



Alvaro del Portillo

9/27
2014

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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. He was chosen as the first successor of Saint Josemaría on September 13, 1975.

When Pope John Paul II erected Opus Dei as a personal Prelature on November 28, 1982, 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.

Introduction



The Joy of a Christian Family

On September 27, 2014, Alvaro del Portillo, Bishop-Prelate of the Prelature of the Holy Cross and Opus Dei, was beatified. He was the first successor and 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.

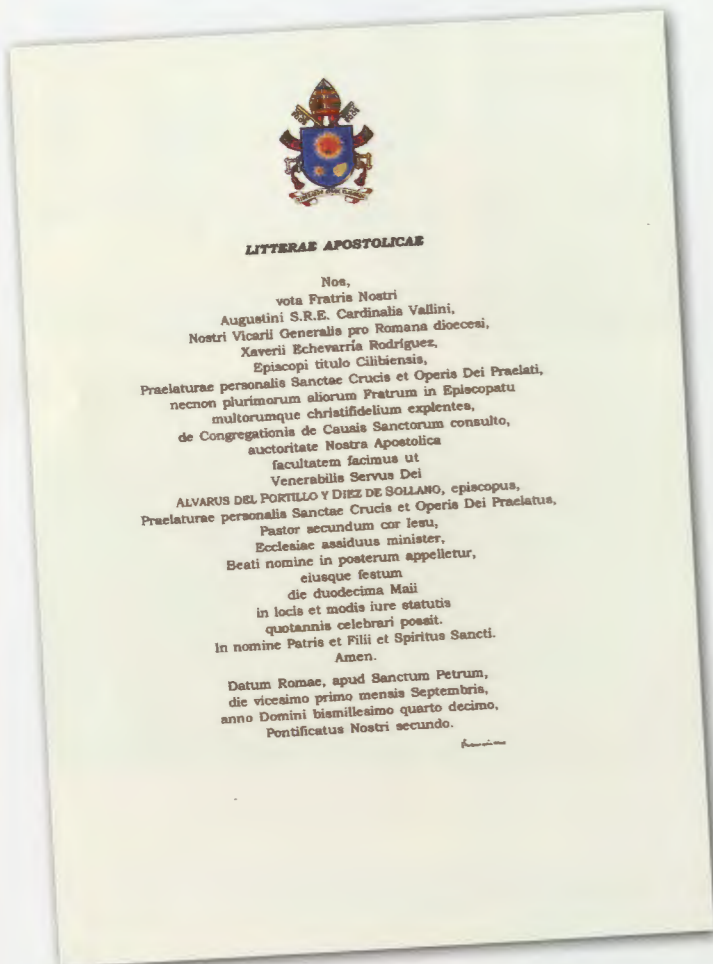
For the beatification, Pope Francis wrote a letter to the Prelate of Opus Dei, Bishop Javier Echevarría. After expressing his joy at this event, the Holy Father said that "Blessed Alvaro del Portillo is sending us a very clear message. He is telling us to trust in the Lord, that he is our brother, our 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."

Blessed Alvaro's life, the Prelate of Opus Dei said, "is summed up in a full fidelity to God's plan for himself and his mission on earth. From here stemmed his unflinching peace, the joy that so

many of us were witnesses to. On 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 of the Prelate to the faithful and cooperators of Opus Dei, October 1, 2014).

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

- 1** Cardinal Amato, representative of the Pope 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, accepting the desire of our Brother the Cardinal of the Holy Roman Church Agostino Vallini, our Vicar 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, as well as of many other Brothers in the Episcopate and of numerous faithful, after having obtained the opinion of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, by our apostolic Authority grant that the Venerable Servant of God Alvaro del Portillo y Diez de Sollano, bishop, Prelate of the personal Prelature of the Holy Cross and Opus Dei, a Shepherd in accord with the heart of Christ, a zealous minister of the Church, from now on shall be called Blessed and each year his feast may be celebrated on May 12, in the places and in accord with the practices established by law. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Given in Rome, next to St. Peter, on the 21st of September of the year of the Lord 2014, the second of our Pontificate.

