

BLESSED ALVARO DEL PORTILLO

Newsletter No. 9 - 2022



DRIVING THE NEW EVANGELISATION

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WHO WAS DON ALVARO?

Alvaro del Portillo was born in Madrid in 1914 and joined Opus Dei in 1935, when he was a civil engineering student.

He was ordained to the priesthood at the age of thirty and became the most direct aide of Saint Josemaría, with whom he worked closely in governing and guiding Opus Dei and its apostolates throughout the world.

He was esteemed by Popes from Venerable Pius XII to Saint John Paul II, who valued his Christian faith, his pastoral work, his intellectual abilities and his social sensitivity. They entrusted him with tasks in the service of the Church on different occasions, especially during the Second Vatican Council.

He was elected as first successor of the Founder of Opus Dei in 1975. He impelled the spread of the message of the Work through different countries. This was made evident specifically by his encouragement to start numerous educational, scientific and social initiatives. Saint John Paul II consecrated him as a bishop in 1991.

He died a holy death three years later, on 23 March 1994, just after having made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. The Pope went to pray before his mortal remains at Opus Dei's headquarters, as an acknowledgement of his service to the People of God. Alvaro was beatified in Madrid on 27 September 2014. His feast is on 12 May.

For more information: www.alvarodelportillo.org

THE NEW EVANGELISATION OF EUROPE

a wish of St John Paul II

“It is the Pope’s wish that a new evangelisation of Europe be carried out, to bring Europe back to its Christian roots. All of us in the Work embrace the Holy Father’s desires – which the Father also extends to the United States and Canada – with enthusiasm and with deeds. To carry out this task, which is of the utmost importance at the current time, we rely on the weapons we have always used: first, the supernatural means, the effort we make to practise the theological virtues in accordance with the spirit of the Work; and then, making use of the human means we have at our disposal. Even though the undertaking is difficult, we will launch into it full of optimism and confidence, because we count on God’s help and the special capacity of the spirit of the Work to draw the men and women of our time to God.”¹

“That was Blessed Alvaro: A man whose smile gave glory to God, who ‘has done wondrous things’ (Sir 50:22), and who chose him to serve the Church by spreading Opus Dei, as a faithful son and successor of St Josemaría.”²

I entrust to our Lady a rejuvenated Church, a Church firmly united and renewed in its quest for sanctity and in the apostolic zeal of all its members

“Blessed Alvaro, considering his indebtedness to St Josemaría, stated that ‘The best way to show gratitude is to put the gifts received to good use.’³ In his preaching, in family gatherings, in personal encounters, in all places, he never ceased to speak about apostolate and evangelisation.”⁴

“Entrust all your apostolic tasks – which must be based always on professional work competently done – to the protection of Mary, *Spes Nostra, Mater Ecclesiae, Regina Mundi*. We ask her to shorten the time of trial and bring great good out of these difficulties – a rejuvenated Church, a Church firmly united and renewed in its quest for sanctity and in the apostolic zeal of all its members – so that in Europe and from Europe Christ may be placed **in the glory of all human activities, so as to draw all things to himself** (John 12:32)”^{5,6}



¹ Blessed Alvaro del Portillo, *Family Letters* – Volume 2, Rome, 25 December 1985, Introduction

² Bishop Javier Echevarría, Homily at the Mass of Thanksgiving after the Beatification of Blessed Alvaro, Madrid, 28 September 2014.

³ Blessed Alvaro del Portillo, *Family Letters* – Volume 1, Rome, 1 July 1985, 174.

⁴ Bishop Javier Echevarría, Homily at the Mass of Thanksgiving after the Beatification of Blessed Alvaro, Madrid, 28 September 2014.

⁵ St Josemaría Escrivá, *Instruction*, 1 April 1934, 1.

⁶ Blessed Alvaro del Portillo, *Family Letters* – Volume 2, Rome, 25 December 1985, 384

A SHINING LIGHT

in the re-Christianisation of Europe and of the world



Don Alvaro never ceased to insist on the need to extend the apostolic work, especially following the suggestions of St John Paul II on the re-Christianisation of Europe.

As well as supernatural means, there are human resources.

