Romana is the bulletin of the Prelature of the Holy Cross and Opus Dei. These pages reprint documents of the Holy See directed to the entire Church, as well as those referring specifically to Opus Dei. It also provides news about the activities of the Prelate and the Prelature in the service of the Church and the local dioceses. Brief articles are included about some of the apostolic initiatives fostered by faithful of the Prelature within their profession and in society at large in their endeavor to infuse a Christian spirit into the secular sphere.

The contents of the bulletin do not provide an entire picture of Opus Dei’s activities, since the Prelature’s fundamental apostolate is that which its faithful carry out personally, guided by the Christian formation and spiritual assistance they receive from the Prelature. This apostolate takes place in the context of each person’s professional, social, and family setting, and its variety and creativity naturally cannot be reduced to a set of statistics.

Romana’s publication fulfills an express desire of St. Josemaría Escrivá. In choosing the title Romana for the future bulletin, St. Josemaría wished to emphasize the catholic and universal character of Opus Dei’s pastoral mission.
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EDITORIAL
A Good and Faithful Servant

On September 27, 2014, Alvaro del Portillo, bishop and prelate of Opus Dei, was raised to the altars before a multitude of faithful in a ceremony celebrated in Madrid. Hundreds of thousands of people from all over the world took part in the joy of the beatification of this “shepherd in accord with the heart of Christ, a zealous minister of the Church,” as he was defined by Pope Francis in the Apostolic Brief of beatification.

In a letter sent to Bishop Javier Echevarría, the Roman Pontiff shared his “special joy” for the new blessed, emphasizing his “life of humble service to others,” forged from his youth “in the simplicity of family life, through friendship and service to others.” The Pope said that Blessed Alvaro “is also teaching us that in the simplicity of our daily lives we can find a sure path to holiness.” His example is an encouragement “not to be afraid to go against the current and suffer for announcing the Gospel.”

Alvaro del Portillo had an immense love for the Church, “which he served with a heart devoid of worldly self-interest, far from discord, welcoming to everyone and always seeking in others what was positive, what united,” the Pope stressed. The new blessed 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.”

“One who is very immersed in God is able to be very close to other people,” wrote the Holy Father, highlighting Alvaro del Portillo zeal to bring to all men and women the lovable and merciful face of Christ: “He traveled to many countries to foster new projects for evangelization, undeterred by difficulties, moved by his love for God and his brothers and sisters,” he added in his message.

This issue of Romana contains the chronicle of those days of grace, together with the texts of the homilies and messages for the beatification, and the news of the ceremonies that took place in Rome during the following days.

In addition, the second half of 2014 brought other news, such as the appointment—for the first time—of an Auxiliary Vicar in the Prelature, the pastoral trips of the prelate to Central America and Russia, and the
convoking of a Marian Year in the Prelature of Opus Dei, “in order to place in our Lady’s hands all the needs of the Church and mankind, and follow faithfully the Pope’s intentions,” as Bishop Echevarría said on December 28th, the liturgical feast of the Holy Family.
HOLY SEE

- The Roman Pontiff
- The Roman Curia
Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning,

One of the great gifts from the Second Vatican Council was that of recovering a vision of the Church founded on communion, and grasping anew the principle of authority and hierarchy in this perspective. This has helped us to better understand that all Christians, insofar as they have been baptized, are equal in dignity before the Lord and share in the same vocation, that is, to sainthood (cf. Lumen Gentium, nn. 39-42). Now let us ask ourselves: what does this universal vocation to being saints consist in? And how can we realize it?

First of all, we must bear clearly in mind that sanctity is not something we can procure for ourselves, that we can obtain by our own qualities and abilities. Sanctity is a gift, it is a gift granted to us by the Lord Jesus, when He takes us to Himself and clothes us in Himself, He makes us like Him. In his Letter to the Ephesians, the Apostle Paul states that “Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her” (5:25-26). You see, sainthood truly is the most beautiful face of the Church, the most beautiful face: it is to rediscover oneself in communion with God, in the fullness of his life and of his love. Sanctity is understood, then, not as a prerogative of the few: sanctity is a gift offered to all, no one excluded, by which the distinctive character of every Christian is constituted.

All this makes us understand that, in order to be saints, there is no need to be bishops, priests or religious: no, we are all called to be saints! So, many times we are tempted to think that sainthood is reserved only to those who have the opportunity to break away from daily affairs in order to dedicate themselves exclusively to prayer. But it is not so! Some think that sanctity is to close your eyes and to look like a holy icon. No! This is not sanctity! Sanctity is something greater, deeper, which God gives us. Indeed, it is precisely in living with love and offering one’s own Christian witness in everyday affairs that we are called to become saints. And each in the
conditions and the state of life in which he or she finds him- or herself. But you are consecrated. Are you consecrated? — Be a saint by living out your donation and your ministry with joy. Are you married? — Be a saint by loving and taking care of your husband or your wife, as Christ did for the Church. Are you an unmarried baptized person? — Be a saint by carrying out your work with honesty and competence and by offering time in the service of your brothers and sisters. “But, father, I work in a factory; I work as an accountant, only with numbers; you can't be a saint there...”. “Yes, yes you can! There, where you work, you can become a saint. God gives you the grace to become holy. God communicates himself to you”. Always, in every place, one can become a saint, that is, one can open oneself up to this grace, which works inside us and leads us to holiness. Are you a parent or a grandparent? — Be a saint by passionately teaching your children or grandchildren to know and to follow Jesus. And it takes so much patience to do this: to be a good parent, a good grandfather, a good mother, a good grandmother; it takes so much patience and with this patience comes holiness: by exercising patience. Are you a catechist, an educator or a volunteer? Be a saint by becoming a visible sign of God’s love and of his presence alongside us. This is it: every state of life leads to holiness, always! In your home, on the street, at work, at church, in that moment and in your state of life, the path to sainthood has been opened. Don’t be discouraged to pursue this path. It is God alone who gives us the grace. The Lord asks only this: that we be in communion with Him and at the service of our brothers and sisters.

At this point, each one of us can make a little examination of conscience, we can do it right now, each one respond to himself, in silence: how have we responded up to now to the Lord’s call to sanctity? Do I want to become a little better, a little more Christian? This is the path to holiness. When the Lord invites us to become saints, he doesn't call us to something heavy, sad... quite the contrary! It’s an invitation to share in his joy, to live and to offer with joy every moment of our life, by making it become at the same time a gift of love for the people around us. If we understand this, everything changes and takes on new meaning, a beautiful meaning, a meaning that begins with little everyday things. For example: a lady goes to the market to buy groceries and finds a neighbor there, so they
begin to talk and then they come to gossiping and this lady says: “No, no, no I won’t speak badly about anyone”. This is a step towards sainthood, it helps you become more holy. Then, at home, your son wants to talk a little about his ideas: “Oh, I am so tired, I worked so hard today...”. — “But you sit down and listen to your son, who needs it!”. And you sit down, you listen to him patiently: this is a step towards sainthood. Then the day ends, we are all tired, but there are the prayers. We say our prayers: this too is a step towards holiness. Then comes Sunday and we go to Mass, we take communion, sometimes preceded by a beautiful confession which cleans us a little. This is a step towards sainthood. Then we think of Our Lady, so good, so beautiful, and we take up the rosary and we pray it. This is a step towards sainthood. Then I go out to the street, I see a poor person in need, I stop and address him, I give him something: it is a step towards sainthood. These are little things, but many little steps to sanctity. Every step towards sainthood makes us better people, free from selfishness and being closed within ourselves, and opens us to our brothers and sisters and to their needs.

Dear friends, in the First Letter of St Peter this is asked of us: “As each has received a gift, employ it for one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who utters oracles of God; whoever renders service, as one who renders it by the strength which God supplies; in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ” (4:10-11). This is the invitation to holiness! Let us accept it with joy, and let us support one another, for the path to sainthood is not taken alone, each one for oneself, but is traveled together, in that one body that is the Church, loved and made holy by the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us go forward with courage on this path to holiness.

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Letters of the Pope and Prelate About Appointments
MONS. JAVIER ECHEVARRÍA
Vescovo tit. di Cilibia
Prelato dell’ Opus Dei
Roma, 10 de diciembre de 2014
Santo Padre,

me conmovió filialmente su consejo, durante la Audiencia pública del día 1 de octubre: ¡cúídense!, me dijo. Me encuentro bien de salud -contando también con mi edad- y puedo seguir viajando periódicamente, para impulsar el trabajo apostólico de los fieles de la Prelatura en los distintos países: son 67 y el desarrollo de la labor aumenta año tras año.

Meditando su consejo, y teniendo en cuenta que el Codex iuris particularis Operis Dei, que promulgó San Juan Pablo II con la Const. Ap. Ut sit, de 28-XI-1982 (AAS, 75[1983], pp. 423-425), establece que el cargo de Prelado es ad vitam, y prevé la figura del Vicario auxiliar para ayudar especialmente al Prelado cuando el propio Prelado lo estime oportuno -también en el caso en que estuviera impedido-, me ha parecido conveniente proceder al nombramiento de Mons. Fernando Ocáriz como Vicario auxiliar, con toda la potestad ejecutiva para el gobierno de la Prelatura, incluyendo las competencias ejecutivas que el Derecho atribuye al Prelado.

Para sustituirle como Vicario general, he nombrado a Mons. Mariano Fazio, hasta ahora Vicario regional de Argentina, con las competencias propias de un Vicario general.

Le pido oraciones para continuar la labor del Opus Dei, al servicio de la Iglesia y del Sucesor de Pedro, y contribuir así al desarrollo de la tarea de evangelización a la que V.S. anima constantemente.

Con mi filial adhesión, le aseguro la de los sacerdotes y laicos del Opus Dei y le pido para todos, la bendición apostólica

de Su Santidad
devmo hijo
+Javier Ecchevarría
Primera sección-asuntos generales
Vaticano, 16 de diciembre de 2014
N. 63.415
Señor Obispo:
Con la presente, me complace transmitirle la adjunta correspondencia que el Santo Padre le ha enviado, en respuesta a la suya del 10 de los corrientes.
Aprovecho la ocasión de manifestarle, Excelencia, el testimonio de mi consideración y estimo en Cristo.
+ Angelo Beccio
Sustituto

Mons. Javier ECHEVARRÍA
Prelado del Opus Dei
ROMA
(Con anexo: Carta Pontificia)
Vaticano, 16 de diciembre de 2014
Querido Hermano:
Le agradezco de corazón la carta que me ha enviado para comunicarme el nombramiento de Mons. Fernando Ocáriz como Vicario auxiliar de la Prelatura, así como la de Mons. Mariano Fazio como Vicario general de la misma.
Pido al Señor para que les conceda seguir sirviendo a la Iglesia y a su misión con amor y fidelidad creciente.

Le ruego que rece por mí, pues o necesito mucho. Le deseo una feliz y santa Navidad. Que Jesús le bendiga y la Virgen Santa le cuide.

Fraternalmente,

Francisco

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**Letter of the Holy Father to the Prelate of Opus Dei on the Occasion of the Beatification of Alvaro del Portillo (June 26, 2014)**

Dear brother,

The beatification of the Servant of God Álvaro 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 to 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 arrives first, touches and caresses us first. He takes the initiative and is always waiting for us. Álvaro 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: 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 trusting 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 Álvaro 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 brothers and sisters. 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 pressing concern 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 Álvaro 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 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.

Fraternally,

Franciscus
The Roman Curia

Decree of Approval of the Korean Translation of the Mass of St. Josemaría, by the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments

CONGREGATIO DE CULTU DIVINO DISCIPLINA SACRAMENTORUM

Prot. N. 301/12/L

SANCTAE CRUCIS ET OPERIS DEI

Instante Excellentissimo ac Reverendissimo Dominio Xaverio Echevarría Rodríguez, Episcopo titulari Cilibiensi ac Praelato Santae Crucis et Operis Dei, litteris die 2 mensis maii 2012 datim vigore facultatum huic Congregatione a Summo Pontifice FRANCISCO tributarum, textum coreanum Missae honorem sancti Iosephmariae Escrivá de Balaguer, presbyteri, prout in adiecto exstat exemplari, perlibenter probamus seu confirmamus.

In textu imprimendo mentio fiat de approbatione seu confirmatione ab Apostolica Sede concessa.

Eiusdem insuper textus impressi duo exemplaria ad hanc Congregationem transmittantur.

Contrariis quibuslibet minime obstantibus.

Ex aedibus Congregationis de Cultu Divino et Disciplina Sacramentorum, die 3 mensis decembris 2014, in memoria sancti Francisci Xavier, presbyteri.

(Robertus Card. Sarah) Praefectus
(+ Arturus Roche) Archiepiscopus a Secretis
CONGREGIO DE CULTU DIVINO DISCIPLINA SACRAMENTORUM

Prot. N. 301/12/L

Ciudad del Vaticano, 3 de diciembre de 2014

Excelencia Reverendísima:

En esta Congregación, para el Culto Divino y la Disciplina de los Sacramentos se recibió su atenta carta, de fecha 2 de mayo de 2012, con la que transmitía los textos litúrgicos propios, en lengua coreanam de san Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer, presbítero.

El Dicasterio ha completado la revisión de los textos y adjunto a la presente se envían con el Decreto de aprobación.

Me sirvo de la ocasión para expresarle mi mayor aprecio y estima en el Señor.

De Vuestra Excelencia Reverendísima afectísimo en Cristo,

(Robert Card. Sarah) Prefecto

(Con anexos)

A Su Excelencia Reverendísima

Mons. Javier ECHEVARRÍA RODRÍGUEZ

Obispo titular de Cilibia

Prelado del OPUS DEI

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Message of the Third Extraordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops (October 18, 2014)

We, Synod Fathers, gathered in Rome together with Pope Francis in the Extraordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, greet all families of the different continents and in particular all who follow Christ,
the Way, the Truth, and the Life. We admire and are grateful for the daily witness which you offer us and the world with your fidelity, faith, hope, and love.

Each of us, pastors of the Church, grew up in a family, and we come from a great variety of backgrounds and experiences. As priests and bishops we have lived alongside families who have spoken to us and shown us the saga of their joys and their difficulties.

The preparation for this synod assembly, beginning with the questionnaire sent to the Churches around the world, has given us the opportunity to listen to the experience of many families. Our dialogue during the Synod has been mutually enriching, helping us to look at the complex situations which face families today.

We offer you the words of Christ: “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will enter his house and dine with him, and he with me” (Rev 3:20). On his journeys along the roads of the Holy Land, Jesus would enter village houses. He continues to pass even today along the streets of our cities. In your homes there are light and shadow. Challenges often present themselves and at times even great trials. The darkness can grow deep to the point of becoming a dense shadow when evil and sin work into the heart of the family.

We recognize the great challenge to remain faithful in conjugal love. Enfeebled faith and indifference to true values, individualism, impoverishment of relationships, and stress that excludes reflection leave their mark on family life. There are often crises in marriage, often confronted in haste and without the courage to have patience and reflect, to make sacrifices and to forgive one another. Failures give rise to new relationships, new couples, new civil unions, and new marriages, creating family situations which are complex and problematic, where the Christian choice is not obvious.

We think also of the burden imposed by life in the suffering that can arise with a child with special needs, with grave illness, in deterioration of old age, or in the death of a loved one. We admire the fidelity of so many families who endure these trials with courage, faith, and love. They see
them not as a burden inflicted on them, but as something in which they
themselves give, seeing the suffering Christ in the weakness of the flesh.

We recall the difficulties caused by economic systems, by the “the
idolatry of money and the dictatorship of an impersonal economy lacking a
truly human purpose” (Evangelii gaudium 55) which weakens the dignity of
people. We remember unemployed parents who are powerless to provide
basic needs for their families, and youth who see before them days of empty
expectation, who are prey to drugs and crime.

We think of so many poor families, of those who cling to boats in order
to reach a shore of survival, of refugees wandering without hope in the
desert, of those persecuted because of their faith and the human and
spiritual values which they hold. These are stricken by the brutality of war
and oppression. We remember the women who suffer violence and
exploitation, victims of human trafficking, children abused by those who
ought to have protected them and fostered their development, and the
members of so many families who have been degraded and burdened with
difficulties. “The culture of prosperity deadens us…. all those lives stunted
for lack of opportunity seem a mere spectacle; they fail to move us”
(Evangelii gaudium 54). We call on governments and international
organizations to promote the rights of the family for the common good.

Christ wanted his Church to be a house with doors always open to
welcome everyone. We warmly thank our pastors, lay faithful, and
communities who accompany couples and families and care for their
wounds.

❑❑❑

There is also the evening light behind the windowpanes in the houses
of the cities, in modest residences of suburbs and villages, and even in mere
shacks, which shines out brightly, warming bodies and souls. This
light—the light of a wedding story—shines from the encounter between
spouses: it is a gift, a grace expressed, as the Book of Genesis says (2:18),
when the two are “face to face” as equal and mutual helpers. The love of
man and woman teaches us that each needs the other in order to be truly
self. Each remains different from the other that opens self and is revealed
in the reciprocal gift. It is this that the bride of the Song of Songs sings in
her canticle: “My beloved is mine and I am his... I am my beloved’s and my beloved is mine” (Song of Songs 2:16; 6:3).

This authentic encounter begins with courtship, a time of waiting and preparation. It is realized in the sacrament where God sets his seal, his presence, and grace. This path also includes sexual relationship, tenderness, intimacy, and beauty capable of lasting longer than the vigor and freshness of youth. Such love, of its nature, strives to be forever to the point of laying down one’s life for the beloved (cf. Jn 15:13). In this light conjugal love, which is unique and indissoluble, endures despite many difficulties. It is one of the most beautiful of all miracles and the most common.

This love spreads through fertility and generativity, which involves not only the procreation of children but also the gift of divine life in baptism, their catechesis, and their education. It includes the capacity to offer life, affection, and values—an experience possible even for those who have not been able to bear children. Families who live this light-filled adventure become a sign for all, especially for young people.

This journey is sometimes a mountainous trek with hardships and falls. God is always there to accompany us. The family experiences his presence in affection and dialogue between husband and wife, parents and children, sisters and brothers. They embrace him in family prayer and listening to the Word of God—a small, daily oasis of the spirit. They discover him every day as they educate their children in the faith and in the beauty of a life lived according to the Gospel, a life of holiness. Grandparents also share in this task with great affection and dedication. The family is thus an authentic domestic Church that expands to become the family of families which is the ecclesial community. Christian spouses are called to become teachers of faith and of love for young couples as well.

Another expression of fraternal communion is charity, giving, nearness to those who are last, marginalized, poor, lonely, sick, strangers, and families in crisis, aware of the Lord’s word, “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35). It is a gift of goods, of fellowship, of love and mercy, and also a witness to the truth, to light, and to the meaning of life.

The high point which sums up all the threads of communion with God and neighbor is the Sunday Eucharist when the family and the whole
Church sits at table with the Lord. He gives himself to all of us, pilgrims through history towards the goal of the final encounter when “Christ is all and in all” (Col 3:11). In the first stage of our Synod itinerary, therefore, we have reflected on how to accompany those who have been divorced and remarried and on their participation in the sacraments.

We Synod Fathers ask you walk with us towards the next Synod. The presence of the family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph in their modest home hovers over you. United to the Family of Nazareth, we raise to the Father of all our petition for the families of the world:

Father, grant to all families the presence of strong and wise spouses who may be the source of a free and united family.

Father, grant that parents may have a home in which to live in peace with their families.

Father, grant that children may be a sign of trust and hope and that young people may have the courage to forge life-long, faithful commitments.

Father, grant to all that they may be able to earn bread with their hands, that they may enjoy serenity of spirit and that they may keep aflame the torch of faith even in periods of darkness.

Father, grant that we may all see flourish a Church that is ever more faithful and credible, a just and humane city, a world that loves truth, justice and mercy.

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Prelate

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Decree of Appointment of the Regional Vicar of Argentina

Nos Dr. D. XAVERIUS ECHEVARRÍA
Dei et Apostolicæ Sedis gratia
Prælatus
D E C R E T U M

Præsentibus his litteris te, Rev.dum D.num D.rem Victorem Ansgarium Urrestarazu Villarroel, nominamus atque constituimus Vicarium Nostrum pro Regione Argentinæ, cum omnibus et singulis iuribus et obligationibus huic officio adnexit.

Dum enixas preces effundimus ut Deus tibi in huiusmodi munere ad suam gloriam et Ecclesiae bonum propitius adsit, Nostram benedictionem in Domino tibi libentissime impertimus.

Datum Romæ, ex Ædibus Curiæ Prælatitœ, die 20 mense decembri anno 2014.

✠ XAVERIUS ECHEVARRÍA
Prælatus Operis Dei
Decree of Appointment of the Vicar General of the Prelature

Nos Dr. D. XAVERIUS ECHEVARRÍA

Dei et Apostolicæ Sedis gratia

Prælatus

D E C R E T U M

Vacante officio Vicarii Generalis, visis cann. 475 et 477-480 Codicis Iuris Canonici et nn. 138, 140-142 et 144 Codicis iuris particularis Operis Dei, de consensu Consilii Generalis, præsenti decreto

NOMINO

Rev.mum D.num Marianum Fazio Vicarium Generalem Prælaturæ, cum omnibus et singulis iuribus et obligationibus huic officio adnexit.

Datum Romæ, ex Ædibus Curiæ Prælatitiæ, die 9 mense decembri anno 2014.

✝ XAVERIUS ECHEVARRÍA

Prælatus Operis Dei

Rev.mus D. Dr. Ernestus Burkhart

Curiæ Prælatitiæ Cancellarius

Reg. Gen. R. lib. VI pag. 56
Decree of Appointment of the Auxiliary Vicar of the Prelature

Nos Dr. D. XAVERIUS ECHEVARRÍA

Dei et Apostolicæ Sedis gratia

Prælatus

D E C R E T U M

Extensio navitatis apostolicae Operis Dei, augmentum circumscriptionum regionalium, centrorum et inceptorum quibus Prælatura assistentiam pastoralem præstat, secum tult incrementum non parvum laboris regiminis directe ad Prælatum spectantis.


Quapropter, audito meo Consilio,

NOMINO

Rev.mum D.num Ferdinandum Ocáriz Braña Vicarium auxiliarem, cum omni potestate executiva ad regimen Prælaturæ necessaria, inclusis competentiiis Prælato specialiter reservatis, his solummodo exceptis quæ exercitium ordinis episcopalis requirunt.

Datum Romæ, ex Ædibus Curiae Prælatiæ, die 9 mense decembri anno 2014.

✠ XAVERIUS ECHEVARRÍA

Prælatus Operis Dei

Rev.mus D. Dr. Ernestus Burkhart

Curiae Prælatitiae Cancellarius

Reg. Gen. R. lib. VI pag. 56
Activities of the Prelate

Pastoral Trips

*During the second half of 2014, the Prelate of Opus Dei made pastoral trips to Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama, Venezuela and Russia.*

*Guatemala, from July 18 to 22*

Bishop Echevarría arrived in Guatemala City on Friday, July 18. On the following day he visited the new buildings for the Kinal Technical Training Center, which offers training to over 2,000 students from low income families each year.

On Sunday the 20th he had a get-together with about ten thousand people—faithful of the Prelature, friends, and families—in the *Cementos Progreso* Stadium. On Monday the 21st he blessed the buildings for the new campus of Istmo University. Alluding to the University’s motto, *Learning in order to serve*, he recalled St. Josemaría’s great zeal to serve everyone: “There are no class differences of any kind in Christian life; we are all equally daughters and sons of God, who speak the same language. Although in daily life we may encounter many different languages, nevertheless the only true language is the communication of love proper to the daughters and sons of God.” The blessing of the new buildings was followed by a meeting with the directors, professors, students and personnel at the university, with some 3,000 people taking part.

On July 22, Bishop Echevarría was received by Archbishop Oscar Julio Vian of Guatemala City, and went to the metropolitan cathedral to pray for the country and for the needs of the Church. During his trip, the Prelate also met with Bishop Hector Hugo Palma of Escuintla, and Bishop Gonzalo de Villa of Sololá-Chimaltenango. He also had a chance to meet
with 150 diocesan priests and seminarians, whom he encouraged to be true shepherds of souls and to strive to bring the light of Christ present in their hearts to those around them.

_Honduras, from July 23 to 24_

On Wednesday, July 23, the Prelate of Opus Dei traveled to the city of San Pedro Sula, Honduras, where the apostolic work of Opus Dei began in a stable way in 2007. Some 900 people took part in the catechetical get-together with Bishop Echevarría, who was received by the mayor of the city, Armando Calidonio.

On July 24, in Tegucigalpa, he visited the Basilica of Our Lady of Suyapa, patroness of Honduras, where he placed in our Lady’s hands his gratitude for the trip and his prayer for the country. Following this, he met with some 4,000 people in the Antares Student Center and had a cordial and fraternal meeting with Cardinal Archbishop Oscar Andrés Rodríguez Maradiaga of Tegucigalpa.

_El Salvador, from July 25 to 27_

The Prelate of Opus Dei arrived in San Salvador on July 25, and that same day went to the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe to pray for all Salvadorans. On the 26th, in the International Fair and Convention Center, he met with faithful of the Prelature and friends in a gathering of about 8,000 people. He stressed the importance of fraternal charity: “Love one another a lot; you have to avoid divisions, separations; you have to avoid failing to treat each other as what we are: brothers and sisters in Christ.”

On Sunday the 27th, in the working class district of Syapango, he visited the Siramá Center of Professional Training for Women, which since 1970 has been assisting the advancement of Salvadoran women. He also visited Archbishop José Luis Escobar Alas and went to the metropolitan cathedral, where he prayed intently before the tomb of Archbishop Oscar Arnulfo Romero, asking especially for peace in the country. The pastoral trip concluded on Monday, July 28.

_Nicaragua, from July 28 to 30_
During his stay in Nicaragua, the Prelate met with faithful of the Prelature, cooperators, friends, and other people interested in learning about the message of Opus Dei. On the 28th he was with university students and Spanish and Italian volunteers, who during those days were carrying out various social projects in the country. On the 29th he spoke with a large group of people in a convention center in Managua. He reminded those present of St. Josemaría’s prayer for the countries of Central America, as well as his appreciation for popular devotions rooted in the region. Afterwards he received a group of priests and seminarians. On the same day he had the chance to greet Cardinal Leopoldo Brenes, Archbishop of Managua, and the Archbishop Emeritus, Cardinal Miguel Obando y Bravo.

On the 30th, Bishop Echevarría visited the Vega Baja Social Center, located some 20 miles from Managua. Vega Baja is an initiative aimed at the human and spiritual formation of women in the district of Diria. It imparts training in cooking and hotel operations thanks to donations gathered throughout the country and international aid.

The apostolic work of Opus Dei in Nicaragua began in 1992, shortly after the beatification of St. Josemaría. Bishop Echevarría made his first trip to this country in the year 2000.

Costa Rica, from July 30 to August 3

On July 30, an enthusiastic group of families welcomed the Prelate of Opus Dei to the Miravalles University Center, the student residence where he was to stay during his days in Costa Rica. On the following day, he went with Most Rev. José Francisco Ulloa, the bishop of Cartago, to pray at the Basilica of Our Lady of the Angels (known popularly as La Negrita, the Black Madonna), whose feast was to be celebrated two days later. During the visit, the Prelate also greeted Bishop Oscar Fernandez, of Puntarenas. Back in San José, he stopped to pray a response for the dead at a cemetery where various faithful of Opus Dei are buried. After this he visited the Yorkin and Iribo schools and the Los Olmos pre-school, initiatives started by concerned parents, many of whom are faithful of the Prelature.

In the evening he was received by Archbishop José Rafael Quiros of San Jose, who was accompanied by several priests of the Archdiocese. He
also had a get-together with priests and various gatherings with faithful of the Prelature and with young people. “Since our Lord wants to rely on us to re-Christianize society, our drawing back through fear or comfort-seeking would be to reply: ‘don’t count on me,’” the Prelate said during one of those gatherings. And he added: “St. Josemaría, with a strong expression to spur us to use our talents, said that Hell is full of sins of omission. Moreover, as you know, he wanted all Catholics to know their civic duties and rights, and that people should be taught this part of the social doctrine of the Church in the catechism from childhood.”

On August 1, he visited the Suri Educational Project in Pavas, a school for the human, cultural, professional and social advancement of women. Afterwards, in the Pedregal Events Center, in San Antonio of Bethlehem, several thousand people attended a gathering for families. Bishop Echevarría told them that Opus Dei “was born among the poor and the sick, and has reached all corners of the world... Many people in Opus Dei don’t have many resources, and even then they give everything, which is their own life.”

Panama, from August 3 to 6

On the first trip that he made to Panama, in the year 2000, the Prelate blessed the land foreseen for the Cerro Azul Retreat and Conference Center and the Tagua Training Center. Thanks be to God, both of these initiatives are now a reality. In the Tagua Training Center, Bishop Echevarría was able to see the work being done by instructors and students, and he encouraged them to continue assisting the country in advancing the dignity of women, families and society as a whole. In Cerro Azul he dedicated the altar in the oratory.

He also met with the apostolic nuncio, Archbishop Andrés Carrascosa, at the seat of the nunciature, and was received by Archbishop José Domingo Ulloa of Panama, who is also president of the Panamanian Bishops’ Conference. Together they went to the cathedral to pray before the image of Our Lady of La Antigua.

Bishop Echevarría also held a get-together with about 2,000 people in the Atlapa Convention Center. He told the people there: “I had an opportunity to see a map of your country, with a sign saying: ‘Panama, we
unite the world.’ It helped me a lot to consider the mission that we Christians have of being women and men who bring unity. So may you love each other a lot here in Panama, may you respect one another, and may you be concerned about helping everyone. Don’t limit yourselves to those in your immediate circle; welcome everyone who wants to share in the friendship you offer them... Then, how much misfortune, how many differences, how much discrimination will disappear.”

On August 5, the Prelate received several Panamanian families and greeted the President of Panama, Juan Carlos Varela.

**Venezuela, from August 6 to 8**

The Prelate arrived in Caracas on Saturday, August 6. That same day he accepted an invitation to greet Cardinal Archbishop Jorge Urosa Savino. On the 7th, the anniversary of his priestly ordination, Bishop Echevarría blessed a statue of the founder of Opus Dei that he gave as a gift to the Parish of the Holy Family of Nazareth and St. Josemaría Escrivá.

During his apostolic visit, he also had the opportunity to meet with faithful of the Prelature and friends, who wanted to express their gratitude for his trip. Bishop Echevarría encouraged them to be people who know how to forgive, bearers of hope, because “by God’s arm, by God’s hand, even what is impossible can be overcome.” He also spoke about the family and about the importance of raising one’s children well, while asking for prayers for the Synod of bishops that will be held in October. He took advantage of his stay in the country to encourage everyone to bring many people close to God and to the Church.

**Russia, from November 3 to 6**

Bishop Echevarría arrived in Moscow on Monday, November 3. On the 4th he had a get-together with a group of about 200 people in the theater of the House of Culture. In that encounter, as in others that he held with families and university students, he encouraged everyone to pray for the Pope, for the Church, and for all their country’s citizens: “Let us fill the streets of Moscow and the other cities with petitions for one another, so that the others become part of our own lives,” he urged.
In the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception of Mary, he concelebrated with Archbishop Paolo Pezzi of Moscow, a Mass of Thanksgiving for the beatification of Álvaro del Portillo, the first successor of St. Josemaría at the head of Opus Dei.

During his visit he also visited the church where the icon of Our Lady of Kazan is venerated in Red Square. There, together with some faithful of the Work, he prayed for Russia and for the needs of the Church.

On Wednesday November 5, Bishop Echevarría spoke with the apostolic nuncio in Russia, Archbishop Ivan Yurkavich. The pastoral trip ended on November 6.

**Ordination of Deacons, St. Eugene's Basilica, Rome (November 8, 2014)**

On Saturday, November 8, 32 faithful of Opus Dei received diaconal ordination from the hands of Bishop Echevarría. The ceremony took place in the Roman Basilica of St. Eugene. The new deacons are from 14 countries: Spain, Poland, Chile, Ecuador, the United States, Nigeria, Mexico, Taiwan, Kenya, Brazil, Guatemala, Colombia, Austria, and Argentina.

In his homily, which is included in full below, the Prelate invited all of them to be “untiring in their self-giving, vigilant in prayer, friendly and welcoming in service.” He also recalled the example of the founder of Opus Dei and Blessed Álvaro. “The 32 new deacons,” he said, “continue a long chain begun by St. Josemaría in 1944, with Don Álvaro and two other faithful of the Work.”

