

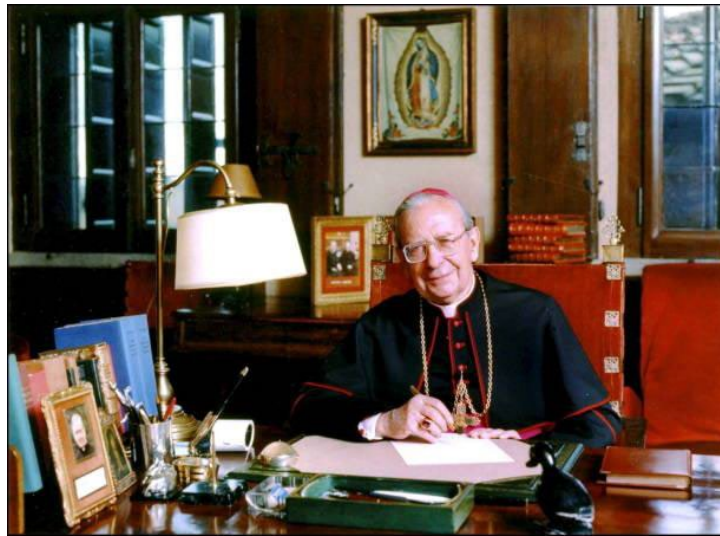
NOVENA TO BLESSED ALVARO DEL PORTILLO

by Monsignor Juan Larrea Holguin

I dedicate this novena to the numerous persons devoted to Mons. Alvaro del Portillo and ask the Lord to bless and grant the graces requested through his intercession.

+ Juan Larrea Holguín

Archbishop Emeritus of Guayaquil, Ecuador



Translated July 2022 from original Spanish version¹

to pray for the healing of MARY MOSS TELLER

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¹ <https://opusdei.org/es/article/novena-alvaro-del-portillo-por-juan-larrea/>

Prayer for each day

O God, merciful Father, you granted your bishop, Blessed Alvaro, the grace of being, with our Lady's help, an exemplary pastor in the service of the Church and a most faithful son and successor of Saint Josemaria, the Founder of Opus Dei. Grant that I also may respond faithfully to the demands of the Christian vocation, turning all the circumstances and events of my life into opportunities to love you and to serve the kingdom of Jesus Christ. Deign to grant the canonization of Blessed Alvaro, and through his intercession, grant me the favor of healing Mary Moss Teller. Amen.



Our Father, Hail Mary and Glory Be

First Day: The family, educator in the Faith.

The life of persons who have excelled in virtue, and whose canonization by the Church we can soundly anticipate, usually manifests the Lord's providential care, leading those souls little by little up to the fulness of charity. The family constitutes the environment where the personality of children and young people is developed and where lasting values are transmitted.

The greatest gift from God is Faith, and Christian parents assume the responsibility of transmitting this precious treasure to new generations. Alvaro del Portillo y Diez de Sollano was born and grew up in the heart of an exemplary Christian home. There he received, from his first years, the example of industry, simplicity and piety.

The del Portillo family included the parents and eight children, of whom Alvaro was the third oldest. It was a normal home, in which harmony reigned and the children learned from their parents to serve one another, and to collaborate in domestic chores with solidarity. Despite being financially well endowed, their home and lifestyle were not luxurious, nor were superfluous needs created; the children were, instead, accustomed to a frugal existence.

In a climate of freedom, without impositions of any kind, the children were eased into religious practices that were common in any Christian home: Sunday Mass, some family prayers, and a holy respect for the things of God. From his childhood, Alvaro embraced this simple piety, made it his own and, moved by the Holy Spirit, continued to grow in it, reaching the summit of heroic virtues.

Words of Blessed Alvaro

To Christianize society, one must reinforce its foundations: the family. How much you are doing already, and how much work remains! Consider, those of you called to the pathway of matrimony, that with your vocation you give much example. You know that children are a marvelous gift from God and you receive them with joy, while others—who refuse to behave like Christians, or who are lacking in formation—judge them to be a burden and avoid them. They aspire to less and you to more. Well, onwards! Embrace without fear this proof of the confidence of Heaven, which is how the Church grows, how the Kingdom of Christ spreads, and in the souls of children, through divine grace and the climate of love and of joyful sacrifice that is palpable in your homes, it is how so many desires to respond fully to the Christian vocation are born, together with so many saintly decisions which are a reflection of your self-giving. The new Catechism of the Catholic Church points out again what the Magisterium has always taught: that “large families are a sign of divine blessing and of the generosity of the parents” (n. 2373). Nurture, then, that dream of forming a large family if God gives it to you.