"So, my daughters and sons, increase your union with our Lord, which is the only guarantee of success in apostolic work. 'He has overcome the world',⁷ and he will make us share in his triumph if we cultivate a strong piety that is nourished by the study of Christian doctrine; if our prayer is operative, that is, if it leads us to generous sacrifice and translates into the example of upright behaviour, in unity of life; if we keep trying daily to live in God's presence. So, **the further away your surroundings may be from Christ's truth, the more immersed you must be in God, with our inner fire and apostolic fervour. Thus, our Father assures us, we will be light, a shining lantern, enkindled on the crossroads of this earth**^{8,9}

"As well as supernatural means, there are human resources. Study what is most suitable to be done in each country where you are, the most urgent initiatives, the fields which should have priority in this task of evangelisation. And get everyone in contact with the Work – Cooperators, St Raphael people, relatives and friends – to play a real part in this work, since so many areas need attention."¹⁰

"The recipe is the same as ever, my daughters and sons: more interior life, more personal apostolate! But don't assume then that we know it all already. We need more apostolic vibration – much more! – more commitment to souls, more openings for meeting people. Each one of you must seek enlightenment from the Holy Spirit in prayer and spiritual guidance, asking: How can I be more effective? How can I be a better instrument? What obstacles am I placing in the way of grace? What environments, which people might I reach, if I were less easy on myself – if I were more in love with God! – and had a greater spirit of sacrifice?"¹¹

"God allows contradictions, as much to purify us as for us to savour the sweet weight of His Holy Cross."¹²

"Only with the logic of the Holy Cross, where sorrow becomes a medicine and death turns into new Life, can we glimpse the explanation and the deep meaning – redeeming, generating graces for the Church – of what remains inexplicable to human eyes."¹³

"Be patient, just as our Lord is patient with each of us. Help those people you are dealing with to make a fresh start, again and again. Always receive them affectionately: let them be able to come to you in order to recover their enthusiasm, after a defeat, because they feel understood, encouraged, loved!"¹⁴

Teach me to practise, as Blessed Alvaro did, the art of 'knowing how to wait'

To ask Blessed Alvaro for serenity and peace of mind

Fr Francisco Faus has written the Novena for Serenity¹⁵ to ask for Blessed Alvaro's help in the face of difficult moments or situations. We include some excerpts:

"Grant me, O Lord, the friendliness, understanding and patience that Blessed Alvaro always had and which was so much appreciated by all who knew him, filling their hearts with peace."¹⁶

"Teach me to practise, as Blessed Alvaro did, the art of 'knowing how to wait', that he learnt so well from St Josemaría. Before speaking, correcting or pointing things out to others, may I let a reasonable amount of time to pass and only take action after having prayed about the matter and reflected on it calmly."¹⁷

⁷ Cf. John 16:33.

⁸ St Josemaría Escrivá, *Letter 14 February 1974*, 9.

⁹ Blessed Alvaro del Portillo, *Family Letters – Volume 2*, Rome, 25 December 1985, 378

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 380.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 381.

¹² Blessed Alvaro del Portillo, *Letter, 14 May 1984*, in Javier Medina, *Álvaro del Portillo – Un hombre fiel*, Rialp, Madrid 2012, p. 575, note 60.

¹³ Blessed Alvaro del Portillo, *Family Letters – Volume 1*, Rome, 29 September 1978, 36.

¹⁴ Blessed Alvaro del Portillo, *Family Letters – Volume 1*, Rome, 2 October 1986, 264.

¹⁵ Novena to Blessed Alvaro for Serenity, <https://opusdei.org/en/document/novena-for-serenity-to-blessed-alvaro-del-portillo/>

¹⁶ Novena to Blessed Alvaro for Serenity, 7th Day, Prayer.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*



HE TOOK EVANGELISATION *to 20 new countries*

Blessed Alvaro del Portillo welcomed, warmly and joyfully, a suggestion of St John Paul II, regarding the evangelisation of old Europe. He explained this in a pastoral letter of 25 December 1985 to the faithful of Opus Dei:

“In 1981 the Pope had already said: ‘We find ourselves in a Europe where the temptation of atheism and scepticism becomes ever stronger; where there is a woeful moral uncertainty, with the breakdown of the family and degeneration of morals; where there is a dangerous conflict of ideas and movements.’¹⁸ And in some of his recent audiences – as I told you immediately, because the Pope himself authorised me to do so – he asked me that in our apostolic work we should concentrate with special urgency on the countries of old Europe. That was how the Holy Father put it and, from the context of his words, I interpreted that he also included nations like the United States and Canada, where the same phenomenon is at work. The Pope then expressed a hope-filled thought: these countries, which have served the cause of the faith for so many centuries – some for almost two thousand years – and which now find themselves in such a difficult situation, need to go back to their own Christian roots.

“Since the spirit of the Work leads us to have the same mind as the Church in all things, we have to make these concerns of the Pope very much our own. We are delighted to second the Holy Father’s indications, and to work harder in the areas that he, as universal Shepherd of the Church, points out to us Catholics. There comes to mind the supernatural and human force with which our Father applied a phrase from Scripture to express this attitude of ours in serving the Church



On the ferry during the voyage to the Baltic countries



and the Holy Father: *Respiciat nos tantum Dominus noster et laeti serviemus!*¹⁹ (Gen 47:25) One of the ways our Father interpreted that text was: Let the Pope give the merest indication, even a glance, and his daughters and sons in Opus Dei will gladly put it into practice.”²⁰

Blessed Alvaro welcomed, warmly and joyfully, a suggestion of St John Paul II that the countries of Europe go back to their Christian roots.