The priestly ordination is scheduled for May 9, 2015.
Participation in the Meeting for Friendship among Peoples, Rimini, Italy (August 2, 2014)

On Thursday, August 28, the Prelate of Opus Dei took part in the Rimini Meeting with a presentation entitled “Walking to Emmaus, by all the paths of the world,” centered on the commitment to better the world with a spirit of service, in line with Pope Francis’ invitation to go out to all the “existential peripheries.” In his address, he encouraged his listeners to offer a living witness to the Gospel by their actions of solidarity to eradicate material poverty, while referring to some specific examples from the lives of St. Josemaría and Blessed Álvaro del Portillo.

This was the first time that a Prelate of Opus Dei has participated in this event, organized by Communion and Liberation. Bishop Echevarría praised its founder, Luigi Giussani, for his life of piety, apostolate and service to the Church, and expressed the hope that his process of canonization might soon reach a favorable conclusion.

The text of his presentation is included in this issue under the heading “Addresses.”

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Priestly Ordinations at the Shrine of Torreciudad, Spain (August 31, 2014)

The Prelate of Opus Dei ordained Ignacio Mirón (Madrid, Spain) and Luis Ramon Quesada (Granada, Spain), on August 31 at the Marian Shrine of Torreciudad. Bishop Echevarría asked the new priests to “be witnesses to God who forgive and embrace everyone, good shepherds who accompany, as Pope Francis has emphasized.” And he encouraged those present to pray “for the holiness of all priests, so that they be an effective aid in fostering the universal call to holiness.”
Ignacio Mirón, 56 years of age, worked for more than two decades as a financial auditor. Luis Ramon Quesada, 49, worked as a teacher in several schools in Spain and the United States. At the Midtown Center, a social initiative of Opus Dei in Chicago, he also worked with groups of boys from disadvantaged backgrounds.

The full text of the Prelate’s homily is included in this issue of Romana.

Pastoral Letters

Pastoral Letter of October 1, 2014

My dear children: may Jesus watch over my daughters and sons for me!

Ut in gratiarum semper actione maneamus! Let us unite our hearts to St. Josemaría’s unceasing thanksgiving in Heaven, especially now for the unity of the Work that we have sensed so visibly with the beatification of our beloved Don Álvaro: the more thanks we give to God, the more closely we will unite ourselves to his most Holy Will always and in everything.

There come to my lips the words of St. Paul: my joy [is] the joy of all of you.[1] A joy that comes from the Holy Spirit, as a fulfillment of Christ’s promise to the first Twelve, and in them, to all Christians: If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.[2]

The life of this good and faithful servant (we have considered this many times) 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 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.

We feel very close to the joy of my beloved predecessor, in 1992, at the beatification of Saint Josemaría. He wrote to us then: "So intimate and deep was that joy, the fruit of the Holy Spirit (see Gal 5:22), that we seemed to be immersed in a 'sea of joy,' a clear sign of God's presence in our souls."[3] The same is now happening to all of us. And I ask our Lord, as Don Álvaro did on that occasion, that this joy may spread to the hundreds of thousands of people throughout the world who have seen the beatification ceremony, and also to those who took part in Masses of thanksgiving in various places. In recognition of our Father's sanctity, now too we beseech God that these days may leave in everyone's heart an indelible mark; that the shower of graces from this event may spur everyone "to pray, to frequent the sacraments, to improve in their life at home or at work; in short, to draw a bit closer to God."[4]

Saint Josemaría always insisted that "joy is a Christian possession which we will have as long as we keep fighting, for it is a consequence of peace."[5] Therefore, a very specific resolution we can draw from these days is to struggle with a sporting spirit to be at each moment closer to God: in work and when resting, at home and in social life, in the small or great events of each day, let us raise our sight to our Father God, asking him to make us determined to take advantage of Blessed Álvaro's example, loving the teachings of Saint Josemaría. Thus we will always be calm and happy, and sow around us gaudium cum pace, the joy and peace of those who walk alongside Christ.

In the Mass on September 27, a letter was read that the Holy Father sent to me for the beatification. Pope Francis reflects on the aspiration that Don Álvaro so frequently had on his lips: thank you, forgive me, help me more. We were all moved on hearing these words in that solemn ceremony. They are the same ones that I suggested to you as a motto for the coming months: a specific expression of our gratitude to God, which offer us a channel for that deeper conversion that God is now asking of each and every one of us.
Thank you! This first exclamation flows forcefully from our heart at these moments. Our gratitude for what we have witnessed is directed to the King of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, [to him] be honor and glory for ever and ever. Thank you, Most Holy Trinity, for this gift that you have made to the Church, to Opus Dei, and to all mankind, in highlighting the beloved figure of this servant of yours as a reference point and intercessor. The celebrations in Madrid during the past few days, and those now taking place in the Eternal City and in so many countries, with the Masses of thanksgiving and the thousands of people who have come to pray in the Basilica of St. Eugene before the body of the new blessed, we have to give thanks for all of this with the spirit that Saint Josemaría, right from the beginning of the Work, condensed into a few brief and intense words: Deo omnis gloria! Regnare Christum volumus! Omnes cum Petro ad Iesum per Mariam! Let us renew our desire to give God all the glory, struggling with determination each day to make Christ's kingdom a reality in society, closely united to the Pope, letting our Lady, our Mother, bring us to Jesus.

Let us beseech God ardently for his grace so that this resolution will yield specific deeds. For as St. Josemaría also told us: "Love means deeds, not sweet words." Often, despite the good will that we have through God's goodness, our zeal for conversion does not reach far enough, because of our weakness. Then is the moment, with the help of Don Álvaro's words, to seek God's forgiveness, especially in the examination of conscience at the end of each day and each time we approach the holy sacrament of Penance: forgive me, help me more. Thus even these lost skirmishes will become battles that we win, and divine grace will invite us to begin again our spiritual combat with new vigor.

Let us consider some words of the Pope in his message for the beatification. "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." And the Holy Father adds: "Blessed Álvaro 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."[9]

This morning, October 1, those of us who are taking part in the Roman ceremonies for the beatification have gone to the audience with the Holy Father in St. Peter's Square. There I expressed to him again my gratitude and that of all of you and assured him that we will strive to increase our prayer for him and his intentions, as he asked us expressly in the last lines of the letter that he sent me: "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."[10]

Let us consider with joy how in these first days of October we have abundant reasons to give thanks and to pray, to pray a lot, trusting in the goodness of our Father God. Tomorrow, anniversary of the foundation of the Work, our gratitude has to rise up to Heaven with a new intensity. In the afternoon, after a time of Eucharistic adoration in the Basilica of St. Eugene, and after venerating a relic of the new blessed, we will return the sacred remains of Don Álvaro to the crypt of the prelatic church.

Let us also entrust to Don Álvaro's intercession peace in the world, more specifically in those places where many people are suffering persecution because of their faith, and let us pray for the work of the upcoming extraordinary assembly of the Synod of Bishops, which begins on October 5. May our recourse to our Lady through the praying of the Holy Rosary take on new vigor, in this month that the Church traditionally dedicates to that Marian devotion. Filled with faith, let us raise up our petitions to Heaven through the intercession of our Mother, asking that the Holy Spirit may enlighten the Synod fathers in setting forth the Church's doctrine about marriage and the family, of capital importance if civil society is to return to walking once again, everywhere, along the paths that God, in his loving providence for mankind, has indicated.

Among other reference points for our prayer, I remind you of some teachings that Saint John Paul II set forth clearly in his apostolic
exhortation *Familiaris Consortio*, a fruit of the Synod of Bishops celebrated in Rome in 1980. After stressing that Christian marriage, a sacrament of the New Law, is an act of worship of God and a means and path of holiness for those God calls to this state, the Pope insisted that just as "husbands and wives receive from the sacrament the gift and responsibility of translating into daily living the sanctification bestowed on them, so the same sacrament confers on them the grace and moral obligation of transforming their whole lives into a spiritual sacrifice."[11] And this is only possible, the Holy Pontiff added, if spouses have assiduous recourse to the sacrament of conversion and reconciliation, and to the sacrament of the Eucharist.[12]

Saint John Paul II went on to stress the importance of family prayer (of the spouses, and of parents with their children), which "is both a consequence of and a requirement for the communion bestowed by the sacraments of Baptism and Matrimony... Family prayer has for its very own object family life itself, which in all its varying circumstances is seen as a call from God and lived as a filial response to his call. Joys and sorrows, hopes and disappointments, births and birthday celebrations... mark God's loving intervention in the family's history. They should be seen as suitable moments for thanksgiving, for petition, for trusting abandonment of the family into the hands of their common Father in heaven."[13]

It seems to me that these points stressed by Saint John Paul II are very timely and can help guide everyone's prayer in the coming weeks. Speak about this with your relatives, friends and acquaintances, so that, closely united to the Holy Father, they will thereby assist the work of the upcoming Synod.

I won't stop to consider the other anniversaries that fall during this month (God's providence in guiding the Work is so marvelous!). But seek them out yourselves in order to remain very close to Saint Josemaría, to Blessed Álvaro, and to all the women and men who are already contemplating the Most Holy Trinity.

With all my affection, I bless you,

Your Father

✠ Javier
Rome, October 1, 2014

[1] 2 Cor 2:3.


[4] Ibid.


[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid.


[13] Ibid., no. 59.

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Homilies

At the Ordination of Deacons of the Prelature, St. Eugene's Basilica, Rome (November 8, 2014)
Most dear sons about to receive the diaconate,

Dear brothers and sisters:

Let us give thanks to God for the gift of these new deacons to his Church. We unite our gratitude to that which we raised up to God a little over a month ago, for the beatification of Bishop Álvaro del Portillo, the first successor of St. Josemaría and the first Prelate of Opus Dei. These thirty-two men will receive the sacrament of Holy Orders today following a long chain initiated by St. Josemaría in 1944, with Don Álvaro and two other faithful of the Work. By receiving the diaconate, and later the priesthood, they are ordained to serve the faithful of the Prelature and every person who draws close to their apostolic activity.

The opening prayer of the Mass invites us to ask God the Father that, in the school of Christ who became the servant of all, the new deacons may learn to serve their brothers and sisters and not to be served. The liturgical text expresses clearly what the Church expects from them, and from all of us, given that these words are directed also to the laity in accord with each one’s vocation and state: to be tireless in the gift of self, persevering in prayer, joyful and welcoming in service.[1]

1. Let us consider these characteristics. Tireless in the gift of self. This can seem difficult, and it certainly is if we rely on ourselves. But our Lord has called us to follow him and grants us the grace needed to overcome this challenge. This is confirmed by the example of the prophet Jeremiah. When he laments that he is too young and lacking the conditions needed to fulfill his mission, the Lord responds: Say not, "I am too young." To whomever I send you, you shall go; whatever I command you, you shall speak... See, I place my words in your mouth.[2]

Let us learn from our Lord: “Jesus’ whole life, his way of dealing with the poor, his actions, his integrity, his simple daily acts of generosity, and finally his complete self-giving, is precious and reveals the mystery of his divine life. Whenever we encounter this anew, we become convinced that it is exactly what others need, even though they may not recognize it... Sometimes we lose our enthusiasm for mission because we forget that the Gospel responds to our deepest needs, since we were created for what the
Gospel offers us: friendship with Jesus and love of our brothers and sisters.\[^3\]

In the effort to bring the word of God to others, in the apostolate, no one will lack God’s help if we rely on his grace. And we can obtain grace abundantly by means of the sacraments and prayer.

2. This is the second recommendation of the opening prayer: to be persevering in prayer. It is not enough to pray from time to time, when we feel the need; we ought to desire that our prayer be ceaseless. With the help of God it is possible. As well as dedicating to God a daily time for personal prayer, let us strive — not only in word — to act in coherence with the demands of the Christian vocation: with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another through love, striving to preserve the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace.\[^4\] Thus, even when it is not possible to speak with God because work obligations or sleep do not permit us, it is possible to pray at every moment, without words but with our heart set on God, as St. Josemaría wrote, borrowing an idea from St. Jerome.

You, dear sons and deacons, are going to be entrusted with a specific duty: to pray the Liturgy of the Hours in the name of the Church. Enunciate the psalms, the readings, etc., *digne, attente ac devote*, with dignity, attention and piety, with your mind set on God and realizing, also in those moments, that you are servants of all souls.

3. To be joyful and welcoming in service. This is the final recommendation of the opening prayer. And it is logical that it be this way. St. Josemaría said that God has wanted the spirit of Opus Dei “in order to make serving God in the world lovable and cheerful.”\[^5\] Recalling our Lord’s commandment and citing words of St. Paul, he said: “*alter alterius onera portate, et sic adimplebitis legem Christi* (Gal 6:2). Bear one another's burdens, and so you will fulfil the law of Christ... With love for God and love for your brothers, give yourselves in a service that passes unnoticed. And if you live like this, you will see how others will begin to live the same way, and you will be like a great bonfire that enkindles everything.”\[^6\]

Today, as always, it is urgent that the message of love intrinsic to Christianity reach all parts in order that the *mandatum novum*, Jesus’ new commandment at the last supper, be fulfilled: *love one another as I love*
you.[7] It is always possible to follow this commandment because the Holy Spirit, who is the personal Love of the Father and the Son, has been poured into our hearts. Christ himself assures us: You are my friends if you do what I command you... I have called you friends, because I have told you everything I have heard from my Father.[8]

With words of Benedict XVI, I desire this for you, my dear sons: “May the certainty that Christ does not abandon us and that no obstacle can prevent the accomplishment of his universal plan of salvation be a cause of constant consolation — also in difficulties — and steadfast hope for you. The Lord's goodness is always with you, and it is powerful. The Sacrament of Orders, which you are about to receive, will make you sharers in the very mission of Christ; you will be called to scatter the seed of his Word, the seed that carries in itself the Kingdom of God; to dispense divine mercy and to nourish the faithful at the table of his Body and Blood.”[9]

I congratulate the families and friends of the new deacons. And I invite everyone to pray for these brothers of ours. Let us pray for all the Church’s ministers, above all for the Holy Father, Francis. Let us pray also for many priestly ordinations throughout the whole world.

Attentive to the suggestions of the Holy Father, I think that today is also a favorable occasion to draw close to the sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist. Then we will all become people who, like our Lady, receive Christ, carry him with us and make him known to all those we encounter.

May Jesus Christ be praised!

[1] Roman Missal, Opening prayer of the Mass for the ordination of deacons.
At the Priestly Ordination of Faithful of the Prelature, Shrine of Torreciudad, Spain (August 31, 2014)

My dear Nacho and Luisra; dear parents and brothers and sisters of the two ordinands; my dear brothers and sisters:

My heart and soul are overflowing with joy in this place so loved and desired by St. Josemaría, who from Heaven is following us closely. You know perfectly well that he urged forward the construction of this church in honor of our Lady with one exclusive aim: that those who come here, through the intercession of a Mother who never abandons us, will approach with still more trust the forgiveness of our sins, in order to feel ourselves, as we truly are, loved, followed, understood by this Lord of ours who is all mercy for those who draw close to Him.

The readings we have listened to are an invitation for each of us to take to heart our personal responsibility. The Lord has anointed us. I recall St. Josemaría’s joy when referring to the anointing we have all received in Baptism, and also to the new anointing that strengthens us to fight the battles of God in Confirmation. Therefore each and every one of us, through the royal priesthood that Christ has infused in our soul, are enabled to be men and women who bring to this world of ours the name of God, the love of God, the understanding of God.

I would also like to recall now our beloved Don Álvaro; within a few weeks we will celebrate his beatification, his being raised to the altars. He was, as you know, a man, a priest, a bishop who because he sought out God’s grace intensely, was able to communicate the simplicity, the attractiveness, the joy of being brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ, sons and daughters of God the Father, temples of the Holy Spirit. I suggest that you
go to his powerful intercession because, if already here on earth he poured himself out generously to look after and listen to and learn from everyone, you can imagine how closely he now follows us, helps us, and urges us forward.

We have to give great thanks to God for the words we have heard in the responsorial psalm: *The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want* (Ps 22[23]:1). Let each of us consider this carefully: we are the object of God’s love of predilection; he wants to be our shepherd and is the *Pastor bonus*, the Good Shepherd who never abandons us. Moreover, if we should ever have the sadness of separating ourselves from him, he waits for us and, as tells us with that graphic image we have read so many times in the Gospel, he goes in search of us like the lost sheep and takes on himself our sorrows, placing us on his shoulders. Therefore let us say with heartfelt conviction: *the Lord is my shepherd*, yours, mine. And he wants us to approach him with trust, making everything that is his our own and everything that is ours God’s.

Now I want to address Nacho and Luisra. We have heard some words of Isaiah that refer to everyone, since the Holy Spirit is upon all of us (see Is 61:1-3). But you two specifically are going to receive the greatest gift that a man can receive on earth: the capacity to celebrate Holy Mass *in persona Christi*. Christ is going to act through you to make present the sacrifice of Calvary, from which pours forth all the Church’s life and riches. You are also going to have the capacity to forgive sins; not you, but Christ himself, making use of your words, your attention, and your pastoral work. It is very important that we now pray for all the priests in the world. Let us never cease to feel that responsibility.

Each and every one of you is responsible for the holiness all priests should strive for; and they, not because they are better or more important, also spur each of us upwards so that we aspire to the goal of the life of every woman and man: holiness. All of us, by God’s love, are called to holiness, to life in Christ, with Christ and through Christ. Nor should we become discouraged when we see our own littleness, our own weakness. For he is waiting for us and tells us once more, as he told the Apostles: *Go therefore and make disciples of all nations* (Mt 28:19). Aren’t you moved when you recall the words we have heard in the Gospel? For you, and you, and you,
each one of you, and I, we are that salt, salt with a divine savor, which has to season our work in this society. And we are at the same time, because God wants it, a light that becomes stronger and stronger, like a beam that brings light to its environment, precisely because he gives us that light at every moment and we can receive that light with the grace of the Holy Spirit. You two should be priests one hundred percent, and let all of us be apostles of Christ to bring him to all the pathways of this world.

I can assure you that St. Josemaría—and also Don Álvaro following in the footsteps of St. Josemaría—gave to his whole life, including his daily life working at his desk, a pastoral dimension. Behind the papers, behind the issues, he saw souls he loved in Christ, with the strength of Christ’s love, souls he wanted to serve. Let us never forget it. By God’s will, priests—but also you women and men—are mediators between Heaven and mankind. Therefore, to you two I say: my sons, you are going to receive some extraordinary powers, and I would like you to be aware of that intimacy with God when you are assisting each person. I want to remind you of some words of St. Josemaría: “God our Lord is infinite; his love is inexhaustible; his clemency and tenderness toward us are limitless. He grants us his grace in many other ways, but he has expressly and freely established, as only he can do, seven effective signs to enable men to share in the merits of the redemption in a stable, simple, and accessible way” (*Christ Is Passing By*, no. 78).

Therefore, I ask you with all my soul not to fail to speak about the sacrament of Confession. Don’t be afraid, don’t have human respects. Souls are awaiting your help. And also don’t be afraid to speak about the Eucharist. For twenty centuries Jesus has been waiting for each of us with the same love he had when he came into this world and with the same love he had when he thought of us before the creation of the world. Through Baptism, he has freed us from original sin, but we are all aware of our personal weakness and of the possibility that we might offend God. Nevertheless, God is not like men, who keep a memory of offenses committed against them. God, if we go to him, forgives us, embraces us and tells us once again: forward, forward; and as in the parable of the prodigal son, he wants us to share in his treasures and riches.

We have also heard Paul’s words: *the love of Christ urges us* (*2 Cor* 5:14)
Yes, it is true, that Christ loves you, loves me, with all his infinite strength. And love, as you know perfectly well, is repaid with love. Therefore, our beloved Don Álvaro not only sought to have an intense life of piety; he went to the sacraments punctually, truly eager to obtain the necessary fruit of the grace that reaches us through these supernatural means, which are like the footsteps of Christ on earth.

Before ending I would like to remind you of what we have heard: “You are salt, you are light” (see Mt 5:13-14). Let us ask our Lord to give us the light and the salt to accompany Francis, our Pope, so that he feels sustained every day by our prayer and our mortification. It isn’t difficult. Love, affection, filiation, bring with them, as a natural consequence, joyful and voluntary sacrifice. In these moments of history, let us insistently beseech Heaven for peace in the world. I ask you, my children, my brothers and sisters, not to listen to the news simply as new information. Let us pray for all the places where people are suffering, where people are undergoing serious persecution for their faith. Therefore, may your prayer and my prayer, and our mortification, reach out to all humanity, through the intercession of Our Lady of Torreciudad.

There is a very significant photograph of St. Josemaría gazing with great gratitude at the image in the altarpiece, the image through whose intercession our Lord deigned to cure him of a grave illness when he was a child. So let us look at our Lady and ask her to help all of us—and now specifically Nacho and Luisra—to have a priestly soul in all our actions, since each of us can be the priest of his or her own existence. May holy Mary make us good and faithful, as were St. Josemaría and the soon to be Blessed Álvaro del Portillo. May you truly take to heart this reality, and ask our Lady’s help: the Church is in my hands, in my life, in my faith, in my loyalty. May God bless you. And I congratulate with all my heart the parents and brothers and sisters of the two new priests. Our Lord has passed through your families with this special blessing.

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

Dear brothers and sisters:

In the first reading, St. Paul speaks of the action of the Paraclete, the third Person of the Blessed Trinity, and reminds us that *to each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good* (1 Cor 12:7). These divinely inspired words bring to our memory a joyous event we took part in just ten days ago. I am referring to the recent beatification of Bishop Álvaro del Portillo, the first Chancellor of the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross. Indeed, anyone who had, as I did, the gift of having known and lived close to him, can testify that God granted him great human and spiritual gifts, and we are witnesses to how Bishop Del Portillo put those gifts at the service of the Church, of Opus Dei, and of all souls. The Pontifical University of the Holy Cross is one of so many fruitful results of his faithful dedication to the mission he had received, which St. Josemaría had already prepared the ground for and which was brought to maturity thanks to the constant effort of Blessed Álvaro del Portillo.

Therefore, in this Holy Mass for the inauguration of a new academic year, we direct ourselves to the Holy Spirit, grateful for the way he intervened in the life of Don Álvaro, a zealous pastor of the Church, and we invoke his help so that we may all safeguard and increase the legacy he passed on to us. This university began its activities thirty years ago, in 1984, as the Roman Academic Center. In the homily at the Mass of inauguration for the second academic year, celebrated on October 15, 1985, Blessed Álvaro del Portillo invited those present to look with faith and hope to the future of the new academic center, which was then taking its first steps: “Like the mustard seed Jesus spoke of in the Gospel, it will turn into a tree rich in fruit, if you all strive to cooperate with grace and to do your work in a competent way, with a Christian spirit and with... *spiritus diaconiae*, with a spirit of service.”[1]

His words stemmed from a deeply supernatural outlook, and three decades later we can see that they have become a joyful reality. But Bishop
Del Portillo’s exhortation continues being relevant today for each and every one of you: for the professors, the students, and the technical and administrative personnel. Each of you needs to let yourself be guided by the Holy Spirit towards holiness, and strive to carry out your personal obligations better and improve your preparation, and exercise all the Christian virtues in your work and aspire to serve others through your profession. We cannot allow ourselves to think that all this is too difficult for us, since our Lord gives us his grace, and we are also helped by the loving example and intercession of the new blessed.

The Gospel of the Mass reminds us that Jesus wishes to make use of us to spread the Church’s evangelizing action. The risen Christ tells his disciples, still downcast and hesitant after the Master’s passion and death: *As the Father has sent me, I also send you* (Jn 20:21). We too, each one of us, have received this apostolic call. In a certain sense, the fact of working in a university makes this responsibility even more acute. As Pope Francis wrote in *Evangelii Gaudium* “the good always tends to communicate itself. Every authentic experience of truth and of beauty seeks its expansion by itself... by communicating it, the good becomes rooted and develops.”[2] In the university halls, by your study and teaching, you experience, both teachers and students, the truth and beauty that come from God. Therefore you cannot shirk the urgent need to assimilate these and communicate them to others, to the whole world.

We are called to proclaim the greatness of the Gospel, especially its light on marriage and the family. During these days the Extraordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops is taking place, dedicated to the pastoral challenges of the family in the context of evangelization. Let us invoke with faith the inspiration of the Holy Spirit so that the work of the Synod will help to orient the role of the Church’s leadership in the modern world, being faithful to Christ’s teachings. At the same time, we want to commit ourselves personally to help bring it about that the truth about marriage and family life, in the light of the plan of God who created the human person as man and woman, may shine forth and be understood ever more fully.

Let us entrust this commitment to the intercession of St. John Paul II, whose canonization a few months ago brought us great joy. As one who
worked so diligently in furthering the apostolate of the family as a priest and a bishop, he will help us to proclaim effectively the beauty of God's creative plan for the union between man and woman.

I would also like to invoke the protection of St. Josemaría Escrivá, who on the 6th of October twelve years ago, in 2002, was counted among the saints. May St. Josemaría, who prepared the beginnings of the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross, intercede for each of us so that each, in our own sphere and thanks to our own work, will be a sower of light, joy and peace.

I would like to finish by making my own the invocation of Pope Francis to our Lady in this special moment of the Church’s evangelizing mission: Mother of ours, “obtain for us now a new ardor born of the resurrection, that we may bring to all the Gospel of life which triumphs over death. Give us a holy courage to seek new paths, that the gift of unfading beauty may reach every man and woman.”[3] Amen.

[3] Ibid.

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Addresses

At the Presentation of the Book Álvaro del Portillo: Un uomo fedele, Rome (September 18, 2014)

Your eminence, my dear journalists, dear friends:

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

The rapid approach of September 27 reopens a question: What is the meaning, the importance of a beatification or canonization? Pope Francis, referring to the saints, answered in this way: “Our Lord chooses some persons to make holiness better seen, to make it clear that he is the one who sanctifies... This is the first rule of holiness: Christ must increase and we must decrease” (Homily, May 9, 2014).

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

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

The Venerable Álvaro del Portillo was, certainly, a man, a priest, and a bishop to whom God granted outstanding human and supernatural qualities. Nevertheless, I can give witness to the fact that his life was spent in an atmosphere of ordinary life, lived with a strong and joyful fidelity. He never tried to shine with a light of his own; rather, at every moment, he strove to reflect the divine light, following loyally the spirit he had learned through the words and example of St. Josemaría, the founder of Opus Dei. Don Álvaro attained sanctity, with the grace of God and his own generous response, by putting into practice, in an extraordinary way, the ordinary life of a Christian.

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

The example of the saints and the blessed stirs up in us the desire to be like them, to belong forever to the great family of God, very close to Jesus and our Lady. As Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger wrote, “To be holy does not mean being superior to others... Holiness is this profound contact with God, becoming a friend of God: it is letting the Other act, the Only One who can really make the world both good and happy.” (October 6, 2002).

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

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

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

Your Eminence, Excellency,
professors, collaborators, students,

ladies and gentlemen:

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

Let us give thanks to the Most Holy Trinity for having given us Don Álvaro, whom we thank for his efforts to begin that Roman Academic Center which, after growing little by little, became the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross. It stemmed from his longstanding filial fidelity to the founder of Opus Dei, who for many years had wanted to implement this project.

Following his guidelines, Blessed Álvaro del Portillo decided that the moment had come for the creation of this ecclesiastical university in Rome, dreaming of its service to the particular churches and to all souls.

Being close to God enlarges the human heart, “making it capable of taking in everybody and everything in its longing to lay the universe at the feet of Jesus.”[1] The more one’s identification with Christ grows through the working of grace, the more he or she will look at the world with the eyes of God, the origin and goal of all creation, trying to see each person and object just as God sees us.

In 1992 Blessed Álvaro, recalling the teachings of St. Josemaría, said: “The light of Revelation, fully accepted through faith, does not eliminate or lessen the legitimate autonomy of each of the sciences. On the contrary, it confers on them something they cannot accomplish by themselves: the capacity to contribute effectively, in the deepest sense, to human fulfillment. The truth is the goal of each person working in the university;
the research carried out there has to be marked by the desire to know the truth of reality ever more deeply and to love the truth as an ideal to which one commits one’s whole life. Therefore those working in the university cannot allow themselves to be influenced by environments averse to accepting the specific and serious demands that, at times, the truth requires in order for us to be consistent with it.”[2]

Indeed, the faith gives a new light to a person’s vision of the world that enables us to know and love it more deeply. Thus not only is the faith not opposed to the universality of reason, as some reductionist conceptions assert, but rather it grounds reason and strengthens it. Faith in God and the fidelity of Blessed Álvaro to the charism received from St. Josemaría are manifested also in the founding of this university.

In 1991, in an academic ceremony similar to the one today, our first Grand Chancellor, Bishop Álvaro del Portillo, spoke about the connection between the words omnes traham ad meipsum from the Gospel of St. John (Jn 12-32)—words that had such great resonance in the interior life of the founder of Opus Dei—and the motto *Regnare Christum volumus!* that Bishop del Portillo chose for his episcopal coat of arms. In the incarnate Word, the entire cosmos is drawn towards the unity that stems from the Trinity, and the desire that he reign thus becomes an expression of our passionate love for the world.

The university, in virtue of that attraction, should direct all its efforts to revitalizing the world like a leaven. Study becomes true praise for the Creator in the measure that it brings to light the unity and truth of reality and is placed at the service of Christ in his desire to lead everyone and everything to the Father.

Thus, for example, the study of the history of the Church, as well as of mankind’s efforts to seek the truth about God, becomes a spur for going deeper into all the gifts we have received, in order to rediscover the importance of one’s own charism and communicate it with renewed vigor.

Moreover, being open to all the fields of human knowledge and the multiform cultural realities of yesterday and today is a prerequisite for “savoring” one’s own charism and appreciating the greatness of the gift received. The verb “to savor” derives from the Latin verb sapere, from
which also comes the word sapientia or “wisdom.” Every Christian, guided by the Holy Spirit, can savor, and help others to savor, our true Christian identity.

As Pope Francis frequently says: “Time is superior to space.” Our incarnate God is present in time, and is always acting through his ordinary providence, through the outpouring of charisms and through his constant assistance for the Church. Thus he transcends the specific spaces in which Christians find themselves and urges them to go out into the world.

This “going forth” of the Church is also manifested in the places where priests, religious, and the laity are being formed, before returning to their respective dioceses. A Church “going forth” needs the help of a university “going forth,” which does not close itself up in an ivory tower, but rather develops its thought in the service of the life of all mankind. The teaching of the various subjects needs to be grounded in the faith, in the unity of Christian life. Thus the university will be able to always work in the service of the universal Church.

As Blessed Álvaro del Portillo said succinctly: “The universality of the university is most directly manifested in its concern to cultivate all the sciences, since it is interested in all truth.”

The spirit that inspires the university and the work of those who teach and study there, should lead to “close and fruitful relations with the world of culture, within the framework of the university ideal of the unity of all knowledge and the harmony between faith and culture.”

This vision, grounded in the faith, needs to be reflected in the daily lives of those who work in the university. Thus it is a matter of priority to dedicate energy to good relations between those on the teaching staff, called to collaborate and to share experiences not only from their research, but also from their pastoral life, so that life may enrich thought. With the greatest respect, of course, for freedom of research—within the guidelines of the Church’s magisterium—and following the explicit will of St. Josemaría, who never wanted Opus Dei to have a “school” of thought of its own.

The same spirit of openness and collaboration should also be present in relations with the nonteaching staff and with the students. What will most
effectively inspire them is love for their work, seen day by day in the recognition of each person's contribution. In such an environment, true servants of others will be formed, since, once more citing Blessed Álvaro, “we can never separate the supernatural from the human in man.”[6] As Lumen Gentium teaches, whose fiftieth anniversary we will celebrate on this coming November 16, “all men are called to this union with Christ, who is the light of the world, from whom we go forth, through whom we live, and toward whom our whole life strains.”[7]

While we accompany the Synod on the Family with our prayer, and we pray more intensely for peace in many parts of the world, let us entrust to our Lady of the Rosary these intentions as well as the new academic year 2014—2015, which I declare inaugurated.


