

Prayer

Praying to Blessed Alvaro del Portillo

Bishop and Prelate of Opus Dei

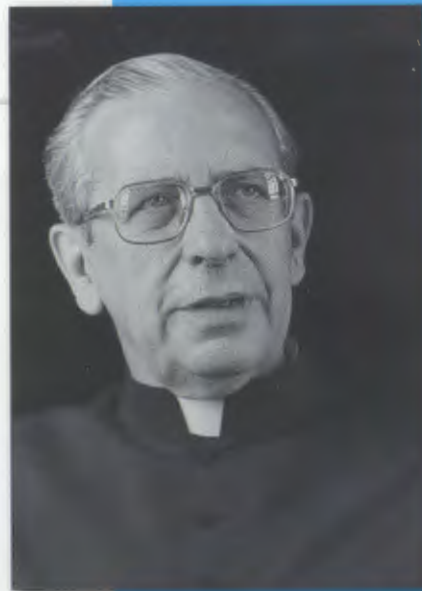
*O God, merciful Father, you
granted Blessed Alvaro, Bishop,
through the mediation of the Virgin Mary,
the grace of being an exemplary pastor
in the service of the Church,
and a most faithful son and successor
of Saint Josemaría, the founder of Opus Dei.*

*Grant that I too may respond faithfully
to the demands of the Christian vocation
and turn all the circumstances and events
of my life into opportunities to love you
and serve the kingdom of Jesus Christ.*

*Deign to grant the canonization of
Blessed Alvaro, and through his intercession
grant me the favor I request*

... (here make your petition). Amen.

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



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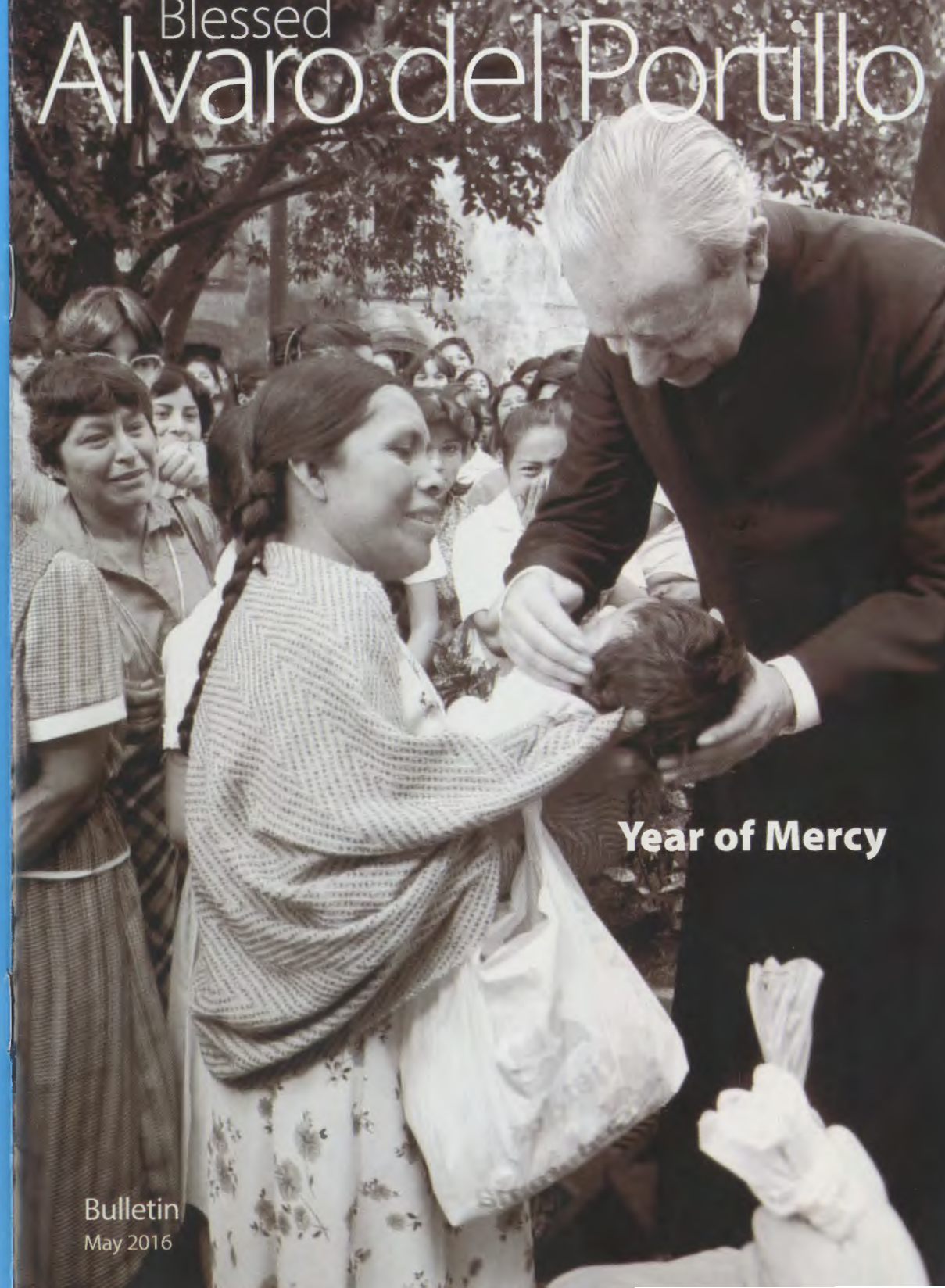
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Blessed Alvaro del Portillo



