

Paying tribute to Blessed Álvaro del Portillo

On the occasion of his feast day on May 12, the author relates how she was inspired this year to publish a graphic novel of Blessed Alvaro.

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In 2014, I joined tens of thousands from around the world in Madrid, Spain to witness the beatification of Álvaro del Portillo. It was a momentous occasion, honoring his

holiness and officially recognizing his beatitude. To me, Blessed Álvaro was more than just a saintly figure—he was the Prelate of Opus Dei when I first encountered it, and over time, he became my spiritual father. His sanctity touched countless lives, including mine, and I quietly hoped that one day, I could pay tribute to his holy life.

Fast forward to 2024—the 10th anniversary of his beatification brought an unexpected yet providential opportunity: the chance to publish a graphic novel about his life. Written by Fr. Rafael Arias Villalta and illustrated by Juan Juvančić, this 48-page, full-color book weaves together defining moments of his life, unveiling his personality through distinct stages—his childhood, family, priesthood, and leadership—highlighting his unwavering goodness and service to

the Church through the charism entrusted to him by St. Josemaría.

Fr. Rafael explains, “*Juan and I sought to capture his life not as a mere sequence of events, but as a journey of transformation. We focused on the aspects of his life that had the greatest influence on the formation of a character that he placed at God's disposal.*”

“From childhood to maturity, he strove to better himself. Though unruly as a boy, he resolved from his first holy communion to work on his character and serve others. Seeking strength in the sacraments, he embraced daily communion and frequent confession. In his youth, he generously helped others, spreading Christian doctrine and providing aid to Madrid's poorest communities. Meeting St. Josemaría Escrivá changed his life—he dedicated himself entirely to Opus Dei, spreading the

message that holiness is a universal call."

He added, "As Pope Benedict XVI said, Christian holiness is friendship with God—a truth reflected in Blessed Álvaro's life. His mission was simple yet profound: to love God and his neighbor, bringing joy and selfless service to all he encountered. His story, like that of all saints, reminds us that holiness is within reach—not just for a few, but for everyone."

Both the writer and illustrator were deeply influenced by the stories of saints they read during their childhood and adolescence.

Recognizing the profound impact these narratives had on their own lives, they felt compelled to create books that could offer the same inspiration and guidance to children and teenagers worldwide.

Among their illustrated works are biographies of Saint Josemaría

Escrivá, Blessed Guadalupe Ortiz de Landázuri, and the married couple Tomás and Paquita—whose process of canonization is under way (Tomás is the first married member of Opus Dei.) They have also published a book on Venerable Ernesto Cofiño, a dedicated pediatrician who devoted his life to serving the children of Guatemala.

Their books have already been translated into more than ten languages, including Mandarin Chinese, English, French, Spanish, Portuguese, German, Polish, Lithuanian, Croatian, Slovenian, and Finnish, reaching readers across the globe.

Seizing the opportunity to print one of their books in the Philippines, I entrusted the project to Blessed Álvaro's intercession, tackling challenges from translation and cover redesign to financing 1,000

copies. Through it all, I felt his guiding hand.

Looking back, these hurdles were blessings. Though I never met him, this project brought me closer to him. His steadfastness—reflected in his monicker *Saxum (Rock)*—inspired me in my own life, even leading me to teach catechism, just as he once did.

Beyond this project, I continue seeking his intercession, hoping both myself and readers become “rocks” within our families and communities—steadfast pillars of faith.

Just months after it was released in the Philippines, this book has already reached various countries in Asia, Africa, and Europe. As highlighted on the back cover, it showcases “*his goodness and dedicated service to all people across every stage of his life.*”

More than a tribute, this book encourages readers to live their faith heroically in daily life. May it serve as an expression of gratitude for the blessings Blessed Álvaro has shared with countless souls—and inspire more to seek his intercession. Above all, I hope it becomes a powerful tool for evangelization, spreading faith and love wherever it goes.

Those who wish to purchase a copy may contact Tanglaw Activity Center at +63 956 116 6065

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