[3] Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation, Evangelii Gaudium, November 24, 2013, no. 222; see also the Encyclical Lumen Fidei, June 29, 2013, no. 57


"Walking to Emmaus along all the Roads of the World," An Address at the Meeting di Rimini, Italy (August 28, 2014)

First of all, allow me to thank the organizers of the Meeting di Rimini for all their marvelous hard work, and for giving me the opportunity to take part in an event so rich in content and reflection. Being present here, my thought and affection go out to Don Giussani, the founder of Communion and Liberation. I remember him with sentiments of friendship and sincere gratitude for the deeply Christian contribution that the movement inspired by him continues providing society and the Church. I recall his exemplary fidelity to the Church and the Pope, the loyalty he showed even in difficult circumstances, when his spiritual message was at times not well understood. And I pray that his cause of beatification may reach a favorable conclusion as soon as possible.

1. The Meeting for this year has as its theme “Towards the peripheries of the world and of life.” It is a theme that has been recurrent in the addresses of Pope Francis, who encourages the Church to “go out” to the streets of the world to proclaim anew Christ’s Gospel, with the strength and daring of the first evangelization. Right from the start, following in the Master’s footsteps, the early Church showed a special predilection for the poorest members of society. Jesus showed compassion for all men and women, especially those most in need of his mercy. During his stay on earth, Christ was concerned about the material needs of the people who followed him, the sick who drew close to him and the sinners he urged to conversion by his grace.

In reading the Acts of the Apostles and the Letters of St. Paul, we see that the early Christians followed the same path. Already in the first years, the apostles chose some in the Church to dedicate themselves to caring for orphans and widows (see Acts 6:1-6). And Paul himself testifies that the early Church was made up mainly of lowly people, thus fulfilling a divine plan: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth; but God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise, God chose what is weak in the world to shame the
strong, God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God (1 Cor 1:26-29).

The Church has always followed the example of the first Christians. Popes, bishops and priests, religious and many lay faithful have been known for their great concern for the indigent. In the atmosphere of justice and charity fostered by Christianity, there have arisen, over the course of the centuries, countless hospitals, shelters for the homeless, centers of welcome for the poor and orphans, schools and institutions to provide access to education at all levels, and, obviously, churches and seminaries open to all. In line with this long tradition, St. Josemaría insisted and told the faithful of Opus Dei that “a person or a society that does not react to suffering and injustice and makes no effort to alleviate them is still distant from the love of Christ’s heart.”[1] The Church, since the beginning, has never left men and women on their own, but has constantly gone out to meet their needs.

A key characteristic of this Christian concern, following in the footsteps of the Master, is not limiting oneself solely to alleviating the situations of material and social poverty of so many people, but of striving to open up for everyone the supernatural horizons to which God calls us. Obviously, this spiritual dimension does not stand in contrast to the material one, but rather rectifies and broadens its meaning. Often urgent daily needs will put the material needs of people in first place, since Christian life is always built on a human foundation. But it is also always guided by a view that surpasses it: “Going out to others in order to reach the fringes of humanity,” Pope Francis wrote, “does not mean rushing out aimlessly into the world.”[2]

The goal of the Church has to always be that of offering a living witness to the Gospel, with all of its natural and supernatural consequences for each person. We need to “go forth from our own comfort zone in order to reach all the ‘peripheries’ in need of the light of the Gospel.”[3] The universal Church is present and active in all the particular Churches, endowed with all the instruments of salvation given by Christ. Therefore “its joy in communicating Jesus Christ is expressed both by a concern to
preach him to areas in greater need and in constantly going forth to the outskirts of its own territory or towards new socio-cultural settings.”[4]

We should not forget that often the “existential peripheries” the Pope speaks of are not far away, but rather close to each one of us: in our cities, in our work environment, among our friends, in our families… We can find people everywhere who need our help, our understanding, our Christian witness. In our dealings with each person alongside us, our Lord asks us to be bearers of his consolation, his peace and his joy. And the same evangelizing spirit that we want to live and make present in our society, in our daily environment, we will then be able to bring to the distant “peripheries,” as the Church has always taught. I recall so many conversations with bishops, priests, religious, and also laity who, moved by zeal for souls, have gone to countries all over the world to bring Christ’s Gospel there; they told me about their experiences not to highlight their own efforts, but to show their great affection for all the initiatives they were carrying out in favor of the needy. These men of God saw humanity as a family in which we are all brothers and sisters; and they recounted their marvelous adventures, real epics that are often hidden to human eyes, but that shine in God’s presence, as heroic examples of a heavenly charity that each day comes down to earth.

I could go on with these stories, each time feeling a holy pride, because what stands out in them is the holiness of the Church. Where people grow, the Church also grows, advancing on its path. Here we have the treasure of so many saints and martyrs who are the riches of Catholicism, and, indeed, of humanity itself.

When I was invited to take part in this meeting, it was suggested that I might speak about my personal experience of faith. I want to do so, but not by speaking about myself; rather I want to relate several events that I had the immense good fortune of witnessing in the lives of two giants of the faith: St. Josemaría Escrivá, the founder of Opus Dei, and his first successor, the Servant of God Álvaro del Portillo, who will be beatified within a month. I lived at the side of both of them for many years and my personal testimony of faith is linked to their memory and example. Thanks be to God, every day, in every corner of the world, the majority of the faithful of Opus Dei dedicate themselves to serving people of every
condition and background. They do so not as a favor, but as the response of someone who wants to be faithful to Christ, who out of love for God experiences the desire and responsibility of serving one’s brothers and sisters.

This path of service to souls, in the Prelature of Opus Dei, was opened up by St. Josemaría personally; and he encouraged many men and women to follow that call. As I joyfully recall, among the Gospel texts that he loved the most was that of Christ’s encounter with the disciples from Emmaus. He liked to dwell on that marvelous scene in his preaching. He stressed how Jesus, eager to recover some of his disciples, decided to set out and look for them. They were disappointed and saddened by the recent events, and were returning dejectedly to their previous life, from which our Lord had drawn them by presenting them with a marvelous supernatural adventure. As St. Josemaría wrote:

“Jesus joins them as they go along their way. Lord, how great you are, in everything! But you move me even more when you come down to our level, to follow us and to seek us in the hustle and bustle of each day. Lord, grant us a childlike spirit, pure eyes and a clear head so that we may recognize you when you come without any outward sign of your glory.”[5]

2. In 1928, the year Opus Dei was founded, the peripheral areas of Madrid, then in a phase of rapid expansion, were populated by large numbers of people who lived in miserable shacks, by sick persons who were cared for in public hospitals, and by many poor people who hid their poverty behind an appearance of outward dignity. St. Josemaría himself recalled this scenario a few days before leaving this world, when he gave thanks to God for always having been close to them, right from the start of this divine adventure.

“What do people do when they want to obtain something? They make use of human means. What resources did I have?... I went to seek strength in the poorest districts of Madrid. Hours and hours going everywhere, day after day, on foot from one place to another among the shamefully and wretchedly poor, so poor that they had not a thing to their name; among dirty runny-nosed children, but children for all that, which means souls pleasing to God... I spent many hours in that work. I’m only sorry they
weren’t more. And in the hospitals and in houses where these sick people were, if those shacks can be called houses. They were sick and forsaken people and some of them had tuberculosis, which was then incurable. So I went to all those places to find the means to do the Work of God. Meanwhile I worked and formed the first ones that I had by me. There were people of almost every kind among them. There were university students, working men, small tradesmen, artists. . . .

“They were very intense years, in which Opus Dei was growing on the inside almost without our realizing it. But I have wanted to tell you... that the human strength of the Work has been the sick people in the hospitals of Madrid: the most forsaken ones; those who lived in their houses having lost the last vestige of human hope; the most ignorant in the remotest corners of the city.”[6]

This is how Opus Dei was born and how it developed, with the help of our Lord and his most holy Mother. And thus it continues to grow today as well, thanks to the efforts of so many faithful of the Prelature who, following St. Josemaría’s example, seek out the “peripheries,” close or far away, with the sole desire of serving people, so that they may grow in their human and Christian dignity, as children of God. They share this commitment with their friends and their colleagues at work, and they discover how in the service of their neighbor in need, they are the first ones to obtain an enormous spiritual benefit. They learn to see in the sick, in the poor, in the marginalized, a special presence of Christ. Therefore the founder of Opus Dei had an unshakable trust in their prayer and in their offering up to God their illness and suffering.

In this regard, some events from the first years of Opus Dei come to mind. The first is one that St. Josemaría frequently recalled. The protagonist was a mentally retarded woman, to whom he gave spiritual direction, sure that no infirmity could impede familiarity with God. During that period, in Madrid a rabidly anti-Catholic newspaper was being published, which was causing grave damage to souls. St. Josemaría, trusting in the power of God, who acts through disproportionate instruments, asked that woman to pray insistently for an intention of his, which was precisely the shutting down of that newspaper. A number of years later, in a letter written in 1950, he recounted: “Before long Scripture was fulfilled:
quae stulta sunt mundi elegit Deus ut confundat sapientes (1 Cor 1:27). God has chosen the foolish in the eyes of the world to put to shame the wise. That newspaper went under through the prayer of a poor simple woman who kept on praying for the same intention. Then a second and a third newspaper that succeeded the first one, and that also did great harm to souls, likewise collapsed.”[7]

The second episode that I would like to share with you was very personal, and therefore St. Josemaría didn’t speak about it in public, so as not to place himself as an example. It was an event that he only referred to on a few occasions before a very restricted number of people, when opening up his heart.

It took place in the first years of the thirties of the last century. St. Josemaría went each day to celebrate Mass in the Church of St. Elizabeth, where he was the rector. Every morning he met a beggar woman on the way, always in the same place. One day he approached her and said: “My daughter, I can’t give you either gold or silver. I, a poor priest of God, give you what I have: the blessing of God the Father Almighty. And I ask that you pray a lot for an intention of mine that will be for the glory of God and for the good of souls. Be as insistent with our Lord as you can!”

St. Josemaría recounted that, a short while later, he noticed that the woman was not at her usual spot. And later, during a visit to the sick in a hospital, he found her there, gravely ill. “My daughter, what are you doing here, what happened to you?” he asked her. The woman smiled and St. Josemaría assured her that he would offer Mass for her, asking our Lord to give her back her health. She replied: “Father, what are you saying? You told me to pray for something that would give great glory of God and that I should give all I could to our Lord. I have offered him what I have, my life.” “I assure you,” the founder remarked, “that after that poor beggar woman went to heaven, the Work began moving quickly.”[8]

There is another event from St. Josemaría’s life that I want to tell you about, regarding the “existential peripheries” where God calls us to serve and accompany our brothers and sisters. This episode especially reflects the refined charity of the saints, who sense that need to respond to the loneliness of people nearby.
St. Josemaría was preaching a retreat for priests. During those prayer-filled days he tried to speak personally with each of the participants, to listen to them and help them in their personal struggle. He noticed that there was one priest who had not dared to speak with him, and after a few days he approached him and encouraged him to do so. He discovered that he was suffering greatly owing to a bitter calumny based on an unjust accusation. He asked him why he wasn’t united with his brother priests, and he replied: “I am united only with myself.” St. Josemaría suffered a lot on seeing the loneliness of that brother of his who was also a priest, and he said years later. “That coldness hurt me. I was young. I took his hands and kissed them. He started to cry. But I think by the end he no longer felt alone.”[9] His final commentary on this experience is an appeal to our responsibility as Christians, to our duty to serve our neighbor out of love of God: “I treated that priest as I thought Jesus would have done.”

3. I have many others memories of St. Josemaría’s charity and holiness in his relations with people both close and far away. But I think the episodes touched on here are sufficient to show how he “went out to the peripheries of life,” taking Jesus’ place on the road to Emmaus.

St. Josemaría’s commitment to the service of his neighbor was shown in his constant apostolic eagerness to begin many projects for the social and human advancement of people in poor countries and in the disadvantaged areas of the great cities. And the men and women of the Prelature continue committing themselves to helping people along this path of human and professional advancement, with the assistance of so many friends and cooperators, some of whom are even non-Christians, eager to contribute to the welfare of those around them.

The same spirit of service, urging people to go out to meet others in the “peripheries of life,” also deeply marked the life of Bishop Álvaro del Portillo, the first successor of St. Josemaría. He himself recalled how the visits to the sick and poor on the outskirts of Madrid, which he made in his youth with some friends and classmates at the university, prepared him for his decisive encounter with Opus Dei and for the divine call to follow our Lord.
“Some companions from the School of Engineering brought me to visit the poor for several months. The contact with poverty and abandonment produces an enormous spiritual shock. It makes us see how often we are concerned about foolish things that are nothing more than our selfishness, our pettiness. We see people who are suffering from grave hardships—poverty, abandonment, loneliness, sickness—and who are happy because they have God’s grace. This produces a shock, which is what prepared me for my meeting our Father.”[10]

During the almost twenty years that he was at the head of Opus Dei, Bishop Álvaro del Portillo started many initiatives to provide educational and professional training to people. They are the fruit of the priestly soul that all Christians (“both priests and laity,” Don Álvaro insisted) should put into effect, acting on the character received in Baptism.

Without trying to make an exhaustive list, I would like to recall here some of the projects that the faithful of the Prelature are carrying out with the assistance of many other people.

In the health field I would like to mention two initiatives. The first, which began in 1988, is the Campus Bio-Medical University in Rome, with its hospital and schools of medicine, nursing and biomedical engineering. The construction of the present site was completed in 2008. The hospital has a capacity for 400 patients and has 18 operating rooms. Today, next to that building, there is a research center and another for the care of the elderly. As a warm gesture, the city of Rome named the street leading to the University after Bishop del Portillo. Today it offers degrees in eight disciplines and has over a thousand students, while the hospital cares for thousands of people each year.

The second initiative is in Africa: the Centre Hospitalier Monkole, which arose on the outskirts of Kinshasa after a trip Bishop Álvaro del Portillo made to Congo in 1989. During his stay there, Don Álvaro spoke with Cardinal Laurent Monsengwo, then President of the Congo Bishop’s Conference, who highlighted the need to have a well-equipped hospital that could serve the people there and also the many priests, religious men and women, missionaries, etc. who were working in the country. Bishop del Portillo suggested to some faithful of the Work that they begin a
project to provide health care. Today the Monkole hospital center offers specialized medical attention in gynecology, surgery, internal medicine and pediatrics, and provides health education especially in widespread local diseases. Three ambulatory satellites of the hospital bring health care to people in poor outlying districts. The hospital is linked to a nursing school that each year trains 50 new nurses, and a center for continuing education for doctors. More than 50,000 medical consultations take place there each year.

Among the educational projects begun by Bishop del Portillo in developing countries, I would like to mention here the Centro Educativo y Asistencial Pedreira, which arose in a district of São Paulo, in Brazil. The social conditions in this area are among the worst in the city, and many young people run a real risk of falling into crime and violence and the drug culture. Now each year the Pedreira center opens its doors to hundreds of students. It also offers courses of basic professional formation for 10 to 14 year old boys, and professional courses in computer networks and telecommunications for 15 to 17 year olds.

In the business sphere, the Institute for Social Responsibility in Business Management was founded in Guatemala City in 1991, at the suggestion of Bishop Álvaro del Portillo. It seeks to foster the study and putting into practice of St. John Paul II’s encyclical Centesimus Annus. “Let us do everything possible,” he wrote in a pastoral letter, “to try to ensure that the Church’s social doctrine is known and put into practice.”

In Uruguay, the Uruguayan Association of Family Farm Schools seeks to provide greater human dignity for farm workers, by helping to improve their living conditions and those of their families. The first center was inaugurated in 1980. Bishop del Portillo gave an important push to the work of this association, especially during a discussion in Rome, in 1987, with one of its directors. As of now the institution has provided 485 people from a rural background with the training required to develop their own professional projects.

In the eighties a group of women from various professions, as a result of the formation received in the Prelature, began to carry out activities of professional education in Brixton, a multi-ethnic district in the south of
London. Besides giving encouragement to the people involved in the initiative, Bishop del Portillo took advantage of a trip to London in 1987 to bless the building. In 1992, the local civil authorities offered to help in expanding the facilities. Today over 500 young women from 48 countries take part in the courses; in addition, through the Homework Club, 900 children from the area receive tutoring assistance in their studies. At the same time, many mothers receive professional training and are encouraged to help their children in their studies.

Projects like these are found in the sixty-seven countries where the Prelature of Opus Dei is carrying out its stable apostolic work: in the Philippines and Bolivia, in the United States and Cameroon, in Lithuania and Sweden, in Australia and New Zealand. Some of these projects are quite large, others of a more modest nature. But, as Don Álvaro often said, “everything is great if it is done with love.” And he insisted: “God wants to make use of small things to place the lever of his mercy there and raise up the world.”

Bishop Álvaro del Portillo’s decisive faith in urging forward all these initiatives came from St. Josemaría’s example and teaching, who always said that God had brought forth the Work to serve the Church and therefore all humanity. In 1957, at the will of Pope Pius XII, the founder received the request that Opus Dei take over the pastoral care of one of the territorial prelatures in Peru. When the Holy See suggested that he choose one, St. Josemaría replied to Bishop Samorè, secretary of the Congregation for Extraordinary Ecclesiastical Affairs (now the second Section of the Secretariat of State): “Tell the Holy Father to first offer these prelatures to other institutions in the Church; the one the others don’t want, you can entrust to us.” Later on, he gave some advice to the priests who were to make up the prelature’s presbyterate, basing it on his own pastoral practice. Among other things, he told them that they should always remember that there is only one race in the world, the race of the children of God. Whereas before there had not been a single native priest, today that territorial prelature has a minor seminary where 52% of the priests incardinated there have received their training, priests faithful to the Church, to the Pope, and to their bishop.

4. I don’t want to go on any longer. But before finishing I would like to
highlight two projects now under way. The first is a project that arose in 2002, after the canonization of St. Josemaría, called *Africa Harambee*. This initiative has begun programs of human and social development in a dozen sub-Saharan African countries. Finally, in recent months, not far from Jerusalem, construction has begun on *Saxum*, an initiative in memory of Don Álvaro. This Latin word, *saxum*, or rock, was the nickname St. Josemaría gave to that son of his in the early days, when he realized that our Lord had placed him at his side as a strong support, as firm as a rock, in the task of building the Work that God had entrusted to him.

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

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

I will stop here. I am grateful for your patience and attention. And I ask that you pray for me and for these apostolates of the faithful of the Prelature of Opus Dei. But I especially ask that you always pray for the Holy Father and his intentions. Thank you.


Articles and Interviews

"Holiness: A Vocation for Everybody,"
Palabra, Spain (August-September 2014)

What is the meaning, the importance of a beatification or canonization? The realization that Bishop Álvaro del Portillo, first Prelate of Opus Dei and successor to Saint Josemaría at the head of this institution of the Church, will soon be raised to the altars spurs us to ask this question. Pope Francis, in referring to the saints, gives us this answer: God chooses certain people so that we might see more clearly the reality of sanctity, so that we might see that it is He who sanctifies... This is the first rule of sanctity: Christ must increase and we must decrease (Homily, May 9, 2014).

When the Church declares the sanctity of one of her daughters or sons, she highlights in a special way the mission to which she is called: namely, to lead to Heaven those she has engendered to a new life, through the action of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, every beatification or canonization is
an occasion to rejoice for the People of God still journeying here on earth. As the moment approaches when Don Álvaro will be numbered among the blessed, it is only natural that our joy be shown in thanksgiving to God, from whom all sanctity proceeds.

For the canonization of Saint Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer, Cardinal Ratzinger said that people can sometimes have a mistaken concept of sanctity, as though the persons beatified or canonized were “supermen” or “superwomen.” Cardinal Ratzinger wrote: “Heroic virtue does not mean that the saint performs a type of ‘gymnastics’ of holiness, something that normal people do not dare to do... Holiness then becomes a thing reserved for some ‘greats’ whose images we see on the altars, and who are completely different from us ordinary sinners. But this is a mistaken notion of holiness, a wrong perception which has been corrected—and this seems to me the central point—precisely by Josemaría Escrivá” (Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, in L’Osservatore Romano, October 6, 2002).

These words express very well the meaning of the beatification of Bishop del Portillo. Don Álvaro was, certainly, a person to whom God had granted great human and supernatural gifts. Nevertheless, his daily path was one of ordinary life lived with a strong and joyful faithfulness. He never strove to shine out with his own light, but rather to always reflect the divine light by following loyally the spirit of Opus Dei, which he learned directly from the words and example of Saint Josemaría. Don Álvaro attained sanctity, with God’s grace and his own generous correspondence, by putting into practice in an extraordinary way an ordinary Christian life.

His beatification reminds us (and here resides the meaning of this act of the Church) that holiness is truly accessible to all the baptized, if they correspond with complete generosity to their Christian vocation. This calling spurs us to seek identification with Christ, each in our own circumstances and state in life. And it requires the effort to carry the Cross each day: there is no identification with Christ if we don’t love the Holy Cross. For the great majority of people, this is an ordinary cross, which they are asked to take up and bear with joy in their daily life: in the heart of the family, in the social and sporting environment, in health and in sickness, in work and in rest. Therefore, it does not involve carrying out
extraordinary actions, or possessing exceptional charisms; rather it means following the Master’s example by bearing the small hardships of each day.

Don Álvaro put into practice with daily constancy Saint Josemaría’s advice to seek God in daily life. As the founder of Opus Dei once said: There is no other way. Either we learn to find our Lord in ordinary, everyday life, or else we shall never find Him... Your ordinary contact with God takes place where your fellow men, your yearnings, your work and your affections are. There you have your daily encounter with Christ. It is in the midst of the most material things of the earth that we must sanctify ourselves, serving God and all mankind (Conversations, 114 and 113).

The example of the saints stirs up in our heart the desire to be like them: the eagerness to rejoice eternally in the Blessed Trinity, to belong forever to the great family of God, very close to Jesus and our Lady. “To be holy does not mean being superior to others; the saint can be very weak, with many mistakes in his life. Holiness is this profound contact with God, becoming a friend of God: it is letting the Other work, the Only One who can really make the world both good and happy” (Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, in L’Osservatore Romano, October 6, 2002).

Álvaro del Portillo’s beatification invites us to see each day as a call to take up once again with new vigor our Christian life, and to thus experience more intensely the joy of the Gospel. The ceremony on the upcoming 27th of September reminds us once again of the universal calling to holiness, preached untiringly by Saint Josemaría Escrivá and reaffirmed forcefully by Vatican II.

✠ Javier Echevarría.
“I dream of a great number of God’s children, sanctifying themselves in their life as ordinary citizens, sharing in the endeavors, hopes and efforts of those around them.” If these words of St. Josemaría Escrivá are applied to Opus Dei today, is this now a reality or is it still something in process?

St. Josemaría always stressed, since 1928, that holiness is not a goal just for a few privileged persons, but for all the baptized. The apostolic work of the Prelature of Opus Dei is precisely to remind people of this universal call to holiness and the consequent value of everyday life as a path of sanctification. Thanks be to God, many people, through the apostolic efforts of the women, men, and priests of the Work, have decided to place Christ at the center of their lives. In this sense, one could say that St. Josemaría’s dream has become a reality. Nevertheless, it is a reality always in process—as is the life of the Church—that comes about with God’s grace and with each person’s response. Christians cannot be conformists. Each day, with new joy, they need to show their love for God and for their fellow men and women.

You knew St. Josemaría. What would he say to those who today, in the twenty-first century, are yearning for true happiness? Would he point to Opus Dei as a path to attain it?

St. Josemaría used to say that “the happiness of heaven is for those who know how to be happy on earth.” Authentic happiness arises as a consequence of living close to God; it is the fruit of the Holy Spirit’s presence in the soul. The men and women who realize, thanks to their faith, that they are God’s beloved children, cannot help being filled with peace and joy, even in the midst of setbacks and suffering, with a happiness that is not simply a nice feeling. It is the fruit of faith and charity. Sin is the great obstacle to happiness.

Opus Dei is one among many possible Christian paths to which our Lord may call a person. Each of us has a very personal vocation that we need to discover in prayer, in a loving dialogue with God. Saying “yes” to the divine call, whatever it might be, and responding each day to its demands, is a sure guarantee of happiness.

In the perspective of the Church’s history, the existence of Opus Dei is quite recent. How much does this fact affect people’s understanding of the Work, its
nature, methods and goals? What does Opus Dei do to provide answers in an evangelical key to the doubts of some people or the open opposition of others?

When St. Josemaría saw that God was calling him to spread the universal vocation to holiness, this reality—deeply rooted in the Gospel—seemed something quite new to the majority of Christians. It was not that common back then to speak about a universal call to holiness and, as has happened many times in the history of the Church, he had to confront misunderstandings, especially in the 30s and 40s of the past century. Today (above all thanks to the Second Vatican Council) this teaching is quite common and familiar to everyone. Following the example of their founder, the faithful of Opus Dei have their arms wide open to everyone; and thanks be to God, for many years now it has been greatly loved and helped by millions of people, including non-Catholics and non-Christians. When misunderstandings arise, an attempt is made to clarify things with patience and serenity. Experience has shown that—even back then—attacks or misinformation are an opportunity for friendship and for bringing people closer to the Church.

Sanctification in everyday life clearly speaks to the laity. What place are they called to occupy in the Church? How does Opus Dei understand their role?

As Vatican II teaches, the laity are called to bring light and order to temporal affairs, so that they be in accord with Christ’s spirit and further the glory of God and the good of souls. Opus Dei helps its faithful and those who take part in its apostolates to find and draw close to God in their daily occupations: in their work, in their family, in social life, in moments of entertainment, in sickness or in poverty. When they strive to identify themselves with Christ in these spheres, the laity sanctify the world from within; they spread the Gospel message and contribute to the human progress of society. They thus take up their role as protagonists in the Church’s mission from their workshop, their office, the operating room in a hospital, their school, and the other settings in which each one’s day unfolds.

Today the emphasis is on the breakdown of the social fabric, but doesn’t this focus take our gaze away from the family and the challenges it faces? Is the family in crisis?
The family is a great treasure, indispensable for society. Therefore we should strive to make known the true nature of the institution of the family, although at times this is not an easy task. For me, it is a reason for special thanksgiving to God to find myself these days in Costa Rica, with couples who are imparting family orientation to fathers and mothers of children and adolescents. I think that, by their generous dedication, they are providing the country and the world with a service of great value and importance, also in human terms. But we cannot be satisfied with defending with our words the values of the family. Our own example is absolutely essential! May we be concerned about the members of our family, may we pray for them, may we rejoice with them in their joys and accompany them in their sorrows. We have to create around us a true family atmosphere and strive to maintain it, sacrificing ourselves for our relatives and generously dedicating time and energy to the sick and the elderly. Let us frequently repeat those three phrases that Pope Francis stressed should always be found in a family: “please,” “thank you,” and “I’m sorry.”

In Evangelii gaudium, Pope Francis says that he prefers a Church that is bruised and hurting because it has been out on the streets, rather than a Church that is unhealthy from being confined. How can Opus Dei help to further the Holy Father’s wish?

The apostolic dynamism of Pope Francis is a blessing for the whole Church. The evangelization to which he is spurring us is a mission that belongs to all the baptized. The Holy Father invites us to go out to meet others, to leave aside our own comfort and share our closeness to Christ with the people around us. How? First with our example and affection, and then with a face-to-face dialogue with our friends and acquaintances, preceded by prayer for the person we are speaking to and invoking the Holy Spirit. At times it may seem to us that our actions are not producing any fruit. But nothing could be further from the truth. Our Lord counts on everything we do for him, and no seed will remain sterile.

Pope Francis also encourages us to show mercy towards those who are suffering or who are alone. We are all in a position to help a sick person, a needy person, or the elderly. And we can also bring them the light of Christ. Let us not remain with our arms crossed! Personally I give thanks
also on seeing so many faithful and friends of the Prelature who are carrying forward initiatives of social service all over the world: hospitals in needy parts of Africa, centers to care for the terminally ill in the peripheries of various European cities, assistance provided to immigrants in the United States and Brazil, and so many others. Every baptized person is and should realize that he or she is the Church. And therefore also through the civic activities of service such as those that I have mentioned or others, the Church makes herself present in the peripheries, in underprivileged areas, in those places where at times the affection that everyone is entitled to is lacking.

In this era of shallow thinking nowadays, we seem to lack any reference points. One confronts a great vacuum of truth, where doubt is making inroads, with a ferociously anti-Christian and especially anti-Catholic secularism. Do we still have reasons for hope in the midst of this reality? How can we present the faith today to a world so divided by contrasts?

A consistent Catholic can never give in to pessimism. Although today we may witness sad and even tragic events, if we are men and women of faith we will discover countless gifts from God in our lives, in the lives of those around us and also in the lives of nations. And above all, that faith is precisely the foundation of our hope, as we read in the Letter to the Hebrews. Amid the secularism and relativism that we see in large sectors of the western world, many people are thirsting for the truth about God. These people need witnesses who help those around them to come closer to Christ; colleagues or friends who are guided above all by love for God and others, and not only by their own interests, who bring light with their faith and who know how to explain it.

Therefore, as I already said, we need to anchor our own life on prayer, on conversation with God, and on the frequent reception of the sacraments, true channels of divine grace. Also we always need to make a greater effort to get to know our faith better, through reading, study, and catechism classes. I would also stress that the faith is passed on effectively when we are acting out of affection and concern for our neighbor. The soon to be blessed Álvaro del Portillo used to tell us: “Pour out affection on the others, my daughters and sons, even though it is not returned.” This advice is very useful for anyone who wants to evangelize.
You will have the opportunity to meet with Archbishop José Rafael Quirós. In this regard, how can Opus Dei strengthen communion with the diocesan churches in our country and help further the common effort of evangelization?

Yes, I will have the pleasure of conversing with the archbishop of San José, Most Rev. José Rafael Quirós. As soon as we made plans for this trip, I asked that the archbishop and other ecclesiastical authorities be informed of my stay in Costa Rica, since Opus Dei, as a small part of the Church, only wishes, in words of its founder, “to serve the Church as the Church wants to be served.”

Obviously, the apostolic work that the faithful of Opus Dei carry out bears fruit in the very diocese where they live and work. In the more than fifty years that have gone by since the beginning of Opus Dei’s work in this country, there have been, with God’s grace, many Christian marriages and vocations for the priesthood, for the religious life, and for lay celibacy.

I would like those who belong to the Work, and all Costa Ricans, to be a support for the diocesan bishops, to pray for each of them, and to ask God for abundant apostolic fruit in this land. I would ask them especially to pray for priestly vocations in the country’s dioceses, for the catechists and educators, for the sanctity of Costa Rican families and for the other intentions of the bishops of the country. I would also encourage them to redouble each day their apostolic zeal, so that the Church in Costa Rica may harvest a lot of fruit from Opus Dei’s work of evangelization.

Opus Dei is preparing for the beatification of Bishop Álvaro del Portillo. How will the raising to the altars of its “engineer,” as some people call Don Álvaro, affect the Work?

Álvaro del Portillo was a man of peace, of service, of fidelity: first in his work as an engineer, later as a priest, and still later as a bishop. As the date for his beatification, September 27, approaches, I ask our beloved Don Álvaro to pass on to us his peace, his goodness, his joy, his loyalty to the Church, and his concern for the most needy.

People saw in him a man of God, and since his death the number of those who entrust their petitions to him has grown greatly. Up to the present, the office of postulation has received more than 13,000 signed
accounts of favors attributed to his intercession. It is a surprising number, above all if you consider the fact that, among those who receive favors, only a few people decide to write them down and send them to Rome. Many of these reports come from countries that don’t even have centers of the Prelature. The upcoming beatification of Álvaro del Portillo, besides being a cause for great joy, will be an opportunity to give glory to God and also will be a gift for the whole Church.

Since Opus Dei is in the vanguard in this field, what is happening in the communications world regarding the faith and evangelization? Do we in the Church fully understand the value of social communication, or do we fail to appreciate its great possibilities?

St. Josemaría had a special affection for professional environments related to communication. He realized the importance of having many Catholics working professionally in the means of communication, to bring to the world the warmth and friendship of those who want to follow Christ. He himself gave classes of ethics for journalists; he encouraged the founding of schools of journalism in several countries, and urged forward—with his human initiative and his prayer—the start of several media initiatives by people of Opus Dei and their friends. He dreamed of many Catholics choosing as their professional field the world of movies, literature, entertainment, radio and television. If your kind words of appreciation, for which I thank you, are a reflection of reality, it is undoubtedly due to the seed planted by the founder.

Thanks be to God, I think that today people generally view social communication positively—which does not exclude a critical reflection on the limits of a certain type of sensationalistic journalism. It gives me joy to see the large number of activities of evangelization that, through the means of communication, are arising all over, thanks to the efforts of Catholics: news agencies, web pages with Christian orientation, charitable and service initiatives on the internet, producers of movies and television programs with Christian values. Sometimes these are not widely known, but if you add up their audiences they surpass quite a few international media outlets.