The pressing call for the new evangelisation of old Europe, which had lost its Christian roots and needed to return to them in order

to recover its own identity, began as a cry from John Paul II in Santiago de Compostela on 9 November 1982 on the Roman Pontiff’s first trip to Spain, with which he wished to revive the faith of the continent: “From Santiago, I send you, old Europe, a cry full of love: ‘Come back to find yourself. Be yourself. Discover your origins. Revive your roots. Revive those authentic values that made your history glorious, and bless your presence in the other continents. Rebuild your spiritual unity, in a climate of full respect for other religions and genuine freedoms. Give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God. Do not be so proud of your achievements that you forget their possible negative consequences. Do not be depressed by the quantitative loss of your greatness in the world or by social and cultural crises.”

¹⁸ St John Paul II, *Address to the International Colloquium on “The common Christian roots of European nations”*, 6 November 1981.

¹⁹ *May our Lord but look upon us and happily will we serve!*

²⁰ Blessed Alvaro del Portillo, *Family Letters – Volume 2*, Rome, 25 December 1985, 375.

UNTIRING TRAVELLER

and promoter of educational initiatives

Blessed Alvaro promoted culture and the intellectual world, “encouraging his children, together with other citizens, to promote universities and institutes of higher education.”²¹

Between 1975 and 1994, he visited 42 countries and hundreds of thousands of people of different cultural and social backgrounds listened to his words.

“During the 19 years that Blessed Alvaro was at the head of Opus Dei, as a continuation of the mission St Josemaría had begun, he promoted the beginning of apostolic work and travelled to places where St Josemaría had been unable to go.”²²

“Before starting each trip, and during the course of it, he always asked for prayers.”²³

“He went to 42 countries and hundreds of thousands of people of different cultural and social backgrounds listened to his words:²⁴ “The first thing he did was to visit the bishop and, where appropriate, the Nuncio. He also went to pray before the most venerated image of the Virgin Mary in that place.”²⁵

“The typical day included a demanding programme of work, with no sightseeing or time for rest.”²⁶

“He only asked that the times for the celebration of the Holy Mass, for meditation, for the recitation of the Liturgy of the Hours, for the reading of the Gospel and of some spiritual book and for the recitation of the Holy Rosary, should be properly fixed. He also set the day of

the week for his confession.”²⁷

“His first objective was his children... He gave them meditations and talks. He gave them fatherly advice. He listened with interest to their apostolic initiatives, their small or great difficulties, the details of their daily lives. He was concerned about their needs, both spiritual and material. He had a special affection for the sick. Before taking part in large gatherings, he would pray to ask the Holy Spirit to work in those souls.”²⁸

“The gatherings usually lasted an hour. He also set aside time to receive families.”²⁹

University Initiatives

“Even though he usually resided in Rome, he took a keen interest in everything that affected the life of the University, always promoting its development with optimism and a supernatural vision.”³⁰

“I can say that Don Alvaro was for me, and for those of us who are now at the ‘halfway point’

²¹ Javier Medina Bayo, *Álvaro del Portillo – Un hombre fiel*, Rialp, Madrid 2012, pg. 565 (cited below as JMB).

²² *Ibid.*, pg. 569.

²³ *Ibid.*, pg. 584.

²⁴ *Testimony of Mgr Joaquín Alonso*, AGP, APD T-19548, pg. 101; in JMB pg. 584.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 52-53; in JMB pg. 585.

²⁶ *Testimony of Bishop Javier Echevarría*, AGP, APD T-19544 p. 788; in JMB pg. 585.

²⁷ *Testimony of Mgr Joaquín Alonso*, AGP, APD T-19548, pg. 101; in JMB pg. 584.

²⁸ Javier Medina Bayo, *Álvaro del Portillo – Un hombre fiel*, Rialp, Madrid 2012, pg. 565.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pg. 587.

³⁰ Jaime Nubiola, *Don Álvaro y el gobierno de la Universidad de Navarra*, in *El Beato Álvaro del Portillo y la Universidad*, EUNSA, Pamplona, 2015,

of our professional careers, a clear point of reference, an encouraging presence in our first years at the University.”³¹

The University, with its teaching and research tasks, with its aspiration to deepen the sources of wisdom and science, is like the vanguard of civil society: in classrooms and laboratories, in libraries and hospitals, a spirit is forged day by day that can be Christian – and thus direct men and women along paths that lead to eternal life.³²

Among the various Universities he promoted are the following:

La Sabana University | Bogota, Colombia



University of Asia and the Pacific | Manila, Philippines



Austral University | Buenos Aires, Argentina



Centre for Research in Applied Medicine (CIMA) of the University of Navarre | Pamplona, Spain



University Campus Biomédico | Rome, Italy



³¹ María Iraburu Elizalde, *El legado de don Álvaro, un reto para el futuro*, in *El Beato Álvaro del Portillo y la Universidad*, EUNSA, Pamplona, 2015, pg. 35.

