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Alviras

Yesterday, the Cardinal Archbishop of Madrid presided over the closing of the diocesan phase of the cause of marriage canonization formed by the servants of God Paquita Domínguez Susín and Tomás Alvira Alvira, both faithful of the Prelature of Opus Dei.

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Readers of Vazquez de Prada's biography of St. Josemaria will remember Tomas Alvira, a young doctoral student who crossed over

the Pyrenees with St. Josemaria in November 1937 to escape from the religious persecution during the Spanish Civil War. When the war ended, in 1939, he married Paquita Dominguez and started a family that would eventually have nine children.

Tomas wanted to join Opus Dei as the first Supernumerary member, but St. Josemaria told him to wait until the Church had given its full approval to this path of holiness for married people. Tomas joined Opus Dei in 1947, and his wife Paquita in 1952.

The diocesan phase of the cause of canonization of the servants of God Tomas and Paquita Alvira was formally closed on September by the Archbishop of Madrid, Cardinal Ruoco. The couple's eight living children were present at the ceremony.

The testimonies and documents gathered during the three year

diocesan investigation have been sent to Rome and are now being studied by the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints.

During the closing ceremony Cardinal Ruoco said: “we have before us an example of the vocation to holiness that the Second Vatican Council insisted is the universal calling of all the baptized, a path that St. Josemaría Escriva illuminated and spread from 1928.”

For the Archbishop of Madrid, “this process of canonization confirms, as Benedict XVI said, that being a saint does not mean doing strange or spectacular things, or being people without faults. Rather it means a determined struggle to be united to God in daily life, with a deep concern for others.” Cardinal Ruoco expressed his joy at seeing the growing number of lay people who are in the process of canonization,

and stressed that “the Church wants to hold up as models of sanctity people who have lived integrally their matrimonial vocation.”

During the ceremony, Pilar Alvira, the couple’s fourth child, spoke of her parents’ “enormous capacity to love. The atmosphere in our home was one of enormous affection because they poured themselves out for us and taught us to do likewise with others.”

Tomas Alvira was born in Villanueva de Gallego, near Saragossa, on January 17, 1906, and died in Madrid on May 7, 1992. After earning a doctorate in chemistry, he taught at the Natural Science Institute in Madrid.

Paquita Dominguez was born in Borau, near Huesca, on April 1, 1912, and died in Madrid on August 29, 1994. She worked as a high school teacher during the Spanish Civil War

years. At the end of war, on June 16, 1939, she and Tomas were married in Saragossa. They had nine children, the first of whom, Jose Maria, died at the age of five.

Faithful to the spirit of Opus Dei, they passed on to their children and to many other people their example of Christian life and marriage, of a “bright and cheerful home,” as St. Josemaria used to say.

They strove for sanctity through the heroic and persevering exercise of the Christian virtues. The Holy Mass was the center and root of their interior life. Assisted by divine grace and living in God’s presence, they imbued their ordinary daily activities with supernatural meaning.

Both suffered painful illnesses towards the end of their lives, and offered up their suffering with a deeply supernatural outlook.

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