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Cardinal Ruini says Don Álvaro is "an example of sanctity in ordinary life"

Cardinal Camillo Ruini, the Pope's vicar for the diocese of Rome, closed the diocesan process of Bishop Álvaro del Portillo's cause of canonization. With 11 photos from the ceremony.

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The ceremony took place in Rome's Lateran Palace on June 26, the

liturgical memorial of St. Josemaría Escrivá, whose first successor as head of Opus Dei was Bishop Álvaro del Portillo

Bishop Javier Echevarría, the current Prelate, was present at the ceremony, along with many faithful of the Prelature and friends of Bishop del Portillo, who lived in Rome for almost fifty years, from 1946 until his death in 1994.

Cardinal Ruini explained that "Bishop Echevarría, although he had been recognized by the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints as the competent Bishop to investigate his predecessor's cause, out of a refined and rigorous sense of justice, desired that I appoint a Tribunal of the Vicariate to receive his deposition and that of some of the other witnesses."

"I was happy to accede to his request" he continued, "in virtue of

which I am present here today to formally close the investigative process and transmit the documents to the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints, since, as is well known, the diocesan tribunals are only fact-gathering bodies, and the only judicial body is the Congregation."

Cardinal Ruini's remarks included some personal recollections: "I will never forget the affection Don Álvaro showed when he came to visit me at the Vicariate. He always gave witness to his dedication to Christ."

Bishop Álvaro del Portillo's process of canonization was opened on March 5, 2004, and has been carried out in its first phase in two tribunals, one of the Vicariate of Rome and the other of the Prelature of Opus Dei.

The second tribunal has not yet completed its work. Some witnesses have also given testimony to tribunals in their own dioceses, in

accord with established judicial procedures.

Álvaro del Portillo was born in Madrid on March 11, 1914. "On July 7, 1935, while still an engineering student," Cardinal Ruini recalled in his address, "he asked for admission to Opus Dei. During the tragic events of the Spanish Civil War, he was the person who provided the most assistance to the Founder. On June 25, 1944, he was ordained a priest, one of the first three priests of Opus Dei."

"In 1946 he moved to Rome, where he carried out various tasks in service of the Holy See," Cardinal Ruini continued. "He was a Consultor to various dicasteries, as well as Secretary of the Second Vatican Council Commission that drafted the decree *Presbyterorum Ordinis*. In 1975, after St. Josemaría's death, he

was called to succeed him as head of Opus Dei."

Don Álvaro died in Rome on March 23, 1994, just after returning from a trip to the Holy Land. John Paul II, who had ordained him as a bishop in 1991, went that afternoon to the chapel of repose in the Prelatic Church of Opus Dei, dedicated to Our Lady of Peace. His body now lies in repose in the crypt of that same church in Rome.

Cardinal Ruini said that Bishop Álvaro del Portillo was "an example of fidelity in following the spirit of sanctification in work and ordinary life," a spirit he learned directly from St. Josemaría. The Cardinal concluded by asking our Lady that Don Álvaro's example be a stimulus to "spread love for God and neighbor to many other people."

For his part, Bishop Javier Echevarría, Don Álvaro's successor

as Prelate of Opus Dei, said that this "is only a first step, but a step that fills us with joy, because we see in our beloved Don Álvaro an integral man, an authentic Christian, a good shepherd, a most faithful son of St. Josemaría."

Msgr. Flavio Capucci, postulator of the cause, recalled that back in 1978, when the process of St. Josemaría began, Msgr. Álvaro del Portillo had insisted that, in asking the Pope to open the cause of its Founder, Opus Dei was not seeking its own glory, but that of the Church. "Today," Capucci said, "we echo these words with our whole heart."

The next stage of the process, once the tribunal of the Prelature concludes its sessions, will be the drawing up of the *positio*, which is a biography of the Servant of God that shows how he lived the Christian virtues in an heroic manner.

The *positio* is then sent by the postulator of the cause to the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints to be studied and decided upon.

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