Year of Mercy

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May 2016

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Blessed Alvaro del Portillo was born in Madrid, Spain, on March 11, 1914, in a large and deeply Christian family. He held doctorates in civil engineering, history, and canon law.

In 1935 he joined Opus Dei. He lived his Christian vocation with complete fidelity, sanctifying his professional work and daily duties, and brought many of his fellow students and colleagues at work closer to God.

He was ordained a priest on June 25, 1944. From then on he dedicated himself completely to his priestly ministry. In 1946 he moved to Rome. There he also served the Church by his dedication to the many tasks the Holy See entrusted to him, especially in the work of the Second Vatican Council. On September 15, 1975, he was chosen as the first successor of Saint Josemaría.

On November 28, 1982, when Pope John Paul II erected Opus Dei as a personal Prelature, made up of lay faithful and secular priests, he appointed him the first Prelate, and on January 6, 1991 ordained him a bishop. His pastoral government was characterized by a close communion with the Pope and the other bishops, a complete fidelity to the founder's spirit and message, and a tireless pastoral zeal.

Our Lord called this good and faithful servant to his side on March 23, 1994, a few hours after his return from a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. There he had visited with deep devotion the places where Jesus had walked on earth.

That same day, Pope 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, viale Bruno Buozzi 75, Rome.

He was beatified on September 27, 2014.



Editorial



"Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good: for his mercy endures forever" (Ps 118[117]:1). In this Jubilee Year, Pope Francis invites us to *contemplate the mystery of mercy and to experience the love of God who consoles, pardons, and instills hope.*¹ Thus, by letting ourselves be embraced by divine mercy, we become capable of being merciful with others, as God is with us.

The Holy Father recently asked: *What is it that "pleases God most"? And he answered: Forgive his children, having mercy on them, so that they may in turn forgive their brothers and sisters, shining as a flame of God's mercy in the world. This is what pleases God most.*²

This Holy Year is an extraordinary moment of grace and spiritual renewal for obtaining, each one of us first of all, God's mercy. In particular, it offers us the opportunity to rediscover the joy and peace that God

the Father grants in the sacrament of Reconciliation, and to alleviate the suffering of our fellow men and women, by carrying out the corporal and spiritual works of mercy.

In short, it is a favorable time for experiencing God's closeness and tenderness, so that our faith is strengthened and our Christian witness becomes more effective. In this issue we want to echo this invitation of the Pope, following closely in Blessed Alvaro del Portillo's footsteps. ■

1 With a family in Montefalco, Mexico, in May 1983.

2 Mass of thanksgiving for the beatification of Saint Josemaría, on May 18, 1992.

¹ Pope Francis, Bull *Misericordiae vultus*, April 11, 2015, nos. 2 and 3.

² Pope Francis, *Audience*, December 9, 2015.

³ *Misericordiae Vultus*, no. 3.

⁴ See Pope Francis, *Letter on the occasion of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy*, September 1, 2015.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation

Manifestation of God's Mercy

In this Jubilee Year, Pope Francis invites us to rediscover God's mercy. And he has suggested various means for doing so; among them, the Sacrament of Penance. *Let us place the Sacrament of Reconciliation at the center once more in such a way that it will enable people to touch the grandeur of God's mercy with their own hands. For every penitent, it will be a source of true interior peace.*¹

Below are some words taken from Blessed Alvaro's preaching about Confession:

Divine mercy comes forth to meet us

In the face of our falls and sins, divine mercy comes forth to meet us, especially in the sacrament of peace and reconciliation, the sacrament of Penance. Have recourse to Confession as often as you need it, to cleanse yourselves from your sins and recover God's grace.²

Recovering our friendship with God

The only truly serious cause for concern and sorrow is sin, the voluntary separating of ourselves from God which leaves the soul in darkness, with the anxiety of having lost the true meaning of life, or at least of having tarnished such an incomparable friendship: our friendship with God! But not even in these circumstances, which might be frequent due to our weakness, should we let ourselves be overcome by discouragement. We feel sorrow for having offended God and we run to re-

gain our peace by reconciling ourselves with Him and with our fellow men in the Sacrament of Penance.³

