

The Saint in Figures tours East Africa

The word 'saint' is remote, as remote as the afterlife and I don't always associate it with the here and now. I was to put up an exhibition, here-and-now about a saint, about Bishop Álvaro who was pronounced blessed on 27th September 2014.

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The exhibition narrates the life of Bishop Álvaro from cradle to grave. What a gifted man! And what a life!

With an ordinary upbringing and good education, he was ready, by 1935, to embark on a promising career -which he did as a member of Opus Dei. The young engineer was ordained priest in 1944. The exhibition reveals the extraordinary number of journeys he made, as prelate of Opus Dei, covering 408,082 km; the number of social projects he initiated; the various Vatican offices he held etc. And one may ask: to what purpose were all these? In order to make his life useful. "Don't let your life be barren, Be useful. Make yourself felt" (The Way, no. 1. St Josemaria) as the first panel in this exhibition tells us. And useful is indeed what Blessed Álvaro's life was.

This travelling exhibition started on 30th August 2014, in Strathmore University, Nairobi. After a week it moved to Kimlea Girls Training Centre in Limuru. Both institutions

were under the patronage of Blessed Álvaro. The next venue, on the 13th and 14th of August, was St. Patrick's Church in Thika Town. Between 16th and 25th August, the exhibition was hosted by Kibondeni College, Strathmore School and Kianda School, respectively. All are in Nairobi. In April 1989, Blessed Álvaro visited these three institutions.

The Holy Family Basilica in Nairobi, hosted the exhibition on the very day of Blessed Álvaro's beatification -27th September 2014. Christ the King Church, Kampala, was the next venue followed by the Holy Ghost Cathedral in Mombasa.

Viewers expressed surprise and admiration at the many activities carried out by Blessed Álvaro. Who was he? What did he achieve? And why is he a saint? The exhibition gave information about his life and his work. It did so in figures,

reminding the viewer, however, that behind these figures there are motives which are the reason for the figures; the other side of the coin, the truer side. Another of the exhibition quotes exhorts: "Many things depend, don't forget it, on whether you and I live our lives as God wants" (The Way, no. 755. St Josemaria). By beatifying Bishop Alvaro, the Church declares that he has lived as God wants.

A series of photos from the various exhibitions

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