

Cardinal Nichols blesses painting of Our Lady of Willesden with St Thomas More, St Josemaría Escrivá and Bl Alvaro del Portillo

On 2 October 2016, Cardinal Nichols blessed a painting of Our Lady of Willesden to which had been added the figure of Bl Alvaro del Portillo following his beatification in September 2014.

10/10/2016

Soon after the canonization of St Josemaría Escrivá in 2002, the parish priest of the church of Our Lady of Willesden commissioned a painting which showed that, among the many pilgrims who had come to pray at that shrine of Our Lady, there were two canonized saints: St Thomas More in the 16th century and St Josemaría in the 20th. A signboard with the painting was placed outside the church.

Following the beatification in September 2014 of Alvaro del Portillo, closest collaborator of and successor to St Josemaría at the head of Opus Dei, the parish priest of Our Lady of Willesden decided that his figure should be added to the signboard, as he had also been to Willesden with St Josemaría in the

1950s and – as his successor – in 1980.

This was done and the painting returned to its position in late September 2016.

On 2 October 2016, Cardinal Vincent Nichols blessed the painting in a short ceremony before the start of a candle-lit rosary procession in the streets of Willesden. The text of the prayer of the blessing was as follows:

My brothers and sisters, we have genuine reason to rejoice because we are about to bless this image of Our Lady of Willesden along with Saint Thomas More, Saint Josemaría Escrivá and Blessed Alvaro del Portillo, which has been erected here for public veneration. This image honours above all the truth that Christ is the visible image of the invisible God, the eternal Son of God who came down to the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary as a sign and

sacrament of God the Father, as Christ himself said: "He who has seen me has seen the Father."

Let us pray.

God our Father, lover of the human race, we praise you for the great love shown us in the sending of your Word. Born of the Virgin, he became our Saviour, our first-born brother, like us in all things but sin. You gave us Christ as a perfect example of holiness. We see him as a child in his Mother Mary's arms, yet acknowledge him as God Almighty. We see his face and we discern the countenance of your goodness. We hear him speak the words of life and are filled with your wisdom.

Today we praise you, too, for the gifts of the Spirit bestowed upon Saint Thomas More, Saint Josemaría Escrivá, and Blessed Alvaro del Portillo, in whose honour we dedicate this signboard. May we follow in the

footsteps of the Lord, keeping before us the example of these saints and be brought to a maturity measured not by nature but by the fullness of Christ.

May we proclaim to the world his Gospel by word and deed, and in shouldering our cross daily, expend ourselves for others in your service. And may this sign be blessed, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

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