FRANCIS

Ceremonies of the Beatification

SEPTEMBER 26

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

SEPTEMBER 27

Beatification of Bishop Alvaro del Portillo.

SEPTEMBER 28

Solemn Mass of Thanksgiving, celebrated by Bishop Javier Echevarría.

SEPTEMBER 29

Transfer of the casket of Blessed Alvaro from the Prelatic Church of Our Lady of Peace to the Basilica of St. Eugene to be venerated by the pilgrims who have come to Rome.

SEPTEMBER 30, in the morning

Mass of Thanksgiving in the Basilica of St. John Lateran.

SEPTEMBER 30, in the afternoon

Mass of Thanksgiving in the Basilica of St. Mary Major.

OCTOBER 1

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

OCTOBER 2, in the evening

Eucharistic exposition and benediction with the singing of the *Te Deum*, in the Basilica of St. Eugene, before the return of the casket of Blessed Alvaro to the Church of Our Lady of Peace. There benediction was celebrated with the relic and the mortal remains were transferred to the crypt in that church. ■

Letter of Pope Francis to Bishop Javier Echevarría, for the Beatification of Venerable Alvaro del Portillo

Dear brother,

The beatification of the Servant of God Alvaro del Portillo, faithful collaborator of St 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, and also for you, who were for so long a witness of his love for God and others, and 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, there took place the event that definitively marked the course of his life: his meeting with St 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 ourselves be loved by the Lord, to open up our hearts to his love, and to allow him to be the one who guides our lives.

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



September 28, a sea of umbrellas.

manifestation of his fatherly love. But he did not stop at that: his recognition of our 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, whom 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 St 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 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 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 traveled 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 tenor of a life that is centered 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 their own human weakness and limitations, trusts in God's mercy and

wants all mankind, their 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 find 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 please pray for me. At the same time, I give them all my Apostolic Blessing.

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

Faternally,

Franciscus



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4

Words of Pope Francis during the Angelus on September 28, 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 remains of the new Blessed.
- 5 People from all over the world.



5



5

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

1. "A shepherd in accord with the Heart of Christ, 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 his life, Cardinal Amato paused to recall his humility.]

5. However, there is one virtue which Bishop Alvaro practiced 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. Blessed Alvaro answered him with a smile that he had gone up the Holy Stairs on his knees, even though the place was somewhat stuffy because of the crowds of people and the poor ventilation.⁴ It was a great lesson in simplicity and piety.

Indeed, Bishop del Portillo was "infected," in the good sense, by the behavior 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 despicias* – a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise."⁷

For him, as for St Augustine, humility was the dwelling-place of charity.⁸ He would repeat some advice which the Founder of Opus Dei used to give, quoting St. 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 his fellow-students, 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 have to struggle all our lives to become humble. We have the marvelous school of humility of our Lord, the Blessed Virgin Mary, and St. Joseph. Let's learn from them. Let's 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 Don 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 limita-



tions, 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 Don Alvaro, because our Father lives on in his successor."¹³

A cardinal testifies that when he read about humility in the Rule of St. Benedict or the Spiritual Exercises of St. 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 practice 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 in accord with the Heart of Christ, 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 that 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 reliquary of Blessed Alvaro.
- 2 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. *Ezech* 34:11-16; *Jn* 10:11-16.

³ *Mt* 11:29.

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

⁵ *Mt* 20:28; *Mk* 10:45.

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

⁷ *Ps* 51[50]:19.

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

⁹ St. Josemaría Escrivá, quoted in Andres Vazquez de Prada, *The Founder of Opus Dei*, vol. I, p. 491.

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.

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

At the end of this celebration, I would like to show my deepest gratitude to the Holy Trinity for the gift that has been given to the Church today. Today's action, raising Don Alvaro del Portillo, the successor of Saint Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer, to the altars, reminds us of the universal call to holiness. The Second Vatican Council emphasized this teaching. The earthly life of Blessed Alvaro shows that the complete fulfillment of one's duties marks the path of personal sanctification, the path that leads to full union with God, to which all should aspire.