Interest in social communication is clearly growing in most dioceses and Church institutions. Many, for example, are sending students to the
school of Church Communications at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross, in Rome. This program has as its aim training people to transmit effectively the Christian message and the marvelous reality of the Church, through the means of communication.

Interview with Inside the Vatican (October 8, 2014)

Wlodimierz Redzioch

On September 27, in Madrid, Mons. Álvaro del Portillo, successor to Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer as head of Opus Dei, was beatified. Who was Blessed Álvaro?

Álvaro del Portillo was first an engineer, and then a priest, and later a bishop, who loved the Lord, the Church, and all souls, very much. Perhaps the key feature of his personality was his desire to carry out faithfully the will of God in every moment. He was extremely likeable, and always wore a smile. He was goodhearted, and had a delicate charity, inherited in part from his mother, Doña Clementina, who was from Mexico, and acquired also from her his constant practice of the virtue of charity.

The Holy See’s declaration on his heroic virtues describes him as “a man of profound goodness and affability, able to transmit peace and serenity to souls.” The Lord used his personality to bring many people closer to the Church.

He had a special love for the Sacrament of Penance. He always spoke about it, during his catechesis. When a journalist asked him what the happiest moment of his life had been, he immediately replied, “Every time I received God’s pardon in Confession.” He was also a thankful man. “Thank you” and “Thank God” were some of the words that most often came out of his mouth. He repeated them many, many times a day.

His character never lacked a spirit of constant service to others. In the years of his youth, he would often go to the poorer outskirts of Madrid, to
The Church beatifies and canonizes holy people to give believers examples to imitate. What were Bishop Álvaro’s most distinguishing saintly characteristics that can be imitated today?

I will mention three aspects that always caught my attention: his faithfulness, his humility, and his smile.

He was a model of faithfulness to the Church and the Popes he knew (from Pius XII to John Paul II), as well as being faithful to his vocation and to the founder of Opus Dei. In his pastoral work he would speak, too, about faithfulness in married life, within the family, in friendships, etc. He brought people to the understanding that faithfulness is a creative virtue, one that requires daily renewal through small and continuous acts of love. I think this is an important example for today’s world, which is so critically at odds with the values of strong family and social relations.

I would also like to spend a moment discussing his humility: whoever worked with Mons. del Portillo during the Second Vatican Council found that he never sought to assert either himself over others, or his opinions over those of others. He had great human and intellectual qualities, but he always wanted to live out his duties in a discreet way: both the duties he had in Opus Dei, in which his only goal was to help St. Josemaría carry out his mission; and his duties at the Holy See, which he carried out while focusing exclusively on giving glory to God and souls.

In 1975 he was called to be the successor to the founder. His program for leading Opus Dei had one sole objective: maintaining continuity. With sincere humility, he affirmed that he desired nothing more than to be the shadow of St. Josemaría’s presence on earth. In this way, he was following
the advice of the future Blessed Paul VI, who, in 1976, told him that he should always think about how the founder would have acted, whenever it came time for decision-making.

Finally, I believe that behind his constant smile, visible to all, there lay hidden an outstanding characteristic in his Christian path: he always thought of others and forgot about himself. This attitude made him a blissful man, and a sower of peace and happiness.

*What miracle was attributed to Mons. Álvaro’s intercession?*

The miracle approved by Pope Francis is the full recovery of a Chilean baby, José Ignacio Ureta Wilson, in August 2003. After suffering cardiac arrest for 30 minutes, along with a massive hemorrhage, not only did he continue living, he also recovered completely, with no neurological after-effects whatsoever. His parents prayed with great faith for the intercession of Bishop del Portillo and, when the doctors thought that José Ignacio had died, his heart began beating again, without any further intervention. Today, 11 years later, he is living a perfectly normal life.

*Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer, founder of Opus Dei, has already been beatified and canonized. Now his successor, head of “The Work” from 1975 to 1994, is being beatified. Does the charism of Opus Dei help in personal sanctification?*

The message of Opus Dei is, precisely, the universal call to holiness. In this sense, Bishop Álvaro’s beatification reminds us that each of us can become a saint in the normal, everyday circumstances of our work, our family relationships and friendships. I ask God that the Prelature of Opus Dei might keep reminding many, many people of this, so that it can help millions of people find God through their work and common, everyday life.

*John Paul II had a very important role to play in Opus Dei’s history. He established “The Work” as a “Personal Prelature.” Later, he beatified Josemaría Escrivá (on May 17, 1992), then canonized him (on October 6, 2002). But not everyone knows that first as Karol Wojtyla, and later as Pope John Paul II, he had quite frequent personal contacts with members of Opus Dei, and among these was Bishop Álvaro del Portillo. What can you tell us about this relationship?*
St. John Paul II and Blessed Álvaro del Portillo met at the Second Vatican Council. After Cardinal Karol Wojtyla’s election as Vicar of Christ, they shared a profound unity and closeness, exhibited, on the Opus Dei Prelate’s part, by solid filial trust.

I think they were so very in tune with one another because they were both priests, both bishops, in love with the Church and with a great love for souls. Bishop Álvaro del Portillo admired the Pope-Saint’s generosity and dedication, and faithfully tried to carry out all the evangelical initiatives he proposed. Maybe this is the reason that John Paul II encouraged many priests to seek out spiritual support from Bishop del Portillo.

This filial contact, one of cooperation, was frequent, and lasted up to the last day.

I feel that a small fact demonstrates this: the day before he died, Bishop Álvaro wrote a post card from the Holy Land, in which, through the Pope’s personal secretary, he expressed his desire to be *fideles usque ad mortem* (to be faithful until death) in his service to the Church and the Holy Father.

I can’t fail to mention another memory, because for me it was a moment of grace and consolation: after Bishop del Portillo passed away, John Paul II decided to go to pray before his mortal remains, at the prelature church of Santa María de la Paz.

Between these two men there truly existed a strong spiritual understanding.

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*Interview Granted to Giornale del Popolo, Switzerland (September 27, 2014)*

*Bishop Echevarría, let’s go back to the early years. When, how, where, and why did young Álvaro del Portillo meet Fr. Josemaría Escrivá, while studying engineering?*
They met in the spring of 1935, through a common friend, Manuel Pérez Sanchez, who thought that priest could help his young classmate spiritually. But even before meeting Álvaro, St. Josemaría was already praying for him, since his aunt Carmen del Portillo, who was assisting some works of charity of which St. Josemaría was the chaplain, had spoken very highly—with even a healthy pride—of that nephew of hers, Álvaro, who she said was so good and intelligent.

In 1936, after the Nationalist uprising, Álvaro was in Madrid (a city in the hands of the Republicans) with Fr. Josemaría and some companions. While the future saint managed to pass over to the Nationalist zone the following year, Álvaro remained in Madrid with other companions and spent some dramatic months there, during which he was even imprisoned…

Actually, when Álvaro was in prison, from December 3, 1936 to January 27, 1937, St. Josemaría was still in Madrid. It was one of the times that Álvaro showed a serenity that could only be explained by his faith. This serenity protected him from losing hope when—despite having nothing to do with the military coup, and simply because he was a practicing Catholic—he was imprisoned, with a real possibility of facing execution. His serenity also enabled him to forgiving the injustice he had suffered, and to not use that experience as a pretext for resentment or revenge.

Let us continue with the historical and political context. Some people have accused Opus Dei of being an organization that was very useful for Francoism…

Opus Dei was born in 1928 and started growing after 1930, that is to say, before the Nationalist uprising in July 1936. It is important to realize that Opus Dei and a nation’s government act on completely different planes. As St. Josemaría wrote: “the only purpose of Opus Dei is spiritual,” and therefore “it has not entered nor will it ever enter into the politics of groups or parties, nor will it link itself to any person or ideology.” Opus Dei certainly urges its members to be fully responsible citizens, but precisely for this reason it leaves them the broadest possible freedom in their political choices, within the framework of the guidelines of Catholic doctrine.

Some government ministers had links to Opus Dei in the Franco era…
Yes, but it is also true that they were appointed by the government because of their technical knowledge and that they freely accepted that position. Also keep in mind that all the ministers during the Franco period (116 in 11 different governments) were Catholics; those who belonged to Opus Dei could be counted on the fingers of one hand. St. Josemaría learned of their appointments through the newspaper and, as he always strove to do, he respected their freedom. If he had not acted in this way, he would not have been able to defend the freedom of other sons of his then and in the future who had different opinions, including opposing ones.

None of that small number of government ministers was ever a member of the Falange. Besides, in Opus Dei, along with some who sympathized with Francoism (in that postwar era in Spain the great majority of Spaniards were sympathizers; we need to view history in its context), there were others with anti-Francoist convictions. And some of these were the object of press campaigns on the part of the Falange party. For example, in 1953, our Founder, who had asked for an audience with Franco, energetically defended someone who had been attacked personally, namely Professor Rafael Calvo Serer, after he wrote an article critical of the government and the regime.

Let’s return to Don Álvaro, who in 1944 was already a priest. What was his role during the Second Vatican Council? How did he view the Conciliar assembly?

He was a Conciliar “expert” and the secretary of the commission on the discipline of the clergy and of the Christian people. Also, beginning in 1959, he worked on various commissions preparing for the upcoming Council. His two books published at the end of the 60s, Faithful and Laity in the Church and On the Priesthood, can be seen as a homage to the Council. Therefore during those years he distanced himself from some of the proposals presented by those who were opposed to both the letter and the spirit of the Council, even if sometimes these were presented, in an abusive way, as practical applications of the Council. He was a man of the Second Vatican Council.

The years that preceded Pope John Paul II’s decision to erect the Prelature of Opus Dei in 1982 were difficult for Fr. Josemaría Escrivá and for Opus Dei as a
whole. What was the role of Don Alvaro in all of this?

He fully realized that he had inherited, after the death of the founder in 1975, a very delicate task: to bring to conclusion the canonical path of Opus Dei in accord with the founder’s wishes, following the path of personal prelatures opened by the Council. He confronted this task with faith and determination, until the final goal was reached. Certainly, difficulties were not lacking, which is understandable given the novelty that this path involved. I would like to add that both John Paul I and later John Paul II stressed the need to begin the corresponding study.

Is it true that Pope Paul VI and Archbishop Giovanni Benelli were not particularly favorable to the activities of Opus Dei?

As far as Paul VI is concerned, this is absolutely false. With Benelli, there were a few misunderstandings for some years, but later he changed his opinion about the role of Opus Dei in the Church and relations became very cordial. In fact, he was one of the first ecclesiastics who came to pray before the mortal remains of the founder, a few hours after his death.

Often small misunderstandings, which are normal in any area, can be presented to the public in an exaggerated way, because people think that without the picture of two parties in conflict, the public will lose interest in following that matter. This happened with Benelli and also with a few other people, who at certain moments showed themselves less favorable to Opus Dei. For example, in 1981 the Holy See asked thousands of bishops for their opinion about erecting the Prelature of Opus Dei. Well, just fifteen raised objections, something quite understandable, and which the Holy See itself answered.

From the perspective of faith, I must confess that even those small misunderstandings were useful in order to put greater trust in God, to be more humble (St. Josemaría used to remind us that no one is “a ten dollar bill that everyone likes”), and to learn to explain ourselves better.

What were relations like between Pope John Paul II and the prelate of Opus Dei, Álvaro del Portillo?

Don Álvaro was older than John Paul II, but when he was with the Pope, it was natural for him to see himself as a small child. At the same
time, there was a reciprocal esteem between the two, a
harmony—including psychological—and a trust such that one could
perfectly well speak of friendship, a deep friendship, and not simply esteem
or reverence.

How had Opus Dei developed by the time of the death, in 1994, of
St. Josemaría's successor? Did its public image change somewhat?

Between 1975 and 1994, Opus Dei began its apostolic activity in 20
new countries, and developed more fully in many environments in which it
was already working. During those 19 years the number of members of the
Work grew from 60,000 to 80,000. For those seeking to follow Christ
closely, the fact that from time to time they appear in public opinion as a
sign of contradiction is not something unusual. But I think that, at least in
the Catholic environment, during Don Álvaro’s years the image of
Opus Dei (also because of the approval of the personal Prelature) became
decidedly more in conformity with its true image. Today the Work is
certainly better understood than it was before 1982.

Do you have any especially strong personal recollections from your years
beside Bishop Álvaro del Portillo? Could you tell us one?

I have many memories, and they are so rich in significance that I
wouldn’t want to try to choose one as representative. That would be to
somehow betray the memory that I have of him. But I like to recall him, for
example, in the pediatric department of the University of Navarra Hospital,
visiting the children there with cancer. His affection, his concern, his acts
of service, his requests to them that they help him with their prayer…
Those scenes left a very strong impression on me, as they did on the
children and their parents.

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At the Beatification of a Universal
"Madrileño" La Razon, Spain (September 28, 2014)
On September 27, Madrid was transformed into the site of the beatification of a universal “Madrileño”: Álvaro del Portillo. Cardinal Amato, as the delegate of our beloved Pope Francis, inscribed him in the list of the Church’s blessed, before thousands of people gathered in Valdebebas.

This celebration has both a universal and a local savor at the same time. The new blessed has deep roots in this country and especially in Madrid, where he was born. Here he studied first in the school of the Marianists and afterwards in the School of Highway Engineers. He received his first Holy Communion in the Church of the Conception, recently raised to the status of a basilica. The Retiro Park was the scene of his childhood games and his comings and goings as a student from his home to the Engineering School. And the slums on the outskirts of Madrid in the thirties were witnesses to his concern for the poorest and most needy.

At the same time, this beatification has a universal dimension, because Álvaro del Portillo spread the seed of the Gospel throughout every continent. That explains why people from over eighty countries have been present. What does this beatification mean for the Church? In first place, it is an act of thanksgiving to the Most Blessed Trinity, for all the gifts we have received. One of these gifts is the life in the Church of holy women and men. While being a cause of joy for Christians, the Church wants above all that it serve as a spur for all the baptized, ordinary Christians, to strive with personal responsibility to illumine civil society with the life-giving light of Christ’s teachings, since the faith of Christians should never be separated from their daily work and activity.

The new blessed lived and taught the spirit of Opus Dei, which he received directly from St. Josemaría. We all have a calling from God, a mission that fills our lives with meaning. We are all called to discover the loving solicitude of God, who awaits us in our family, in our work, in our friendships, in our social relationships, etc. As Álvaro del Portillo reminded us, holiness does not mean attaining a level of “perfection” that places us above others, but rather in growing in the love that places us at the service of all those around us.

The Church desires that beatifications be for all who attend, and for all
who follow them through the means of communication, an opportunity for a personal encounter with God and a stimulus for their Christian life.

God granted the new blessed notable intellectual qualities. Besides being a Highway Engineer, he had doctorates in History and in Canon Law. He worked intensely in various commissions during the Second Vatican Council and had closes ties to three exceptional twentieth century Popes: St. John XXIII, St. John Paul II, and the soon to be Blessed Paul VI. The latter was his first friend when he arrived in Rome back in the 1940s. And the fact that John Paul II went to pray before his mortal remains on the very day of his death shows his great esteem for this new blessed.

Álvaro del Portillo dedicated his life to the service of God and souls, with a free and generous response to God’s grace day after day. For, as St. Josemaría wrote in The Way, no one is born with the “stuff of saints,” or without it. God calls everyone without exception to the fullness of charity, and he wants to produce, with the poor ingredients of our life, a work of art, the fruit of grace and of the personal response of each and every one of us. If we let him, God wants to draw out of us, evoking the words of a poet, “our best I.” This “best I” means being fully identified with Christ, letting oneself be molded by grace, and seeking in every moment to fulfill the divine command to love our neighbor.

Álvaro del Portillo was faithful to God, to the Church, and to St. Josemaría and his charism, with a creative and renewing fidelity. His human gifts, placed at the service of his profession and the Church, did not separate him from other people. On the contrary, his simplicity, his humility, his naturalness, his friendly good humor and spontaneity made it easy for him to connect with others, and to establish from the first moment a relationship of trust and friendship with so many people.

Therefore, for many of those who knew him, attending his beatification bears the mark of gratitude. These are people who had heard from him personal advice or words of encouragement in difficult moments, who felt strengthened in their faith when everything seemed to be toppling around them, sustained by his prayer and human affection.

People in the most varied settings of the world heard him speak about
God: in Nagasaki, Texas, Lima, Nairobi, Tallinn and Sydney; in various countries of Africa, or while walking by his side through the streets of Rome. From then on, Don Álvaro’s example and words remained in their souls like a sowing of love for God and a constant stimulus to serve our Lord and their fellow men and women..

His years spent close to St. Josemaría made him an heir to his great love for the whole Church. Afterward, as Prelate of Opus Dei, he continued the Work’s expansion in communion with the bishops. His signs of affection and veneration for the religious life are also well known. Religious men and women held a very special place in the heart of the soon to be blessed, while he constantly urged the laity to be present in all sectors of society, with the desire to build up, side by side with their fellow citizens, a world that was more united, more just and more human.

Along with his faithfulness to God’s will, I would like to emphasize Don Álvaro’s deep sense of mercy. His Christian heart prompted him to constantly endeavor to solve, to the extent that he could, the human and social problems that he encountered throughout his life. His deep Christian charity, united to a demanding sense of justice, far from mere laments and accommodating attitudes, gave birth to numerous works of social and educational assistance throughout the world, in favor of the most needy.

As a young man he dedicated many hours to assisting poor families and abandoned children in Madrid. And he made these efforts compatible with studying for an engineering degree and his job as a “Public Works Assistant,” in order to help support his family.

He learned from St. Josemaría to never be unmoved when confronting the bitter face of poverty, misery or injustice. I had the privilege of being a witness to how he reacted, during his catechetical trips throughout the world, to those living in situations unworthy of human dignity. After speaking to them with affection, and praying for them, he used all the means within his reach to move the hearts of people there and encourage them to find a just—and thus Christian—response to those challenges. And thus were came about—the result of his encouragement and of the work of so many people, believers and non believers—hospitals, clinics in
poor areas, centers for professional training and for the assistance of underprivileged women, initiatives to care for the elderly and for street children, food banks, care for the abandoned sick…

In these times filled with great difficulties and great hopes, I would like all the people who take part in the beatification of Álvaro del Portillo to experience the joy of a Church that is alive, young and beautiful in the example of its saints, and discover the joy of following Christ in the midst of the ordinary circumstances of each day.

✠ Javier Echevarría
Prelate of Opus Dei

Interview with Alfa y Omega, Spain (September 25, 2014)

Juan Luis Vázquez Diaz-Mayordomo

When did you first meet Don Álvaro? What impressions remain from that first meeting? After so many years at his side, what is the first thing that comes to mind on recalling him?

My meeting Don Álvaro is inseparable from my meeting St. Josemaría, when I was sixteen. For many years, he was the older brother on whom St. Josemaría could rely very especially, and the rest of us tried to imitate his example. I can assure you that from the first moment that he was at the head of Opus Dei, his virtues became even more fatherly, and it was very easy to begin to see him as a father to each one of us. In recalling him, there comes to mind his unfailing smile, a sign of his warm welcome, his availability, his service.

I am very aware of God’s special grace in allowing me to have lived with two saints, and therefore I ask every day for prayers to respond to that gift, and to transmit it to the faithful of the Prelature and to everyone else.
How did Don Álvaro pray? What was his relationship with God like? What was he like close up, in day to day life?

He learned from St. Josemaría to be a contemplative in the middle of the world, through the ordinary circumstances of each day: in his work, in his tiredness, in his concern for others… His relationship with God was one of great trust, going to him as a Friend and a Father. It wasn’t a matter of extraordinary events, or of will-power, but rather the frequent effort to share daily circumstances with the person one loves: some minutes of prayer, meditative reading of the Gospel, a filial greeting to an image of our Lady, a brief visit to the Tabernacle on leaving home.…

His deep supernatural outlook resulted in a great serenity that attracted people. Many people, even if they only had a few minutes of conversation with him, attested to the fact that he transmitted a great peace to them. It was the peace of knowing oneself loved by a person whose focus was fixed on what was truly important. Don Álvaro shared in others’ sufferings, and rejoiced in their joys, while seeing everything as part of God’s fatherly providence.

He too lived close beside St. Josemaría for many years. What was his relationship with the founder of Opus Dei like? What did he say about him? How did he remember him?

As one can read in his writings and see in videos, Don Álvaro always kept St. Josemaría and his teachings present to him. In spite of his outstanding human and intellectual qualities, he freely put himself in second place in order to help St. Josemaría fulfill his mission. And with sincere humility he said that he did not want to be anything more than St. Josemaría’s shadow here on earth. He described his mission at the head of Opus Dei as a stage of continuity and fidelity to the foundational charism, striving to transmit to all generations Josemaría’s affectionate nearness.

Many people, when speaking about him, remember him as a man of peace. Nevertheless, Don Álvaro lived through the hard years of the Spanish civil war and even suffered religious persecution in his own flesh. How did those years affect him?
He never wanted to speak much about the sufferings that, like so many Spaniards of his generation, he had to endure during that horrible fratricidal struggle. It is true that some episodes of his life during the war are better known, also because of their close connection to St. Josemaría’s life, with whom he took refuge for many months in the Honduran Legation. He recalled the affection filled with courage with which St. Josemaría risked his life to provide spiritual care for his father, who died after the hardships he suffered when imprisoned for being a Catholic. Don Álvaro himself was imprisoned unjustly, and was at the point of being martyred a number of times.

But the few times that he spoke about these events, he always placed them in the context of the need to reject any kind of violence and foster forgiveness and fraternal love among all men. He told us that “we have to always forgive.”

What was his relationship with Spain like? How did he view the events in our country: Francoism, the arrival of democracy, the advance of secularism…?

Two years after his priestly ordination, in 1944, Don Álvaro moved to Rome, where he resided until his death in 1994. He became Roman, in the Catholic sense of the word: universal. During his first years there, he also received the task from St. Josemaría of directing the apostolate of the Work in Italy, a country that he got to know very well. Throughout his life he was acquiring what St. Paul called a concern for all the Churches. During his years as prelate of Opus Dei, he urged forward the activities of the Work in many countries, and made trips to them to give encouragement to those who were beginning the apostolic work and to establish a fraternal relationship with the bishops of each place.

But this universal mentality did not make him a person without roots. He never lost his love for Spain nor his characteristic way of being as someone from Madrid. Don Álvaro was born only a few yards from the Puerta de Alcalá, and he was very much a Madrid native; he used local expressions in his conversation, and made use of examples taken from recollections of his time spent in Madrid. Moreover, he had a close relationship with his mother and brothers and sisters who lived in Spain. He also paid special attention to the apostolic development of what he
called the “first-born region of the Work.” He didn’t say this to foster vanity, but to remind those who were carrying out the work of the Prelature in Spain of their responsibility. In addition, as prelate and bishop he maintained a cordial and close communion with the Spanish bishops and the Church in Spain in general: religious institutions, ecclesial movements, etc. He confronted the changes in Spanish society by encouraging the faithful to be united to the bishops, and to freely participate in public affairs, each on his or her own personal responsibility.

Don Álvaro assisted the work of the Second Vatican Council as president of the ante-preparatory Commission for the Laity. How did he understand the role of the laity in the Church? Where did he put the emphasis when talking and meeting with lay people? What did he ask of them?

By his efforts in that ecclesial assembly, Don Álvaro sought to help further the spread of the universal call to sanctity. Thanks to his years of experience living and transmitting the spirit of Opus Dei, received from St. Josemaría, he was able to offer not only the theory, but also the reality of the lives of thousands of lay faithful who, understanding their baptism as an authentic vocation to exercise the common priesthood in their professional work and ordinary daily circumstances, strove to be consistent to their faith in all their actions.

Don Álvaro not only provided important contributions to theology and canon law, but above all he led thousands of lay people to discover their baptismal vocation and mobilized them to get involved in society, sowing the leaven of the faith through their professional work, friendships, and family relationships. We could say that he continued the mission of St. Josemaría (the saint of the ordinary, as St. John Paul II called him), by making the truth of the Gospel lovable among people on every continent, of all ages and walks of life. As a consequence of his teachings, many of them launched out to put into operation educational and social welfare initiatives. And, above all, thousands of people discovered the human and Christian value of work well-finished out of love for God, in the service of society.

He also formed part of the Commission on the discipline of the clergy. What was the priesthood of Don Álvaro like? How did he understand the priesthood in
relation to the mission of the laity in the world?

Indeed, he was the secretary of the Commission that produced the Conciliar decree on the priesthood, *Presbyterorum Ordinis*. In that document one can see the mature fruit of the relationship between the ministerial priesthood of clerics and the common priesthood of the lay faithful. I still recall the impact made on some people by his explanation that everyone in the Church, not only the laity, but also the cardinals and bishops, were equally the faithful. On the other hand, Don Álvaro explained that “the priest is not more a Christian than the other faithful, but he is more a priest, and he is such in an essentially distinct way.” This was the thesis that he developed in his book *Faithful and Laity in the Church*, and that is present in the Council’s theological vision.

But also in this area, Don Álvaro was a priest in love with his vocation. He encouraged the priests of the Work to enlarge our hearts in order to understand everyone and to share in their needs, and he gave us advice like this: “celebrating the Eucharistic mystery devoutly will be your best apostolate.” He also insisted that preaching be joyful and doctrinal.

St. Josemaría’s constant concern for the holiness of priests was equally one of the guiding principles of Don Álvaro’s pastoral action, which led to his keeping very much in his heart the other diocesan priests when he succeeded the founder. In the last year of his life, he had the joy of being able to say that “St. Josemaría dreamed about the marvelous reality that we contemplate today: that a great number of priests, through the faithful fulfillment of their own duties, incarnate the spirit of Opus Dei and are contributing to its spread throughout the whole world.”

*Don Álvaro was the successor of St. Josemaría at the head of Opus Dei, and the first prelate of the Work when it was erected as a personal prelature in 1982. At the time this was a new canonical figure in the Church. How would you sum up the results after all these years? And how did Don Álvaro react personally to the objections that were raised back then by some people?*

Don Álvaro always gave priority to continuing the foundational legacy of St. Josemaría. One of his most important tasks was that of bringing to completion—at the request of John Paul I and later John Paul II—the canonical path of Opus Dei, within the general law of the Church, so that
its canonical form would respond to its ecclesial reality. Also in this regard he was seconding the wishes of St. Josemaría, who had left everything prepared so that the Work could be erected as a personal prelature, a canonical figure contemplated by the Second Vatican Council. With the prudence that characterized him, he worked without rushing, but also without stopping, and always in consultation with the Holy See, to bring to a happy conclusion this mission in the service of the whole Church. I am a witness of how this holy bishop took up every day St. Josemaría’s advice to have recourse first of all to prayer when seeking to carry out a program for the glory of God. For years, Don Álvaro prayed and asked others to pray for this intention, and he liked to point to the immense riches of the prayer, reception of the sacraments and sacrifices of many thousands of people, also among the sick and the indigent. It was on these that he relied when the difficulties arose that are often present in this kind of process. And instead of becoming discouraged, when they arose he gave thanks to God, while also insisting that we needed to pray more.

How is Opus Dei carrying out its apostolate at a time when evangelization is needed in the Church, and Pope Francis has put the emphasis on the family?

The immense majority of faithful of the Prelature are lay faithful, ordinary Christians, mothers and fathers of families who try to follow Christ closely in their family, professional and social situation. One of the great teachings of St. Josemaría was reminding people of the value of marriage as a vocational path to holiness. Today we can all see that society progresses or regresses morally, according to the thermometer of the value that is given to marriage, to fatherhood and motherhood, to family life in general. Therefore those of us who share in the spirit of Opus Dei have received with great joy the news of Pope Francis’ decision to soon celebrate synodal meetings centered on the family. Pope Francis is a pastor who is very close to the faithful, and knows from close up the possibilities and risks facing Christian families today. All Catholics should support him in this intention, with our prayer and our evangelizing zeal.

Many lay people connected to Opus Dei have had their causes of canonization opened. Is it true that a father or mother of a family, a person who holds down a job, a normal everyday student… can become a saint, and a saint raised to the altars?
This has been true throughout the history of Christianity! Especially in the first centuries, there were many men and women saints who were fathers or mothers of a family, adolescents, soldiers, craftsmen, etc. It is true that during a certain period this reality was placed in the background, but it never disappeared from the Church’s life. Our Lord, in inspiring St. Josemaría, wanted to awaken among the lay faithful the call to sanctity, which doesn’t mean not having defects, but rather fighting to be loyal to God, learning to love God and other men and women, overcoming each day our selfishness. To truly love everyone is not easy, but it is within the reach of each of us if we go to the one who loves us and who gave himself for us: Christ Jesus, the Son of God. Naturally, it gives me joy when a new cause of canonization for a lay faithful of Opus Dei is opened. But what I most ask our Lord for is that those lives may serve as an example and stimulus for many Christians to discover Christ’s love, and the happiness of spending one’s life with Him and for Him.

Interview Granted to Avvenire, Italy (August, 29 2014)

Francesco Ognibene

What are the “existential peripheries” to which Opus Dei’s efforts are directed?

Pope Francis often speaks of offering a living testimony to the Gospel by assisting people in situations of poverty, both material and spiritual. The “existential peripheries” he speaks about are not far away; frequently they are found at our side and challenge us personally. The faithful of the Prelature of Opus Dei live in very diverse situations, but they always find themselves facing the same challenge: to go out to help solve mankind’s needs. Whether they live in the so-called “rich countries” or in “developing” ones, the “peripheries” are always present there, and the faithful of the Prelature try to respond to the spiritual and material needs that continually accompany the human condition.
You knew Don Álvaro del Portillo very well, the first successor of St. Josemaría Escrivá. What memories do you have of him?

The memories are very numerous. I will limit myself to saying that he was a man of peace—deeply spiritual and deeply human. It was a peace that didn’t rest on human reasons, but on placing all his trust in God. I was a witness to how, even in difficult moments, Don Álvaro always kept a perspective of faith and serenity, leading others to be understanding, to dialogue, to overcoming confrontations.

He sought to be fully dedicated to the service of others. When he visited a country, even the most distant, he was concerned about the needs of the local population. And afterwards, with a calm but decisive spirit, he encouraged the faithful of Opus Dei and many others to respond to that need with specific deeds. Thus over time dozens of educational institutions, hospitals and training centers became a reality all over the world.

The “Rimini Meeting” is an initiative in which young people especially take part. What can we do today so that the new generations have a personal encounter with the faith?

Young people have an immense yearning for great ideals. They know what it means to give oneself for an ideal. The Meeting, which began with a group of young people eager to give Christian witness in society, reflects this concern. I was very impressed by the volunteers: young people (and not so young) who are dedicating their vacations to assisting people here and helping everything run well. It shows how people respond generously when they are offered high goals and challenges. I was also impressed by the joy of so many families present here.

Interview Granted to Vida Nueva, Spain (December 19, 2014)

Darío Menor
How are you going to coordinate your mutual responsibilities. Will traveling and attending to daily matters be Msgr. Ocáriz’s responsibility?

The appointment of Msgr. Ocáriz as Auxiliary Vicar of the Prelature will be an important help for the governing of this portion of the People of God that is the Prelature of Opus Dei. He will share with me the executive power, not only in matters that corresponds to a Vicar General but also those our law reserves to the Prelate.

Thanks be to God, in recent years the number of circumscriptions of the Prelature that depend more directly on the Prelate has grown. All this entails an increase in the work of government. The Auxiliary Vicar—and the new Vicar General—can provide direct assistance in this task and help to maintain close contact with people, also by means of trips. I hope to continue making pastoral visits to the various countries, so that the faithful of the Prelature can sense the “family” spirit (the whole Church is a family!) of the spiritual make-up of Opus Dei, which the founder so deeply marked with his paternity.

We will coordinate each one’s work on the various matters, following the collegiality that St. Josemaría imprinted from the beginning on the government of Opus Dei.

Is it correct to interpret the appointment of Msgr. Ocáriz as a sign of who is the best candidate for an eventual succession at the head of the Prelature?

It is not up to me to anticipate the future. The Prelature’s Statutes are very clear on this point: they set down that the election of the Prelate is the responsibility of a General Elective Congress and requires the confirmation of the Holy Father.