The joy of frequent Confession

Go to confession frequently. Make the resolution to improve your sacramental reconciliation with God. Prepare it well, examining your conscience deeply; be sincere, fostering contrition in your heart, and renew your desire to struggle harder to do what is right. Few joys are as great as that of experiencing, after a well-made confession, what the prodigal son experienced: the embrace of our Father God who forgives us!⁴

The strength needed to be witnesses to Christ

To re-Christianize society it is indispensable to have recourse to sacramental Confession. There Christians receive the strength needed to be effective witnesses to Christ, with their example and word, in all the earthly realities that have to be brought back to God the Father. Each of us needs to have recourse to this source of grace; and we have to help many other people—relatives, friends, colleagues, neighbors—to take advantage of this marvelous Sacrament of divine forgiveness.⁵ ■

¹ The Pope administering the sacrament of Reconciliation in Rio de Janeiro, on July 26, 2013.

² Confessions during the beatification of Blessed Alvaro, on September 27, 2014.

¹ *Misericordiae Vultus*, no. 17.

² Homily, March 30, 1985, in Alvaro del Portillo, *Like Salt and Like Light*, Scepter Publishers, 2014, no. 254.

³ Homily, April 12, 1984, in *ibid.*, no. 252.

⁴ *Ibid.*, no. 255.

⁵ Homily, June 27, 1988; in Alvaro del Portillo, *Una vida para Dios*, Rialp, Madrid, 1992.



Examples from the Life of Blessed Alvaro

While studying at the university, Blessed Alvaro joined with other companions to provide spiritual and material care to the underprivileged. A friend of his, Manuel Perez, has passed on to us some reminiscences that are recorded in Javier Medina's biography of Alvaro del Portillo:

"Those students went to the bleak and agitated neighborhoods on the outskirts of the city, distributing alms, coupons exchangeable for food, medicine, etc. On Sundays they taught catechism in the parish of Saint Ramon.

"Their efforts weren't restricted to the children; they

also tried to reach the adults. 'We were concerned about raising the level of those people's spiritual formation,' says Manuel Perez, 'and we organized something that now might seem surprising, but that back then was quite common: some days of recollection. At the time, the practice of days of recollection was widespread among women and men in almost all the parishes of Madrid. And we thought that during Lent we should organize a recollection for the poor who we were helping, in the same place that we were teaching catechism. In reality, rather than recollections, they were catechism classes for adults, which we members of the St. Vincent de Paul Society took turns in giving. I particularly remember Alvaro giving one of those talks. With the simplicity and gentleness that always characterized him, he knew how to deal with those people with great affection and understanding. There were about 20 men attending.'

"The event ended with a meal 'in the dining room of the parish, thanks to the pastor who provided us with the food. There was room for about a hundred people. Some Sisters of Charity who ran a home for



the blind across the street cooked the meal for us—a very appetizing meal—and we served it ourselves. We also offered some wine and tobacco to the men. Alvaro, along with the rest of us, took an active part in organizing the meal and serving it personally to those people.'

"Manuel Perez mentions another episode that took place near the Abroñigal River. Alvaro and he, who had gone to visit several families living in shacks, 'came upon the aftermath of a domestic fight. The police had arrested the parents but left the four children in the shack, one of whom was too young to walk. The children had no food and were shivering from cold.'

"They brought the children to the police station, but it was closed; they then gave some money to a neigh-

bor and asked that the children be cared for till the next day, when they would come back and try to see the police again. But the police showed no interest in the matter, so they had to have recourse to a charitable institution, the Saint Catherine shelter located near the university. Manuel Perez writes: 'I still have a vivid memory of Alvaro walking through the streets of Madrid with one of those poor children in his arms, on the way to the shelter.'

"Alvaro del Portillo's effort to assist the poor was inspired by a Christian spirit, as is reflected in his words spoken years later: 'I always learned from those people: they didn't even have enough to eat and I saw in them nothing but joy. For me it was a great lesson.'¹ ■



The Corporal Works of Mercy

- Feed the hungry
- Give drink to the thirsty
- Clothe the naked
- Shelter the homeless
- Care for the sick
- Visit the imprisoned
- Bury the dead

The Spiritual Works of Mercy

- Counsel the doubtful
- Instruct the ignorant
- Correct the erring
- Console the sorrowful
- Forgive offenses
- Bear wrongs patiently
- Pray for the living and the dead

¹ Blessed Alvaro in 1937.

² Trip to Japan, February, 1987.

