

BLESSED ALVARO DEL PORTILLO

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Learning to love in everyday life

Blessed Alvaro del Portillo pointed out that, for the Christian faithful, filiation and freedom, expressed through love, are presented as both a gift and a task, enabling us to recognise our own identity and to carry out our mission to transmit the legacy of the Gospel in the contemporary world. He therefore spoke of the need **“for the formation of all the faithful, appropriate to their unique vocation and mission”**, whose **“objective and goal is unity of life.”**



In the framework of Christianity in the 20th century, which Bishop Alvaro explains in the light of the teachings of St Josemaría, God considers us as authentic agents and expects initiative on our part. God calls, he makes his will clear, he contemplates us lovingly. But the response depends on how we engage in this dialogue. The individual **“must exercise freedom in this dialogue faithfully, that is, in such a way that it is a filial dialogue** and not an altercation or a debate. The human response is certainly marked by God’s initiative; and, consequently, the result will be a true dialogue between the infinite freedom of God and the finite freedom of his creature.”

Recalling the exhortations of *Lumen Gentium* (nos. 17, 30 and 33), Blessed Alvaro underlined the “call” that a Christian receives from God, while at the same time urging “each one to discover”, in the free exercise of temporal tasks, the real presence of “the divine” in a world that has forgotten it. **We could say that his theology of the faithful and the laity is marked by the experience of vocation, of the call that God makes to every man and woman, to each human being in his personal circumstances and which is an extension of the creative call.**



Ideas taken from the philosopher María Jesús Soto Bruna. See more:





FAITHFUL AND LAITY IN THE CHURCH

With his publications, Blessed Alvaro contributed to highlighting the **notion of the faithful** in the Church. An important document of the Second Vatican Council, the Constitution *Lumen Gentium* (21 November 1964), stresses “the dignity and freedom of the children of God” within the Church. This freedom and dignity are common to all members of the People of God. The eventual recognition that the faithful have rights and duties was something that matured over a long period of time.

During the summer of 1965, Bishop Alvaro prepared a response to a request from the Pontifical Commission for the reform of the Code of Canon Law. On the basis of that response and his extensive conciliar experience, in 1969 he wrote a book, *Faithful and the Laity in the Church*.

In that book he developed the notion of “faithful” (rather than laity, clergy or religious). It is a very important concept in Church law. More specifically, he set out to reflect on the theological and juridical principles that should underlie the new canonical norms on the rights and duties of the laity in the Church.

An important novelty in this work was to describe and enumerate for the first time a list of rights proper to all the faithful. The first Code of Canon Law, known as the Pius-Benedictine Code after the two Popes who initiated it, had paid little attention to this subject. To speak of rights and duties in the Church was almost unthinkable in 1917.

Blessed Alvaro had studied this question in depth during his academic career,

firstly with his theological studies in Madrid, his doctorate in Canon Law in Rome, his collaboration in the preparatory commissions for the Second Vatican Council, his intense work in the commission that drafted the conciliar decree *Presbyterorum ordinis*. Also, and no less importantly, through his reflection on the legacy of St. Josemaría Escrivá, who insisted so much on the inviolability of the freedom of the faithful, willed by God and acknowledged by the Church.

Ideas taken from the historian Josep-Ignasi Saranyana.

See more:



WHO WAS BLESSED ALVARO?



Alvaro del Portillo was born in Madrid in 1914 and joined Opus Dei in 1935, when he was studying civil engineering. At the age of thirty he was ordained a priest and became the most direct aide to Saint Josemaría, with whom he worked in the direction and apostolic promotion of Opus Dei throughout the world. He enjoyed the esteem of the Popes from Pius XII to St John Paul II, who valued his Christian faith, his work as a pastor, his intellectual preparation and his social awareness. On various occasions, especially during the Second Vatican Council, he was entrusted with work in the service of the Church. In 1975 he was elected St Josemaría's first successor. He promoted the expansion of the Work's message in various countries and encouraged the implementation of numerous initiatives of an educational, scientific and social nature. St John Paul II ordained him a bishop in 1991. He died a saintly death three years later, on 23 March 1994, after a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. The Pope came to pray before his mortal remains at the headquarters of Opus Dei, in recognition of his service to the People of God. He was beatified in Madrid on 27 September 2014. His feast day is celebrated on 12 May. *Further information:* www.alvarodelportillo.org

NEW PUBLICATION

Salvador Bernal, *Y aquí estoy. Biografía ilustrada del beato Álvaro del Portillo* (in Spanish)

Free by scanning this QR code:



PRAYER

God, merciful Father, you granted your bishop Blessed Alvaro, with our Lady's help, the grace to be an exemplary pastor in the service of the Church and a very faithful son and successor of Saint Josemaría, founder of Opus Dei. Grant that I too may respond faithfully to the demands of my Christian vocation, using every moment and event of my life to love you and serve Christ's kingdom. Deign to grant the canonisation of Blessed Alvaro, and through his intercession grant me the favour I ask of you (*here make your petition*). Amen.

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

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