Declaration on the Beatification of Paul VI (October 18, 2014)

The beatification of Pope Paul VI is a cause of great joy for the entire Church. Paul VI was the Pope who led Vatican II to its conclusion. His
pastoral and apostolic impact on the world, as a young priest and in his later responsibilities until taking on his universal mission as Roman Pontiff, is well-known to all Catholics. His pastoral charity helped inspire in Catholics a desire for generous spiritual renewal and deep fidelity to the Gospel message.

I am happy to recall the spirit of service that the then Monsignor Montini showed in serving the Pope and all mankind in his various responsibilities in the Holy See. Today I go to the new Blessed asking him to infuse in all Catholics this same affection, both human and filled with faith, for the Vicar of Christ, now Pope Francis.

Besides welcoming Monsignor Escrivá and Álvaro del Portillo with sincere friendship (later transformed into the affection of our common Father in the Church), I recall very vividly the affection and interest he showed when inaugurating a center run by faithful of Opus Dei for young working-class people in Rome. I realized even more forcefully that day his love for all souls, especially for the most humble, and his desire for social justice: may no one lack what they need. The Holy Father’s visit to Centro Elis ended with his giving a fatherly embrace to Saint Josemaría, saying “qui, tutto è Opus Dei!” [“everything here is the Work of God”].

As the Church reflects in a special way on the institution of the family, let us also ask Paul VI for all the families in the world, so that they might be the “communion of love” and the “school of the Gospel” of the spouses, which he spoke to us about during his pilgrimage to Nazareth in 1964, and on so many other occasions when speaking about marriage.

✠ Javier Echevarría
Prelate of Opus Dei

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Masses of Thanksgiving

For the beatification of Álvaro del Portillo, many Masses of Thanksgiving were celebrated throughout the world. In Japan, Eucharistic celebrations were held in the dioceses of Tokyo, Osaka, Oita, and Kyoto. In these last two cities, the Masses were celebrated in the cathedral. In Oita, the Eucharistic celebration was presided over by Bishop Paul Hamaguchi. In a festive atmosphere, many faithful of the Prelature together with cooperators, people who take part in the Prelature’s apostolic work, and those with devotion to the new blessed, gathered to joyfully celebrate his elevation to the altars, while also recalling the visit that Álvaro del Portillo made to Japan in 1987.

On September 29, two days after the beatification, the Cardinal Archbishop of Paris, André Armand Vingt-Trois, celebrated a Mass of Thanksgiving for a large congregation, in which people who were not able to travel to Madrid took part. “It is for me a joy to celebrate this Eucharist with the members and friends of the prelature of Opus Dei in France on the occasion of the beatification of Bishop Álvaro del Portillo. It is an opportunity to give thanks for the fruit of the gift of God of his life, and also to express to God our gratitude for the ecclesial experience that we are living with the prelature of Opus Dei,” Archbishop Vingt-Trois pointed out. In his homily, the Cardinal said that “Blessed Álvaro welcomed God’s call, and incarnated through his life the figure of a pastor, giving us a living example of the image of the Good Shepherd shown in the Gospel... The life of Álvaro del Portillo was a beautiful example, both of the vocation that led him to be one of the first companions and disciples of St. Josemaría, as well as of the message of fidelity, humility and gentleness that he gave throughout his life, especially during the time he was Prelate of Opus Dei.”

On October 11, the Church of Our Lady (Onze Lieve Vrouw), in Amsterdam, was the site of a solemn Mass of Thanksgiving presided over by Bishop Jozef Punt of Haarlem-Amsterdam.
On October 19, more than 400 people in Lebanon took part in the Mass celebrated in the Maronite cathedral of Beirut by the diocesan Archbishop Boulos Matar. In his homily, Archbishop Matar stressed the humility of the new blessed and the great fruit produced by his work on behalf of all souls. He also encouraged those present to meet in Rome for the future canonization of the new blessed.

On Tuesday, October 21, a solemn Mass of Thanksgiving was held in Zurich Church of Our Lady (Liebfrauenkirche) for the beatification of Bishop Álvaro. Celebrating were Bishop Vitus Huoner of Zürich, Bishop Martin Grichting, vicar general of the diocese of Chur, Msgr. Mario Codeamo, secretary of the Nuntiature of the Holy See in Bern, the Regional Vicar of Opus Dei in Switzerland, Msgr. Peter Rutz, the pastor of the Liebfrauenkirche, and other priests. The church was filled with young families and students. Bishop Huondor described the personality of Blessed Álvaro, and stressed his love for both the common priesthood of the faithful and the ministerial priesthood. He mentioned his contribution to the Second Vatican Council’s decree Presbyterorum Ordinis through his intense work as secretary of the preparatory commission. Citing a passage from the Old Testament, he spoke of the need for bishops who are good shepherds, and encouraged everyone to go to the intercession of Blessed Álvaro, asking that there be many holy priests closely united to them.

In Mexico, on October 25, a Mass of Thanksgiving was celebrated in the Basilica of Our Lady of El Roble (the Oak). It was presided over by Archbishop Rogelio Cabrera Lopez of Monterrey. In Brazil, as well, during the months of October and November, many Thanksgiving Masses were held in various dioceses, with large crowds in attendance giving thanks to the Blessed Trinity for the benefits derived from the holy life of the new blessed.

On the Iberian peninsula, the Eucharistic celebrations related to the beatification were many. In Portugal, between October and December 2014, thanksgiving Masses were celebrated in Porto (October 27), presided over by Auxiliary Bishop Pio Alves de Sousa, in Lisbon (November 15), in Viseu (November 22), in Coimbra (November 28), and in Braga
(December 6). In Spain thousands of faithful wished to thank the Blessed Trinity for the gift of the beatification, by participating in Masses in many cathedrals throughout the country, including Bilbao, Santiago de Compostela, Pamplona, and San Sebastian, where the celebrations were presided over by the respective bishops of the diocese. A Solemn Vespers in thanksgiving for the beatification was held in the Monastery of Leyre, presided over by Abbot Mitrado.

Many religious orders and congregations, as well as movements, sent messages to the Prelate and his Vicars expressing their joy for the beatification of Bishop del Portillo, who had so often expressed his affection and veneration for the life of witness and dedication of the religious and his esteem and encouragement of the new ecclesial institutions and movements.

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September 27: The Solemn Rite of Beatification

Álvaro del Portillo, bishop and first successor of St. Josemaría as head of Opus Dei and one of the protagonists of Vatican II, was beatified on September 27 in Madrid, in a ceremony presided over by the delegate of Pope Francis, Cardinal Angelo Amato, who was accompanied by Cardinal Antonio Maria Rouco, emeritus Archbishop of Madrid, and the Bishop Prelate of Opus Dei, Javier Echevarría.

The ceremony began with the Vicar General of Opus Dei, Fernando Ocariz, reading a message sent by Pope Francis. The Holy Father said that “Blessed Álvaro del Portillo teaches us that simplicity and ordinary life are a sure path to holiness,” and reminded everyone that Blessed Álvaro “went to many countries, fostering projects of evangelization without being inhibited by difficulties, moved only by his love for God and for his brothers and sisters. Whoever is very immersed in God knows how to be close to other people.”
Immediately following the solemn act of beatification by Cardinal Amato, at 12.24 pm an image of the new blessed was revealed to the faithful. His feast day will be celebrated on May 12 every year in the dioceses determined by the Holy See.

Another key moment was the transfer of the relics of Álvaro del Portillo to the altar, borne by the Ureta Wilson family, whose son José Ignacio was miraculously cured thanks to the new blessed’s intercession.

The universal impact of the new blessed was manifested by the presence of several hundred thousand faithful from more than 80 countries, and the participation of 17 cardinals and 170 bishops from all over the world.

Among those in the front row at the ceremony were two hundred people with some form of disability, as well as representatives of the many social initiatives promoted by the new blessed, particularly in Africa and Latin America. There were also many families and some Spanish and international civil authorities.

From very early in the morning, 1,600 buses and a bus shuttle service brought the more than 200,000 people to the Valdebebas site. They waited joyfully for the start of the ceremony watching audio-visual programs on 26 giant screens. Many also prepared themselves spiritually either by praying in the 13 chapels available or by receiving the sacrament of penance in one of the 80 confessional spread throughout the area.

Faithfulness to the Gospel, to the Church and to the Pope

In his homily Cardinal Amato illustrated some virtues that the new blessed “lived in a heroic manner,” including his “faithfulness to the Gospel, to the Church, and to the Magisterium of the Pope.” The Cardinal stressed that Álvaro del Portillo “always avoided focusing on himself, because he passed on the truth of the Gospel and the fullness of tradition, not his own opinions.” Among other things, “he stood out for his prudence and uprightness of intention in the way he valued events and persons. He also stood out for his respect for the good name and freedom of others.”

Cardinal Amato continued: “Today Blessed Álvaro del Portillo invites us to be holy like him, living a holiness that is friendly, merciful, good-
natured, meek, and humble. 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.”

The huge turnout of the faithful was marked by piety and joyful singing, accompanied by the two hundred voice choir from the last World Youth Day. 1,200 priests distributed communion during the Mass.

Bishop Echevarría: a special prayer for those suffering persecution as a result of their faith

At the end of the celebration, Bishop Javier Echevarría, Prelate of Opus Dei, addressed some words of gratitude to God, to the Church and to Pope Francis, as well as to Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, to Cardinal Amato and to the Archdiocese of Madrid, the choir, the volunteers and the media, all of whom have made possible the ceremony followed by so many people throughout the world.

“The raising of Álvaro del Portillo to the altars reminds us anew of the universal call to holiness, proclaimed with great fervor by the Second Vatican Council.” He also made reference to the “joy that Saint Josemaría Escrivá would undoubtedly feel on seeing this most faithful son of his held up as an intercessor and model for all the faithful.”

Bishop Echevarría asked those present to pray in a special way “for our brothers and sisters who are suffering persecution for their faith, including martyrdom in different parts of the world.”

The diocese of Madrid is proud of its son

In his closing remarks, Cardinal Antonio María Rouco wished to point out the close bond between Álvaro del Portillo and the city of Madrid. “Not only for historical reasons but also because of the influence which his life and writings have had on the hearts of so many faithful in this Archdiocese. His footprints are also felt through the spiritual and social good done by the many initiatives that owe their inspiration to him.”

In conclusion, Cardinal Rouco said that “Blessed del Portillo, who was born here in Madrid, is ours in a unique way and so sends us special blessings from heaven.” “As a diocesan Church,” he added, “we are very proud of the faithful help he lent to Saint Josemaría in spreading the
message of Opus Dei throughout the world and the contributions he made to the Second Vatican Council.”

At the end of the ceremony the more than 3,500 young volunteers helped participants to leave Valdebebas. While some returned to their places of origin, others remained in the Spanish capital for the Mass of Thanksgiving that would be presided over by Bishop Javier Echevarría, Prelate of Opus Dei, the next day.

On Sunday September 28, a Mass of thanksgiving was held for the beatification of Álvaro del Portillo. The venue was the same site at Valdebebas that the day before was filled with more than 200,000 people who attended the beatification.

September 28: A Solemn Mass of Thanksgiving

At 12 noon, as the Mass was beginning, Pope Francis (from Rome) during the Angelus remembered the beatification that had taken place the previous day in Madrid and prayed that “the exemplary Christian and priestly witness of Bishop Álvaro del Portillo may bring about in many people the desire of uniting themselves ever more closely to Christ and to the Gospel.”

Prayer for all the world’s families in union with Pope Francis

As the event was attended mainly by family groups from all over the world, the Prelate of Opus Dei dedicated a good part of his homily to them. Thus he united himself to the wishes of Pope Francis, who dedicated this Sunday to prayer for the celebration of the III Extraordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on the family: “On this day that the Holy Father Pope Francis has dedicated to praying for the family, we unite ourselves to the petitions of the entire Church through this communion of love, this school of the Gospel that is the family.”
Bishop Echevarría addressed families saying: “Our Lord loves you. Our Lord is present in your marriage, the image of the love Christ has for the Church. I know that many of you dedicate yourselves generously to supporting other married couples along their path of faithfulness. I know that many of you help other homes to go forward in a social context that is sometimes difficult and even hostile. Take courage! Your work as Gospel witnesses is necessary for the whole world.”

He also thanked them for their efforts: “Now we also give thanks to all the mothers and fathers gathered together here, and to all those who care for children, the elderly, and the sick.”

**Fruitfulness of the life of Álvaro del Portillo**

At the start of his homily, the Prelate made specific reference to the beatification ceremony that took place the day before: “The crowd during these days, the thousands of people from all over the world and so many others who are already waiting for us in Heaven, give special testimony to the fruitfulness of Don Álvaro’s life.” And he continued, “we cannot really call this a crowd, but rather a family gathering, united by love for God and love for one another. This same love is also made strong today in the Eucharist, during this Mass of thanksgiving for the beatification of our beloved Don Álvaro, bishop prelate of Opus Dei.”

**Álvaro del Portillo revealed God’s mercy through his solidarity with the poor and abandoned**

During the thanksgiving Mass, Bishop Echevarría said that “looking at the holy life of Don Álvaro we discover God’s hand, the grace of the Holy Spirit and the gift of a love which transforms us.” The Prelate urged everyone to strive so that “others may discover God’s goodness in our own way of life, as was the case in the daily activities of Don Álvaro, who already in this beloved Madrid also revealed God’s mercy through his solidarity with the poor and abandoned.”

In accord with this spirit of Blessed Álvaro del Portillo and in coordination with the NGO Harambee, the collections from the Masses held on September 27 and 28 will be used to support four social projects the new blessed helped to start when he was alive: The construction of a
mother-and-child wing in the Niger Foundation and Diagnostic Centre in Enugu, Nigeria, a project that will benefit 12,000 people annually. A program to eradicate infant malnutrition in Bingerville (Cote d'Ivoire) and that will directly benefit 5,000 people. Four outpatient clinics on the outskirts of the capital of the Democratic Republic of Congo, a project that will offer health care to 10,000 children a year. And the funding of Scholarships for the training of African priests in Rome.

At the end of the ceremony, the 3,500 young volunteers helped to collect the materials used for the ceremony and to clean up the area.

About 15,000 people who came to Rome to celebrate the beatification of Álvaro del Portillo attended the audience with Pope Francis on Wednesday, October 1. They wanted to show in this way their union with the Holy Father as well as their appreciation for the beatification.

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**September 29: Transfer of the Body Blessed Álvaro to St. Eugene's Basilica**

The Roman ceremonies for the beatification of Álvaro del Portillo began on Monday, September 29. At six in the evening, the casket with the mortal remains of Blessed Álvaro was transported from the crypt of the prelatic Church of Our Lady of Peace, where it usually rests, to the nearby Basilica of St. Eugene.

Faithful from all over the world received the Blessed, who was carried in procession to the sanctuary, with prolonged applause. After a Liturgy of the Word, the Prelate of Opus Dei directed some words to those present.

“I am sure,” said Bishop Javier Echevarría, “that we all would have liked to carry the casket to thank Blessed Álvaro for his life of dedication and service to the Church, his interest in each one of us, and his daily love for God’s will.”

“We are in the presence of the remains of a man, a priest, a friend, who abandoned everything in God’s hand, and who therefore was always
travelling, happy. He was a great communicator of peace. Let us ask him sincerely: help us to be witnesses to God’s love for us,” said the prelate.

At the end of his homily, Bishop Echevarría blessed those in attendance with a relic of the new Blessed. Following this, many of the faithful went up to the casket and touched it with prayer cards, rosaries, photographs, notes with petitions, etc.

From September 29 to October 2, Eucharistic concelebrations followed one another next to Álvaro del Portillo’s mortal remains. Mara Celani, spokesperson for the Roman ceremonies for the beatification, said that on the evening of the 29th alone some 20,000 people came to the Basilica.

*A tangible sign of the beatification: four African projects.*

During the Roman days for the beatification, an exposition organized by the NGO Harambee-Africa about Blessed Álvaro was installed in the patio of St. Eugene’s Basilica. Besides recounting the life of Álvaro del Portillo, the exhibit showed the projects to which the funds collected during the beatification ceremony will be destined.

These are the three projects begun under Bishop del Portillo’s impetus to provide care for women and children in Nigeria, the Ivory Coast, and the Democratic Republic of Congo, as well as the creation of a scholarship fund for priests from Africa who are studying in Rome.

“To the extent possible, all of us need to place ourselves in contact with those who are suffering, with the sick, with the poor... with those who are alone and abandoned.” These words, written by Blessed Álvaro in 1981, reflect his desire to assist others and bring everyone to Christ’s lovable and merciful face. It was a passion that led him to promote dozens of social and educational initiatives all over the world, in the years he was at the head of Opus Dei.

He said that a natural consequence of concern for the poor and the sick is the effort to “encourage people to promote or participate in social
assistance projects that try to remedy, in a professional way, these human needs and so many others.”

In words of Rosalinda Corbi, coordinator of Harambee’s international efforts, “it seemed necessary to share the gift of this beatification with those who need it the most, and we wanted to do so in a way that would have greatly pleased the new Blessed, who right from his youth dedicated many hours to the sick and needy.

October 1: An Audience with Pope Francis

Pope Francis specifically addressed them, saying, “I greet Bishop Javier Echevarría, Prelate of Opus Dei, as well as the faithful of the Prelature here present to give thanks to God for the beatification of Bishop Álvaro del Portillo. And I encourage you to seek his intercession and his example to help you respond generously to God's call to holiness and apostolate in ordinary life, in the service of the Church and of humanity, thank you very much and God bless you.”

José Ignacio Greets the Pope

José Ignacio, the Chilean boy miraculously cured through the intercession of Blessed Álvaro, greeted the Holy Father at the end of the audience. “The Pope asked me to pray for him,” he said afterward. His parents, who accompanied José Ignacio, gave the Pope the requests that had been put next to the relic of Blessed Álvaro on the preceding days. “These have been moments of great joy and deep gratitude,” said Susana Wilson, the mother of José Ignacio. “We told him that in Chile we pray a lot for him and his intentions. We are very excited. These are days of great graces, full of blessings, and so many loving people who have greeted us.”

Her husband, Javier Ureta, summed up the family’s joy, “It is a great joy despite all the suffering from the time when José Ignacio was sick, it has resulted in a huge blessing for the whole world. It really highlights the image of Don Álvaro as an example of a life of holiness. We asked the
Pope to give us his blessing for 15 years of our marriage, and he told us to be an example of 'marriage forever.'”

Most of the participants in the acts of thanksgiving for the beatification of Álvaro del Portillo in Rome came from the Americas, Asia, Africa, and Oceania, as well as Italian faithful from all parts of Italy. In some cases, as was the case with pilgrims from Africa and from some countries in South America, coming to both Madrid and Rome meant a considerable sacrifice.

October 2: Eucharistic Adoration and the Transfer of Blessed Álvaro to Our Lady of Peace

On October 2, 86th anniversary of the founding of Opus Dei, a Eucharistic benediction presided over by Bishop Javier Echevarría was celebrated in the Roman basilica of Saint Eugene’s.

Following this act, the coffin with the body of the new blessed was moved from Saint Eugene’s to the prelatic church of Our Lady of Peace. Thousands of people in the basilica were able to watch the transfer on a large screen that had been installed there. Others accompanied the new blessed along Bruno Buozzi Street, which connects the two churches. In addition, many thousands followed by live coverage available on the website www.Alvarodelportillo.org

At the end of the ceremony, the Prelate addressed the following words to the new blessed: “Thank you dear Blessed Álvaro for everything you’ve done; thank you for your generosity, for your unwavering loyalty to God and to those at your side, also when faced with difficulties.”

Bishop Echevarría. “Give God all the glory, closely united to the Pope, and letting ourselves be led by Jesus.”

In a pastoral letter dated October 1 that he sent to Opus Dei’s faithful and cooperators, the Prelate invited them to thank the “Most Holy Trinity, for this gift that you have made to the Church, to Opus Dei, and to all
mankind, in highlighting the beloved figure of this servant of yours as a reference point and intercessor.”

The celebrations in Madrid and those that took place in the Eternal City and in countries all over the world should lead “to renewing our desire to give God all the glory, closely united to the Pope, letting our Lady, our Mother, bring us to Jesus.”

In the same letter, the Prelate invited everyone to “entrust to Don Álvaro’s intercession peace in the world, more specifically in those places where many people are suffering persecution because of their faith, and to pray for the work of the upcoming extraordinary assembly of the Synod of Bishops, which begins on October 5.”

Roman committee for the beatification

At the conclusion of the ceremonies, the spokeswoman of the Roman events, Mara Celani, thanked all the people and institutions that had worked together to make these events possible: “As the ceremonies come to a close, I would like to express my deep gratitude towards all who have helped us to benefit so much from these events. For the people who have come to Rome, the joy of the beatification has been increased by the audience with the Pope and the warm welcome they have received from a city that has treated them so affectionately.”

Between September 29 and October 2, nearly 40,000 people went to the Basilica of St. Eugene to pray before the remains of the new blessed.

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Litterae Apostolicae

Litterae Apostolicae

Nos,

vota Fratris Nostri

Augustini S.R.E. Cardinalis Vallini,

Nostri Vicarii Generalis pro Romana dioecesi,
Xaverii Echevarría Rodríguez,
Episcopi titulo Cilibiensis,
Prælaturæ personalis Sanctæ Crucis et Operis Dei Prælati,
necon plurimorum aliorum Fratrum in Episcopatu
multorumque christifidelium explentes,
de Congregationis de Causis Sanctorum consulto,
auctoritate Nostra Apostolica
facultatem facimus ut
Venerabilis Servus Dei
ALVARUS DEL PORTILLO Y DIEZ DE SOLLANO, episcopus,
Prælaturæ personalis Sanctæ Crucis et Operis Dei Prælatus,
Pastor secundum cor Iesu,
Ecclesiæ assiduus minister,
Beati nomine in posterum appelletur,
eiusque festum
die duodecima Maii
in locis et modis iure statutis
quotannis celebrari possit.
In nomine Patris, et Filii et Spiritus Sancti.
Amen.
Datum Romae, apud Sanctum Petrum,
die vicesimo primo mensis Septembris,
anno Domini bismillesimo quarto decimo,
Pontificatus Nosti secundo.
Franciscus
September 30: Masses of Thanksgiving in Rome

As part of the program of acts for the beatification, on Tuesday, September 30, two Masses were celebrated in the Basilicas of St. John Lateran and St. Mary Major respectively presided over by Cardinal Agostino Vallini (Vicar General of the Holy Father for the diocese of Rome), and Cardinal Santos Abril y Castello (Archpriest of the Basilica of St. Mary Major). Both basilicas were packed with faithful from many countries, some of whom had to follow the Mass from outside.

During his homily in St. John Lateran, Cardinal Vallini recalled that “Blessed Álvaro del Portillo lived always with the certainty that God never abandoned us and that he always sought his children, especially those who are most lost. The newly beatified had tremendous confidence in God, so much so that St. Josemaría had the same confidence to choose Álvaro del Portillo as his confessor. Blessed Álvaro was always trying to discover the will of God, striving his whole life to correspond to God’s will. In this way, he lived a holiness that everyone can live, because it was carried out as part of everyday life.

For his part, Cardinal Santos Abril recalled that Blessed Álvaro "knew how to embody the goodness of God" and "the Christian message announced in deed and in truth, echoing the beauty of the teachings of Vatican II." Teachings that "were constantly in his preaching and in his pastoral work: especially the universal call to holiness, the irreplaceable role of the laity and their freedom, as well as the vocation and mission of priests," he said.

“His life can best be characterized by a real zeal to bring the light and warmth of Christ to all souls,” he continued, “With his teachings, prayer and example, he urged his sons and daughters to work in many environments, looking for occasions to present the figure of Jesus to the people at their side... and encouraged many Christians to be consistent with their vocation to be light for the world, illumined by our Lord.” In
addition, Santos Abril said that Blessed Álvaro “affirmed the call of John Paul II to carry out the new evangelization in the countries where our Lord’s message of joy and mercy has been obscured.”

“In the life of Blessed Álvaro we contemplate a spirit of overflowing love,” he said, “an operative charity that led him to consistently follow the founder of Opus Dei in a silent way” but “with loving fidelity.”

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Homilies and Addresses

Words of Bishop Javier Echevarría after the Transfer of Blessed Álvaro del Portillo to the Prelatic Church of Our Lady of Peace, Rome, October 2, 2014

My dear brothers and sisters:

My dear brothers and sisters, Let us give thanks to God for these solemn days we have lived through, saying to God with all our heart: *Gratias tibi, Deus, gratias tibi*. As Saint Josemaría and our beloved Blessed Álvaro always strove to do, we want to make our whole life into praise for God and an act of love which will lead us to seek specific ways to purify our souls, our bodies, our intentions.

Bishop Álvaro, Blessed Álvaro, was a man of great maturity of will and intellect; with an astonishing simplicity that enabled him to draw close to everyone and serve them. It was wonderful to be in his company because he saw in others Christ himself, and also a sister or a brother. Thus his daily work was a service to God, while realizing it needed to be directed to the service of the people he was dealing with or who were alongside him. We ask our Lord, through the intercession of Blessed Álvaro, and also, naturally, of Saint Josemaría, to make all of us loyal men, loyal women,
who will spend their lives cheerfully, with the same simplicity as Blessed Álvaro, who undertook both very important tasks and the everyday tasks that make up a person’s ordinary life. Therefore, invoking his protection, we ask him to guide us, to help us constantly to raise our heart to God, and also to begin again if ever we have failed to respond as energetically as we should have done.

Blessed Álvaro, thank you for all you have done. Thank you for your generosity. Thank you for your unshakeable faithfulness, even though you had to undergo, as happens to everyone, but specifically to you, moments when you had to face external difficulties that were far from small. At the same time, you never lost your peace or your willingness to accept those crosses, whether big or small. Thank you again. We say it to you with all our heart. Thank you because we would like to tread in the footsteps of your faithfulness, in the footprints of your service to God, in the footprints of your apostolic zeal, because you made use of every opportunity to love people, to love them one by one, and to bring them to God in their daily lives. Thank you, and our thanksgiving could go on without ever ending, because we see here the results of a heroic life. How many people have come to thank him, to honor him and, at the same time, to ask for his protection in their life, their work, their family life, their professional life, their rest and their dealings with others. We would also wish, dear Blessed Álvaro, that you pour into our soul the filial devotion you had from your earliest years to our Mother Holy Mary. Teach us to say to her: Sweet Mother, don’t go away, don’t turn your gaze away from me. But we feel that you are telling us: You, don’t go away from her, not even in the slightest way.

May you truly be very Marian, as that point from *The Way* which moved him so deeply in his youth teaches us: “One always goes to Jesus and one ‘returns’ to him through Mary” (*The Way*, 495). Let us strive to draw ever closer to her, to be more deeply filled with devotion to the Blessed Virgin so she may take us to God the Father, to God the Son, to God the Holy Spirit, and to turn our life into a constant apostolate which will spur us to give our lives generously, to practice constant mortification, to cheerful sacrifice and selfless work, passing everything through our Lady’s hands, so that it may be an offering to God, every day, every
moment, every instant. Thank you, dear Álvaro! Thank you, Blessed Álvaro!

Final Words of the Archbishop of Madrid
Cardinal Antonio María Rouco Varela,
Madrid, September 27, 2014

As we come to the end of this solemn beatification ceremony, I give thanks to God for so many wonderful things he has done in the life of Blessed Álvaro del Portillo and through his faithfulness, for so many men and women throughout the world.

I wish also to express my gratitude to our Holy Father Francis who wanted that this beatification take place in our beloved Archdiocese of Madrid. I would dare to say that Blessed del Portillo, who was born in this city, can be considered ours in a special way, and as such that he blesses us in a special way from heaven. And since he had such deep roots here, he could and knew how to be a citizen of the world, of the five continents to which he had travelled and which are marvelously represented in this prayer assembly.

The new blessed received Baptism, Confirmation and First Holy Communion in this city. Thanks also to the education he received from his family and in school, from an early age his love for Jesus Christ grew ever stronger. He studied civil engineering in Madrid, carrying out at the same time a work of evangelization of the very poor in the slums of Spain's capital city during a period of urban expansion and a rapidly growing population. These events, which took place during the first half of the twentieth century, gave rise to some serious social, human, religious problems in a particularly dramatic period of Spanish and European history.

It was also here in Madrid, while still a young man, that after getting to know Saint Josemaría Escrivá, the founder of Opus Dei, Blessed Álvaro answered with promptitude God’s call to follow him on a path to seek
holiness in the midst of the world through the sanctification of his professional work and carrying out apostolate.

In Madrid, and in the tumultuous years of the Spanish Civil War, he had a chance to bear loving and faithful witness to Christ both in a difficult and risky work of catechesis as well as the months he spent in prison. In 1944 Blessed Álvaro del Portillo received priestly ordination from the hands of my predecessor, Bishop Leopoldo Eijo y Garay.

The particular Church of Madrid is sensitive to the needs of the universal Church. Although Blessed Álvaro left for Rome in 1946, this does not stop us from considering him a citizen of Madrid. As a diocesan Church, we are very proud of the faithful help he lent to Saint Josemaría in spreading the message of Opus Dei throughout the world and for the contributions he made to the Second Vatican Council. We are also proud of the exemplary talent he displayed in succeeding the founder with humility and fidelity and for the episcopal ministry he carried out in union with the Successor of Peter and with the college of bishops.

This ceremony that has brought together people from all over the world reminds me of another festive and universal celebration, the World Youth Day in Madrid, which was an outpouring of grace for everyone and particularly for our city. During those days in 2012 presided over by Pope Benedict XVI, many of you here would have been present, accompanied as well by the same choir that is singing here today.

The footprints of the new blessed are very much felt here in Madrid, not only for historical reasons but also because of the influence which his life and writings have had on the hearts of so many faithful of this Archdiocese. His footprints are also felt through the spiritual and social good done by the very many initiatives that owe their inspiration to him. May the intercession of Blessed Álvaro del Portillo continue to protect them!

I would like to recall that in my personal dealings with Blessed Álvaro, for example during the Synod of Bishops in 1990, I was able to notice how he stood out for his goodness, his serenity and his good humor. “In the Communion of the Church”: Yes, Blessed Álvaro reminded me of my
episcopal motto, “In Ecclesiae Communione.” He loved the Church, which is why he was a man of communion, of union, and of love.

I ask Our Lady of Almudena that we too, as faithful announcers of the Gospel, may know how to respond faithfully to our Lord’s call to serve the men and women of our time.

Final Address of the Prelate of Opus Dei
Bishop Javier Echevarría, 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 Álvaro del Portillo, the successor of Saint Josemaría Escrivá, to the altars, reminds us of the universal call to holiness proclaimed forcefully by the Second Vatican Council. The earthly life of Blessed Álvaro 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 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 that all of us show our thanks in a daily, constant, and intense prayer for the person and the intentions of the Roman Pontiff, for the Bishops and for priests. Let us keep very much in
mind the upcoming Synod of Bishops. Let us beseech the Holy Spirit to enlighten the Synod Fathers in their deliberations for the good of the Church and of souls.

I also consider myself duty bound to give special thanks to Benedict XVI, who paved the way for this beatification by recognizing the heroic virtues of Bishop Álvaro, as well as Cardinal Antonio María Rouco, Archbishop of Madrid, who has followed with such attention the procedure for the Cause over the years. Finally, I would like to thank the many Cardinals, Bishops and priests who are present. For all of us, the beatification of Bishop Álvaro has a special meaning because of the faithfulness with which over many years he carried out his direct service to the Church. Moreover, I cannot help but remember that now someone from among the Roman Curia who assisted the Pope and who actively participated in the Second Vatican Council, has now been declared Blessed.

I can imagine the joy—an accidental part of glory—that Saint John XXIII and Saint John Paul II, as well as the soon to be Blessed Paul VI, must have. Blessed Álvaro served them with full fidelity and filial affection. And I very much like to think about the special joy of Saint Josemaría Escrivá, 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 everyone present here: 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 and daily work. To all, thank you very much! May the example and intercession of the new Blessed inspire us to keep treading diligently, full of Christian joy, along the path of holiness.


Beloved brothers and sisters,

We are celebrating this Holy Eucharist today to praise and bless God for the grace of the beatification, last Saturday in Madrid, of Bishop Álvaro del Portillo, Prelate of Opus Dei.