Prayer

God, our Lord and Father, grant us, through the intercession of your servant Alvaro, the grace for all Christian homes to be truly like the home in Nazareth, transmitting to new generations the marvelous gift of the faith and a sincere piety, to know, love and serve you until death. Amen.

Aspiration

Jesus, Mary and Joseph, bless our family.

Prayer for each day

Second Day: Adolescence and youth, preparation to serve.

The testimonies of those who knew Alvaro as a child and as a young man in school coincide in admiring his evident talent, total dedication to study and spirit of friendship and solidarity, together with his exemplary conduct and intense piety. From his First Communion, he received the Holy Eucharist daily, making the sacrifice to remain fasting, as was obligatory then, from the preceding midnight.

His excellent intellectual capacity and his dedication and order in his studies, enabled him to enter Engineering School while very young. He was preparing himself to serve, studying various languages on his own and deepening his cultural outlook with appropriate reading.

A great sense of generosity and solidarity with his family led him to decide to pursue, within the Engineering School, a certain course of studies that would allow him to qualify in only three years for the position of Public Works Assistant. He did not renounce his ambition to obtain a higher degree in Engineering. He made it his priority to help his parents financially in caring for their large household: his was a generous drive to give himself in the service of others, postponing his own interests.

In fact, with great effort and dedication, he obtained his first degree and immediately continued on to higher Engineering studies, making it compatible with a job yielding a modest income. He was forced to interrupt his studies because of the war, but he completed them after the conflict came to an end.

During all this time of intense study, he kept up a solid life of piety, dedicating time to mental prayer, making frequent recourse to the sacraments of Reconciliation and the Eucharist, and praying the Holy Rosary.

During the 1933-1934 academic year, a friend proposed that he participate, together with other students, in the Conferences of Saint Vincent de Paul. He went around the suburbs of Madrid with his companions, bringing items, in hopes of bringing consolation to those in need. He did it with a humble Christian spirit, as demonstrated by his own words when remembering those times: "I always learned from them: people who had nothing to eat and who showed me nothing but joy. For me, it was a tremendous lesson."

When religious persecution in Spain became more severe, in one of those charitable visits to a poor neighborhood, Alvaro suffered a serious attack: a group of young men hit him over the head with a monkey wrench. He came close to being killed and narrowly escaped. He moved beyond this tough incident, without drawing attention or abandoning his charitable activity.

Words of Blessed Alvaro

Christian formation has always considered the whole person: and it is known that the theory that is common to all ecclesiastic educators is that the *curriculum perfectionis* must start with the reformation of the exterior man, looking to correct all that goes against urbanity and courtesy, and inculcating afterwards the virtues necessary for union with God and for living with other persons.

Prayer

We ask, Lord, through the intercession of the Virgin Mary and your servant Alvaro, that you widen our hearts so we might always be generous, concerned about the needs of our neighbor, and striving to alleviate their worries and pains. Amen.

Aspiration

Jesus, give me a heart like yours.

Prayer for each day

Third Day: First contact with Opus Dei. Vocation. Generous response.

In 1935 Alvaro, just over 21 years of age, obtained the title of Assistant of Public Works, worked under the corresponding Minister, and was in his first year at the Superior School of Engineering, with a specialty in roads and bridges.

Beginning four years prior, St. Josemaria included in his prayers the brilliant young man, whom he had heard about from an aunt of the young fellow, Carmen del Portillo. Having become aware of him, he implored God for him. Providence arranged for St. Josemaria to meet him personally.

One day, while Alvaro was heading out with some friends to visit a poor family in an outskirt neighborhood of Madrid, a young priest who was carrying out a broad apostolate, filled with self-sacrifice, came up in conversation. Alvaro took interest and expressed his desire to be introduced to Fr. Josemaria Escrivá; and one of his friends took him to the center of Opus Dei. It was a day in March of 1935.