I would also like to thank the Blessed Virgin, whose maternal mediation obtains for us many gifts from Heaven. I ask the Mother of God and our Mother to continue to intercede for us, each and every one of us, so that we keep walking on the path to holiness. We pray in a special way for our sisters and brothers in various parts of the world who suffer persecution and even martyrdom for the faith.

I would also like to thank the Holy Father Francis for his fatherly message, for how he shows that he is close to us and for his clear advice for the spiritual struggle of Christians. With deep gratitude I would like to thank Cardinal Angelo Amato, Prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, who, on behalf of the Pope, with such dignity and affection presided over the beatification. I ask all of us to show our thanks by a daily, constant, and intense prayer for the person and the intentions of the Roman Pontiff, for the Bishops and for priests. (. . .)

I can imagine the joy—an accidental part of glory—that the Popes Saints John XXIII and John Paul II, as well as the soon to be

Blessed Paul VI, must have. Don Alvaro served them with full fidelity and filial affection. And I very much like to think about the special joy of Saint Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer, seeing that this son of his who was most faithful has been proposed as an intercessor and an example for all the faithful.

I give special thanks to the members of the choir and orchestra, which have helped us to live more fully the sacred liturgy, and all present: with your responses and your songs you have sung a magnificent symphony directed to Heaven.

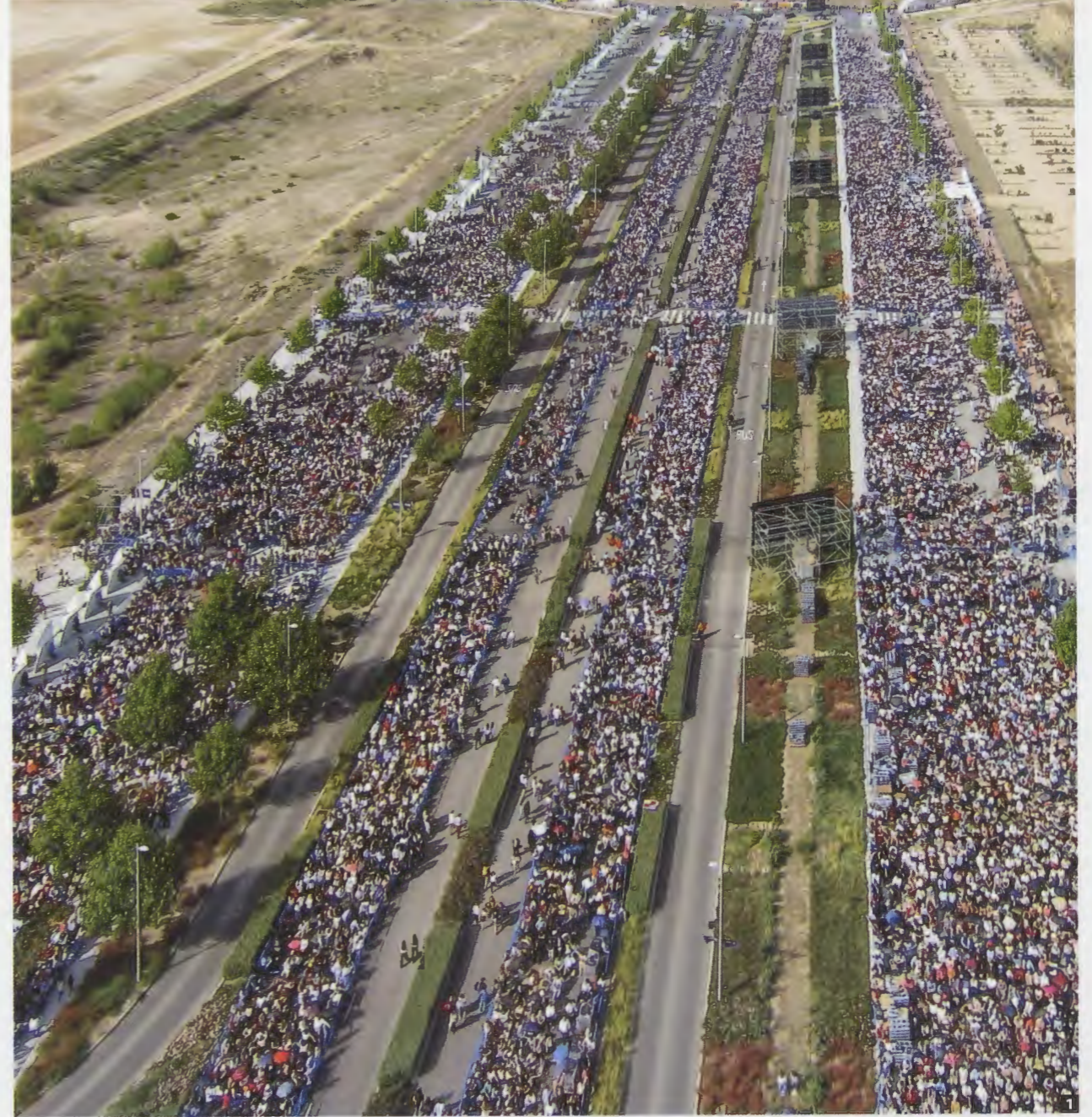
It is possible that I might never finish expressing my gratitude to those who have devoted hours and hours of cheerful work to prepare the celebration. A particular appreciation for professionals in the social media, who have made it possible for many people around the world to be involved in this ceremony from their countries.