1. In today’s first reading the prophet Ezekiel, speaking in God’s name, reveals to us how urgently God loves us, continuously taking the initiative to save his flock: “I myself will search for my sheep... and I will make them lie down, says the Lord God. I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the crippled, and I will strengthen the weak, and the fat and the strong I will watch over” (Ezek 34:11, 15-16). God goes out in search of his sheep especially those that have “strayed”, brings them to green pastures and gives them rest. It is truly comforting and encouraging to know that God never abandons us, because he loves us. God always precedes us. He knows our needs, anticipates our petitions, and before we address him with our pleas for help and protection, he acts; he preserves us from evil and creates new opportunities for doing good. Aware of God the Father’s provident love, we can joyfully profess our gratitude with the words of the Psalm: “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want (Ps 23 (22):1b).”

2. The Gospel has reminded us that God’s love for us has truly gone much further than Ezekiel’s words express. Jesus, the Son of God, in proclaiming himself the “good shepherd,” has transformed the very concept
of shepherd, for he is the shepherd who not only guides and cares for his flock, but lays down his life for it: “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep” (Jn 10:11). On the cross, Jesus has given himself entirely for us, and in the resurrection he has communicated divine life to us with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, who in Baptism has made us sons and daughters, sharers in the same destiny as the Son and members of his family, the Church. The risen Jesus is Life unending: in him we can address God, as children address their father and say with Saint Paul: “It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me (Gal 2:20).”

3. My brothers and sisters, Blessed Álvaro del Portillo’s life was imbued with this sure faith. Born in Madrid in 1914, at the age of 21, in 1935, he joined Opus Dei and very soon the holy founder found in him his most valued and faithful co-worker. Ordained a priest in 1944, he lived nearly fifty years in Rome, from 1946 on, where he died in 1994. Such was Saint Josemaría’s esteem for Don Álvaro that, on the very day of Don Álvaro’s priestly ordination, he chose him as his confessor. The dedication of this son and brother to the Church won him the trust of the Holy See, which called on him for multiple tasks, both during the Second Vatican Council and afterwards, in various dicasteries of the Roman Curia. Elected in 1975 as the first successor of Saint Josemaría to head the Work, he worked intensely to obtain from the Church the canonical form most suited to the foundational charism, made specific in the personal prelature, of which he was the first prelate. Saint John Paul II raised him to the episcopacy, ordaining him on January 6, 1991. On March 23, 1994, God called him to his presence just a few hours after returning from a pilgrimage to the Holy Land.

4. The new blessed believed deeply and intensely that God, in Jesus, loves us, gives his life for us, introduces us into his family, the Church, cares for us and guides us with fatherly affection so that we may attain our true good. Blessed Álvaro fell in love with Christ and let himself be loved by him. He opened his heart and abandoned himself totally in the Lord. That was how he lived and to this ideal he also consecrated his priestly life, teaching us that at every moment, both in the little things of each day and in the most difficult and painful situations, our intimate disposition should
be to try to discover God’s will for us and to strive generously to second it. This is what the Christian vocation consists in, a vocation to the holiness to which we are all called; a holiness accessible to all men and women in the simplicity of daily life. Those who knew him testify that he “transmitted the urgency of God’s love. He gently reminded each person of their own responsibility to love God and souls.”

He shared fully the charism that God had given to Saint Josemaría and he worked tirelessly—with “apostolic daring,” as the holy founder often invited people to act—so that everyone might find God and respond to their own vocation. In marriage and the family, as in the priesthood or other possible forms of Christian life, God reveals to us what is his will for our true good and with his grace calls us to listen to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit and to put them generously into practice. Abandonment to God’s loving will is the source of the joy that should saturate the life of every Christian.

In one of his pastoral letters the new blessed wrote that, with this project of God for each one: “our existence has taken on this purpose, in a total and exclusive way: there are not — there cannot be — other aims in our will, other desires in our heart, other thoughts in our mind, which are not fully subject to the merciful plan which God has put to us.”[1]

5. In the second reading Saint Paul, speaking of himself, says he is a minister of the Church “according to the divine office which was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known, the mystery hidden for ages and generations” (Col 1:25-26).

Jesus is the true shepherd, but he carries out his work in history making use of men as his instruments for doing good. Among the multiplicity of gifts and charisms, one that is certainly important is the ministry of those who, having received the grace of the priestly ministry, act in the person of Christ to be dispensers of the Word by means of the work of evangelization, dispensers of the grace of the sacraments and pastoral guides along the path to salvation.

Blessed Álvaro del Portillo exercised the priesthood, and afterwards the episcopate, with a deep “spiritual fatherhood.” With his gentle and attentive humility he sought always to understand the needs and hopes of
men and women, approaching them all with a father's love. For him, the ministry was an exercise of fatherly care, which in turn expressed itself in ministry. That is why he always encouraged people to give themselves generously in the apostolate. He said: “There are many people living around us who do not know Christ and are waiting for us to attend to them.” He also showed his pastoral charity by his tireless promotion of social activities all over the world: works of mercy, hospitals, schools, universities…

In view of the progressive spreading of secularization, he exhorted the members of the Work, and in particular the laity, to bring a Christian spirit with the light of the Gospel to all environments. “Let there be no sphere of civil society,” he used to say, “with its back turned to the light of Christ. Recover this world which is fleeing from God and bring it back to him.”

He was deeply convinced that Christ “desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim 2:4). That is why all of us members of the Church are called to cooperate in its mission. As the Holy Father Pope Francis said forcefully in his apostolic exhortation Evangelii Gaudium: “In virtue of their baptism, all the members of the People of God have become missionary disciples (cf. Mt 28:19). All the baptized, whatever their position in the Church or their level of instruction in the faith, are agents of evangelization.”

“To take part sincerely in this great task entails, on the one hand, a very special responsibility for which all of us will have to give an account to God; and, on the other, it is a sign of the great honor which the Blessed Trinity bestows on us, an unmerited manifestation of God’s loving affection and trust in his children.”

In the particular case of the laity, “this mission is to be accomplished through the fulfillment of one’s professional work and in one’s ordinary duties, lived heroically, with supernatural outlook, to sanctify oneself and to sanctify the temporal realities each one meets in his or her daily contact.” It is an apostolate without limits, which begins with one’s own family — the domestic church which needs to be built day by day — and extends afterwards to one’s friends, work colleagues and to all the people we have occasion to meet, with a sense of responsibility for the common good of society. And always without discrimination, because God loves everyone
and excludes no one from the apostolic zeal which should show forth in every instant of our life.

6. In the pastoral life of the new blessed I would like to recall, in particular, his Eucharistic and penitential ministry.

First, the Eucharist, the memorial of the death and resurrection of the Lord, which makes present here and now, by means of the sacramental signs, the reality of the sacrifice of the cross, placed once and for all at the summit of human history. The Second Vatican Council has exhorted Christians to do their utmost to convert the holy Mass, each day, into the “center and root of their whole life.”[6] This was something Blessed Álvaro was fully convinced of, even at times making his thanksgiving after Mass out loud, with simplicity and devotion, to help the faithful to love Jesus in the Eucharist and to speak with God.

With this same zeal he celebrated the sacrament of confession: the “sacrament of joy,” as Saint Josemaría like to call it. Blessed Álvaro said that each time we receive it with sincere repentance for our sins we throw ourselves into the open arms of God, who welcomes us lovingly, forgives us and assures us of the grace to go ahead along our path united to him, or to start upon it anew if we had left it. Blessed Álvaro went to confession with great faith every week, giving example of humility and trust in God’s love, and likewise encouraged everyone to go frequently, so as to experience God’s tenderness.

7. Dear brothers and sisters, may the example of the saints encourage us to pursue with daring and faithfulness the path to holiness. Let us ask Blessed Álvaro and the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God and our Mother, to accompany us on our path as sons and daughters of God, docile to his will, so that we may live to the full our vocation and be witnesses to it each and every day. Amen.


Homily at the Beatification Mass of Álvaro del Portillo Cardinal Angelo Amato, S.D.B., Prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, Madrid, September 27, 2014

1. “A shepherd according to the Heart of Christ, a zealous minister of the Church.”[1] This is the portrait that Pope Francis draws of Blessed Álvaro 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]

As a youth, the new Blessed was called to follow Christ, going on to become a diligent minister of the Church and to proclaim throughout the world the glorious riches of his saving mystery: “This is the Christ we proclaim, this is the wisdom in which we thoroughly train everyone and instruct everyone, to make them all perfect in Christ. It is for this I struggle wearily on, helped only by his power driving me irresistibly” (*Col* 1:28-29). He made this proclamation of Christ the Savior in absolute faithfulness to the cross and, at the same time, with exemplary, evangelical joy amidst difficulties. Therefore today the liturgy applies to him St. Paul’s words: “Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the Church” (*Col* 1:24).
Serene happiness when undergoing pain and suffering is characteristic of the saints. Moreover, the beatitudes, including the more demanding ones such as being persecuted, are nothing other than a hymn to joy.

2. Blessed Álvaro practiced many virtues to a heroic degree, such as faith, hope and charity. He practiced these virtuous habits in the light of the beatitudes of meekness, mercy, and purity of heart. The testimonies all coincide in this. Apart from the absolute spiritual and apostolic harmony he had with the holy Founder, he also stood out as being a person of great humanity.

Witnesses state that from his childhood Álvaro was “a very happy and studious boy, who never caused any problems;” “he was affectionate, straightforward, happy, responsible and kind.”[3]

From his mother, Doña Clementina, he inherited a notable serenity, considerateness, the habit of smiling, being understanding, and speaking well about others, and reflecting deeply before judging. He was a true gentleman. He was not a talkative person. His engineering training gave him habits of intellectual rigor, conciseness, and precision, enabling him to go straight to the essence of problems and solve them. He inspired respect and admiration in others.

3. His consideration for others went hand-in-hand with exceptional spiritual richness. One of his outstanding graces was the unity between his interior life and his tireless apostolic zeal. The writer Salvador Bernal states that he turned the humble prose of daily work into poetry.

He was an example of fidelity to the Gospel, the Church, and the Magisterium of the Pope. Every time he went to St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome, he would recite the Creed before St. Peter’s tomb, and a Salve Regina before the picture of Our Lady, Mother of the Church.

He always avoided focusing on himself, because he passed on the truth of the Gospel and the fullness of tradition, not his own opinions. His spiritual life was nourished by Eucharistic piety, devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, and veneration for the saints. He kept his awareness of God’s presence alive by frequent aspirations and vocal prayers. Some of those he used habitually were “Most Sacred and Merciful Heart of Jesus, grant us
peace!” and “Most sweet heart of Mary, prepare a safe journey,” as well as invoking our Lady as “Holy Mary, our Hope, Handmaid of the Lord, Seat of Wisdom.”

4. A decisive moment in his life was his calling to Opus Dei. When he was 21, in 1935, after meeting St. Josemaría Escrivá, who was at that time a young priest of 33, he responded generously to God’s call to holiness and apostolate.

He had a deep sense of filial communion with the Holy Father, expressed both in affections and deeds. He received the Pope’s teaching gratefully and made it known to all the Opus Dei faithful. In the last years of his life he would often kiss the Prelate’s ring given to him by the Pope, as a way of reaffirming his total adherence to the Pope’s wishes. In particular, he backed up the Pope’s requests for prayer and fasting for peace, Christian unity, and the evangelization of Europe.

He was outstanding for his prudence and rectitude in evaluating events and people; his justice in respecting other people’s good name and freedom; his fortitude in facing up to physical or moral difficulties; and his temperance, shown in his sobriety and his interior and exterior mortification. Blessed Álvaro possessed the fragrance of Christ, the bonus odor Christi (see 2 Cor 2:15), which is the aroma of genuine holiness.

5. However, there is one virtue which Bishop Álvaro 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 (Mt 11:29). 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 Álvaro 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] Hence 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 despicietas *(Ps 51 [50]:9)*—a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.”

For him, as for St. Augustine, humility was the dwelling-place of charity.[7] 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.”[8] 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 from not considering himself better than others. He thought that his worst enemy was pride. One witness states that he was “humility personified.”[9]

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.”[10]

For Blessed Álvaro, 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.”[11] 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. Álvaro, because our Father lives on in his successor.”[12]

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 Álvaro, 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 Álvaro. 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 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.”[13]

This is the message that Blessed Álvaro del Portillo hands on to us today. He was “a shepherd according to the Heart of Christ, a zealous minister of the Church.”[14] He invites us to be holy like him, with a holiness that is friendly, merciful, good natured, meek, and humble.

The Church and the world need the great witness 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 Álvaro del Portillo, pray for us. Amen.


Homily at the Mass of Thanksgiving

We come together today with great joy in this Roman basilica dedicated to Holy Mary. Our Eucharist takes on a special coloring, for we are thanking the thrice holy God for the recent beatification, decreed by our beloved Pope Francis, of Bishop Álvaro del Portillo, prelate of Opus Dei. God’s holiness is reflected in his saints and, using an expression
of the Holy Father, it has a face. In the light of the liturgy of the Word, I would like to contemplate with you the goodness of God which took flesh in Álvaro del Portillo: we want to “discover Jesus in the face” of the new Blessed. With a faithfulness full of love, following the example of Saint Josemaría, he proclaimed the Christian message in deeds and in truth, echoing the beauty of the teachings of the Second Vatican Council, and his zeal for souls inspired him to bring the warmth of our faith to all the world.

1. “I myself will search for my sheep and will seek them out” (Ezek 34:11). Great is the promise Yahweh makes, through the prophet Ezekiel, to the members of the chosen People who had undergone the deportation. Despite men’s infidelities, the Lord shows his closeness to them, and promises to protect them and guide them: “I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I will make them lie down” (Ezek 34:15).

Israel goes forward in history sustained by the hope in those prophecies, which were to find fulfillment with the incarnation of the Word. Indeed, Jesus Christ takes this same moving image and presents himself as the good shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep he has received from the Father (cf. Jn 10:11.29). He thus expresses both his intimate — consubstantial — union with the Father and his mission before mankind. In this loving care by our good shepherd, we recognize the mercy of the eternal Father, who goes in search of his children to draw them to himself, gathering them into the same house, which is the Church.

Jesus’ mission is prolonged in a special way in the Apostles and their successors. He makes himself present in those he has designated as shepherds of his people: that is why Saint Paul considers himself the servant of the Church, and is conscious of having received a precise task, on behalf of the faithful (cf. Col 1:25). To communicate this boundless love of God for men and women is something beyond our capability and it would almost seem rash to attempt it; nevertheless, the Apostle exclaims that he is carrying out his mission, not with his own energy, but that of Christ: “I toil, striving with all the energy which he mightily inspires in me” (Col 1:29). Álvaro del Portillo was a faithful pastor, true to the announcement the prophet Jeremiah had made to the people, that God would give them shepherds after his own heart (cf. Jer 3:15). Such was
Blessed Álvaro’s response to the merciful faithfulness of God, which Scripture designates as truth and love.

At the beginning of this Eucharistic celebration, we turned in the collect prayer to God, to the Father of mercies who filled Blessed Álvaro del Portillo with a spirit of truth and love. And indeed grace acted powerfully in this blessed bishop, whose life of service to the People of God was a manifestation of the Father’s mercy. He did so in an age in which men and women continue to need to experience the tenderness of the Father, who heals wounded hearts, strengthens the weak and brings back the stray to the good path (cf. Ezek 34:16). Blessed Álvaro invited people to draw close to the Lord, to persevere faithfully at this side and thus fill their lives with gladness: “Don’t leave ‘him’ and you will fall in love; be loyal and you will end up madly in love with God” he once wrote, commenting on the last point of Saint Josemaría’s book, *The Way.*

2. The spirit of truth was everywhere in the life of Blessed Álvaro. He was truly a worker in the truth (cf. 3 Jn 1, 8), of that truth which saves, which is faith in the Triune God. He delivered the gospel message to many people of the most diverse backgrounds. Following in the footsteps of Saint Josemaría Escrivá he undertook journeys to North and South America and to Australasia, where he had many catechetical meetings, giving Christian doctrine to the men and women of today, both in countries with deep Christian traditions and in those in which the announcement of Jesus Christ is still opening its way. In his work assisting the Apostolic See he was a faithful custodian of the Church’s Tradition, while at the same time he knew it had to be transmitted to his contemporaries with the same strength and liveliness as in the early Church. Thus he collaborated effectively in the work of the Second Vatican Council, whose teachings were constantly present in his preaching and pastoral work, especially the universal call to holiness, the irreplaceable role of the laity and their freedom, and the vocation and ministry of priests.

As a servant of the truth, Blessed Álvaro also worked to set up universities and educational centers, filled with the spirit of the Gospel. In a time which exalts the value of freedom, he reminded people that it is truth that sets man free (cf. Jn 8:32), and specifically the truth of our dignity as sons and daughters of God.
That is why, together with this tireless service of the truth (and as its necessary foundation), we contemplate in the life of Blessed Álvaro a spirit overflowing with love. His was an operative charity, which led him constantly to second the founder of Opus Dei in a quiet but very effective manner. His life was not exempt from sorrows and afflictions, which he bore with genuine peace, strengthened by God’s grace. Thus he was able to say what Saint Paul wrote to the Colossians: “Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the Church” (Col 1:24).

In his pastoral ministry, he was a sower of peace and joy. Many were struck by the peacefulness of Blessed Álvaro’s gaze, an expression of his deep filial relationship to God as Father and which spontaneously communicated the peace of one who knows he is a much loved son. In his pastoral journeys, he invited his listeners to let this Christian serenity govern their daily efforts, turning their work, family life and other daily realities into an occasion for meeting Jesus Christ.

This holy pastor also knew that peace can only come to society if human relations are filled with justice and love. Therefore, in his journeys and pastoral letters he made heartfelt appeals not to be indifferent to the lot of our brothers and sisters. For God calls all of us to be instruments of his mercy, by alleviating the material and spiritual needs of those who live alongside us. Many welfare and social improvement initiatives owe their beginning in some way or other to the life and preaching of Blessed Álvaro.

3. “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 state that this concern was deep in the shepherd’s heart of the new blessed. His gaze took in the whole world. With his teaching, prayer and example he encouraged his sons and daughters to work in the most diverse environments, turning them into an opportunity to present the figure of Jesus to the people they were with. Indeed, as Pope Francis teaches, “every Christian is a missionary to the extent that he has met the love of God in Christ Jesus.”[1] Blessed Álvaro encouraged many Christians to live up to their vocation to be the light of the world, letting themselves be enlightened by the Lord. At times he
compared the Eucharist’s power to transform souls to the sun’s rays at sunset that seem to set the world on fire. So too Christians can shine and give light wherever they go, if they receive our Lord in the Sacrament of the Altar.

To bring Christ’s light and warmth to everyone was a yearning that characterized the life of the new blessed. He was quick to respond to Saint John Paul II’s call for a new evangelization in those countries where our Lord’s message of joy and mercy had become obscured. He also began the apostolate of the Prelature of Opus Dei in other places where the Gospel had not yet fully taken root.

As Pope Francis reminds us, “the new evangelization should bring out a new protagonism in each of the baptized.”[2] This Mass of thanksgiving is also an invitation to all of us to rekindle our apostolic commitment. We celebrate it in this church which has the venerated image of Holy Mary, Salus Populi Romani, salvation of the Roman people. The Holy Father came to pray to her the day after his election as successor to Peter. Blessed Álvaro too was a frequent pilgrim to this Marian shrine. On January 1, 1978, he came to pray here to initiate a Marian year of thanksgiving for the 50th anniversary of the foundation of Opus Dei. He knew that to reach Jesus the best way is to have recourse to his most Holy Mother, according to these words of the founder of Opus Dei, who had lodged deep in his heart the truth that: “One always goes to Jesus and one ‘returns’ to him through Mary.”

Dear friends, today too we wish to entrust our Christian journey to the protection of Holy Mary. And we repeat our gratitude to the Lord who, through the mediation of his most Holy Mother, has shown us his mercy in the life of Blessed Álvaro del Portillo: may the new Blessed intercede so that we may be good sons and daughters of so good a Mother. Amen.

[1] Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhort. Evangelii gaudium, November 24, 2013, no. 120.

[2] Ibid.
Dear Brothers and Sisters

As you can well imagine, many memories pass through my mind today and lead me to give thanks to God for the good and faithful servant Blessed Álvaro del Portillo, bishop and prelate of Opus Dei.

I think all of us would have liked to carry the coffin so as to thank him for his life of self-giving and service to the Church, his interest in each one of us, his daily love for the will of God.

Today we celebrate the feast of St. Michael, St. Gabriel and St. Raphael. I can assure you that Blessed Álvaro had great devotion to these Archangels, who received specific missions from God. Our most beloved Bishop Álvaro was so devoted to them that in a meeting he proposed that instead of suppressing the liturgical feasts of St. Gabriel and St. Raphael, the celebration of the three archangels should be unified in a single feast, the one we celebrate today.

I imagine that many of you will have attended Mass this morning, so you will remember the words that Nathaniel heard from the lips of Philip, “Come and see.” Blessed Álvaro always sought to see and do the things that God asked of him. He met the Work in the early years, in 1935. He was so impressed by Saint Josemaría’s strong and marvelous faith that, when the possibility of following God along the path of Opus Dei was suggested to him, he did not hesitate and responded with all the strength of his soul, saying “Here I am.” This way of acting, this response, was the one he tried to give every day of his life. He did it in the first place following the example of our Lady, with her wonderful reply “ecce ancilla Domini,” and also following the footsteps of Saint Josemarúa. Thus he opened for us the path of faithfulness, an unbreakable faithfulness.

Blessed Álvaro was a man of faith, who trusted God and those called
by God to lead this part of the Church which is the prelature of Opus Dei. That is why Saint Josemaría realized, after only a short time, that here was a person he could rely on to further the work he had started alone, but with great faith which he passed on to the people around him. Blessed Álvaro understood this lesson of faith and therefore trusted in God throughout his life. He always wanted to follow him more and more closely.

Blessed Álvaro possessed all the virtues we have heard about in today’s reading, because he truly sought to identify himself constantly with the will of God. He was able to continue saying “Here I am” right to the moment when God called him to his presence, and he went to heaven with a smile on his lips, full of the peace he always communicated to everyone around him.

We ask you, Blessed Álvaro, with all our heart, that we may all be very faithful to the calls of God throughout the day. We remember you with that smile, so usual in you—a smile that came from your union with God, from your faith in the intercession of our Lady, and the certainty that Saint Josemaría Escrivá looked after us from heaven.

When our founder left this earth, Blessed Álvaro decided to adapt himself completely to the way of working of Saint Josemaría. And that was precisely what Paul VI asked him once when Blessed Álvaro talked to him about the apostolate that needed to be carried out throughout the world. With the certainty proper to the supreme pastor in the Church, the future Blessed Paul VI told him: “Whenever you need to resolve a problem or give some indications entrust yourself to Msgr. Escrivá, so as to act according to his mind.”[1] And Blessed Álvaro followed this advice. I can assure you that his prayer was based on his conversation with God but going through the intercession of our Lady and asking for the help of Msgr. Escrivá. He had seen Saint Josemaría praying, growing in his daily conversation with our Lord, and treasuring the value of sacrifice and cheerful mortification, not with resignation but with joy, because Saint Josemaría loved the cross, and Blessed Álvaro too learned to love the cross with all his strength.

He had great human and spiritual qualities and sought to develop them throughout his life. He was faithful and made use of every possible
opportunity to say to God, as I mentioned before, “here I am.” We ask you, Blessed Álvaro, father and friend, to help us all to never shirk in our own life, not even in small ways, what God wants from us. Help us, because we need your intercession to serve God better, to go to our Lady more, and to be good instruments, faithful to the Church and to the Pope, thus helping our society today in all its needs.

My brothers and sisters, we have before us the mortal remains of a man, a priest, a bishop, who placed everything he did in God’s hands. That is why he was always serene, happy. He was a great communicator of peace. Let us truly ask him: help us to give witness to the love that God has for us.

On our part, let us seek to work with sacrifice and renunciation, if necessary, because this is the way of growing positively in our human and spiritual life. Let us invoke the intercession of our Lady, to whom Blessed Álvaro so often prayed (so many memories come to my mind of his visits to shrines of the mother of God and our mother). Let us draw close to our Lady, asking her that God may increase the accidental glory of Blessed Álvaro and that he —father, friend, brother—may help us to be always constant and faithful to God’s will. May Jesus Christ be praised!

Homily of the Mass of Thanksgiving for the Beatification Bishop Javier Echevarría, Prelate of Opus Dei, Madrid, September 28, 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 here yesterday, 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 for God and for one another. This love is also strengthened today in the Eucharist, in this Mass in thanksgiving for the beatification of our beloved Bishop Álvaro, 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 learn 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 Álvaro?

Contemplating the holy life of Blessed Álvaro, 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 the 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 then I will be able 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 Bishop
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, Álvaro 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] Bishop Álvaro would often say, 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 that poem in which Virgil addresses a newborn child: Incipe, parve puer, risu cognoscere matrem;[5] “Little child, learn to recognize your mother by her smile.” At birth, children begin to discover the universe. In their mother’s face, full of love, in her welcoming smile, children newly born into the world discover 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,” 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 a great “spiritual
fecundity,”[8] open to life at all times, as taught by Saint John Paul II, to whom Blessed Álvaro was united by a filial friendship.

In giving thanks to Blessed Álvaro, 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 Álvaro: 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 go forward in a social context that is often difficult and even hostile. Keep up your effort! 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 Álvaro, thinking of how much he owes to Saint Josemaría, said 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 turn puts down deep roots, we need 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 during 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 Álvaro’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.” And he added that Blessed Álvaro “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 of our daily lives we can discover a sure path to holiness.”

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 Álvaro, to respond to the invitation of the Successor of Peter: “to let ourselves be loved by the Lord, to open up our heart to his love, and to allow him to be the one who guides our lives,” a desire Saint Josemaría so often entrusted to Our Lady of Almudena, so greatly loved and venerated in this Archdiocese. Amen.


Virgil, *Eclogue IV*, 60.


Ibid.

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


Ibid.

Ibid.

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ABOUT SAINT JOSEMARÍA
E-book of Diccionario de San Josemaría

The Spanish publisher Monte Carmelo has published a digital version of the *Diccionario de San Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer*. In this work, the life and teachings of the founder of Opus Dei are presented under 288 headings. Of these, 148 refer to theological and spiritual topics and 130 contain material of an historical and biographical nature. It also includes entries on the writings of St. Josemaría and some of the apostolic initiatives that he fostered all over the world. The work is the fruit of the collaboration of 226 authors, including theologians, canonists, historians, philosophers and other specialists from many different countries. It was supervised by an editorial committee under the direction of Professor Jose Luis Illanes. The printed version of the work was published in 2013.

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Devotion Throughout the World

*A relic in Tejar del Guarco, Cartago, Costa Rica*

For the centennial celebration of the parish of the Immaculate Conception in Guarco, the pastor, Rev. Alfonso Marin, and his vicars decided to embellish the basilica by constructing a new altar that would contain a relic of St. Josemaría. On November 17, Bishop José Francisco Ulloa of Cartago, presided over the solemn Mass for the centennial, celebrated on the new altar. More than a thousand parishioners from the Tejar del Guarco community attended the ceremony.

As the pastor explained: “I am certain this is going to be a great opportunity to spread St. Josemaría’s teaching about the universal call to holiness, and an invitation to our parishioners to go to his intercession and learn to find God in their ordinary work. And for our priests, it will be a wonderful reminder each day to rely on the help of St. Josemaría especially in the celebration of Holy Mass, to make it, as he did, the center and root of our life.”

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**Two new paintings**

**Madrid, Spain**

In October, the Royal Monastery of St. Elizabeth placed in its church a painting of St. Josemaría, chaplain and rector of this church from 1931 to 1946. The canvas represents the founder of Opus Dei during those years, holding in his arms the statue of the infant Jesus from the convent. The painting, by Ignacio Valdes, has been reproduced on cards, on the back of which is printed: “Through a singular grace of God, during those years there took root in his soul a sure awareness of his divine filiations and a strong love for Christ’s Most Holy Humanity, to which the Infant Jesus of this Recollect Augustinians convent contributed. Next to the sacristy he wrote his book *Holy Rosary*, which has taught many people to contemplate the life of Jesus, Mary and Joseph, as one more person in the Gospel scenes.”

**Florence, Italy**

The *Scuola d’Arte Sacra* in Florence has produced an oil painting of St. Josemaría. This representation of the founder of Opus Dei was placed in the Church of St. Mary Magdalene, in Ischia near Naples, together with a portrait of Blessed Maria Cristina of Savoy.

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**A traffic circle in Jerez de la Frontera, Spain**

On December 6, the city of Jerez de la Frontera dedicated a traffic circle to St. Josemaría. The municipal government took this decision based on a citizens’ initiative backed by the Academy of St. Dionisius, sports clubs, neighborhood associations, fraternities and confraternities, businesses, private enterprises, and the diocese. The traffic circle is found in the vicinity of Pozoalbero, a retreat center begun under the impetus of St. Josemaría, which offers spiritual and cultural formation to people from all walks of life.

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**A sports field in Fondi**
The Italian town of Fondi has dedicated its new sports field to St. Josemaría Escrivá. This recreational complex is located in the working class area of Portone della Corte. Its inauguration took place on November 18, with the attendance of 300 children from the Don Milani primary school. Salvatore De Meo, the town mayor, reminded people of the visits by St. Josemaría and Blessed Álvaro del Portillo to Salto di Fondi and expressed his gratitude for their efforts to foster the social and spiritual growth of the area. He also stressed that the dedication was in recognition of the love that the founder of Opus Dei had for the neediest. Afterwards, in the parish church of St. Francis of Assisi, Rev. Ugo Borghello presided over a Eucharistic celebration in thanksgiving.

Blessed Paul VI, Saint Josemaría, and Blessed Álvaro

Archbishop Giovanni Battista Montini, the future Paul VI, and St. Josemaría Escrivá met for the first time in 1946, in Rome. From then on they were always united by their mutual affection. For Pope Paul VI’s beatification, we reproduce an article by Cosimo di Fazio that provides some details regarding the relationship of the founder of Opus Dei and Blessed Álvaro del Portillo with this Pontiff.

The close relationship between Josemaría Escrivá and Giovanni Battista Montini has been amply documented in articles already published. Their first meeting took place in Rome, when Montini was the “Sostituto” (the substitute for ordinary affairs) of the Secretariat of State, and continued afterwards when he was elected Pope with the name of Paul VI.

Many of the articles that have been published deal especially with questions related to Opus Dei’s canonical path. However, even in the “official” correspondence between Montini and Escrivá, we can detect an especially deep and close relationship between them. This was not just a matter of a mutual esteem, but also of a spiritual communion between two
people the Church now sets forth as an example to all Christians. The saints have always enjoyed a privileged wisdom regarding other people’s interior life, with a surprising intuition of another person’s holiness. It is enough to remember the words of blessed Ildefonso Schuster, Cardinal of Milan, about St. Josemaría, and vice versa. The same can be said about his relationship with Giovanni Battista Montini.

During the last audience that Paul VI granted to St. Josemaría, on June 25, 1973, they spoke about Opus Dei’s canonical framework and the situation of the Church. The Pope told him several times: “You are a saint!” After the founder’s death, Álvaro del Portillo asked the Pope for permission to tell the faithful of Opus Dei about this encounter. On hearing those words of the Pope, Don Álvaro said, the founder in his humility was deeply embarrassed. On his part, St. Josemaría also perceived the holiness of the Pope from Brescia. In 1967, for example, when speaking in Madrid about Pope Paul VI to some members of Opus Dei, he stressed his “longing for peace, his love and concern for the humblest, his desire that no one be lacking anything.” Later Álvaro del Portillo alluded (always with Pope Paul VI’s permission) to his words in an audience with Don Álvaro in 1976. Paul VI said that the founder of Opus Dei was “one of the people who had received the most charisms in the Church’s history and had responded with the greatest generosity to God’s gifts.”

Giovanni Battista Montini first heard people speaking about the founder of Opus Dei in 1943, when he was Sostituto for the Vatican’s Secretariat of State. During those years, when World War II was raging, two people of Opus Dei were living in Rome, José Orlandis and Salvador Canals. It was they who informed him about Msgr. Escrivá’s spiritual message, giving him a copy of The Way, his best known book. On reading it, Montini grasped with great insight its significance, and advised them that the founder should come to Rome.

The news he was receiving about Opus Dei and his reading of The Way left a deep impression on him, as we can deduce from a note addressed to Álvaro del Portillo on June 20, 1946. The two had met for the first time just a few days earlier. During that first encounter, Don Álvaro invited the Sostituto to lunch and requested an audience with the Pope for St. Josemaría, who was to arrive in Rome a few days later. Montini in his note
replied that he wasn’t able to leave his work in the Vatican at the present moment and added: “I am very happy about the news you have given me (the arrival of the founder). It would be a great pleasure for me to meet a person of such great merit. Let us arrange a time in the evening, if possible, for that conversation, which I expect will be useful for my soul.”

