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Don Alvaro's cause opened

Cardinal Camillo Ruini, vicar of Rome, presided on March 5th over the opening session of the Tribunal of the Vicariate of Rome, which was convened for the cause of canonization of Bishop Alvaro del Portillo, Prelate of Opus Dei (Madrid, 1914 – Rome, 1994).

03/25/2004

Cardinal Ruini opened the canonization proceedings for Bishop Alvaro del Portillo on March 5, 2004,

at the Lateran Palace, commending “the service that Don Alvaro always provided to the Church of Rome.”

“The rather frequent occasions that I had to meet Bishop del Portillo,” recalled Cardinal Ruini, “imprinted on my soul the conviction that I found myself in the presence of an exemplary pastor.” He added: “In the firmness of his adherence to the doctrine of the Church, in his union with the Pope, in his pastoral charity, in his humility, and in his balance, he exhibited an extraordinary interior richness.”

Cardinal Ruini traced a biographical sketch of Bishop del Portillo. “The deep pastoral experience he developed working with St. Josemaría, his proven human qualities and his theological and juridical competence made him capable of many different tasks,” he said.

The Pope's vicar emphasized "the long and multifaceted activity that he carried out in the service of the Apostolic See" as a consultor of various congregations, as secretary of the commission of the Second Vatican Council which prepared "Presbyterorum Ordinis," as the consultor of other Conciliar commissions, and as a synodal Father.

According to the Cardinal, "the service that Don Alvaro always provided to the Church of Rome and the prompt and effective way that he supported the Holy Father's pastoral initiatives in this diocese showed the love of the Church that he had learned from St. Josemaría."

"Also relevant," he added, were "his efforts in the promotion of unity between culture and faith" and his contributions to the theology of the laity and the priesthood, shown in

some of his publications such as “Faithful and Laity in the Church” and “On the Priesthood.”

Cardinal Ruini spoke of the desire for a “quick beginning of this cause of canonization” on the part of “so many members of the ecclesiastical hierarchy and of the people of God.” There is “an abundant store of testimonies of people who knew him, among them, those of quite a few cardinals and bishops,” he said. He then added: “The Bishop’s Conference has unanimously expressed its favorable opinion” on beginning the cause.

The vicar of the Pope then spoke of the notable cures and the thousands of other spiritual and material favors attributed to the intercession of Don Alvaro, which demonstrate the “spread of private devotion to the Servant of God.”

The Cardinal's address followed the formal petition for the opening of the diocesan investigation by the postulator of the cause, Msgr. Flavio Capucci. Afterwards, Cardinal Ruini confirmed the naming of the tribunal, and then proceeded to the swearing in of its members and of the postulator.

Some 400 people filled the hall: "The number of people gathered in this first session," the Cardinal concluded, "is a sign of the affection which surrounds our beloved and much missed Alvaro del Portillo."

In a television interview after the ceremony, Bishop Javier Echevarría, del Portillo's successor as Prelate of Opus Dei, said: "I am very happy about this. Without anticipating the judgment of the Church, I see it as the appropriate conclusion of the way Bishop del Portillo lived." He added: "I recall perfectly how he

sought every day to respond to the grace of God. He would frequently repeat this aspiration: ‘Thank you, Lord. Forgive me and help me more.’”

The Congregation for the Causes of Saints has established that, besides the tribunal of the vicariate of Rome, a second tribunal of the same canonical competence will be conducted by the Prelature of Opus Dei. The sessions of the latter tribunal will begin on March 20, 2004. These two tribunals will coordinate between them the first phase of the cause, that is, the diocesan investigation on del Portillo’s life, virtues and reputation for holiness. Once the tribunals have collected all the relevant testimonial and documentary evidence, it will be up to the Holy See to study the cause and issue its judgment.

With Bishop del Portillo, there are now seven faithful of the Prelature of Opus Dei whose causes of canonization are currently open. These include Montse Grases (1941-1959), a Catalanian student who bore a painful illness with exemplary cheerfulness; Ernesto Cofiño (1899-1991), a Guatemalan pediatrician and father of a family, who exercised his profession with a spirit of great service; and Tony Zweifel (1938-1989), a Swiss engineer.

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(04/03/2025)