St. Josemaria received the young university student and worker with his usual joy and simplicity. The conversation was completely supernatural and brief. It did not last more than five minutes, but in the soul of Alvaro the seed of a certain restlessness to good and to draw close to God was planted.

Nevertheless, some time passed without a subsequent encounter. Finally, on the eve of his departure for a family vacation, Alvaro, moved without a doubt by grace, decided to say goodbye to that priest that had received him with such kindness and supernatural outlook.

On this occasion St. Josemaria suggested that he partake in a day-long spiritual retreat and that, to do so, he postpone his vacation. Alvaro agreed to it, and the next day, July 7, he went to the retreat. The founder of Opus Dei spoke about love of God and love for the Blessed Virgin. His preaching stirred up the soul of Alvaro, who, moved by the Spirit, decided to hand over his whole life, with holding anything back, to the service of God.

That is how he expressed it to a member of the Work, who then described to him the vocation of seeking the fullness of Christian life through one's work and ordinary duties. Alvaro immediately asked to be admitted to Opus Dei.

It was a mature decision, prepared by his life of piety and his practice of good works, his fulfillment of his duties as a good son, brother and worker. But it is a decision that cannot be explained, except by a special grace, given that Alvaro was a measured young man, extremely prudent, who never made important decisions without thinking about them slowly.

The authenticity of his vocation was reflected in his rapid assimilation of the spirit of Opus Dei, in his faithful fulfillment of the norms of piety, in the intense apostolate that he carried out from the first moment, in his firm and determined adhesion to the founder and in his constant fidelity, up to his death, to the demands of the divine calling. Without a doubt the assiduous prayer of the founder was the foundation of Alvaro's generous correspondence to grace.

Words of Blessed Alvaro.

The council has repeatedly emphasized the unity of the call to sanctity, to the perfection of charity, to Christian perfection, with the variety of forms and paths to arrive at that fullness of Christian life within the radical unity of the Gospel message: all of the faithful have received a vocation to sanctity, which each person should follow within his own state and condition of life: “The classes and duties of life are many, but holiness is one—that sanctity which is cultivated by all who are moved by the Spirit of God... Therefore, the *christifideles*, whatever be the conditions, duties and circumstances of their lives—and indeed through all these, will daily increase in holiness” (Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, n. 41).

Prayer

God of infinite goodness, who from all eternity has plans of salvation for each creature, and who gave Blessed Alvaro the grace to correspond with exemplary generosity and promptness to your call, grant that many souls, following his luminous example, might appreciate the immense blessing of a vocation of total gift of self to your service and have the courage to respond to the grace of your calling. Amen.

Aspiration

Lord, here I am for you have called me. What do you want me to do?

Prayer for each day

Fourth Day: The Civil War, great trials permitted by God

Beginning in 1931 there were countless acts of violence and religious persecution in Spain, which became more severe in 1936 and led to a bloody civil war that lasted until 1939. During this time insecurity was pervasive, and if a person professed to be Catholic or carried a medal, rosary or some other distinctive sign of one's creed, it was sufficient to be imprisoned and in many occasions tortured and assassinated. Countless churches and religious houses were burned, without even the least consideration of the immense artistic value many had.

The founder of Opus Dei and the few young people that followed him suffered persecution. Almost all of them were recruited by the respective armies of the zone in which they found themselves in the moment that the confrontation burst; everyone else had to hide, constantly fleeing to save their lives.

In August of 1936 members of the populist militias burst into the house of the del Portillo family, looking for a military man that lived in a neighboring house; his wife had taken refuge in Alvaro's home. He managed to help his mother and siblings to keep their peace, and finally they were left alone; but they managed to capture the sought-after soldier whom they executed that same day. They also arrested the father of Alvaro, and the family did not receive news of him for a long time.

From that day, Alvaro went from refuge to refuge, until finally being granted asylum by the embassy of Finland. But the embassy was assaulted in December and all the refugees were taken to the San Anton prison. There they suffered hunger and abuse, psychological and physical torture. Such was the lack of communication that he did not know that his father was in the same prison. Without explanation, after many death threats, he was freed. In reality he had not been accused of anything and simply suffered the privation of his freedom because of the indiscriminate hatred of every Christian at the hands of the persecutors.