I also give a special thanks to those who have prepared, with their prayers and sacrifice, the abundant spiritual fruits of these days. Specifically, the sick and those who for various reasons have not been able to join us physically. But spiritually, they have been very close to us, offering their illnesses or whatever tasks that they have. To all, thank you very much! May the example and intercession of the new Blessed inspire us to keep following diligently, full of Christian joy, the path of holiness. ■

Cardinal Antonio Maria Rouco, Archbishop of Madrid. Words of Thanksgiving at the Beatification Mass for Alvaro del Portillo

My gratitude is also directed to the Holy Father Francis, who wished to have the beatification celebrated in this beloved Archdiocese of Madrid. For I dare to say that Blessed del Portillo, who was born here, is particularly ours and that he is blessing us especially from heaven. And because he had those deep roots, he could be and was a citizen of the world, of all those continents he visited, so marvelously represented in this prayerful assembly (. . .)

I would like to mention here that in my personal interaction with the Blessed, for example during the Synod of Bishops in 1990, I could see how outstanding was his goodness, serenity, and good humor. "In the communion of the Church"; yes, Blessed Alvaro reminds me of my Episcopal motto, *In Ecclesiae Communionem*. He loved the Church and therefore was a man of communion, of union, of love.



1 The altar can barely be seen in the distance.

2 80 confessionals were in use without interruption, hours before the beginning of the ceremonies.

3 200 voice choir at Valdebebas.

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

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

1. Our Lord, by instituting the Eucharist, gave thanks to God the Father for his eternal goodness, for the creation that sprang 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 learn to love as you have loved us, to love as you have loved Peter and John, each one of us, as well as Saint Josemaría and Blessed Alvaro?

Contemplating the holy life of Don Alvaro, we discover our Lord's guiding hand, the grace of the Holy Spirit, the gift of 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 that way I will know how to love the others with your Love, and with my poor effort. In my life, the others will discover the goodness of God, as was the case in the daily path walked by Don Alvaro. It was already

here in this beloved Madrid that 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, Don 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: "In spite of everything, I hope that you can place your trust in one who, rather than rock, is clay without any solidity whatsoever. But, our Lord is so good!"² Our entire existence ought to be soaked in that trust in divine goodness. We prayed in the Responsorial Psalm, "I thank you, Lord, for your faithfulness and love" (Ps 138 [137]: 2). And our gratitude rises up to the Holy Trinity, because God continues to be with us, through his Word, Jesus Christ Himself (cf. Col 3:16), and through his Spirit, who fills us with joy (cf. Jn 15:11; Lk 11:13) and enables us to cry out to God, filled with confidence, *Abba, Pater*: "Father! Daddy!"