The first meeting of Giovanni Battista Montini with the founder took place a few weeks after this note was written, on July 8. Montini told Escrivá and Del Portillo that he was very happy to receive news about Opus Dei’s apostolic work with university students. Providing spiritual assistance to students was one of Montini’s deep pastoral concerns, dating back to the time of his appointment as chaplain for the Federation of Italian Catholic University Students.

This news about Opus Dei’s apostolic work was all the more heartening since both he and Pope Pius XII had been saddened by news of the persecution of Catholics in various countries around the world. As their conversation progressed, their mutual trust and esteem became more obvious. Montini even told him that he wanted to address him “as a new brother.” St. Josemaría, a good judge of souls, realized that the Sostituto was a person with a deep spiritual life. At the end of the audience he asked for his blessing. Montini was so surprised he forgot the protocol of the Curia and said: “But you are the one who should give it to me!”

Their trust-filled relationship can be seen reflected in the letters and reports of St. Josemaría and Blessed Álvaro on matters related to Opus Dei’s canonical path. In a note written after their meeting on November 11, 1946, St. Josemaría recorded: “I went to see Montini. When I go to the Vatican and see how much they love us, I bless our Lord a thousand times for all that we have suffered.” And he added that it had been necessary to pass by way of the Cross to reach that resurrection. Montini assured him that he prayed every day for Opus Dei. St. Josemaría often recalled those meetings, right to the end of his life: “The first words of affection and encouragement that I heard in Rome,” he wrote, “were from Bishop Giovanni Battista Montini.”

The appointment of Montini as Archbishop of Milan, in 1954, and his subsequent election as Pope in 1963, decreased the frequency of their
meetings, although their friendship and spiritual harmony endured over time.

Blessed Álvaro, a witness to those meetings, said in an interview in 1982: “I was able to note in a very special way Paul VI's affection for the Father (St. Josemaría) during an audience.” The Pope later told him that he had been reading *The Way* for many years, with great benefit to his soul, and asked him at what age the founder had written it. When Don Álvaro replied that it had been published when he was thirty-seven, but that the core of the book had already appeared in 1934 under the title *Spiritual Considerations*, when the founder was in his early thirties, the Pope turned thoughtful and said: “Then he wrote it in the maturity of youth.”

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Celebrating the Fortieth Anniversary of His Visit to Cañete, Peru

The community of Cañete celebrated the fortieth anniversary of St. Josemaría’s visit to this region, on July 13, 1974. For this occasion, Bishop Ricardo Garcia, bishop of the prelature of Cañete and Yauyos, celebrated a solemn Mass in the shrine of Mother of Fairest Love in San Vicente. Following the Mass, a statue of St. Josemaría was carried in procession from the church to the city hall. Also attending the ceremony were local authorities, and students and volunteers from other countries helping out in development programs in the area.

The mayor, María Montoya, stressed the great value of St. Josemaría’s teachings for the spiritual and human formation of people from this area, and his role in encouraging the start of social projects such as *Condoray* and *Valle Grande*, which are assisting development in the province and benefiting thousands of people with limited incomes. She also pointed out that the founder of Opus Dei’s teachings and example had led hundreds of priests from the Yauyos prelature to give their lives generously in the service of the local people, and to carry out a pastoral work that, over time, has deeply impacted the lives of the families in Cañete.
The Holy See entrusted the territorial prelature of Yauyos to Opus Dei on October 2, 1957.

Bulgarian and Romanian: New Languages for www.escrivaworks.org

The www.escrivaworks.org web page now offers the works of St. Josemaría in Bulgarian and Romanian. With these two new languages, his writings can now be accessed in sixteen languages. The web page www.escrivaworks.org has a simple and intuitive interface to search for quotations in the works of St. Josemaría, create collections of quotes or consult translations in various languages. This makes it a useful instrument for research projects and for getting to know better the founder of Opus Dei.

Other publishing news

Books of St. Josemaría


Camino, Mexico City, Minos, 2014. Twenty-Sixth Mexican printing


Der Weg, Cologne, Adamas Verlag, 2014. Fourteenth German printing of The Way.

Im Feuer der Schmied, Cologne, Adamas Verlag, 2014. Third German printing of The Forge.


Droga, Bruzda, Kuźnia; Poznan, Wydawnictwo Św. Wojciecha, 2014. Combined publication in Polish of The Way (17th printing), Furrow (9th printing), and The Forge (8th printing).


Books about St. Josemaría


On November 21-22, the seventh International St. Josemaría Symposium was held in Jaén, Spain. Over five hundred people from nine
countries met to reflect on, in the light of St. Josemaría’s teachings, the creation of “new scenarios of freedom” due to recent social changes.

The inaugural lecture, “Christianity and the values of citizenship,” was given by José Luis Requero, a justice of the Supreme Court. Among the speakers at the conference were Rev. Jose Luis González Gullón, a theologian and researcher at the Josemaría Escrivá Center of Documentation and Studies at the University of Navarra; the movie director Pablo Moreno; Carmina García Valdés, former director general of the Fundación Red Madre; Jack Valero, director of Catholic Voices; the medical doctor for Atletico Madrid, Jose María Villalón; and Ángel Tallón, a doctor in charge of organizing European initiatives in Africa.

The Vicar General of the Jaén diocese, Rev. Francisco Juan Martinez Rojas, gave the final presentation, entitled “Holiness and daily life in the message of St. Josemaría.” The conference was closed with some words by Bishop Ramón del Hoyo of Jaén.
News
Appointments of Auxiliary Vicar and Vicar General

In accordance with the possibility foreseen in the Statutes of the Prelature, the Prelate of Opus Dei, Bishop Javier Echevarría, has named Msgr. Fernando Ocáriz (born in Paris, October 27, 1944) Auxiliary Vicar, with the executive authority necessary for the government of the Prelature, including powers reserved to the Prelate, except those that require being a Bishop. The position of Auxiliary Vicar is established by law in sections 134.1 and 135 of the Codex iuris particularis Operis Dei, which was promulgated by Saint John Paul II with the Apostolic Constitution Ut sit on November 28, 1982.

In the decree of appointment, dated December 9th, Bishop Echevarría explains that “the extension of the apostolic work of the Prelature and the growth of the number of regional jurisdictions, centers and activities whose pastoral care is entrusted to Opus Dei have meant an increase in the work of government required of the Prelate.” As a consequence, he adds, “taking my age into account as well, I consider it advisable to name an Auxiliary Vicar.”

Fernando Ocáriz Braña was born in Paris on October 27, 1944. He graduated from the University of Barcelona with a degree in Physical Sciences in 1966. He received a licentiate in Theology from the Pontifical Lateran University in 1969 and a doctorate from the University of Navarra in 1971, the year he was ordained a priest. Since 1986 he has been a consultor for the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Father and since 1989 a member of the Pontifical Roman Theological Academy.

He was appointed Vicar General of the Prelature of Opus Dei on April 23, 1994. He is the author of numerous philosophical and theological publications in the areas of Christology and Philosophy of History.

New Vicar General

To replace Msgr. Ocáriz as Vicar General of the Prelature, Bishop Echevarría has appointed—with the deliberative vote of his General Council—Msgr. Mariano Fazio, until then the Vicar of Opus Dei for Argentina, Paraguay and Bolivia.
Mariano Fazio was born in Buenos Aires on April 25, 1960. He studied History at the University of Buenos Aires and received a doctorate in Philosophy from the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross.

In 1991, he was ordained a priest by Saint John Paul II, after having worked for seven years in Ecuador as a professor of Philosophy of Law and editorial writer for the newspaper *El Telégrafo*.

From 1996 to 2002, in Rome, he was the first dean of the School of Church Communications, and then, from 2002 to 2008, the rector of the same university. During the same period, he was elected president of the Conference of Rectors of the Pontifical Universities of Rome.

In 2007, he was named an expert for the Fifth General Conference of Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean, which was held in Aparecida, Brazil. Several months later, he returned to South America, where he has served, until now, as the Vicar of Opus Dei in Argentina, Paraguay and Bolivia.

He is the author of more than 20 books on modern society and the process of secularization, as well as of several biographies, including one of the current Pope.

On communicating these appointments, the Prelate asked the faithful of Opus Dei, and all those who take part in the Prelature’s pastoral activities, to pray for a renewed apostolic dynamism for the work of Opus Dei, in the service of the Church and all souls.

*The Auxiliary Vicar in the law of the Church for the Prelature*

We reproduce here an explanation by Professor Eduardo Baura, from the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross, on the figure of the Auxiliary Vicar, foreseen in the law of the Church for the Prelature of Opus Dei.

The *Codex iuris particularis Operis Dei* (Opus Dei's Statutes), which was promulgated by Saint John Paul II with the Apostolic Constitution *Ut Sit* on November 28, 1982, establishes that the office of the Prelate is for life. For this reason, the same norm foresees the role of the Auxiliary Vicar, which can take two forms.
The first, which is the one that concerns us now, is foreseen for cases in which, because of an increase in the work of government or the advanced age of the Prelate or other similar circumstances, the Prelate considers it advisable that, in addition to the Vicar General, whom he always must have, there be an Auxiliary Vicar who has the executive authority necessary to assist the Prelate in the government of the Prelature. Specifically, section 134.1 of the Statutes establishes that, “if the Prelate judges in the Lord that it is appropriate or useful to appoint an auxiliary Vicar in accord with no. 135, he can freely appoint one after consulting his Council. The full General Council can also sincerely suggest to the Prelate the advisability of designating an Auxiliary Vicar, who can assist him in his governance for eight years. Absent grave reasons to the contrary, the Prelate should readily accept the will of the Council.”[1]

With regard to the mission of this kind of Auxiliary Vicar, no.135 states the following: “The Auxiliary Vicar, if he is given to a Prelate in possession of his faculties, assists him; if the Prelate is absent or impeded he takes his place. He has no other faculties except those which the Prelate delegates to him habitually or ad casum. He should faithfully give an account to the Prelate regarding all that he does.”[2] In the present case, the Prelate has conferred all of the powers of executive authority, including those reserved to the Prelate.

The role described here is best understood taking into account that the task which the Church entrusts to the Prelate—as with any pastor who is the head of an ecclesiastical circumscription—is not limited to the exercise of the powers of government. The Prelate must also be, as the Statutes affirm, “teacher and father” (no. 132.3) for all of the faithful—both priests and laity—in his care.

The other type of Auxiliary Vicar is that foreseen in cases in which the Prelate is impeded in the exercise of his function. In such a situation, there is a procedure for the election of an Auxiliary Vicar, to whom all of the powers of the Prelate are transferred, except the title (and without the right of succession), which requires confirmation by the Holy See. In this way, even in the hypothetical case of an “impeded” Prelate, the role of the Prelate as Father would remain, although the government would be in the hands of the Auxiliary Vicar, whose role would be similar to that of an
apostolic Administrator of a diocese.

[1] Original Spanish is a translation from the Latin by Fr. Eduardo Baura.

[2] Ibid.

Diocesan Assignments Received by Priests of the Prelature

You can read the full text of "Romana" by subscribing to the print edition.

Presentation of the Italian edition of a biography of Álvaro del Portillo

Álvaro del Portillo: Il primo successore di san Josémaría allá guida dell'Opus Dei is the Italian edition of a biography of Bishop Álvaro del Portillo by Fr. Javier Medina. The author, the postulator for his cause, was a direct witness of the last 24 years of Bishop del Portillo’s life. The book was presented in Rome on September 18, with the presence of Bishop Echevarría, Prelate of Opus Dei, who addressed the opening words of greeting. Also taking part were Cardinal Francesco Monterisi, archpriest emeritus of the Basilica of St. Paul; the Carmelite priest Antonio Maria Sicari, theologian, writer and essayist; Senator Emma Fatorini; and Maria Vittoria Marini-Clarelli, director of the National Gallery of Modern and Contemporary Art in Rome. The speakers were introduced by Cesar Cavalleri, director of Ares, the book’s publisher.

In his opening words, Bishop Echevarría said that “a beatification cannot be reduced to the celebration of a person; above all it is an opportunity to praise God, to give him glory and to thank him for his gifts,
specifically for his blesseds and saints. The venerable Álvaro del Portillo was a man, a priest, a bishop filled with joy, to whom our Lord granted many human talents. His beatification places before our eyes (and here is the key to this act of the Church) the reality that holiness is accessible to all the baptized, if they respond generously to God’s grace.”

Cardinal Monterisi pointed out that Bishop del Portillo “did a lot of work for the Second Vatican Council, before, during, and after its celebration, spending days and nights studying, reading, and drawing up texts and opinions. His work in the preparation of the decree _Presbyterorum Ordinis_,” he said, “was truly admirable.” He also emphasized how Don Álvaro “inspired dozens and dozens of social and educational initiatives throughout the world: rural and urban schools, centers of formation and hospitals. When he arrived in a country of Africa or Latin America he tried to understand what the most urgent needs of the people were. And then, with his serene yet determined spirit, he would encourage faithful of Opus Dei to begin an initiative that would respond to that need.

In his talk, the Carmelite Antonio Maria Sicari, described the deep mutual affection and loyalty that united the founder of Opus Dei, St. Josemaría Escrivá, and the future Blessed Álvaro, a relationship that can best be summed up by the word “fidelity.”

Senator Emma Fattorini, in turn, spoke about Bishop del Portillo’s fidelity and simplicity. She said that one could see reflected in his life, in his relationship with his family and in his studies at the university, a “deep interiority, lived at the same time with freedom of spirit.” Therefore “fidelity—which is the key to understanding his personality—is closely tied to freedom.”

Maria-Vittoria Marini-Clarelli, director of the national Gallery of Modern and Contemporary Art in Rome, recalled another feature of the personality of Álvaro del Portillo: his serenity. “His actions seemed to be guided by the Latin phrase _festina lente_ (make haste slowly). He communicated this serenity to others because the beautiful simplicity of his way of being was united to an extraordinary transparency, as though his soul were visible.”
The presentation took place in the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross, begun under the impetus of Bishop del Portillo in 1984—following a wish of St. Josemaría—and of which he was the first Chancellor.

Publication of the First Informative Bulletin on the Servant of God Laurita Busca

In October, the Prelature of Opus Dei’s Office for the Causes of Saints published the first Informative Bulletin about the life of the Servant of God Laurita Busca Otaegui.

Laura Busca Otaegui was born on November 3, 1912 in Zumarraga, in the Basque region of Spain. In 1935 she obtained a degree in pharmacology at the Central University in Madrid. That same year she met her future husband, Eduardo Ortiz de Landazuri. After they both lived through the civil war years in Spain, they were married on June 17, 1941, at the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Arantzazu. Their marriage was a fruitful one, with seven children.

A warm-hearted and understanding person, she sought holiness in the midst of her daily work as the mother of a large family. She asked for admission to Opus Dei on January 8, 1953. Following the advice of Saint Josemaría Escrivá, Laura and her husband Eduardo strove to make their family a “bright and cheerful home.” Her life was marked by an extraordinary self-giving in caring for her husband and children, and for many other people, drawing strength from her deep piety and love for God. From the 50s on she suffered from a painful back ailment, which she bore with fortitude and joyful acceptance of God’s will.

On December 11, 1998, she had the joy of being present, in Pamplona, at the opening of the diocesan Process on the virtues of her husband Eduardo, and soon after was given the opportunity to offer testimony in the Process. After a painful illness borne with extraordinary Christian fortitude, she died in Pamplona, with a reputation for holiness, on October
On June 14, 2013, the opening of her cause of canonization was held, presided over by Archbishop Francisco Perez of Pamplona.

Other new publications


*Con don Álvaro en los cinco continentes* [With Don Álvaro on five continents]. Get-togethers with Blessed Álvaro in París, Hong Kong, Nairobi, Washington, Mexico City, and Sydney, each lasting 30 minutes. DVD. BetaFilms.

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Marian Year for the Family in the Prelature of Opus Dei
The Prelate of Opus Dei has convoked a Marian year of prayer for the family. It began on December 28, 2014, the date of the liturgical feast of the Holy Family. It will end on the same feast day in 2015, which will take place on December 27.

Bishop Echevarría said that the aim of this year is “to place in our Lady’s hands all the needs of the Church and mankind, and to follow faithfully the Pope’s intentions.” The invitation is extended to all who receive Christian formation through the activities organized by the Prelature.

Among other suggestions, the Prelate invited us to pray as a family the various prayers dedicated to the Mother of God, such as the Rosary and the Angelus. “Through our Lady,” he assured us, “our Lord will pour forth abundant graces for the Church and for society.”

The Marian year began in Rome with an act of Eucharistic adoration in St. Eugene’s Basilica. “Following the Pope’s indications,” the Prelate said, “we are praying for all the families of the world... We need to pray each day for the world’s families, asking that every country may fully accept in its laws the natural law that comes from God. That those who govern may seek justice and not undo this great treasure God has given us. Then people will be happier, even though at times living in a family requires effort and sacrifice in daily life. With joy we want never to cede in seeking to protect this institution grounded in natural law, and we will pray constantly for the family.”

During the solemn exposition, the prayer for families composed by Pope Frances for the recent extraordinary Synod was recited.

Novena to Blessed Álvaro Asking for Inner Peace

A notable feature of Blessed Alvaro del Portillo was the peace and joy that he spread around him; he transmitted to souls the serenity that he bore in his heart, a fruit of grace and of his own spiritual struggle. Inspired by
these features, the priest Francisco Faus composed a novena to Blessed Alvaro to ask for serenity and peace of heart when facing difficult situations in life. The novena offers a daily text from the Blessed for meditation, possible intentions for each day, and a prayer to Blessed Alvaro’s intercession to attain these graces. The digital version is available in various languages on the Opus Dei website.

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Pontifical appointments

On July 1, 2014, Professor Ralf van Bühren, professor of Christian art and sacred architecture in the School of Church Communications at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross, was appointed consultor for the Pontifical Council for Culture.

On July 11, 2014, Rev. Stephen Lee Bun Sang, regional vicar of Opus Dei for East Asia, was appointed auxiliary bishop of the diocese of Hong Kong.

On October 8, 2014, Rev. Levi Bonatto, chaplain of the Marumbi Cultural Center in Curitiba, was appointed auxiliary bishop of the diocese of Goiania, Brazil.

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New Centers of the Prelature

The vicars of the respective circumscriptions have erected new centers of the Prelature in Mombasa, Kenya, and in Toumbokro, Ivory Coast.

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Documentary: Working for others
Working for the others presents the testimony of people who have received help from social and educational projects of solidarity promoted by Alvaro del Portillo during his years at the head of Opus Dei. In the space of 27 minutes, ten people from various Latin American countries—Argentina, Guatemala, Peru, El Salvador, Brazil, Uruguay, Colombia, Ecuador and Chile—speak about how these social initiatives have impacted for the better their own lives and the lives of others.

“The initiatives promoted by Alvaro del Portillo are marked by the concern to raise up the person, both professionally—acquiring a job, improving one’s social status—and interiorly,” says Juan Martin Ezratty, director of the documentary.

Produced by Digito Identidad, the video was presented in September, just weeks before the beatification of the first successor of St. Josemaría. With a Spanish sound track it is available with English subtitles.
INITIATIVES

• In Brief
Madrid: Forty Initiatives Against Poverty

Today hundreds of thousands of people all over the world benefit from the many social initiatives begun under the impetus of Blessed Alvaro del Portillo. These include hospitals in Africa, programs for the training of indigenous women in Latin America, schools for the professional formation of adults in the Philippines, food banks in Europe, centers for the integration of immigrants in the United States.....

On the occasion of his beatification, and as a sign of gratitude to the successor of St. Josemaría, the Social Foundation for Strengthening Culture organized in Madrid the Encuentro Internacional Álvaro del Portillo, with the title Forty initiatives against poverty. The conference offered reflections and experiences on the social, educational and welfare work carried out by the projects urged forward by Blessed Alvaro. It was held on September 25 in the auditorium of the Fundación ONCE in Madrid, with the participation of 21 directors of these social projects coming from sixteen countries. During the conference the documentary entitled Trabajar para los demas, con Alvaro del Portillo (Working for the others, with Alvaro del Portillo) was shown, presented by its producer, the Argentinean Guillermo Canoga.

The president of the Foundation for Strengthening Culture, Jumana Trad, sent participants a welcome greeting from Iraq, where her husband, a diplomat, is currently stationed. She said that the conference “could also have been called ‘40 ways of changing the world,’ since all of these initiatives have changed the lives of many specific people.” She also stressed the harmony between St. John Paul II and Blessed Alvaro del Portillo: “Many of the initiatives which today are working against material, cultural and spiritual poverty, are the fruit of their joint efforts to construct, with deeds, a more just and human world.”

Alberto Durán, from the Foundation ONCE, said that the representatives of the projects “have presented their experiences based on personal testimonies of the beneficiaries and on data reflecting social impact on their cities and on the improvement of living conditions.”
The conference reflected on some specific features these social projects have in common: the Christian inspiration underlying them, fostered by Alvaro del Portillo; the total autonomy of the founders, who are lay professionals; and the diversity of aims adapted to the needs of each place: the struggle against poverty, improving health-care, the defense of human rights, educational undertakings, bettering the situation of women and families, among others.

One of the educational projects the public heard about was the work of the “Educar” Association in Mexico. Its director, Juan Humberto Salazar, explained that the institution promotes the development of schools for children in the Valle del Chalco, an area deeply affected by the 1985 earthquake. Up to the present, these schools have helped in the education of 1,500 children, and their social influence has benefited 30,000 Mexican families. This project began thanks to a suggestion made by Alvaro del Portillo, after learning of the earthquake’s devastating effects in this impoverished district.

With regard to the health-care projects fostered by the new blessed, the conference highlighted the development of the Niger Foundation Hospital in Enugu, Nigeria. This hospital center, inaugurated in 1993, now provides care for over 29,000 patients each year, most of them women and children. Thanks to the NGO Harambee, through donations from participants at Alvaro del Portillo’s beatification, the hospital hopes to add a maternal and children’s pavilion that will provide assistance to 12,000 more people each year. The Niger Foundation Hospital arose under the direct impetus of Alvaro del Portillo, during a trip that he made to Enugu in 1989.

The Conference also had representatives from initiatives working to eradicate poverty in the heart of developed countries. Of special relevance was the presence of the director of Rosedale, an educational center for women in New York’s Bronx. Each year this center provides supplementary education to 300 young women from disadvantaged backgrounds and tries to ensure that all of them complete their secondary studies.

The promotion of human rights, especially the dignity of women, was the topic of the session led by Bele Okoye, from the Women’s Board Educational Cooperation Society in Nigeria.
The directors of these solidarity projects stressed that education is a key factor in the battle against poverty. Very relevant here is the experience of the Centro Educativo Tecnico Laboral Kinal, begun under the impetus of the new blessed in a district of Guatemala where 90% of the families live below the poverty threshold. The promoters have obtained a new, larger site where 1,200 young people and 800 adults receive training to obtain work in technical fields.

The importance of education was clearly reflected in the personal testimony given by Maxima Cora, a young indigenous woman from Bolivia. Thanks to the help of the Instituto Tecnico CEFIM, she was able to complete her high school certificate for adults and today is working as a teacher. Edin Roberto, in turn, a Quiché Mayan who was born in Totonicapan, Guatemala, spoke about his childhood spent sowing corn and making rope to sell, and expressed his joy at being given the opportunity to study technical engineering in Kinal.

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Some Undertakings Carried Out by Faithful of the Prelature

The undertakings described in this section are educational, social, and cultural activities carried out by faithful of the Prelature and cooperators together with many other people, both Catholics and non-Catholics. Those who undertake and direct these activities (taking on full responsibility for them, including their financial aspects) are trying to respond to specific local needs without any discrimination regarding race, religion, or social condition.

The Prelature of Opus Dei, through agreements with the organizers, or through the guidelines established by the statutes of each entity, contributes to the development of these social initiatives by providing Christian doctrinal and moral orientation, and priestly service, always with full respect for the freedom of people's consciences.
In Brief

Geneva, Switzerland -- Study Conference on Gender Ideology

The Champel University Residence organized last November a study session on gender ideology, under the direction of Professor Vicent Aubin, an Anthropology teacher in the Ecole de Commerce et de Management in Marseille, France. The participants reflected on the cultural meaning of the theory of gender and the relationship between freedom and biology.

Bogotá, Colombia -- Promoting Sound Values

The University Seminars, organized by the University of the Sabana, have proven to be an effective means of extracurricular formation that fosters the spread of Christian values in a welcoming environment. The value proposed for the year 2014 was that of service. The University Seminars are held in the Torreblanca Cultural Center, in the municipality of Silvania. Those attending included 259 professors, 278 administrators, 630 undergraduates and 76 postgraduate students.
São Paulo, Brazil -- Performance, a Program for Human and Professional Development

Fifty students took part in the sixth annual offering of “Performance — Human and Professional Development for Secondary School Students,” which is organized each year by the Sumaré Center for University Students in São Paulo.

Through monthly conferences and personal tutorials, the program aims at stimulating intellectual curiosity and an eagerness for reflection and study, while presenting the Christian perspective of a true humanism to students and developing their capacity for cooperation and leadership. Performance also includes an additional module for the parents, with sessions on their responsibility in the work of education.

In the 2014 program, students had the opportunity to visit the universities of Columbia, Brown, Harvard, MIT, Yale and Princeton in the United States.

Montevideo, Uruguay -- Resolving Family Conflicts

The Center for Integral Development, in collaboration with various organisms of the European Union, has carried out the first stage of the program Mediating Conflicts, which seeks to help resolve family, educational and neighborhood conflicts in the Casavalle district, one of the lowest income areas in the country. Over 70 educators, technicians, teachers and coordinators of educational and social action institutions in Casavalle have joined this network aimed at fostering better communication in the neighborhood and motivating other citizens to live in a peaceful way.
Santiago, Chile -- The Family, Creator of Humanity

The Family Science Institute at the University of the Andes held a conference entitled The Family, Creator of Humanity. Those giving presentations looked at the main challenges confronting society in this area and pointed out ways to strengthen life in the home and build up a more human society. “Education is teaching people to love, and the family is the environment where the human person is accepted unconditionally and the setting in which everyone can help to transform the world,” was the message of Tomas Melendo, doctor in Educational Science and Philosophy at the University of Navarra.

The August 7 meeting was presided over by the president of the University, José Antonio Guzman, who expressed his gratitude for the strong response to this initiative. He stressed that the scientific study of the institution of the family is a matter of priority in these times of dizzying changes. He said that there is a great need to explain, in new ways, the essential importance of marital fidelity, the anthropological reasons for marriage being a union between a man and a woman, and the value of the family in the formation of future generations.

Lima, Peru -- A Publication on Religious Freedom

The Law School at the University of Piura has published a book entitled El derecho fundamental de libertad religiosa (The fundamental right to religious freedom). The book considers the situation of religious freedom in Peru from several different perspectives: its philosophical foundations, mechanisms for cooperation between the state and religious entities, and legal regulations, among others. This work had its origin in
the Third Conference on Human Rights held in Lima and Piura in June 2014, organized by the Institute of Human Rights at the University of Piura. Dr. Susana Mosquera, editor of the publication, said that public authorities “should avoid putting undue restrictions on the exercise of this right, and facilitate formulas of accord and flexibility for people to express their relationship with God.”

Montevideo, Uruguay -- Personal Identity and the Afterlife

The University of Montevideo sponsored a study group on “Personal Identity and the Afterlife.” Its purpose was to reflect on the philosophy of religion, from an analytical perspective. The group of researchers, who received support from the Center for the Philosophy of Religion at the University of Notre Dame, is made up of professors and students of philosophy and theology. The principal lines of work are centered on the relationship between religion and personal identity, seeking to begin a dialogue on the views of the various religions on life after death.

In what hopefully will be the first in an ongoing series each year, Dr. Guillermo Hurtado, from the National Autonomous University in Mexico, spoke on the epistemological challenges presented by religion. Dr. Georg Gasser, from the University of Innsbruck, Austria, followed with a conference on “Analytical philosophy of religion: a brief introduction.” He stressed the interest of analytical philosophy in the philosophy of religion, in the context of the Anglo-Saxon intellectual world.

Genoa, Italy -- A Solidarity Luncheon

Fifty students from the Residenza Universitaria delle Peschiere in Genoa organized a day of solidarity entitled “An additional two hundred guests at
the table.” It involved the preparation of a lunch for 130 elderly people living alone and other people living in poverty, offering them at the same time a bit of companionship. The initiative had the assistance of the community of San Egidio, which placed at their disposal a garden in the village of Albaro. The university students made the event more enjoyable with an outdoor musical presentation.

**Bogotá, Colombia -- Making Family and Work Compatible**

On September 5-6, experts from the United States, Spain, Mexico, Ecuador and Argentina gathered in the auditorium of the *Cosmos 100* Hotel in Bogotá for the seventh annual International Conference on the Family.

The conference centered on a topic of great importance for families and society: how to harmonize family life with professional life, two dimensions of great importance for the human person, but which today seem more frequently to collide rather than cooperate. The event was attended by more than 600 educators, business people, political leaders and parents, who exchanged experiences and successful approaches.

The conference was organized by the Family Institute at the University of the Sabana, with the collaboration of academics and researchers from institutes, universities, and research centers from a number of different countries, who are engaged in studying the current state of the family, with its opportunities and threats.

In the framework of this gathering, the award of National Recognition for the Strengthening of the Institution of the Family was given, awarded to people and institutions involved in fostering and strengthening healthy families.
Palma de Mallorca, Spain -- Conference on Educational Innovation

On Saturday March 29, the first Conference on Educational Innovation was held in Palma de Mallorca, organized by the Aixa and Llaüt high schools and aimed at people working in the field of education. Professor Pere Pujolàs from the University of Vic spoke about the keys to cooperative learning, in his address to the almost 170 professionals taking part in the conference. After his address, various workshops were held to exchange experiences. At the end, Professor Pujolàs answered questions from the teachers and directors of educational centers attending. The conference could be followed through live-streaming and the social networks.

São Paulo, Brazil -- On the Path of the New Evangelization

To help meet the challenge of the new evangelization presented by the recent Popes, the Estela Cultural Center in São Paulo organized several conferences on topics related to fashion, professional competence and ethics.

The journalist Maria Inêz Migliaccio, a specialist in the anthropology of fashion at the University of Navarra, stressed the need for clothing that follows the dictates of elegance and harmony, so that a modern Christian woman can fulfill her role in today’s society in a worthy and humanly dignified way.

Professor Sofia Albrech, a doctor in Law and Family Sciences, spoke on “How neuropsychology can contribute to the educational process,” in her conference directed to mothers and educational professionals.

The third session, “Emotional intelligence in work,” was held in the context of a workshop. Led by Vera Pinheiro, a doctor in Library Science, she focused on the importance of work that is well done, recalling the
teachings of St. Josemaría in that regard.

Finally Carolina Delaye, a gynecologist and specialist in bioethics, offered a cycle of four lectures on the “Theology of the Body,” inspired by the teachings of St. John Paul II. She stirred up a lot of interest among the group of young professionals preparing for marriage. They were especially attracted by the ideal of a family where love for life and human dignity were a reflection of the love between the spouses.

Lima, Peru -- Marriage and the New Evangelization

The Centro de Estudios y Comunicación organized a symposium entitled “The role of marriage and the family in the new evangelization.” The conference, which took place on July 16 in the Lima campus of the University of Piura, included the participation of Rev. Rafael Diaz Dorronsoro, lecturer at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross in Rome, and Rev. Ramiro Pellitero, professor at the University of Navarra in Spain. Professor Diaz Dorronsoro centered his presentation on the specific contributions of the man and the woman in the family and on the keys for an enduring and fruitful conjugal communion. Rev. Pellitero, in turn, spoke about the relationship between the Church, “the family of God,” and the family, “the domestic Church, and why the family is the best place to learn the culture of life and the meaning of human and Christian love.

Rome, Italy -- The Church Up Close

From September 8 to 14, under the auspices of the School of Communication at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross, and in collaboration with the association ISCOM promozione della comunicazione istituzionale, the fourth session was held of The Church Up Close: Covering
Catholicism in the Age of Francis. The intensive week-long seminar was intended for journalists from all over the world whose job involves providing information about the Catholic Church.

