Prelate: "Let us ask God for a childlike heart"

Homily of Monsignor Fernando Ocáriz, in memory of Blessed Alvaro del Portillo, delivered at the Basilica of Saint Eugene on Saturday, May 11, 2019.

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We are celebrating the feast of Blessed Alvaro del Portillo, our beloved Don Alvaro. More than five years have gone by since his beatification. Time passes quickly,

but we still remember very well those joyful days spent in Madrid.

There are many aspects of the life of Saint Josemaria's first successor we could focus on. Today I want to reflect on his trust in God.

The texts from today's Mass speak to us of this aspect when presenting the figure of the Good Shepherd. In the first reading, we listened to the words of the prophet Ezekiel. The situation of the people of Israel was at a critical moment. Jerusalem had been destroyed and most of the people had been sent into exile. The Israelites awaited someone capable of bringing them back to their own land. But God's plans always exceed our calculations. He says through Ezekiel: "I myself will search for my sheep... I myself will pasture my sheep.... the injured I will bind up, and the sick I will heal" (*Ezek* 34:11-16). The prophet surpasses all

the expectations of his contemporaries: he invites the people to place their hope directly in God instead of merely human solutions.

Don Alvaro was a person who possessed great natural and supernatural traits. He knew that God's grace could do more in his life than he himself could ever imagine. When he was chosen to lead Opus Dei, he said: "I have serious difficulties: all my sins, inadequacies and miseries. But I know that God our Lord gives sufficient grace for whatever He asks of us."

In the Gospel we just heard, Jesus presents himself as the Good Shepherd. In addition to the reasons given by the prophet for trusting in God, He offers us another one when he says the Good Shepherd "gives his life for the sheep" (*Jn* 10:11). The image of the Shepherd thus reaches

its culmination: Christ is the one who seeks us out to carry us on His shoulders; Christ is the one who binds and heals our wounds; Christ is God Himself who gives His life on the Cross for us. After having just proclaimed this in the Gospel, how could we not trust in a God who dies for us?

On numerous occasions, the Pope has encouraged us to remember that, as Saint Paul says, God is the one who works in our lives, both in our desires to do the good and in our good works (cf. *Phil* 2:13). Sometimes, especially in moments of discouragement, it can happen that we trust little in God's grace, relying instead on other sources of security (see *Gaudete et exultate*, no. 50), such as our own strength, ideas, or plans. The Lord knows all of this and yet tells us: I am the Shepherd that you can trust. Can there be anything

more effective than God's own strength?

Blessed Alvaro often prayed an aspiration along these lines, a clear outpouring of his trust in God: "Thank you, sorry, help me more." These words express gratitude for the good things we do not deserve, recognition of our personal weakness, and a humble request for the strength needed to reach the greatest happiness possible, union with God. These words are also among the first that mothers teach their children. Let us ask God for a childlike heart, knowing ourselves incapable of anything without the help of Our Father God. During a family gathering, Saint Josemaria once referred to his personal need for God's grace, saying that he lived "with outstretched hands," begging our Lord for alms.

Let us pray, through the intercession of Don Alvaro, that our trust in God's love for us grow deeper every day, just as his was. Thus we can better understand that the Lord Jesus, the Good Shepherd, is the one who guides us and fills our life with supernatural fruit, which always come to us through the motherly mediation of Holy Mary.

Amen.