2. "The trinity on earth will take us to the Trinity in Heaven,"³ Don Alvaro, following the teaching and experience of the Founder of Opus Dei, would often repeat. 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

¹ Saint Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer, *The Forge*, no. 270.

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

³ Blessed Alvaro del Portillo, Pastoral letter, September 30, 1975, no. 26.

⁴ Cf. Blessed Alvaro del Portillo, Pastoral letter on occasion of the Golden Anniversary of the foundation of Opus Dei, September 24, 1978, no. 51.



Mass of Thanksgiving at Valdebebas, September 28

of a poem with which Virgil addresses a new-born: *Incipe, parve puer, risu cognoscere matrem*: "Little child, learn to recognize your mother by her smile." Upon 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 new being just barely come to 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 *comunio dilectionis*, the "communion of love," the "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 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 Don Alvaro, we give thanks to his parents who received him into this world and educated him, who prepared in him a simple and generous heart to receive God's love and respond to his calling. Don Alvaro did just that: he was a man whose smile gave glory to God, who has done wondrous things (*Sir* 50:24), and who chose him to serve the Church by spreading Opus Dei, as a faithful son of Saint Josemaría.

We 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 lift up our gratitude to God for the gift of the family, a reflection of eternal Trinitarian love, a place in which each person knows himself to be loved for his own sake, just the way he is. And now we also give thanks to all the mothers and fathers that have gathered together here, and to all those persons that care for children, the elderly, and the sick.

Families: our Lord loves you, our Lord is present within your marriage, image of Christ's love for his Church. I know that many of you dedicate yourselves with great generosity to helping other marriages along their path of fidelity, to helping many other homes march onwards in a social context that often times is difficult and even hostile. Keep at it! The whole world needs your work of witness and evangelization. Remember that, as 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, considering his indebtedness to Saint Josemaría, stated that "good use of gifts received is the best show of gratitude."¹¹ In his preaching, in family gatherings, in personal encounters, in all places, he never ceased to speak about apostolate and evangelization. To abide in the love of God that we have received, we must share it with others; God's goodness tends to spread. Pope Francis said that "it is in prayer that the Lord makes us understand this

⁵ Virgil, *Eclogue IV*, 60.

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

⁷ Saint John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris consortio*, no. 41.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Saint Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer, *Christ is Passing By*, no. 22.

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

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

love, but it is also through so many signs that we can recognize in our life, in the many persons he sets on our path."¹²

"It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you" (*Jn* 15:16). Our Lord after having insisted that the initiative is always his and 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 also sets 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 these days, the millions of persons throughout the world, and so many who await us in heaven, bear witness to the fruitfulness of Don 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 implement it through an authentic apostolate of friendship and confidence.

In the letter which Pope Francis wrote me on 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 He also said that Blessed Alvaro "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."¹⁴

Along this path, together with many angels, we are accompanied by the Blessed Virgin. 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, the Queen of the family, the Queen of Apostles. May our Lady help us, as she did Don Alvaro, 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 allow Him to guide our life,"¹⁵ a desire which Saint Josemaría entrusted on so many occasions to the Virgin of Almudena, so loved and venerated in this Archdiocese. Amen. ■

¹² Pope Francis, speech, Hall of Pope Paul VI, July 6, 2013.

¹³ Pope Francis, Letter to Bishop Javier Echevarría, Prelate of Opus Dei, for the beatification of Alvaro del Portillo, dated September 27, 2014.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

