

40 years ago! A bit of history...

On his way to Mexico, Blessed Alvaro, called "Father" for 20 years, stopped in Canada and visited St. Joseph, his father and friend, at St. Joseph's Oratory of Mount Royal.

2023-03-18

With great joy, Blessed Alvaro del Portillo went to St. Joseph's Oratory for the first time in April 1983. He had come all the way from Rome to visit his friend St. Joseph. This was no surprise given his great devotion

to the adoptive father of Jesus, whom he considered a model of fatherhood.

Blessed Alvaro would have agreed heartily with Pope Francis when he wrote in his Apostolic Letter *Patris corde*: "With a father's heart: that is how Joseph loved Jesus (...). In Joseph, Jesus saw the tender love of God." And he adds: " Fathers are not born, but made. A man does not become a father simply by bringing a child into the world, but by taking up the responsibility to care for that child. Whenever a man accepts responsibility for the life of another, in some way he becomes a father to that person. (...) Being a father entails introducing children to life and reality. Not holding them back, being overprotective or possessive, but rather making them capable of deciding for themselves, enjoying freedom and exploring new possibilities."

This is why the closest collaborator and first successor of St Josemaria was a father figure. Don Alvaro, as he was affectionately called, followed the example of St. Joseph in caring for the family of Opus Dei within the Catholic Church. Being closely identified with God's will, he loved his "children" with a father's heart.

A pastor whose gaze radiated kindness and peace

Similar qualities were found in both men. St. Joseph was faithful, silent, discreet, obedient and benevolent. He showed great availability and full adherence to God's plan for his life, with a deep spirit of service. St. Josemaría spoke of him as someone with his two feet firmly rooted in reality, "strong, amiable and effective."

As for Don Alvaro, beatified on September 27, 2014 in Madrid, those who knew him remember a pastor

whose gaze radiated kindness and peace – his serene, affectionate, humble and paternal eyes were attentive to each individual around him. The meekness of his smile, it is said, infused serenity into people's hearts and led many to God.

Always ready to serve, he was prudent, upright, just and strong in bearing physical and moral hardships. Just like St. Joseph, of whom he wrote in March 1989: "We see in him a magnificent example of response to God's call: he was entirely faithful in carrying out the mission for which he had been chosen, that of watching over Jesus and Mary. And we Christians must respond to God's plan for each of us with the same dedication, without keeping anything for ourselves and without restriction."

St. Joseph, Patron and Protector of Canada, Patron Saint of workers

With this double title, he protects our country and helps us discover and deepen the meaning of our work. As Pope Francis writes in *Patris corde*: "In our own day, when employment has once more become a burning social issue (...), there is a renewed need to appreciate the importance of dignified work (...)."

"Working people, whatever their job may be, are cooperating with God himself, and in some way become creators of the world around them. The crisis of our time, which is economic, social, cultural and spiritual, can serve as a summons for all of us to rediscover the value, the importance and necessity of work for bringing about a new "normal" from which no one is excluded."

This reality was very much present in Blessed Alvaro's mission, which is also the mission of Opus Dei: to remind the women and men of our

time of the immense value of their daily work, which is the place where they can meet God and the royal road to becoming saints and apostles, collaborating with God in the salvation of the world.

Thus, it can be said of both St. Joseph and Blessed Alvaro that they were discreet men who show us the way to achieve holiness in the simplicity of everyday life.

But let us leave the last word to Don Alvaro: "Let us turn to St. Joseph, whom we venerate and love so much: contemplate him right next to the Child and his Wife, and humbly renew your resolution to serve, no matter what the cost, until your very last breath."

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