After briefly taking refuge in the embassy of Mexico, he went on to accompany the founder, who also had suffered a thousand trials until being received in asylum in the Honduran consulate. There St. Josemaria and four of his spiritual sons, including Alvaro, remained several months in a situation of unbelievable destitution and poverty. They kept up an intense life of piety, with the celebration of the Holy Mass, mental prayer, and other practices. They took advantage of time to study. They were always cheerful and serene. During this confinement, Alvaro's father passed away. He also had been freed, but in horrible health. St. Josemaria risked his life to attend to him in his final moments, but he advised Alvaro to stay put, and in consequence he was deprived of the consolation of being at his father's side during his final moments.

In October of 1937 St. Josemaria abandoned the refuge and set off with a few others on the dangerous adventure of escaping to France through the Pyrenees. In December they arrived in Andorra, and passing through France, they entered the nationalist zone, finally settling down in Burgos. Alvaro remained in Madrid and, after being granted permission by Isidoro Zorzano, who was the group's head in the absence of the founder, managed to pass through the battle front to reunite with St. Josemaria. It was an incredibly bold adventure marked by total confidence in Providence.

Neither in those years or later, when recalling so many injuries, did Don Alvaro utter a single bitter word or anything that suggested resentment. He always forgave with delay and prayed for those moved by hatred.

Words of Blessed Alvaro

Lay mentality moves us to participate, with personal freedom and responsibility, in noble human activities, and to be in the world like fish in water, even though many times the water is not so clean: it is also for that reason that God has called us there, to purify it. We carry within our soul all noble human desires, and we find unsettling that spiritualistic outlook that tends to separate more or less radically, in one's personal life and in the apostolate, the divine from the human, the search for the kingdom of God from temporal progress. We know that humanly speaking work is a wellspring of progress, of civilization and well-being. But at the same time, we do not partake, because it is not Christian, in that other cheap vision of Godless philanthropic humanism, which pretends to arrange worldly affairs without God and ends up stomping on even the most fundamental human values.

Prayer

Lord, you who permitted the Christian faithful to participate in some way in the extreme suffering to which our Lord Jesus Christ submitted himself, help us accept the suffering and difficulties that arise in our lives with serenity; without ever losing the conviction that we are your children, that we are under your loving care and that you only permit that which we can bear with your grace. Grant us that, imitating Blessed Alvaro, we never harbor a single bitter feeling towards those who may harm us in some way, and that intimately united to our Lord Jesus, who carried the Cross on his wounded shoulders, with immense love and total acceptance of your will. Amen.

Aspiration

By your Passion and Death, free us, Lord, from all hatred and from all evil.

Prayer for each day

Fifth Day: Preparing for the priesthood. A priestly soul.

As soon as the war ended, Alvaro returned to his professional work as an engineer and continued to carry out an intense apostolate among his friends and acquaintances. St. Josemaria took special care in the formation of the first members of the Work and, in addition to encouraging their studies and work in their civil professions, directed them towards a better understanding of doctrine, which would give them a unique ability to exercise their apostolate in the middle of the world.

St. Josemaria had the immense task of educating his sons and daughters, but very quickly had a strong desire that a group of them should receive Holy Orders so that they could give special spiritual care to all. So began the more intensive preparation and formation of three members of the Work: Alvaro del Portillo, José María Hernández Garnica and José Luis Múzquiz.

In addition to the wisdom and experience the founder transmitted, he ensured that they study under the best professors and complete their final examinations before the most competent diocesan tribunals. The three young men put forth great effort to make the most of their talents: they studied hard and well, so much so that they impressed their professors with their deep knowledge and understanding of the course work. Over time, St. Josemaria established that all laymen of the Work preparing for the priesthood would attain the highest academic degree relevant to their professional work, and an ecclesiastical doctorate.

At that time, Opus Dei had only diocesan approval as an organization and could not incardinate priests. St. Josemaria longed for the right solution to emerge and often prayed and meditated on it in the presence of God. Our Lord showed him the appropriate juridical solution on February 14, 1943, which he quickly communicated to the Bishop of Madrid, who received the news with joy and advised that it be taken directly to the Holy See.