Veneration of Blessed Alvaro's Remains

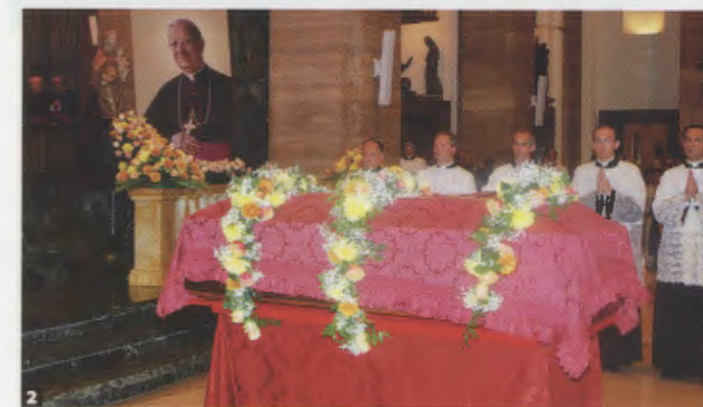
Rome, September 29: Transfer of the Casket to the Basilica of St. Eugene

At 6 pm the casket with Blessed Alvaro's mortal remains was brought from the crypt of the Prelatic Church of Our Lady of Peace to the nearby Basilica of St. Eugene, where it remained for three days for the veneration of the faithful. Many people from Rome and from all over the world were waiting to receive the Blessed, who 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 casket to thank Blessed Alvaro for his life of dedication and service to the Church, his interest in each one of us, and his daily love for the will of God."

The Prelate added that "we are in the presence of the remains of a man, of a priest, of a friend who abandoned everything in God's hands, and therefore who was always tranquil, happy. He was a great communicator of peace. Let us ask him sincerely to help us 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 until October 2, Eucharistic concelebrations followed one another, next to the remains of Blessed Alvaro del Portillo. During those days, some 40,000 faithful from Africa, Asia, North and South America, and Europe came to the Basilica of St. Eugene to accompany and pray before his mortal remains. The widespread devotion in the Church to the new Blessed shows how this bishop, by his word and above all by his example, has touched the lives of hundreds of thousands of men and women who go with confidence to his intercession before God, and who look upon him as a model of Christian virtue. ■



1 Basilica of St. Eugene on September 29.

2 Casket of Blessed Alvaro in St. Eugene's Basilica.

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

Rome, September 30: Masses of Thanksgiving



On the morning of September 30, a Mass of thanksgiving was celebrated in the Basilica of St. John Lateran. In his homily, Cardinal Agostino Vallini, Vicar General of the Holy Father for the diocese of Rome, said 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 our 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 striving to generously carry it out.

"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 their own responsibility to love God and souls."

That same day, in the afternoon, a Thanksgiving Mass was held in the Basilica of St. Mary Major. Cardinal April 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). This zealous concern of our Lord beat strongly in the pastoral heart of the new Blessed.

"He was concerned about everyone. Therefore, by his teaching, prayer, and example, he encouraged his sons and daughters to work in the most varied environments, finding there the opportunity to present the figure of Jesus to the people with whom they lived. Indeed, as Pope Francis said, 'every Christian is a missionary to the extent that they have encountered the love of God in Christ Jesus.' He encouraged many Christians to follow their vocation to be light for the world, letting themselves be illuminated by our Lord." ■

- 1 Holy Mass in St. John Lateran.
- 2 Mass of thanksgiving in St. Mary Major.
- 3 Cardinal Abril during his homily at St. Mary Major.

St. Peter's Square. Audience with the Holy Father on October 1

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

The Holy Father encouraged them to go 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, as well as the faithful of the Prelature gathered here to give thanks to God for the Beatification of Bishop Alvaro del Portillo. May the intercession and example of the new Blessed 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 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 St. Peter's, October 1, 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 St. Josemaría's first successor as head of Opus Dei.

1. The creation of a maternal and infants wing dependent on the Niger Hospital and Diagnostic Centre in Enugu, Nigeria.
2. The expansion and improvement of three medical dispensaries and the training of nursing personnel at the Centre Hospitalier Monkole and the Institut Supérieur en Sciences Infirmières in Kinshasa, Congo.
3. A program 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, October 2. Return of His Mortal Remains to the Crypt of the Prelatic Church of Our Lady of Peace

On October 2, in the evening, the veneration of Blessed Alvaro's casket in the Basilica of St. Eugene was concluded. The final ceremony was solemn Eucharistic Exposition and the singing of the Te Deum. During the liturgical celebration Bishop Echevarría spoke briefly, emphasizing the desire to give "all the glory to God, closely united to the Pope, and letting ourselves be led by Jesus." A large multitude of women and men, of every age and walk of life—including many children—filled the church and took part with deep recollection and emotion.

