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Thanksgiving Masses for Alvaro del Portillo's Beatification

Cardinal Timothy Dolan was the principal celebrant at the Mass held in St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York, while Archbishop Bernard Hebda presided at a Mass held in South Orange, New Jersey.

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(From an article published in *Catholic New York* on October 30, 2014)

A Mass of Thanksgiving for the beatification of Alvaro del Portillo was held at St. Patrick's Cathedral a month after he was beatified in his native Madrid.

Cardinal Dolan served as principal celebrant and homilist at the October 26 Mass. Concelebrants included Msgr. Thomas Bohlin, vicar of Opus Dei for the United States.

The Church rejoices in the beatification of Blessed Alvaro, Cardinal Dolan said in his greeting to the cathedral congregation, which included numerous members and representatives of Opus Dei, and their families.

"What a great gift his example and intercession is to the Church universal," Cardinal Dolan said.

In his homily, Cardinal Dolan said the saints of the Church teach so well how to adhere to the first commandment.

"If I understand the wisdom and the charism of Opus Dei properly—I sure admire it and I sure appreciate it— if I understand the wisdom and the teaching of St. Josemaria Escriva," he advocated starting and ending every day with God, the cardinal said.

"Everything we do and dream and dare and say and think is under the influence of God's grace," he continued. "And when we err we put it under the influence of God's mercy."

Pablo Usandivaras, a member of Opus Dei, attended the Mass with his wife Melinda and their children Diego, 3, and Sofia Lourdes, who turns 1 in December.

The couple, who as a family attend Immaculate Conception parish in Queens, watched the beatification of Blessed Alvaro on television at home, they said.

They attended the cathedral Mass to pray for the intercession of Blessed Alvaro as a family living in New York.

"People who are on their way to become modern-day saints are so attractive to young people who are living in this city who have busy lives," Mrs. Usandivaras said. "When we came in it was standing room only. There were so many families. It's a beautiful representation of just how alive the Catholic Church is, and how much hope there is."

Link to full article in Catholic New York

A second Mass of Thanksgiving took place on Saturday, October 25, at Our Lady of Sorrows parish in South Orange, New Jersey. Archbishop Bernard Hebda was the principal celebrant.

Extracts from Archbishop Hebda's homily follow:

I was so grateful to Professor Coverdale for his excellent volume on Blessed Alvaro's life. I think it brings together so many currents in Blessed Alvaro's history that it could inspire all of us. Because what we see is a man who is incredibly gifted, but who is distinguished most of all for his willingness to say yes to God. We gather this morning in an incredibly beautiful church, and we are reminded by the stained glass windows of those men and women who have gone before us who have been able to say yes to the Lord, and in doing that have given us a

powerful example. As I hear about Blessed Alvaro's desire to always please God, as I read about the way in which he always said yes no matter what, if he knew that it was from God, I think we can all find inspiration and strive to do the same in our lives. I love reading about Blessed Alvaro, and hearing about how first he prepared to be an engineer. And then he studied history, and then he studied canon law. And even as he discerned his call to Opus Dei, he didn't really appreciate that it was going to involve the priesthood. So the Lord was slowly revealing to Blessed Alvaro, how it is that the Lord would lead Blessed Alvaro to take care of the Lord's sheep. . .

But I truly appreciated Blessed Alvaro's work as well in what he taught us about the importance of respecting our universal shepherd, his great love for the Holy Father, for

the successor of Peter. Certainly there was a very personal relationship with Saint John Paul. But when you read and listen to the homilies of Blessed Alvaro, you see that he had such a deep appreciation for the Holy Father not just because of his personal attributes, but because of the role that he had been given as universal shepherd.

I think Blessed Alvaro really teaches all of us how important it is that we pray for the successor of Peter, that we do all that we can to support him in his ministry. I can tell you that I deeply appreciated Blessed Alvaro's insight into the importance of praying not only for the universal shepherd but for his brother bishops and also for all priests.

I personally was so grateful for the work that Opus Dei was willing to undertake with the priests who work in Rome, the priests of the curia. And

it was very much in line with Blessed Alvaro's desire that there would be care given to the shepherds, especially to diocesan priests, realizing that they needed to grow in their spiritual lives as well. Not that they would separate diocesan priests from other priests, but that there had to be the attentiveness to making sure that shepherds were cared for, that they knew God's love, and that they were going to be able to have the strength and the perseverance that they needed to live out their priestly commitments.

Very much in line with what Blessed Alvaro wrote about the priesthood, with what he preached about the priesthood, but indeed with his vision of the Church.

We gather today to give thanks to God, not only for the act of beatification, but also for having given Blessed Alvaro such strength in

the course of his ministry, that he could persevere even in very difficult times, in giving us that incredible example of holiness.

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