¹ *Álvaro del Portillo. Un hombre fiel*, Javier Medina, Rialp, Madrid, 2012, pp. 76-78.



Favors Received

The bacteria disappeared

My sister, whose kidneys weren't functioning properly, was undergoing all the procedures needed prior to a transplant, including analyses and tests. They detected a bacteria in her stomach, but the treatment the doctors tried left her so sick that it had to be stopped. The transplant unit said the condition had to be corrected first, so they began the treatment again for ten days. But my sister was only able to put up with eight days. She had to go back for further tests and asked me to pray that everything would go well, since she knew she wouldn't be able to put up with that treatment again as it made her so sick. I prayed to Blessed Alvaro for her and the results of the test were negative. She was very happy when she called me to tell me this, and when I told her I had prayed to Blessed Alvaro, she was also very grateful.

M.C. (Puerto Rico)

"I will continue with my studies"

My son was in his third year of his university studies in Japan. He helped start a musical group that took up too much of his time that he neglected his studies. In July he began saying that he was going to give up his studies and dedicate himself full-time to music. I strongly opposed this. At first I got him to agree to take a temporary break rather than giving up his studies completely. But he continued planning to leave the university in April and to move to a larger city.

I began entrusting my concern to Don Alvaro. I had the good fortune of attending his beatification in Madrid. During the trip, I went constantly to his intercession, asking that my son would continue with his studies. My surprise was very great when, on the day following my return from Madrid, my son told me: "I will continue with my studies, find a good job and dedicate my free time to music."

My son's decision was very firm and I couldn't see any reason for such a sudden change. So I think this is a favor that Don Alvaro has obtained for us.

G.O. (Japan)

In defense of life

I wrote a short piece for the theater whose main theme is the need to defend life from

the moment of conception. We presented it in a public contest, but with a lot of trepidation since we are governed by people who promote generalized abortion. I assumed that they would never choose us for the prize. But I prayed the prayer card of Don Alvaro for a week, and soon afterwards they told us we had won.

The presentations ceremony went very well. We were even asked to put on our work again in the future, even though there were no plans to do so.

J. W. (Colombia)

A family reconciliation

I have a niece who has been married for ten years and who has a four-year-old son. Two years ago she and her husband went through a difficult time in their marriage relationship. The cause was serious financial difficulties due to the husband's poor management. He encouraged my niece to take their son to live with her parents because he could no longer support them. Seeing this worrisome situation I began to pray insistently to Don Alvaro. The situation was complicated by the fact that my brother, on seeing the difficulties his daughter was going through, fell into a severe depression and didn't want to have anything to do with his son-in-law; he even tried to break off all contact with him.

I continued praying with insistent faith to Don Alvaro, whom I had met in person. I remember that he once spoke to me about my family saying: "the more they get to know the Work, the happier they will be and they too will want to be part of it." Trusting in these words, I was sure that some sort of solution would be found. I did all I could to listen sympathetically to my niece's problems, staying close to her and encouraging her. And then, about a year ago, my niece and her son returned to her husband's home. And they seem to be happy there, despite the pressure from friends and family members who had advised them to separate.

But it didn't end there. Last September, during the days of the beatification, my brother invited my niece and her husband and child to have dinner at his house, seating them at his side. I have to thank Don Alvaro for taking such good care of my family.

A. P. (Italy)

Junkabal Foundation

With the Encouragement of Blessed Alvaro

Junkabal is a foundation that offers the possibility of learning a trade to women from poor backgrounds in Guatemala City. It also helps provide schooling, health care and food distribution. It is a corporate work of Opus Dei, inspired by the teachings of Saint Josemaría. This professional training center began in 1963, in a rented house in a poor neighborhood. From Monday to Friday, courses were offered in cooking, dressmaking, floral arrangement, etc. On Saturdays catechism classes were given to the children of the women studying there and other children from the neighborhood, and needy families were visited.

Since the construction of its second phase, in 1978, Junkabal also offers courses for parents, primary and secondary education for girls from 7 to 18, and social programs aimed at the most disadvantaged.

In 1992, with the encouragement of Blessed Alvaro, new buildings were constructed and the educational offerings multiplied. Since then courses are given in how to start small businesses in various specialties: dressmaking, housekeeping, basic cooking and baking, flower arrangements, artificial flowers, machine embroidery, beautician techniques, etc. At present 15 different workshops are provided so that the students can learn a trade and make a future for themselves. Once their period of training is finished, they can come back and ask for advice and take part in refresher courses.

Junkabal also has a dental clinic and nutritional programs for mothers and children. Over the years more than 100,000 people have passed through its classrooms, many of whom have also benefitted or are benefiting from the activities of Christian formation offered there.

For more information (in Spanish), please consult the following website: www.junkabal.edu.gt