St. Josemaria entrusted Alvaro with the task of taking the necessary documentation to Rome, to ensure that it was attended to appropriately.

On June 4, 1943, a few days after arriving in Rome, he was received in an audience by Pope Pius XII, who was impressed by the young engineer who explained the characteristics of the new apostolate with precision and confidence. He also met with several cardinals of the Roman Curia and others in the Vatican. The initiative was a success because, with the *nihil obstat* of the Holy See, Monsignor Eijo y Garay, the Bishop of Madrid, canonically erected the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross and permanently united it to Opus Dei. This made it possible to ordain priests that would fully dedicate themselves to the service of their brothers and sisters in Opus Dei.

Encouraged by these blessings from the Vicar of Jesus Christ on earth and of other high dignitaries of the Church, the three engineers continued and finalized their preparation, and were ordained on June 25, 1944. The three continued their studies and obtained ecclesiastical doctorates.

Following the teachings of the founder, they, along with everyone else of the Work who would be ordained in the future, were called to maintain their lay mentality, and by so doing, take on whole heartedly their responsibilities, exercising their freedom as children of God. At the same time, the spiritual formation Alvaro received highlighted his priestly soul, which all priests and laity have, by virtue of the sacrament of Baptism received by all, which identifies us with Christ, Eternal and High Priest.

Throughout his life, just as his companions of ordination and all members of Opus Dei, Alvaro cultivated his priestly soul, carrying out with great piety the exercise of his ministry, in confessions and preaching and, above all, in the celebration of the Holy Mass, the unbloody renewal of the sacrifice of Christ on Calvary.

In addition to providing a magnificent personal example, Don Alvaro preached and left in writing abundant pages about the priestly soul that all Christians are called to foster.

Words of Blessed Alvaro

God is infinitely powerful, infinitely beautiful. We cannot imagine what He is like. The sweetest music, the most magnificent symphony, the most beautiful colors, all the world, and the entire universe is nothing in comparison. And that God, infinitely grand, infinitely powerful, infinitely beautiful, hides under the appearance of bread, so that we can draw close to Him with confidence.

Prayer

Oh God, who has ordained that Jesus Christ, sole and eternal priest, would rely on other men to be instruments of his ministry, men who more closely identified with Him and anointed by the sacrament of Holy Orders, would continue the divine redemptive work, grant us the grace that the Christian faithful might always have many holy priests. May those called to such a high ministry respond with generosity to their vocation, may they prepare themselves dutifully and carry out with holiness the sacred functions proper to their condition as “other Christs”. Amen.

Aspiration

Give us, Lord, holy priests.

Prayer for each day

Sixth Day: At the service of the founder, dealings in Rome.

Saint Josemaria again sent Alvaro to Rome in February of 1946, to oversee the dealings with the Holy See in regard to the *Decretum Laudis* that would allow the strengthening of the universal expansion of the Work.

Don Alvaro, only thirty-one years old, carried out this responsibility with great maturity, wisdom and prudence, interacting with cardinals and other figures of the Church, and being received with affection by Pius XII. He nevertheless considered that he needed the presence of the founder in the Eternal City, and he asked St. Josemaria to come deal with the challenges personally. He moved to Rome despite being advised not to for medical reasons and, with the assistance of Don Alvaro, attained the pontifical approval as a secular institute, the only viable juridical pathway at the time.

As a result of this work, the Founder established himself in Rome definitively, and Don Alvaro increasingly became his most intimate and effective collaborator. Dealing with the Holy See continued for the definitive approval of the peculiar legal framework of the Work. It was important to safeguard its nature, especially its secularity. The definitive approval was granted by Pius XII on June 16, 1950.

In the meantime, Alvaro held several positions, including General Procurator of the Work, Rector of the Roman College and first Counselor of the region of Italy in the Work. In these positions, he was magnanimous in his exemplary fidelity to the spirit of the founder, in helping his brothers and sisters with immense charity and tenderness, and in an intense apostolate with all classes of people.