The casket with the body of the Blessed was then brought from St. Eugene to the Prelatic church of Our Lady of Peace. Hundreds of people accompanied the hearse along Bruno Buozzi Street, which connects the two churches. Many other thousands followed the event through the live transmission that was offered by the Opus Dei web page.

In Our Lady of Peace, Bishop Javier Echevarría directed some words of gratitude to the first successor of St. 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 those around you, even amid difficul-

ties . . . 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 . . . Thank you and let us not cease to thank you."

The Prelate then blessed those present with a relic *ex sanguine* of Blessed Alvaro, and the casket was carried to the crypt in the church, where it has rested since his death in 1994. This tomb also has written on it the dates of the earthly life of St. Josemaría, since this is where the Founder of Opus Dei was buried from 1975 to 1992. This fact also emphasizes "the most characteristic virtue of Bishop Alvaro del Portillo: fidelity" (Decree on Heroic Virtues, June 28, 2012). ■

- 1 Departure from St. Eugene's.
- 2 Return via Bruno Buozzi Street to no. 75.
- 3 Blessing with the relic of Blessed Alvaro on October 2.
- 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 Prelatic church.





Favors of Blessed Alvaro

Don Alvaro and my cow

I hoped to attend the beatification of Don Alvaro in Madrid, Spain on September 27, 2014. I had only paid the first installment, and the second was already due. I looked in vain for a way to raise the money. For three months I had advertised for the sale of a cow but there was no ready buyer. One morning in June, I woke up and during my morning prayers I thought to ask Don Alvaro to help me. I told him that I was going to my farm in Mtwapa and asked him to find somebody to buy my cow at Ksh 40,000 (US \$435).

During the morning Mass I repeated my prayer request through Don Alvaro. On my way to the farm I felt an urge to tell a nearby butcher that I had a cow to sell. 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 pm, I heard someone calling to me at the gate. He said he had been told that I had a cow to sell. He wanted to buy it. We negotiated the price and he paid Ksh 40,000. The cow was loaded on his pick-up and off he drove. I could not believe it.

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

C.O. (Mombasa, Kenya)

We were able to pay the workers

We were making repairs in a student residence and needed to pay the salaries of the workers. 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 Don Alvaro. One day after dinner I asked a friend for help. I had not been able to speak to him for some time. I was overjoyed when he said that he would give us the 7,000 Euros we needed to pay the workers. I thank Don Alvaro for this favor.

C. V. (Helsinki)

What are we doing here?

Juan traveled to Rome to attend a convention 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 settled into the hotel he told his friend he was going out for awhile. His friend offered to accompany him. Then Juan explained that he wanted to pray at the Prelatic church of Our Lady of Peace in Villa Tevere, and that it was his custom to go there whenever he visited Rome. His friend, who did not know much about Opus Dei, thought it a good idea and they went together. . . .

They prayed before the remains of St. Josemaría and then went down to the crypt to pray at the tomb of Don Alvaro. Juan told him that in a few weeks he was going to be beatified in Madrid, and encouraged his friend to pray to Don Alvaro 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 was deeply moved because the last medical tests showed that his wife was cancer free. He had no doubt that Don Alvaro had interceded for her.

While Juan was on one of the buses going to the beatification, he received a call from his friend. He told him that upon waking that morning he remarked to his wife: "It's September 27! What are we doing here?" They had decided to go to Valdebebas to take part in the beatification ceremony in thanksgiving for her cure.

J.P. (Barcelona)

A kidney injury

In November 2012, R.R. went to a clinic for a cardiac exam. The procedure ended up damaging his kidneys, to the point that he required dialysis for the next two months. The doctors feared he would never regain use of his kidneys.

