His friend offered to accompany him. Then Juan explained to him that he wanted to go to the prelate church of Our Lady of Peace in Villa Tevere, where he always went to pray whenever he travelled to Rome. His friend, who did not know much about Opus Dei, thought it a good idea and they went together ...

They prayed before the mortal remains of Saint Josemaría and then went down to the crypt to pray before the tomb of Bishop Alvaro. Juan told him that in a few weeks Bishop Alvaro was going to be beatified in Madrid, and encouraged him to pray to him for the cure of his wife, who had been suffering from cancer for some time. His friend was very grateful for the visit and said he would pray with his wife for the cure of her cancer.

A few weeks later, Juan received a call from his friend who, deeply moved, told him that after the last medical tests, his wife had been cured of her cancer. He had no doubt about the intervention of Bishop Alvaro.

On 27 September, while Juan was on one of the buses going to Valdebebas, he received a call from his friend. He told him he had woken up early that morning and remarked to his wife: "What are we doing here?" And they had decided to go to Valdebebas to take part in the beatification in thanksgiving for her cure.

J.P. (Barcelona)

A kidney injury

In November 2012, R.R. went to a clinic for a heart check up. This involved a radiological test that ended up damaging his kidneys, and they were not working for two months. The doctors said his kidneys would never recover.

But we prayed to Bishop Alvaro and to the great surprise of the doctors his kidneys began to function again. He is very grateful to Bishop Alvaro because he has not needed to go on to permanent dialysis and his kidneys are back to normal. A year has now passed and R.R. is perfectly well..

M.M. (Chicago)

Sale of a small school

A year ago my mother began to encounter many difficulties in running a small school where she had been working for twenty years. The economic situation in our country had worsened and she found herself having to close it down. Another problem was that she did not have enough money to pay the staff, and carrying out the whole process of closure required a lot of money.

Worldwide devotion

We (my mother and I) began to ask for a quick solution through the intercession of Bishop Alvaro. There were days when my mother was so short of money that she hardly had enough to eat. The months were going by. All the members of our family were concerned. But despite all the problems, we were sure that Bishop Alvaro was going to help us.

A few weeks ago, someone turned up who said he wanted to buy the school buildings, the school having now closed down. An initial agreement for the sale was reached, but it was not finalized. On 1 September 2014, they reached a final agreement and the property was sold – it was thanks to Bishop Alvaro's help.

To avoid becoming discouraged, each day I watched the video of the cure of José Ignacio, whom Blessed Alvaro had helped. Blessed Alvaro is a faithful friend, a companion, a true father who never leaves us.

I am thankful for this very special help and his daily company in my struggle.

I.M.M. (Rome)

A thrombosis in my eye

Together with my greetings, I am writing to communicate to you that, through the intercession of Blessed Alvaro del Portillo, I have obtained the favour that I asked of him. This was the complete cure of a thrombosis in my right eye.

Here is a brief summary of what happened to me. On Monday, 29 April 2013, I went to see an ophthalmologist about a reduction of vision in my right eye. After a careful examination he diagnosed a thrombosis of the vein in the lower part of the retina. He said that this occurs more often to people above the age of 75 and that there are very few cases in people of my age (40). He also said that treatments for it are limited and those that exist are not completely effective. To be more certain, he asked me to have a series of tests, and these confirmed the diagnosis.

The doctor asked me to return in a month, saying he could not do much at the moment as the centre of the eye was a bit inflamed. He also asked me to see a haematologist for some tests to try to determine the cause of the thrombosis.

During that month I prayed a novena with Bishop Alvaro del Portillo's prayer card. On the second visit to the ophthalmologist, he checked the vision in my right eye and was surprised that I could now see without any difficulty and that the vision in my right eye was again equal to that in my left eye.

I am very grateful for Blessed Alvaro del Portillo's intercession.

S.C. (Santiago de Chile)

Having to postpone the big news

My fiancé and I went to Madrid for the Beatification. We also had in mind to tell her parents, who were going to be there, that we would be getting married in January next year. The plan was to have dinner with the whole family and spring the surprise on the Saturday night, after the Beatification.

I asked a friend to help me find a place to spend the night as all the hotels were booked or very expensive (more than 200 euros per night). He did. Only that, when I arrived in Madrid, I realized that the place was 20 miles from the city centre and that was incompatible with dinner. We would have to postpone the big news.

After lunch my fiancé and I started to look for a room where I could stay overnight. She stood on the road praying Novenas to Blessed Alvaro, and I knocking on doors and asking as many hostels I could find, if they had a single room for me. After looking for more than two hours, and almost having lost hope, I found a room. And the nice owner let me have it discounted to 35 euros. Thanks to Blessed Alvaro!

A.M. (London)

A successful operation

I would appreciate some more pictures of Bishop Alvaro. I feel he had an influence in the successful outcome of a breast cancer operation which my daughter had last Monday! I was in Dublin the day before she was diagnosed with cancer. On my way to a Dart station, I was given directions from a *complete stranger*. As she walked along with me she gave me a picture of Bishop Alvaro. I gave it to my daughter. She prayed to him and so did I. My daughter is coming home today.

J.F. (Ireland)

Two favours in a row

I am writing to give thanks for the intercession of Bishop Alvaro del Portillo. First of all, because my family was able to buy our first house, as getting a subsidy was very difficult because of the complicated application process and all the paperwork involved.

Second, when I resigned from the hospital where I had been working I was told they would not pay me for my final month of work. I had been more than six months without getting this payment. But thanks to Bishop Alvaro's intercession, after praying for a week, the problem was resolved.

A. N. D. G. (Colombia)

Prayer

*O God, merciful Father,
you granted your bishop Blessed Alvaro
the grace of being, with our Lady's help,
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 to serve the kingdom of Jesus Christ.
Deign to grant the canonization of Blessed 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.



This Newsletter is issued free of charge. Those who wish to give alms to help its publication may send donations by cheque or postal order to the address below or by direct transfer.

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 Blessed Alvaro del Portillo.

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Those who have obtained favours through the intercession of Blessed Alvaro del Portillo are asked to let us know by writing to us at the address shown on this page.

More information is available at www.alvarodelportillo.org