Among those giving presentations this year were Cardinal George Pell, prefect of the Vatican’s Secretariat for the Economy; Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran, president of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue; Archbishop Rino Fisichella, president of the Pontifical Council for the promotion of the New Evangelization; and Bishop José Avelino Bettencourt, chief of protocol for the Secretariat of State.

The program included a visit to various offices of the Roman Curia and the Holy See.
IN PACE
Suffrages for the Deceased

In the second half of 2014, 387 faithful of the Prelature passed away and, besides the priests incardinated in it, 10 members of the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross.

Suffrages have been offered for these deceased. As we continue to pray for them, let us thank God for the example they left us through their fidelity in striving to transform their professional work—their pastoral ministry in the case of the priests—and the ordinary circumstances of their lives into an occasion for loving God and serving the Church and all souls. Their love for God and neighbor constitutes the meaning and value of their lives, whether outstanding in the eyes of others, or whether quite ordinary, as was true in most cases.

In addition to the names of all who have died during this period, we have gathered a few biographical details about some of the deceased, which give an idea of the variety of circumstances and situations in which the faithful of Opus Dei live. For reasons of space, we are not including this data in the other cases, but we must not forget that we have a debt of gratitude towards all of them for the example of fidelity they have left us. These brief sketches will help us live the Communion of Saints better with those who have preceded us to heaven.

You can read the full text of "Romana" by subscribing to the print edition.
A study
1. Introduction

Devotion to Saint Joseph was deeply rooted in Saint Josemaría’s soul from a very early age. Recalling how in 1934 he had entrusted to the Holy Patriarch his efforts to obtain permission for the tabernacle in the first center of Opus Dei in Madrid, he remarked in 1971: “I already had deep in my soul the devotion to Saint Joseph that I have passed on to you.”[2] And he strove to keep this devotion alive and ardent right to the end of his life, seeing it undergo an impetuous growth in his final years.[3]

In the three points dedicated to Saint Joseph in his early work, The Way, we already see some of the theological reasons for his strong devotion. In no. 559, he writes: “Saint Joseph, father of Christ, is also your father and lord. Ask him to help you.”[4] The strength with which he calls Saint Joseph the father of Christ here is significant.

In a later text, a homily given on March 19, 1963, dedicated completely to Saint Joseph,[5] he explains the sense in which he speaks of this fatherhood, following the well-known words of Saint Augustine in his Sermon 51, 20: “Our Lord was not born of the seed of Joseph. Yet of the piety and charity of Joseph a son was born to him, of the Virgin Mary, and this was the Son of God.”[6] Saint Joseph’s fatherhood towards Jesus is not a fatherhood according to the flesh, but a real and unique fatherhood that arose from his true marriage to the Virgin Mary and from his unique mission.

In the homily just cited, Saint Josemaría said: “for many years now, I have liked to address him affectionately as ‘our father and lord.’”[7] And he explains: “Saint Joseph really is a father and lord. He protects those who
revere him and accompanies them on their journey through this life—just as he protected and accompanied Jesus when he was growing up.”[8] In the critical-historical edition of The Way, Pedro Rodríguez suggests that Saint Josemaría may have taken the expression “father and lord” from Saint Teresa of Avila, who had such a great influence on devotion to Saint Joseph, not only among the Carmelites but also throughout the whole Church.[9]

In The Way, the consequences of this fatherhood are shown especially in Saint Joseph’s influence on the “interior life.” We read in no. 560: “Saint Joseph, our father and lord, is a teacher of the interior life. Place yourself under his patronage and you’ll feel the effectiveness of his power.” And in no. 561: “Speaking of Saint Joseph in the book of her life, Saint Teresa says: ‘Whoever fails to find a Master to teach him how to pray, should choose this glorious Saint, and he will not go astray.’ This advice comes from an experienced soul. Follow it.” The reason Saint Josemaría gives for these two counsels is Saint Joseph’s close and continuous contact with Jesus and Mary throughout his years at their side.

The three points cited from The Way place Saint Josemaría’s approach to Saint Joseph within two essential coordinates: the truth of his fatherhood towards Jesus and the Holy Patriarch’s influence on the history of salvation. These points testify to a mature theological conviction of the importance of Saint Joseph right from the earliest texts, reflected in the clear and firm way he calls Saint Joseph the father of Jesus with no vacillation whatsoever.[10]

2. A solid prior tradition

With the sober and precise language that characterized him, Saint Josemaría forms part of a solid ecclesial tradition of theological reflection and devotion to the Holy Patriarch. His rich and solid reflections on Saint Joseph go hand in hand with a refined piety inspired by the Holy Spirit, and the awareness of treading on solid theological ground.[11]

In 1870 Pope Pius IX, in the Decree Quemadmodum Deus (December 8, 1870), declared Saint Joseph Patron of the Universal Church, and on August 15, 1889, Leo XIII published his Encyclical Quamquam plures dedicated to the Holy Patriarch. In this Encyclical, Leo XIII clarifies with
great theological force the reasons why Saint Joseph can be considered the Patron of the Universal Church.

The first reason the Pope mentions is that Saint Joseph is the spouse of our Lady, and therefore the father of Jesus, the good—*bonum prolis*—of this marriage. For the Pontiff, the truth of the marriage between our Lady and Saint Joseph is accepted without any doubt and leads directly to the truth of Saint Joseph’s fatherhood over Jesus. Both realities—marriage and fatherhood—form two essential features of Saint Joseph’s divine vocation. He was called to carry out these two tasks desired in themselves by God, in their proper value. In this vocation we find the reason for the other graces received by Saint Joseph, the ultimate reason for “his dignity, his holiness, his glory.”[12]

For Leo XIII, Saint Joseph’s marriage to our Lady is the key to understanding his exalted gifts, since the truth and perfection of this marriage “demands” the participation in its goods and, specifically, in the good of the offspring, although engendered virginally. The Pope calls this marriage “the most intimate of all unions, which from its essence imparts a community of gifts between those that by it are joined together,” and says that Saint Joseph had been given to our Lady not only as “her life’s companion, the witness of her maidenhood, the protector of her honor,” but also as participant in her “sublime dignity.” He is, then, “the legitimate and natural guardian of the Holy Family.”[13]

Leo XIII continues here a line of thought already expressed by Saint Ambrose and Saint Augustine, which found one of its clearest formulations in Saint Thomas Aquinas: between the Blessed Virgin Mary and Saint Joseph there was a true and perfect marriage. Given our Lady’s perpetual virginity, some ancient writers found a certain difficulty in considering this union as a true marriage.[14] These doubts dissipated in favor of the authenticity of the marriage, among other reasons, because of the clear position taken by Saint Ambrose[15] and by Saint Augustine.[16] However, authors as important as Saint Bernard (+1153) still showed great caution in affirming the marriage between Saint Joseph and the Blessed Virgin, or failed to view it as a key element in the theology of Saint Joseph.[17] The position of Saint Thomas Aquinas (+1274) offers no room for doubt: the
union between Joseph and Mary was a true and perfect marriage, because it entailed the spousal union between their spirits.\textsuperscript{[18]}

Nor should we forget that viewing the union between Joseph and Mary as a true marriage accords with the language used in the New Testament, which does not hesitate to call Mary the wife of Joseph. The New Testament also allows no ambiguity regarding our Lady’s virginity, even in places where she is called Joseph’s wife (see, for example, \textit{Mt} 1:16-25); nor does it hesitate to call Joseph the father of Jesus, or to show him acting as such (see, for example, \textit{Lk} 2:21-49).

3. Saint Joseph in the teachings of Saint Josemaría

From his earliest writings, Saint Josemaría describes Saint Joseph as a young man, perhaps a bit older than our Lady, but imbued with vigor and strength: “The Holy Patriarch was not an old man, but a young, strong, upright man, a great lover of loyalty, a man with fortitude. Holy Scripture defines him with a single word: just (see \textit{Mt} 1:20-21). Joseph was a just man, a man filled with all the virtues, as was fitting for the one who was to be God’s protector on earth.”\textsuperscript{[19]} Underlying these words is the conviction that God, on giving a vocation, gives the graces suitable to the one who receives it, and therefore he adorned Saint Joseph with all the gifts of nature and grace that made him a suitable spouse of our Lady and head of the Holy Family.

Saint Josemaría’s emphasis on the youthfulness of Joseph finds support in three fundamental reasons: in reading Sacred Scripture with common sense (which presents his espousal to our Lady as something normal, and the marriage of a young girl with an old man would not have been viewed as normal); in the communion of spirits proper to marriage (the love existing between them); and above all in the conviction that holy purity is not a question of age, but rather stems from love.

“I don't agree with the traditional picture of St Joseph as an old man, even though it may have been prompted by a desire to emphasis the perpetual virginity of Mary. I see him as a strong young man, perhaps a few years older than our Lady, but in the prime of his life and work. You don’t have to wait to be old or lifeless to practice the virtue of chastity. Purity comes from love; and the strength and joy of youth are no obstacle for
noble love. Joseph had a young heart and a young body when he married Mary, when he learned of the mystery of her divine motherhood, when he lived in her company, respecting the integrity God wished to give the world as one more sign that he had come to share the life of his creatures.”

For Saint Josemaría it was “unacceptable” to present Joseph as an old man for the purpose of silencing the “evil thinkers.” And it was equally unacceptable to doubt the truth of his marriage to our Lady, as well as to fail to take into consideration the love that existed between them.

*The love between Saint Joseph and our Lady*

Bishop Javier Echevarría is a valuable witness to how Saint Josemaría contemplated the relationship between Mary and Joseph, passing on his words addressed to Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico in 1970: “A family made up of an upright, hard-working young man; and a woman, hardly more than a girl: with a betrothal full of clean love, they find in their lives the fruit of God’s love for mankind. In her humility she says nothing. What a lesson for all of us, so ready as we are to boast about our achievements! He reacts with the refinement of an upright man—what a hard moment it must have been when he discovered that his wife, so holy, was expecting a child. And as he did not wish to stain her reputation; he remained silent, while thinking how to resolve things, until God’s light came to him, which he was no doubt asking for from the first moment. And without hesitation he accepts heaven’s plans.”

The authenticity of marriage brings with it the reality of conjugal love, the eagerness to spend life together and mutual self-giving; therefore it is only natural to view these features as very much a part of the marriage between Joseph and Mary. God added to that love the fruit of our Lady’s womb: the Eternal Son made man, who chose to be born into a human family.

As we have seen, Saint Josemaría takes it for granted that the marriage between Joseph and Mary is a true marriage. This leads him to reflect on the love existing between the two spouses: “Saint Joseph must have been young when he married our Lady, a woman who had just emerged from adolescence. Being young, he was pure, clean, and very chaste. And he was
so precisely because of his love. Only by filling our heart with love can we be sure that it will not rebel and go off the track, but will remain faithful to the most pure love of God.”[23]

For Saint Josemaría, love is the key to every person’s life, as it was in the life of Joseph. There we find the reason for his fortitude, his fidelity, his chastity. “Can you imagine the reaction of Saint Joseph, who loved our Lady so much and knew her spotless integrity? How much he would have suffered on seeing that she was expecting a child! Only the revelation of God through an Angel calmed him. He had sought a prudent solution: to not dishonor her, to leave without saying anything. But what sorrow, since he loved her with his whole soul. And imagine his joy when he knew that the fruit of her womb was the work of the Holy Spirit!”[24]

Although he doesn’t focus on the reason for Joseph’s inner turmoil, Saint Josemaría suggests that it consisted in his “not seeing,” rather than in doubting the virtue of his spouse. He didn’t know what to do. “Joseph was a just man, a man filled with every virtue, as was proper to the one who was to be the protector of God on earth. At first he was troubled, when he discovered that his Immaculate Spouse was with child. He saw God’s hand in that fact, but he didn't know how he should behave. In his uprightness, in order not to defame her, he thought of secretly taking leave of her.”[25]

Joseph’s pain seems to be concentrated in the need to abandon his spouse. Saint Josemaría holds soberly to the New Testament text, reading it with faith and common sense. According to the text, the reason for Joseph’s concern is clear: his ignorance of what was happening, which the angel’s message dispelled. Joseph’s love and knowledge of Mary led him to think that in this event, which he did not understand, God was involved. Saint Josemaría suggests here what numerous exegetes have said: that Joseph’s doubt was not about the virtue of our Lady, but about how he should react, realizing that something divine involved.[26]

Saint Josemaría never doubted the existence of an authentic conjugal love between the two.[27] Moreover Joseph’s chastity is protected by that love, founded on faith: “His faith nurtured his love of God, who was fulfilling the promises made to Abraham, Jacob and Moses, and his affection for Mary his wife, and her Son. This faith, hope and love would
further the great mission which God was beginning in the world through, among others, a carpenter in Galilee: the redemption of man.”[28]

The fatherhood of Joseph

Saint Josemaría never wavered on how to express the fatherhood of Saint Joseph. From his earliest writings right to the end of his life, he called him the father of Jesus without any qualification. We can view his thought regarding the theology of Saint Joseph as inscribed within the coordinates of two Fathers of the Church: Saint John Chrysostom and Saint Augustine. From Saint John Chrysostom he cites a text that places on God’s lips these words: “Do not think that, since the conception of Christ was the work of the Holy Spirit, you are apart from this divine work. For even though it is true that you had no part in the generation, and that the Virgin remains intact; nevertheless, all that is related to fatherhood without adversely affecting the dignity of her virginity, I give all of this to you, just as I ask you to give him his name.”[29] From Saint Augustine, Saint Josemaría cites, as we have seen, Sermon 5.[30]

The exercise of fatherhood towards Jesus is an essential part of a “mission” that filled Joseph’s entire life: “He had a divine mission: he lived with a dedicated soul; he dedicated himself entirely to the concerns of Jesus, sanctifying his ordinary life.”[31] Here lies one of the main attractions that the Holy Patriarch exerted over Saint Josemaría: his total dedication to Jesus in “sanctifying ordinary life,” that is, in the exercise of the duties proper to his office and as a good father of a Jewish family of his epoch.

Saint Josemaría in Christ Is Passing By offers a long description of the paternal-filial relationship that existed between Saint Joseph and our Lord. It is a beautiful page, sober and pious, filled with attention to details: “The life of Jesus was, for Saint Joseph, a recurring discovery of his own vocation. We recalled earlier those first years full of contrasting circumstances: glorification and flight, the majesty of the wise men and the poverty of the manger, the song of the angels and the silence of mankind. When the moment comes to present the child in the temple, Joseph, who carries the modest offering of a pair of doves, sees how Simeon and Anna proclaim Jesus as the Messiah: ‘His father and mother listened with wonder’ (Lk 2:33) says Saint Luke. Later, when the child stays behind in
Jerusalem, unknown to Mary and Joseph, and they find him again after three days’ search, the same evangelist tells us, ‘They were astonished’ (Lk 2:48). Joseph is surprised and astonished. God gradually reveals his plans to him, and he tries to understand them... Saint Joseph, more than anyone else before or since, learned from Jesus to be alert to recognize God’s wonders, to have his mind and heart awake.”[32]

Here we have the interior life of Saint Joseph described as an authentic pilgrimage of faith, in a certain sense very similar to our Lady’s. Both of them, Mary and Joseph, discover God’s will little by little, and transform their first self-giving into a fidelity that mutually strengthens them. At the same time, in the exercise of his fatherhood, Joseph transmits to Jesus his profession as an artisan, his way of working and viewing the world: “But if Joseph learned from Jesus to live in a divine way, I would be bold enough to say that, humanly speaking, there was much he taught God’s Son... Joseph loved Jesus as a father loves his son and showed his love by giving him the best he had. Joseph, caring for the child as he had been commanded, made Jesus a craftsman, transmitting his own professional skill to him. So the neighbors of Nazareth will call Jesus both faber and fabri filius (Mk 6:3; Mt 13:55): the craftsman and the son of the craftsman. Jesus worked in Joseph’s workshop and by Joseph’s side. What must Joseph have been, how grace must have worked through him, that he should be able to fulfill this task of the human upbringing of the Son of God! For Jesus must have resembled Joseph: in his way of working, in the features of his character, in his way of speaking. Jesus’ realism, his eye for detail, the way he sat at table and broke bread, his preference for using everyday situations to give doctrine—all this reflects his childhood and the influence of Joseph.”[33]

Here is a paradox that Saint Josemaría is very aware of. The One who is Wisdom Incarnate “learns” from a man the most basic things, including the skills of carpentry. Manifested in this paradox is the “sublime mystery” of the Incarnation and the truth of Joseph’s fatherhood. From his Mother, our Lord learned to speak and to walk; in the home presided over by Saint Joseph, he learned lessons of industrious and upright work. Mutual affection made Joseph and Jesus similar to each other in many things: “It’s not possible to ignore this sublime mystery: Jesus who is man, who speaks
with the accent of a particular district of Israel, who resembles a carpenter called Joseph, is the Son of God. And who can teach God anything? But he is also truly man and lives a normal life: first, as a child, then as a boy helping in Joseph’s workshop, finally as a grown man in the prime of life. ‘Jesus advanced in wisdom and age and grace before God and men’ (Lk 2:52).”[34]

Saint Joseph, teacher of interior life in work

Saint Joseph taught Jesus the lessons that every good Jewish father taught his son: lessons of a clean life and self-sacrifice, of human virtues, and of wellfinished work offered to God; lessons of a temperate, just and upright life. Saint Joseph also teaches us who form a single Body with Christ. “In human life, Joseph was Jesus’ teacher in their daily contact, full of refined affection, glad to deny himself to take better care of Jesus. Isn’t that reason enough for us to consider this just man, this holy patriarch, in whom the faith of the Old Covenant comes to full fruition, as a master of interior life? Interior life is nothing but continual and direct conversation with Christ, so as to become one with him. And Joseph can tell us many things about Jesus. Therefore, never neglect devotion to him—*Ite ad Ioseph:* “Go to Joseph”—as Christian tradition puts it in the words of the Old Testament (*Gen* 41:55).”[35]

Two characteristics in Saint Joseph’s life powerfully attracted Saint Josemaría: his life of contemplation and his life of work. This shouldn’t surprise us, since both features are essential to the spirit of Opus Dei. On the feast of the Epiphany in 1956 he said: “And a last thought for that just man, our father and lord Saint Joseph, who apparently has a very minor role in the Epiphany—as usual. I can imagine him recollected in prayer, lovingly protecting the Son of God made man who has been entrusted to his paternal care. With the marvelous refinement of one who does not live for himself, the holy patriarch spends himself in silent prayer and effective service. We have talked today about practicing a life of prayer and concern for apostolate. Who could be a better teacher for us than Saint Joseph? If you want my advice, which I have never tired of repeating these many years, *Ite ad Ioseph:* ‘Go to Joseph’ (*Gen* 41:55). He will show us definite ways, both human and divine, to approach Jesus. And soon you will dare,
as he did, ‘to take up in his arms, kiss, clothe and look after’ this child God who has been born unto us.”[36]

The quotation in the previous sentence is taken from the prayer to Saint Joseph in preparation for Holy Mass found in the Roman Missal.[37] This prayer holds up for us the example of Saint Joseph contemplating Jesus, and is for us a good lesson on how closely we should contemplate Christ’s life.

Saint Josemaría was enamored of Joseph’s life of work, and he considered him a teacher of interior life in that life of intense and humble work. “For he teaches us to know Jesus and share our life with him, and to realize that we are part of God’s family. Joseph “can teach us these lessons, because he is an ordinary man, a family man, a worker who earned his living by manual labor—all of which has great significance and is a source of happiness for us.”[38] The figure of Saint Joseph also speaks to us of the need to be always apostolic, for he knew how to turn his work into an opportunity to “make Jesus known.”

Most of the homily entitled “In Joseph’s Workshop” is dedicated to this topic. The spirit of Opus Dei “hinges upon ordinary work, professional work carried out in the midst of the world. God’s calling gives us a mission: it invites us to share in the unique task of the Church, to bear witness to Christ before our fellow men and so draw all things towards God.”[39] The figure of Saint Joseph stands out as the one who gave to work its proper dimension in the history of salvation.

It is here, in the offering to God of one’s own work, that Christians exercise the priesthood received in baptism. Commenting on the prayer to Saint Joseph we just cited, he said: “Deus qui dedisti nobis regale sacerdotium. The priesthood is royal for all Christians... We all have a priestly soul. Praesta, quaesumus ut, sicut beatus Ioseph unigenitum Filium tuum, natum ex Maria Virgine... suis manibus reverenter tractare meruit et portare... ita nos facias cum cordis munditia. That is the way he wants us to be: clean of heart. Et operis innocencia —the innocence of deeds is rectitude of intention— tuis sanctis altaribus deservire. To serve him not only at the Altar, but in the whole world, which is an altar for us. All the works of men are done as if on an altar, and each one of you, in that union of contemplative souls that
is your day, says in some way ‘his Mass,’ which lasts twenty-four hours, in expectation of the Mass to follow that will last another twenty-four hours, and so on until the end of our life.’[40]

It is proper to the priest to sanctify. The sanctification of work takes place as an exercise of the priesthood of the faithful, “for all their works, prayers and apostolic endeavors, their ordinary married and family life, their daily occupations, their physical and mental relaxation, if carried out in the Spirit, and even the hardships of life, if patiently borne—all these become ‘spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ’ (1 Pet 2:5). Together with the offering of the Lord’s body, they are most fittingly offered in the celebration of the Eucharist.”[41]

Among the expressions of devotion to Saint Joseph one stands out, by which Saint Josemaría joins a rich earlier tradition: the comparison of the Holy Patriarch to Joseph, the son of Jacob, who provided bread to the inhabitants of Egypt and to the children of Israel. This comparison is strengthened by a fact that deeply touched his heart: “seeking bread” is the role of the father of a family (we belong to Joseph’s family), and the bread of which he speaks is the Holy Eucharist. His most ardent words on this topic are found in evoking the events surrounding the obtaining of permission to reserve our Lord in the tabernacle of Opus Dei’s first student residence.

Here is how he recalled this event: “In 1934, if I am not mistaken, we began the first student residence... We had to have our Lord with us in the tabernacle. Now it is an easy matter to set up a tabernacle, but then it was very difficult... I began to ask Saint Joseph for the first tabernacle. And so did my children I then had at my side. While we prayed for this intention, I tried to find the necessary items: vestments, tabernacle.... We had no money. When I could get twenty-five pesetas together, which then was a fair amount of money, it had to go to meet some other more pressing need. I did manage to get some nuns, whom I love very much, to give me a tabernacle. I got the vestments somewhere else, and finally the good bishop of Madrid gave us permission to have the Blessed Sacrament with us. Then, as a sign of gratitude, I had a small chain made for the tabernacle key with a little medal of Saint Joseph which had inscribed on the back the words Ite ad Ioseph! So Saint Joseph is truly our father and lord because he
has given us bread, the Eucharistic bread, like a good father. Didn’t I just say that we belong to his family?[^42]

Saint Joseph, provider of bread for the Holy Family, is also a provider of bread for the Church. From heaven, he continues to exercise his fatherhood over those who form in Christ a single Mystical Body. With the passing of the years, this reality became ever more alive in Saint Josemaría’s heart. As Bishop Alvaro del Portillo recalled about a trip to several South American countries in 1974: “During that trip our founder began to speak of the mysterious presence—‘ineffable,’ he called it—of Mary and Joseph beside all the tabernacles of the world. He reasoned in this way: if the Blessed Virgin Mary never in this life separated herself from her Son, then it’s only logical that she should have continued to stay by his side even after he decided to remain in that ‘prison of love’ that is the tabernacle: to adore him, to love him, to pray for us. And he applied the same reasoning to Saint Joseph. He had always stood by Jesus and by his own spouse: he had had the good fortune to die accompanied by them—what a marvelous death!... In sum, our father[^43] truly brought Saint Joseph into everything.”[^44]

In conclusion, Saint Josemaría’s piety towards Saint Joseph and his theological vision of the Holy Patriarch’s mission are based on his meditation on Sacred Scripture, on the holy Fathers of the Church, especially Saint John Chrysostom and Saint Augustine, and on the theology of Saint Joseph found in the earlier Pontifical magisterium, especially in that of Leo XIII.

Marian theology is usually structured around our Lady’s true motherhood (Mary is the mother of Christ and of all mankind). Analogously, in the theological vision of Saint Joseph found in the teachings of Saint Josemaría, everything is structured around three main axes: the truth of his marriage to our Lady, the truth of his fatherhood towards Jesus, and his mission as Guardian of the Holy Family, and then of the entire Church. Within these coordinates, we see him striving throughout his life for an ever deeper appreciation of the role of Saint Joseph in our Christian life, as seen in the testimony just cited from the soon to be Blessed Alvaro del Portillo.
[1] This article is being published posthumously.


[8] Ibid.


[10] On the various qualifications given to Saint Joseph’s fatherhood throughout the centuries (legal, putative, foster, adoptive, etc.), see Bonifacio Llamera Teología de San José, BAC, Madrid 1953, pp. 73-114. Llamera offers two very useful conclusions: “The denominations legal father, putative father, foster father, adoptive father, virginal father, and
vicarious father of the heavenly Father express only partial and incomplete aspects of Saint Joseph's fatherhood” (p. 94). And also the following conclusion, which explains why all of these “fatherhoods” seem incomplete to him: “The fatherhood of Saint Joseph is new, unique and singular, of an order superior to that of natural paternity and human adoptive paternity” (p. 102). Following Saint Augustine we can say that Saint Joseph’s fatherhood in regard to Jesus is unique, singular and of a superior order, just as his marriage to our Lady is unique, singular and of a superior order.

[11] Besides the numerous allusions to Saint Joseph made by Saint Josemaría during his life, there are four extensive texts dedicated to Saint Joseph from which it is easy to draw out an almost complete theology of the Holy Patriarch: the homily “In Joseph’s Workshop,” March 19, 1963, in Christ Is Passing By, Scepter, London - New York 1974, nos. 39-56; La escuela de José, notes taken from his preaching, March 19, 1958 (AGP, P18, pp. 79-88); San José, nuestro Padre y Señor, notes taken from his preaching, March 19, 1968 (AGP, P09, pp. 93-103); De la familia de José, notes taken from his preaching, March 19, 1971 (AGP, P09, pp. 133-141). [12] Leo XIII, Encyclical Quamquam pluries August 15, 1889, no. 3. [13] “For marriage is the most intimate of all unions, which from its essence imparts a community of gifts between those that by it are joined together. Thus in giving Joseph the Blessed Virgin as spouse, God appointed him to be not only her life’s companion, the witness of her maidenhood, the protector of her honor, but also, by virtue of the conjugal tie, a participant in her sublime dignity” (Ibid.)

[12] Leo XIII, Encyclical Quamquam pluries August 15, 1889, no. 3.

[13] “For marriage is the most intimate of all unions, which from its essence imparts a community of gifts between those that by it are joined together. Thus in giving Joseph the Blessed Virgin as spouse, God appointed him to be not only her life’s companion, the witness of her maidenhood, the protector of her honor, but also, by virtue of the conjugal tie, a participant in her sublime dignity” (Ibid.)

“Nec te moveat quod frequenter Scriptura conjugem dicit: non enim virginitatis ereptio, sed conjugii testificatio, nuptiarum celebratio declaratur” (In Lucam, 2, 5: SC 45, p. 74).

Saint Augustine even affirms that “this marriage is so much the more real the more chaste it is” (Sermon 51, 10, 13 and 16: PL 38, 342, 344-346, 348; BAC 95, 39-40). The Latin expressions used by Saint Augustine in Sermon 51 are of great beauty and clarity: “Quare pater? Quia tanto firmius pater, quanto castius pater... Non ergo de semine Joseph Dominus, quamvis hoc putaretur: et tamen pietati et charitati Joseph natus est de Maria virgine filius, idemque Filius Dei.”

See Saint Bernard, “Homily on the missus est,” II, 15: “Nec vir ergo matris, nec filii pater exstitit, quamvis certa... et necessaria dispensatione utrumque ad tempus appellatus sit et putatus” (in Opera, vol. 4, edited by Jean Leclerq and Henri Rochais, Rome 1966, p. 33). What is stressed here is not the truth of the marriage, but the fact that Saint Joseph was called ‘vir’ and ‘pater’ temporally, ad tempus. The Spanish translation of Diez Ramos underlines the small importance that the marriage between Joseph and Mary receives in this homily: “He was not, then, the husband of the mother nor the father of the son, although (as has been said), for a necessary reason and by the action and permission of God, he was called and reputed for some time to be both one and the other” (BAC 110, 203). The low importance given by Saint Bernard to the marriage between the Blessed Virgin and Saint Joseph does not prevent him from giving a warm description of the holiness of Joseph, comparing him with Joseph, the son of Jacob: “Remember also that great patriarch, sold at another time into Egypt, and you will recognize that he not only bears the same name, but also his chastity, his innocence and his grace.... The first Joseph, remaining loyal to his master, would not consent to the bad intention of his mistress (see Gen 39:12); this Joseph, recognizing his Lady as a virgin, the Mother of his Lord, watched over her most faithfully, preserving himself in all chastity” (Ibíd., 16: BAC 110, 204).

“The form of matrimony consists in a certain inseparable union of souls, by which husband and wife are pledged by a bond of mutual affection that cannot be sundered. And the end of matrimony is the begetting and upbringing of children; the first of which is attained by
conjugal intercourse; the second by the other duties of husband and wife, by which they help one another in rearing their offspring... As to the first perfection, the marriage of the Virgin Mother of God and of Joseph was absolutely true, because both consented to the nuptial bond... But as to the second perfection which is attained by the marriage act, if this be referred to carnal intercourse, by which children are begotten, that marriage was not consummated... Nevertheless, this marriage had the second perfection, as to the upbringing of the child” (Saint Thomas Aquinas, S. Th., III, q. 29, a. 2, c.).

[19] La escuela de José, p. 80. And in another place he says: “The Gospels give us a picture of Joseph as a remarkably sound man who was in no way frightened or shy of life. On the contrary, he faced up to problems, dealt with difficult situations and showed responsibility and initiative in whatever he was asked to do” (In Joseph’s Workshop, no. 40)

[20] “In Joseph’s Workshop,” no. 40. We find the same idea in De la familia de José, p. 134, and in San José, nuestro Padre y Señor, pp. 95-96.

[21] To better “guarantee” our Lady’s virginity some apocryphal writers spoke of a previous marriage and presented Joseph as of an advanced age. This view has had a powerful influence on Christian art (see Guy-Marie Bertrand, in “Joseph (saint). II. Patristique et haut moyen âge,” Dictionnaire de Spiritualité, VIII, cit., 1302-1303). Saint Josemaría, in his “realism” and simplicity, found the imagination of those apocryphal writers unacceptable. The approach of Saint Josemaría is very similar to that of Saint Jerome in his Adv. Helvidium, 19 (PL 23, 203): it is necessary to hold soberly to the data offered in the New


[23] De la familia de José, p.134.


[26] After citing Mt 1:20, Pierre Grelot remarks: “The invitation not to fear to take Mary as his wife was also the revelation of his own vocation:
Joseph, the just man, received from God a calling at the level of his holiness.... In taking to himself the mother of the child and making her his wife, Joseph was at the same time making himself responsible for the mother and the child before God and before men; it is special role in the plan of salvation. His real paternity is pointed to by the fact that he was to give the child his name, the ‘word of recognition’ of a father for his child” (P. Grelot, “Joseph (Saint). I.” Dictionnaire de Spiritualité, VIII, cit., 1297-1298).

[27] “But Joseph, her spouse, being, as he was, just, and not wanting to defame her... No, he could not do this in conscience. He suffered. He knew that his spouse was immaculate, that she was a spotless soul, but he could not understand the marvel that had been worked in her. Therefore voluit occulta dimittere eam (Mt 1:19), he resolved to send her away quietly. He hesitated, not knowing what to do, but the problem was solved in the most pure way” (San José, nuestro Padre y Señor, p. 101).

[28] “In Joseph’s Workshop,” no. 42


[31] La escuela de José, p. 81.


[33] Ibid., no. 55.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Ibid., no. 56.


[37] “O felicem virum, beatum Ioseph, cui datum est Deum, quem multi reges voluerunt videre et non viderunt, audire et non audierunt, non solum videre et audire, sed portare, deosculari, vestire et custodire!”


[39] Ibid., no. 45.


[42] *De la familia de José*, p. 137.

[43] Don Alvaro del Portillo referred to St. Josemaría as *our Father,* to distinguish him from the Father which is the name applied to whoever is the current head of Opus Dei—a family of a supernatural character.


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