

New Biography of Alvaro del Portillo

Alvaro del Portillo, declared “Venerable” by Benedict XVI, was born in Madrid on March 11, ninety-nine years ago. A recent biography contains abundant new information about his fruitful life in service of the Church.

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Entitled *Álvaro del Portillo, un hombre fiel*, “Alvaro del Portillo, a Faithful Man,” this 826 page book published by Rialp (with 16 pages of

photos) contains abundant new information about his life, as well as many extracts from his letters to well-known figures in the Church.

St. Josemaria's first successor at the head of Opus Dei, Bishop Alvaro del Portillo was born in Madrid, Spain, on March 11, 1914. He died in Rome on the morning of March 23, 1994, a few hours after returning from a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. That same day, Blessed John Paul II came to pray before his mortal remains, which now repose in the crypt of the Prelatic Church of Our Lady of Peace, in Rome.

On June 28, 2012, the Holy Father Benedict XVI approved the decree on the heroic Christian virtues of Alvaro del Portillo, declaring that he could now be called "Venerable."

The new biography, written by Javier Medina Bayo, was presented to the public on March 4 at the School of

Highway Engineering in Madrid, with a large public in attendance. A civil engineer who held doctorates in philosophy and canon law, Alvaro del Portillo was St. Josemaría's closest co-worker. On June 25, 1944, he was ordained a priest and dedicated himself generously to the exercise of the sacred ministry. In 1946 he took up residence in Rome, and his service to the Church was also shown in his dedication to the many tasks entrusted to him by the Holy See.

In the act of presentation, Javier Medina Bayo, the biography's author, said that Don Alvaro's life was characterized by "fidelity and service to the Church." He was "a man of great peace who spread peace around him, who made the truth and loyalty to the Church lovable."

Referring to the present moment of *sede vacante* in the Church, Medina

Bayo stressed “the great filial love that he showed the Roman Pontiffs. He acted as a son who wanted only to give joy to his father.”

Medina Bayo recalled how Don Alvaro reacted during the 1978 conclaves, when John Paul I and John Paul II were elected: “As he had learned from St. Josemaria and done during previous conclaves, he prayed very intensely for the future Pope and was deeply grateful when the first white smoke was seen, without knowing who had been elected.”

The author cited a letter of Bishop del Portillo to Cardinal König written in October 1978, soon after the death of John Paul I, in which he assured the German cardinal: “I am closely united to your prayers, during these difficult and extremely important moments in the life of the Church. How much I am praying and getting others to pray for the Sacred College,

so that they may elect a Pope with a deep interior life, with supernatural prudence and fortitude.”

Medina Bayo also pointed to Don Alvaro’s “exceptional service to the Church, while never trying to stand out himself. He made important contributions to the theology of the priesthood and the role of the laity in the Church, as consultor for various dicasteries and in his work during the Second Vatican Council.”

The book’s author concluded: “During the 19 years that he directed the Work, its stable apostolic activities began in 20 new countries. He also urged forward harmoniously many far-reaching social initiatives, fostering the personal responsibility of those directing them, as a person who had and gave peace.”

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