Universal Devotion

But we prayed to Don Alvaro and his kidneys began to function again, to the great surprise of his doctors. He is very grateful to Don Alvaro because he was afraid he would need permanent dialysis. A year has now passed and his kidneys are still functioning very well.

M.M. (Chicago)

Sale of a small school

A year ago my mother began to encounter many difficulties operating the small school where she had been working for twenty years. The economic situation in our country had deteriorated and she was forced to close it down. The situation was complicated because she did not have the financial means to pay her employees, and finalizing the closure process required a lot of money.

My mother and I began to ask Don Alvaro to help us find a timely solution. There were days when my mother was so short of money she hardly had enough to eat. Months went by. All our family members were concerned. Despite all the problems, we were sure that Don Alvaro would come through.

To avoid becoming discouraged, every day I watched the video of the cure of José Ignacio, whom Don Alvaro had helped.

A few weeks ago we were approached by someone who wanted to buy the school facilities. An initial agreement for the sale was reached and on the 1st of September 2014, the sale was concluded. The property was sold thanks to Don Alvaro's help.

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

I.M.M. (Roma)

A blood clot in my eye

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

Here is a brief summary of what happened to me. On Monday, April 29, 2013, I went to see an ophthalmologist about a loss of vision in my right eye. After a careful examination, the ophthalmologist diagnosed thrombosis of the vein in the lower part of the retina. He said that this occurs more often to people over the age of 75 and that few cases occur in people my age (40). He told me that treatments are usually not effective. In order to be more certain, he arranged for additional examinations which confirmed the diagnosis.

The doctor asked me to return in a month. He couldn't do much at that time because the eye was quite inflamed. He also asked me to see a hematologist for some tests to try to determine the cause of the thrombosis.

During that month I prayed a novena with Don Alvaro del Portillo's prayer card. At my follow up visit to the ophthalmologist, he checked the vision in my right eye. He was surprised that I could now see without any difficulty and that the vision in my right eye had returned to normal.

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

S.C. (Santiago de Chile)

Two favors in a row

I am writing to give thanks to Don Alvaro del Portillo for two favors. First, because my family was able to buy our first house with his help. Obtaining a subsidy is very difficult in my country because of the complicated application process and the paperwork involved.

Second, when I resigned from the hospital where I had been working they told me they wouldn't pay me for my final month of work. I had been trying unsuccessfully for six months to receive this payment, but after praying for a week to Don Alvaro, the problem was resolved.

A. N. D. G. (Colombia)

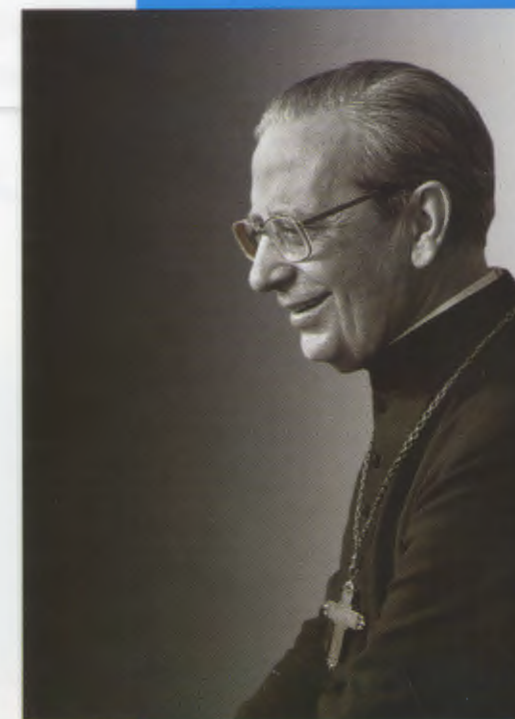
Prayer

*O God, merciful Father,
you granted Blessed Alvaro, Bishop,
with the help 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.

Those who obtain favors through the intercession of Blessed Alvaro del Portillo are asked to notify the Prelature of Opus Dei, Office for the Causes of Saints, 139 E. 34th Street, New York, NY 10016, or by e-mail: ocs@opusdei.org

More information is available at www.alvarodelportillo.org



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