



# Saint Josemaria Escriva

Founder of Opus Dei

[Home](#) - [Documentation](#) - [Accounts](#) - Anniversary of the death of Msgr. Alvaro del Portillo, St Josemaría's first successor

## Anniversary of the death of Msgr. Alvaro del Portillo, St Josemaría's first successor

Early in the morning of March 23, 1994, God called his good and faithful servant to Himself. Bishop del Portillo had returned only a few hours before from a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, where, with deep prayer and piety, he had followed Jesus' footsteps from Nazareth to the Holy Sepulcher, and had celebrated his last Mass on earth in the Church of the Cenacle in Jerusalem. Later that day, Pope John Paul II came to pray before Bishop del Portillo's remains, which now lie in the crypt of the Church of the Prelature, Our Lady of Peace at Bruno Buozzi 75, Rome.

On March 5, 2004 in the Tribunal of the diocese of Rome and on the 20th of that month in the Tribunal of the Prelature, the opening sessions of the "process of instruction" on the life of Bishop Alvaro del Portillo were held, with both tribunals enjoying equal competence.

The first session of the Vicariate of Rome's process took place in the "Hall of Conciliation" at the Lateran Palace, in the presence of some 400 people, among them the Prelate of Opus Dei, Bishop Javier Echevarría. Cardinal Ruini, Vicar of the Holy Father for the Diocese of Rome, opened the session.

When the first session of the process was concluded with the signing of the minutes, Cardinal Ruini addressed those present. After giving a brief sketch of Don Alvaro's life, he spoke of the prestige he enjoyed in the Roman Curia. "We can highlight here the multi-faceted activity carried out by Bishop Del Portillo in the service of the Holy See. His deep pastoral experience gained at the side of Saint Josemaría, his proven human qualities, and his theological and juridical competence fitted him for multiple tasks." And he continued: "The occasions that I had of meeting with Bishop del Portillo convinced me that I was in the presence of an exemplary pastor: the firmness of his adherence to the doctrine of the Church, his union with the Pope, his pastoral charity, his humility, his balance, all clearly

evinced an interior richness that was not at all common.”

He concluded by saying: “to guarantee the success of the work we are beginning, let us call upon the assistance of the Holy Spirit, the principal cause of holiness in the Church. Let me also call upon the intercession of St. Josemaria, of whom Bishop Alvaro del Portillo was the most faithful son and afterwards his first successor. The service that Don Alvaro always provided to the Church of Rome, the prompt diligence with which he supported the Holy Father’s pastoral initiatives for the diocese, were part of the love for the Church that he had learned from St. Josemaria.”

On March 20, there took place in the Höffner Auditorium of the Palazzo di Sant’Apollinare, seat of the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross, the opening session of the Tribunal of the Prelature for the process of canonization of Bishop del Portillo. The ceremony was very similar to the one that had taken place two weeks earlier in the Lateran. At the end Bishop Javier Echevarría, as President of the Tribunal, addressed those present.

He recalled how “one week before his departure for heaven, Don Alvaro, during his prayerful trip to the Holy Land, sent a post-card from Jerusalem to the Pope’s personal secretary, Msgr. Stanislaw Dziwisz, in which among other things he told him, ‘I would greatly appreciate it if you would let the Holy Father know of our desire to be *fideles usque ad mortem*, faithful unto death in the service of the Church and the Holy Father.’ Today, Bishop Echevarría continued, “the reading of this brief hand-written text of Don Alvaro takes on special relevance because of what happened a few days later. One might say that our Lord listened closely to those words, *usque ad mortem*. Because a few days after his return, this good and faithful servant, as John Paul II described him, was called into God’s presence. This episode provides a very fitting framework for the ceremony that has brought us here today. For it has as its protagonist a shepherd who, right to the end of his life, left us an unequivocal testimony of faithfulness.”

The Prelate then referred to various paragraphs of the apostolic letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, in which the Pope speaks of the “pedagogical value” of holiness (see nos. 29-41). And he said that “they constitute an invitation, directed to the shepherds of the Church, to set before the faithful the example of so many Christians who, even in recent times, have known how to put their faith into practice in a heroic manner, in environments and situations that are close to us. Their lives are, at the same time, a sign of hope.” He added, “I also trust that the Cause of canonization of Bishop Alvaro del Portillo will bring many tangible

benefits to Christians. I am sure that through his life many people will discover the fatherly face of God, smiling on them, encouraging them, forgiving them.” Bishop Echevarría concluded by saying: “At the end of his address at the opening ceremony for the diocesan part of the investigation to be carried out by the Vicariate of Rome’s Tribunal, Cardinal Ruini invoked the protection of St. Josemaría for the Tribunal’s work. With all my heart I also entrust the work of this Tribunal to the intercession of the one of whom Bishop del Portillo was the most faithful son.”