These activities alone were consuming, but he took on additional financial responsibilities. He fell to him to obtain funds for the acquisition and adaptation of the headquarters—Villa Tevere—which in and of itself was an adventure, marked by great confidence in God's Providence and of resilience and constancy.

Concerned about the rest of the students of the Roman College, the central house of Formation of the Work, he obtained a rural property on the coast. In addition to it serving as a place of rest, he saw an opportunity to help people of the area. He subdivided a large portion of the property and sold it under terms that were extremely favorable to workers, and in this way improved the conditions of life of over 300 persons.

Beginning in 1956, Don Alvaro was Secretary General of Opus Dei until the death of the founder. He filled in unofficially as head of the Work until he was confirmed juridically, being elected unanimously on September 15, 1975. He replaced the Father, St Josemaria, so closely identified with the founder's spirit that nothing changed in the burgeoning life and development of the Work but, rather, continued with greater intensity than during its foundational time.

He also carried out various important responsibilities, at the request of popes Pius XII, John XXIII, Paul VI, John Paul I and John Paul II, in various ecclesiastical congregations in Rome, and in preparing for the Second Vatican Council and various episcopal synods.

Words of Blessed Alvaro

The only ambition, the only wish of Opus Dei and of each of its daughters and sons is to serve the Church as she wants to be served. This service, which God Himself has entrusted to her, consists in spreading the universal call to sanctity throughout all the pathways of the earth, teaching countless persons to seek God in professional work and in ordinary circumstances, in the middle of the world. In this manner, we cooperate in an effective way in the mission of the spouse of Christ: the salvation, sanctification, of all men, of all women. But don't forget, my daughters and sons, that we can participate in the Redemption, co-redeeming, precisely because we are the Church, for the mystical body of Christ alone is sign and instrument of the union of all creatures with God and among themselves.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, who bestowed Blessed Alvaro with so many virtues and special qualities to so faithfully serve the Church and Opus Dei with immense charity, faith, hope, justice, temperance and other virtues, allow us to follow his admirable example of heroic service and, through his intercession, grant that, in the performance of our duties we may draw ever closer to you. Amen.

Aspiration

Lord, whatever you want, I also want.

Prayer for each day

Seventh Day: At the service of the Church, the Council and the Roman Congregations

His Holiness, Saint John XXIII convened the Second Vatican Council a few months after his election. Don Alvaro, who was already performing important functions in several Roman dicasteries, was designated to be a member of some of the commissions of the Council, the

Secretary of the one responsible for consideration of priests and lay persons and, finally, a conciliar expert as well.

These responsibilities entailed very intense activity both in the preparatory phase as well as in the development of the Council, which closed on December 8, 1965, after four sessions in successive years.

All who dealt with Don Alvaro shared an admiration not only for his extraordinary capacity to work but, to a greater degree, his serenity, prudence, his great sense for collaboration, the humility with which he sought to listen and understand others, and an absolute fidelity to the teachings of the Church.

The Council renewed and updated many pastoral, liturgical, organizational, apostolic and ecumenical aspects of the Church, and it reaffirmed the ageless doctrine on matters of Faith and of morals. For St. Josemaria and don Alvaro, it offered a motive for more prayer and mortification, as well as one for great joy from witnessing how the Holy Spirit constantly guides the Church.

The Council also confirmed the teachings rooted in the Gospel which—for many years—St Josemaria had helped bring back to life, such as the universal call to sanctity and apostolate, the peculiar value of the common priesthood of the faithful, the secular roles that correspond by right to lay persons, the true sense of unity of Christians and of all persons, etc. Naturally, don Alvaro echoed these truths and strove to present them for study and approval by the Council fathers.

Another result of the Council was that, with the creation of the new juridical structure of Personal Prelature, a juridical path was opened up that corresponded to the nature and mission of Opus Dei. Shortly thereafter, St. Paul VI determined the instruments to implement such an important innovation, and John Paul II would be the one to apply this juridical figure to the Work.

Despite the intense work at the service of the Holy See, Don Alvaro continued to assist St Josemaria in the governance and apostolic mission of Opus Dei. These were years in which, together with the founder, preparations were made for the expansion to new countries in Europe and America, and to that end they made several trips, always in conditions of sobriety, embracing the privations and discomforts with joy.

