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John Paul II and John XXIII to be canonized; Alvaro del Portillo to be beatified

This morning Pope Francis signed decrees approving miracles obtained through the intercession of Blessed John Paul II and Bishop Alvaro del Portillo, first successor of Saint Josemaría as the head of Opus Dei, and approved the canonization of Blessed John XXIII.

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The Holy Father also approved the favourable votes of the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints for the canonization of Blessed John XXIII, the Pope who in 1959 convoked Vatican Council II.

Bishop Javier Echevarría: “a happy coincidence”

For Bishop Javier Echevarría, Prelate of Opus Dei, this news is “a happy coincidence and a cause of deep joy. Blessed John Paul II,” said the Prelate, “spent himself with untiring generosity in the service of mankind. He brought us closer to God with his rich teaching, through his words and writings, with images and so many gestures charged with meaning. His whole life was based on intimate union with Jesus Christ. You needed

only to see him pray to understand the fruitfulness of his ministry.”

John Paul II and John XXIII “were truly fathers close to all the faithful, to the Church, and particularly, I can say, to this part of the Church which is the Prelature of Opus Dei. I think they helped millions of people to feel that they were the Pope’s ‘much-loved sons and daughters.’”

The Prelate of Opus Dei described Bishop Alvaro del Portillo as “Saint Josemaría’s best support, and a most faithful collaborator of John Paul II.” And he added: “I turn to the intercession of this good and faithful servant, and I ask him to ‘infect’ us with his loyalty to God, the Church, the Pope, Saint Josemaría, and to his friends. I ask him to win for us a share in his social concern, which was shown in the many initiatives around the world for people in need which he encouraged. I ask that he

may transmit to us his special love for the family and his passionate love for the priesthood, as well as his tender and simple piety, which had such a Marian flavour.”

The miracle attributed to Bishop Alvaro's intercession

The miracle approved by the Holy See is the instantaneous healing of Chilean newborn baby, Jose Ignacio Ureta Wilson. A few days after birth in August, 2003, he suffered a cardiac arrest lasting more than 30 minutes and a massive haemorrhage. His parents prayed with great faith through the intercession of Bishop Alvaro del Portillo. The medical team thought that the baby had died when, without any additional treatment and in a totally unexpected way, the heart of the new born baby started to beat again, reaching 130 beats per minute. Despite the seriousness of his medical situation, ten years later Jose Ignacio leads a normal life.

Mgr Flavio Capucci, postulator of the cause, has received close to 12,000 signed accounts of favours received through the intercession of Bishop Alvaro. They include “graces of all kinds, both material and spiritual. Clearly the most striking are the extraordinary cures, of which there is a variety: from the disappearance of melanomas with metastasis after praying to Alvaro del Portillo, to the full recovery of a child who had drowned in a swimming pool.”

The postulator adds that many of these favours refer to family life: “married couples who are reconciled and live together again in harmony; the ability to have children, sometimes after waiting for many years before going to his intercession; reconciliations between estranged relatives; giving birth to healthy children after being told that the baby would be born sick or malformed. Bishop Alvaro was a

family person, who carried out a wide and deep catechesis on the family. It is perhaps because of this that the desire to go to his intercession for these kinds of matters arises spontaneously.”

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