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Homily of the Prelate on the feast of Blessed Alvaro del Portillo

“There is no greater joy than living solely for the Lord and, with Him, serving others,” said the Prelate of Opus Dei, Msgr. Fernando Ocáriz, during the Mass on 12 May 2025 in the Basilica of Saint Eugene (Rome).

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I myself will look after my sheep and take care of them. As a shepherd cares

for his scattered flock, so will I care for my sheep (Ez 34:11). We heard these words from the prophet Ezekiel in the first reading, and they could well be applied to Blessed Álvaro del Portillo, whose feast we celebrate today, on the anniversary of his first Holy Communion. He was a shepherd who stood out, in Saint John Paul II's words, for his fidelity to the See of Peter.

In the Collect, we asked the Lord to help us give ourselves humbly to the salvific mission of the Church, like Blessed Álvaro did. Today, as the Church welcomes a new Successor of Peter, Pope Leo XIV, we also renew our filial adherence — at once effective and affectionate, as we have always sought to make it — to the Holy Father, praying for him and for his intentions.

“Love for the Roman Pontiff,” Saint Josemaría reminded us, “must be in

us a delightful passion, for in him we see Christ” (*In Love with the Church*, no. 30). Saint Josemaría passed that passion on to Blessed Álvaro and to his children, who pray for the Pope every day, asking God to protect him, encourage him, make him happy, and grant him peace and strength in the storms that sometimes rock Peter’s boat.

In the Gospel, Jesus mentions one of the qualities of a good shepherd: he is someone who *lays down his life for the sheep* (Jn 10:11). Don Álvaro laid down his life for the Work, knowing that in doing so he was serving the Church, for the sole purpose of Opus Dei, from the beginning and always, has been “to serve the Church as the Church wants to be served” (Saint Josemaría, *Letter 8*, no. 1).

As Pope Francis explained, Don Álvaro carried out that service “with a heart devoid of worldly self-

interest, far from discord, welcoming towards everyone and always seeking in others what was positive, what united, what was constructive. He never spoke a word of complaint or criticism, even at especially difficult times” (Letter on the Occasion of the Beatification of Álvaro del Portillo). We too are called to live in that same spirit. Each from our own place: at home, at work, among friends... All of these environments are united by a desire to serve God and those around us. As Don Álvaro once reminded us, “the best service” we can offer the Church is “the effort to become saints” (Blessed Álvaro, Letter, 30-IX-1975, no. 62). When we seek to sanctify our work, doing it well, with the desire to give glory to God and bring souls closer to Christ, we are truly serving the Church as she wants to be served.

The saints personally experienced the truth of the line we repeated in the Responsorial Psalm, that those who have God as their shepherd lack nothing (cf. Ps 23:1). Whoever decides to follow the Lord knows that He will guide them at all times. Thus Don Álvaro's fidelity was not the result of inertia, but rather a deep desire to say yes to God in every circumstance, knowing that there is no greater joy than living solely for the Lord and, with Him, serving others. He understood fidelity as a commitment of love, and love for God as the ultimate meaning of his freedom. We too can ask ourselves whether love of God inspires each of our actions.

Having God as our shepherd does not mean we will be spared the hardships of life, but as the psalmist says: *Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff,*

they comfort me (Ps 23:4). In those circumstances, God never leaves our side. “If we were to rely only on our own feeble strength,” Don Álvaro once said, “we would be right to see it as an unachievable utopia: we are not supermen, nor are we spared the limitations of nature. But, if we are willing, God’s strength acts through our weakness” (Blessed Álvaro, Homily, 7-IX-1991).

Our Mother Mary is the model of fidelity to God. We ask her to help us follow the example of Blessed Álvaro’s life, and we entrust to her our filial prayer for Pope Leo XIV.

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