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Opus Dei leader, PH visitor, to be beatified

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MANILA, Philippines—People of 90 different nationalities, including 1,600 Filipinos, are expected to attend the beatification of Alvaro del

Portillo in Madrid on Saturday.

Bishop Alvaro was the first successor and the closest collaborator of the founder of Opus Dei, Saint Josemaría Escrivá.

Bishop Del Portillo was in the Philippines on Jan. 21 to Feb. 1, 1987 for a pastoral visit to the members and the different apostolic and social projects of Opus Dei in the country. Jaime Cardinal Sin hosted a dinner for him at Villa San Miguel, during which the late Cardinal thanked the Prelate for the work of Opus Dei in the Philippines, “spreading the message of the universal call to holiness among the lay faithful and bringing spirituality to the secular environments where the priests and religious cannot reach,” the Cardinal said. Bishop Del Portillo also paid a courtesy call to then President Corazon Aquino.

The prelate had a number of general audiences at the Philippine International Convention Center in Manila and at the Cebu Plaza Hotel. These were catechetical gatherings where he answered personal questions on the spiritual life, sanctification of work, suffering, Christian joy, family life, and social responsibility.

Upon his return to Rome, he sent an Italian delegation to Cebu to help set up a technical school similar to Centro ELIS, a successful social project in an outlying district of Rome. That technical school is now CITE (Center for Industrial Technology and Enterprise) in Talamban, which has graduated 3,000 industrial technicians from the Visayas and Mindanao since it opened in 1991. It is recognized by the national government and industry as one of the leading technical schools in the Philippines.

President Corazon Aquino formally inaugurated CITE in February 1992. She also inaugurated the Dagatan Family Farm School in Batangas in August 1988, the first of its kind in Asia. Other projects inspired by Bishop del Portillo in the Philippines include the Banilad Center for Professional Development for girls in Cebu and DAWV (Development Advocacy for Women Volunteerism).

On July 5, 2013, Pope Francis signed the decree of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints approving a miracle obtained through the intercession of Bishop Alvaro del Portillo, thus paving the way for his beatification.

The miracle was the instantaneous healing of Chilean newborn baby, Jose Ignacio Ureta Wilson in 2003. The boy suffered a massive hemorrhage and went into cardiac arrest. The medical team applied all

the means for more than half an hour. His parents were praying for his revival through the intercession of Bishop Del Portillo. When the doctors considered the baby dead, his heart started to beat again and the boy recovered completely. For eleven years now Jose Ignacio has been living a normal life.

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