

Blessed Alvaro del Portillo, a Marian pilgrim in the Philippines

The Prelate of Opus Dei visited the National Shrines of Mount Carmel and Our Lady of Peace and Good Voyage in 1987. He was beatified in 2014. His feast day is celebrated on May 12.

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Blessed Alvaro del Portillo arrived in Manila on the evening of January 21, 1987. He was here until February 1.

On the morning of January 22nd, before the many meetings and audiences scheduled for that day, he wanted to make a pilgrimage to Mary. He went to the National Shrine of Our Lady Mount Carmel in New Manila, Quezon City.

Kneeling on the pew closest to the image of our Lady, accompanied by some of his spiritual children, he prayed the Rosary. At the end, he prayed aloud:

“Yesterday, as we were flying already over the Philippine Islands, following the tradition of our Founder, we prayed three Hail Mary’s and invoked our Lady: ‘Holy Mary, Queen of the Philippines, pray for us.’ We start our stay in this country with a visit to our Lady.”

“I like praying before images of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Patroness of Navigators. In this archipelago, with more than seven thousand islands,

there is sea everywhere. It is therefore fitting that we go to *Stella Maris* (Star of the Sea) and *Stella Orientis* (Star of the Orient), Mother of God and our Mother."

"We love her with all our soul. We want to serve her and we trust that she would teach us to serve, to love, to treat Her Son better each time. Let us turn to her, to bring to her custody, her guidance and protection, all our apostolic work during these days."

"Most Holy Virgin, Star of the Orient, we ask that you help us. Take care particularly of this corner of the world. Remember the Philippine Islands, guardian of the faith in the East. May the work of your daughters and sons in Opus Dei in these lands be blessed continually by our Lord; may you always nourish, sustain and protect it."

“Help us, bless us, as we only want the glory of your Son: *Regnare Christum volumus!* (We want Christ to reign). Help us and smile at us always! Holy Mary, our Hope, Seat of Wisdom. Pray for us.”

On January 30, Blessed Alvaro went for a pilgrimage to the National Shrine of Our Lady of Peace and Good Voyage, popularly known as Our Lady of Antipolo.

When Bishop Protacio Gungon of Antipolow learned that the Prelate of Opus Dei was visiting the shrine, he gave instructions so that he could pray up close to the image of our Lady. Blessed Alvaro was most grateful for this detail.

After praying the Rosary and a *Responso* for the soul of our Founder, he prayed aloud, for the small group of priests and laymen accompanying him to hear:

“After seeing these roses offered to our Lady, I thought about the union of hearts of all the members of the Work - your sisters and you all together united to our Lord through our Lady. She has in her hands a rose, as if she were that one heart through which all the other hearts are united.”

“Let us be faithful. Let us renew our desire to do Opus Dei, as our Founder taught us, to serve the Church and the entire humanity, battling against ourselves, because that is our path. The way is all about giving ourselves to God out of love, and because of this love, to all souls.”

“May we really love each other! May we be faithful to our Lord in this love! Defend the unity of the Work. Defend the spirit of Opus Dei, as our Founder handed it to us! For this, we turn to our Lady, Mother of God and

our Mother, Queen of Peace, so that she may grant us this peace."

"My children, let us renew our resolution to give ourselves to the service of the Church and all souls. Let us turn to our Founder so that from Heaven he may help us to be faithful, to do *Opus Dei (God's work)*, being ourselves Opus Dei, each one of us, Opus Dei."

"In our life, let us reject everything that is not God's. And thus, what would remain in us is a perfect work, a Work of God. Despite our miseries and weaknesses, and our ingratitude, we want to be faithful. To achieve this, we go to the protection of the Most Holy Virgin. She will help us."

They stood up and prayed the "Hail Holy Queen" for Opus Dei and particularly for the apostolic work in the Philippines, that it may be as God wants, "a sowing of peace, a river of

peace in these marvelous islands".
Blessed Alvaro then kissed the image.

Some priests in the church were waiting to greet the Prelate. They expressed their gratitude for his visit. Blessed Alvaro told them that it was he that should thank them and our Lady for bringing him to the historic pilgrimage shrine.

Msgr. Javier Echevarría was with Blessed Alvaro in those two pilgrimages in 1987. He succeeded him as Prelate of Opus Dei in 1994. Referring to Blessed Alvaro, he wrote in a letter dated May 1, 2014:

"In many visits to images of our Lady, in Rome and outside of Rome, he prayed the Rosary asking our Mother for the Church and for the Pope, for the Work, and for all souls. His recourse to our Lady was a lesson of faith in the intercession of Mary."

"I can assure you - because I was an eyewitness - that the example of this good and faithful servant, in love with Jesus Christ and his Mother, encouraged others to turn with great confidence to the Blessed Virgin."

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