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Homily of the Prelate on the Feast of Blessed Alvaro del Portillo (2023)

"We can ask our Lord to help us grow in these same attitudes of Don Alvaro: humility and service to the Church,"
Monsignor Fernando Ocariz said at the Mass celebrated on 12 May 2023 in the Basilica of Saint Eugene in Rome.

05/12/2023

Today we celebrate the feast of Blessed Alvaro del Portillo. We have begun this Holy Mass with some words in the Entrance Antiphon that could well be applied to Don Alvaro: "This is the steward, faithful and prudent, whom the Lord set over his household." As shepherd of the family of Opus Dei, his overriding concern was to care for his daughters and sons. In this way he served the Church, and also reached a multitude of other souls.

The Mass readings show us the figure of the Good Shepherd. God, through the prophet Ezekiel, assures his people that, despite the difficulties, He will never abandon them. "I myself will search for my sheep . . . I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep . . . I will bind up the crippled, and I will strengthen the weak" (*Ez* 34:11-16). It is God who guides us. It is God who saves us. And Don Alvaro knew this very well. He was aware

that he had many talents and, even more, that he had received them from our Lord to assist in the fatherly care of the people entrusted to him. In this task, moreover, he had learned from Saint Josemaría that humility is the true path that leads to holiness, also as a shepherd. If we recognize the greatness of God and how He acts through us – with our talents and even with our weaknesses – we come to realize that his infinite love is very close to us and that He never abandons us. Humility opens one's eyes to understanding this way of acting by God: through the shepherds it is He who continues to seek us.

This is how Don Alvaro cared for the flock of Opus Dei. With the humility and responsibility of a shepherd, he wanted to bring God's blessing to everyone. He lived with the watchfulness of a father who gives the best of himself for his children.

In short, Don Alvaro tried to love as Christ did: “I am the good shepherd,” we have read in the Gospel. “I know mine and mine know me” (*Jn 10:14*). His humble attitude instilled peace and serenity in others. We can see this even in the photos we have of him. He trusted in God, and invited his sons and daughters to put their hope in the One who never fails us.

Pope Francis, in the letter he wrote on the occasion of Don Alvaro's beatification, highlighted another aspect that marked his life, in addition to humility. “Especially outstanding was his love for the Church, the Spouse of Christ, whom he served with a heart devoid of worldly self-interest, far from discord, welcoming towards everyone and always seeking in others what was positive, what united, what was constructive. He never spoke a word of complaint or criticism, even at especially difficult

times, but instead, as he had learned from Saint Josemaría, he always responded with prayer, forgiveness, understanding and sincere charity.”

Remembering the benefit that his life has brought to us and to the Church, we can ask our Lord to help us grow in these same attitudes of Don Alvaro: humility and service to the Church in all settings, in the family, at work and in our friendships. We can always try to look for the positive in others, because we can always focus more on what unites us and not so much on what can separate us from others. God’s closeness – above all, in the sacraments – enables us to respond at all times with understanding and forgiveness when a person does not meet our expectations. Although tensions or disunity may sometimes spread in some environments, we should react with prayer, to discover how to act

with a lifestyle marked by the Gospel.

The expression "thank you, sorry and help me more" was a short prayer that Don Alvaro used to repeat frequently. We can end by considering how his heart was filled with gratitude to God for all the good things he had received from Him. And how, as a result of that attitude, he was also prompt to ask for forgiveness. The awareness of his weakness did not take away his peace, but rather led him to ask for more help. It led him to trust more in divine providence and also in the motherly protection of our Lady. We can turn to Mary in this month of May asking that, like Don Alvaro, we may be grateful, humble people with the desire to care diligently for those around us, as an expression of our service to the Church.

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