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# "Thank You, Holy Father"

Bishop Javier Echevarría opened the conference in Rome for the centennial of Alvaro del Portillo's birth with words of gratitude to Pope Francis on the first anniversary of his election.

03/18/2014

The conference for the centennial of Bishop Alvaro del Portillo's birth, which we are beginning today, coincides with Pope Francis' annual retreat and with the first anniversary of his election to the see of Peter.

Therefore I would like to begin these three days of reflection with the deepest gratitude to the Holy Spirit for his continual assistance to the People of God. Naturally, we also want to thank Pope Francis for the apostolic dynamism he is spreading around him and his great concern to draw close to each person.

His encouragement is a spur to all Christians to strive to bring Christ's love and mercy to the furthest corners of the world. Many people have seen in Pope Francis a priest who prays a lot and who is always ready to listen to those he is with. All this is a reason for great filial joy and thanksgiving to heaven.

A central point of the preaching of Alvaro del Portillo was precisely fidelity to the Church and love for the Pope. Wherever he went, Bishop del Portillo asked people to pray for the intentions of the Roman Pontiff.

He was always moved by the desire to bring “Rome to the outposts of the earth” and “the outposts to the Pope,” as St. Josemaria said ( *Forge* , no. 638).

Following Venerable Alvaro del Portillo’s example, let us be closely united to the Pope and his intentions on his retreat in Ariccia, as he asked of his in his Sunday Angelus.

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