³² Álvaro del Portillo, *Responsabilidad de la Institución Universitaria*, in *El Beato Álvaro del Portillo y la Universidad*, EUNSA, Pamplona, 2015.

FAVOURS

I had been unemployed for a long time, our first child had just been born, and I was very overwhelmed. It then occurred to me to start a novena to Blessed Alvaro del Portillo. On 23 March 2018 (the anniversary of his death), I finished the novena. That same day I was informed that I had been selected, after a job interview, for the company where I was hired a few days later. It is there that I am currently working. No doubt I owe this great favour to Blessed Alvaro del Portillo.

**C.V.
Spain**



I went over budget and asked my landlord if I could owe him half a month's rent until I received the financial stimulus payment. It was scheduled to arrive later that month, but it hadn't. I was afraid of losing my tenancy. I started praying the "Novena for Serenity to Blessed Alvaro" and instead of facing problems, I received some help from a social services organisation. It allowed me to regain solvency and buy some much needed food. Thank you, God! Thank you, Blessed Alvaro.

**S.P.
United States**

I work for a Foundation that sponsors schools in rural areas. We had long wanted to sell a property in order to alleviate a difficult situation and had been trying to do so for many years. The situation in the country made it almost impossible for us to find a buyer for the property. Furthermore, some of the characteristics of the property made it even more complicated to find a buyer. We had had some offers that did not materialise at the last moment, and we were very worried because of the situation the Foundation would find itself in if we did not sell the property. Several of us decided to pray until we managed to sell it. At the end of 2019 we were able to sell the property after having overcome several complications that were resolved as we continued praying the prayer card and making arrangements. We are all sure that it was Don Alvaro's intercession that got things resolved. We are grateful for this favour, which is only the last of many that Don Alvaro has done us. It is now a certainty that when faced with such a problem, it is only a question of providing the human resources and asking Don Alvaro to intercede. Even in very small, everyday matters. He has never failed us.

R.B.
Argentina



A friend asked me if I could give the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick to a daughter-in-law who was a terminal patient in one of the hospitals in Bacolod City. I have been to the hospital a couple of times but this time I wanted to use a different route using the GPS. I ended up in a place that was familiar to me but I couldn't get my bearings. So I asked two policewomen who were crossing the street. They gave me directions and before they left I explained the prayer on Blessed Alvaro's card. When I turned around, I found they had got on their motorbikes and they led me to the hospital, a considerable distance from where we had been. No doubt it was a favour, as I asked Blessed Alvaro to get me to the hospital on time. This was during the pandemic. I found out later that this patient died.

H.F.
Philippines

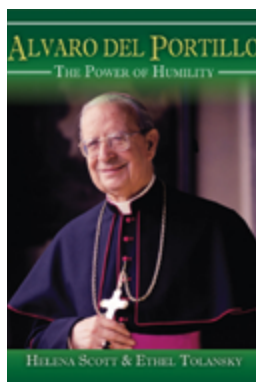
PRAYER

O God, merciful Father, you granted your bishop Blessed Alvaro the grace of being, with our Lady's help, an exemplary pastor in the service of the Church and a most faithful son and successor of Saint Josemaría, the Founder of Opus Dei. Grant that I also may respond faithfully to the demands of the Christian vocation, turning all the circumstances and events of my life into opportunities to love you and to serve the kingdom of Jesus Christ. Deign to grant the canonisation of Blessed Alvaro, and through his intercession grant me the favour I request... (*here make your petition*). Amen.

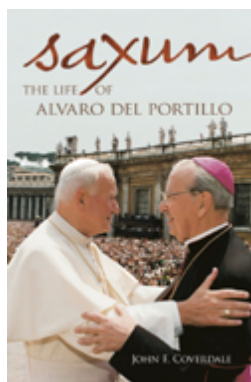
Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be.



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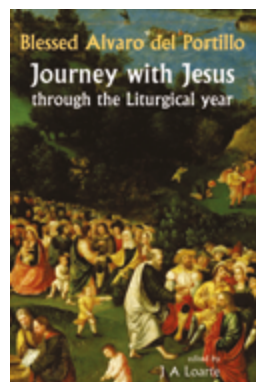
**Alvaro del Portillo –
The Power of Humility**
H Scott & E Tolansky
Catholic Truth Society,
London. Booklet B758



**Saxum: The Life of
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John Coverdale
Scepter, New York



Like Salt and like Light
(Texts for prayer and
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Through the Liturgical
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More information is available at www.alvarodelportillo.org

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

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