

Remembering Don Alvaro in March

Bishop Alvaro del Portillo was born on March 11, 1914. After a lifetime of dedicated service to the Church and to Opus Dei, he died on March 23, 1994, with a reputation for holiness.

03/23/2009

Seeking the intercession of men and women who have died with a reputation for holiness is a common practice in the Catholic Church. Here are 3 favors received through the intercession of Bishop Alvaro.

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The rebellious key

I hope that what I am about to tell shows up the kindness of Fr. Alvaro who is always ready to help, even in the smallest domestic needs. A month ago, I was visiting my sister. While helping her to clean up a room, I locked the door of a wardrobe with its key. Instantly, my sister looked at me in horror. She told me the key of that wardrobe was defective and that, once it was locked, there was no way to open it again. Some days back, it had jammed and had cost her husband a good while – and a small wound – to resolve the problem...

Indeed, we verified that the key was completely jammed. Besides, it was almost time to go to Mass and my sister needed some things from the wardrobe to get ready. I calmed her down, assuring her that we would

find a solution in a short while. I prayed intensely the Prayer of private devotion to Fr. Alvaro, asking him to resolve the problem I had just created. As soon as I finished the prayer, I tried the key. This time it turned without any protest and we could open the wardrobe.

For his fellow colleague

I am a civil engineer. In December 1993, God granted me the favour of meeting Fr. Alvaro personally; he received me on the occasion of a business trip I made to Rome. His simplicity and affection left a deep impression on me. We talked about the apostolic work in my country; I showed him some photos of the conference centre that was being built; and we talked as colleagues of a topic that interested us both: roads and highways. He told me how the construction was done in his time and I described the equipment being

used now. It was an unforgettable experience.

At the beginning of March 2007, I started feeling poorly; I had difficulty breathing. I went to the doctor who gave me some medicine for the chest, he said it was congestion. Since I did not improve, on March 11, my wife brought me to the Emergency Department of the hospital where our insurance company had registered us. We were remarking that it was the day of his birthday, so she started to pray to Fr. Alvaro, asking him to help “his colleague”. The cardiologist on duty told me that I was on the brink of a heart attack and that I urgently needed a pacemaker. However, there were two problems. First, the insurance company had to authorize the use of such a device, which meant more formalities; and second, we had to get the pacemaker in the city where

we lived, which was not going to be easy.

We started praying to Fr. Alvaro to intercede for this, and in less than two hours, the two problems were satisfactorily solved. The pacemaker was inserted and by Monday, I was back home.

We did not dare hope

After having been seriously ill, I thought that I would not be able to have children. We had been married 3 years and we did not harbor much hope. Nevertheless, I started praying to Fr. Alvaro and soon I was expecting...

I had many complications during the pregnancy. The baby was born by Caesarean section at six months and a week old. He came down with pneumonia and had to be in intensive care. Those were endless days. One afternoon, the doctor

asked if I were Catholic and suggested that we called in the priest to baptize the baby because there was nothing that could be done. If they removed all the tubes, he would die in a short while. We requested them not to remove the tubes to allow the baby to die when God wants. My son was in bad shape: he had lost weight and his skin was tinged yellow.

The priest arrived at three; by then I had calmed down, but I felt a sudden panic thinking that our Lord would take my son soon. I felt faint, and the priest reassured me that all would be well and to continue praying. A half past four, his breathing started to slow down, and at midnight, they removed the tubes. From that moment onward, he started to improve...!

Today, Alvaro is 10 years old and has received his First Holy Communion.

He is a healthy boy, generous and smiling, a very good student and a wonderful son.

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On July 7, 1935, while still an engineering student, Alvaro del Portillo asked for admission to Opus Dei. On June 25, 1944, he was ordained a priest, one of the first three priests of Opus Dei. From the moment the Spanish Civil War broke out in 1936, he was the person who provided the most assistance to St Josemaria, a task in which he continued until St Josemaria's death on June 26, 1975 in Rome. He was elected the first successor of St Josemaria as head of Opus Dei. John Paul II ordained him as a bishop in 1991.

During Don Alvaro's years in Rome, the Holy See also entrusted a number of tasks to him. He was a consultant to several congregations and councils

of the Vatican, and took part in the Second Vatican Council in various capacities. He also helped draft the current Code of Canon Law, promulgated by John Paul II in 1983.

Cardinal Ruini, who knew Bishop Alvaro personally, said that he was "an example of fidelity in following the spirit of sanctification in work and ordinary life". He considered him "an exemplary pastor" in the service to the Church.

Reputation for Holiness

Bishop Alvaro del Portillo's process of canonization was opened on March 5, 2004. In this introductory phase over the last four years, 2 tribunals (one of the Vicariate of Rome and the other of the Prelature of Opus Dei) have been studying his life and virtues by interviewing the many witnesses who knew and worked with him.

The next stage of the process will be the preparation of an official biography (called a positio) that shows how he lived the Christian virtues to a heroic degree. The positio is then sent to the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints to be studied and decided upon.

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You may read more about Bishop Alvaro del Portillo at this link:

<https://www.opusdei.org.sg/ssec.php?a=1932>

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