Words of Blessed Alvaro

God blesses us with the Cross. The difficulties and the trials should never separate us from Christ, because they are a means to co-redeem with Him. How well our Father understood this! *In Laetitia, nulla dies sine croce*, he would often write in the booklet used to indicate the Mass of the day. And how he experienced it! Never a day without the Cross: even during feasts he would receive—like a good Cyrene—this blessing from God; and in this manner, at the moment of renewing the Sacrifice of Calvary, he could affirm convincingly: “Our” mass, Jesus.

Prayer

Infuse in our souls, Lord, a growing love for your holy Church. Make us imitate the self-denying service of Blessed Alvaro, being always prepared to faithfully follow whatever you teach and ordain through her, and to put all our strength and talent at your disposal. We also ask that we learn to help all our friends and collaborators to love and serve the Church, as the mother that she is for us. Help us to feel with the Church, that we act as her good children, and that we commit to serve her as she wants to be served. Amen.

Aspiration

Lord, make us love our holy mother the Church more and more.

Prayer for each day

Eighth day: Successor of a saint.

At noon on June 26, 1975, the Lord took St. Josemaria's soul to heaven. Don Alvaro assisted him in his last moments, with the affection and reverence which he always showed the founder. Having confirmed the sorrowful event, he communicated it to the Holy See, to the faithful of Opus Dei, and to the closest relatives. From that moment, he assumed, as was appropriate according to the law, the heavy responsibility of governing the Work.

His first action was to pay homage due to the mortal remains of the Father. He organized everything related to his transfer to the Church, the funerals and burial. He celebrated the first mass *corpore insepulto*, and then innumerable masses at the headquarters in Rome and throughout the world. Don Alvaro wrote a long and detailed letter recounting the minutest details of the last day of the founder and the countless expressions of support received, beginning with the words of condolence from Blessed Paul VI.

Despite his awareness of having lost the physical company of a saint, Don Alvaro inspired serenity in everyone, and confidence that the Work would continue to be governed from heaven by St. Josemaria, and asked that many suffrages be offered for him, according to the holy tradition of the Church.

Don Alvaro ensured the publishing of several previously unpublished works by the founder. He did not stop repeating St. Josemaria's teachings and instilling in the members of Opus Dei the greatest fidelity to the wishes and words of the founder. He was the first and most perfect executor of St. Josemaria's will, and with his example and his word he led all the faithful not to deviate in the least from such holy dispositions.

The major projects that he established as goals and carried to completion were: the preparation of the testimony of the life and virtues of the holy founder (over 2000 type-written pages); the completion of the process of establishing Opus Dei as a Personal Prelature, according to the desire of St. Josemaria, and the edition, at the founder's request, of his intimate notes, a work yet to be published.

Precisely to fulfill the wishes of the founder, he took on the necessary tasks of the definitive juridical configuration of Opus Dei. This "special intention", for which St. Josemaria worked untiringly over the course of more than four decades, was also prayed for by thousands and even millions of persons with constant prayer and mortification, and above all, with the offering of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Don Alvaro continued to urge a lot of people to pray and offer up everything for this intention, while at the same time employing the human means to study and resolve the issue. Finally, St. John Paul II, accepted the petition of the founder, reiterated by Don Alvaro, and established Opus Dei as a Personal Prelature, on November 28, 1982. On March 19, 1983, the Apostolic Nuncio in Rome, presided over the solemn execution of the constitution by which the Prelature was erected.

At the appropriate moment, he requested the initiation of the process of beatification and canonization of the founder. The difficult investigation and judicial tasks were carried out with maximum gravity and thorough fulfillment of the canonical requirements. Infinite documents were presented, countless writings were examined, the testimony of numerous witnesses was gathered; the ecclesiastical tribunals looked on everything with great respect, precision and

diligence. This allowed for timely review of everything that was needed for the appropriate commissions of specialists, theologians and cardinals to inform the Holy Father in due fashion. The Roman Pontiff issued the decrees about the heroic virtues, writings, and miracles attributed to the saint's intercession, and finally set the date for the solemn beatification.

This event gathered three hundred thousand persons in St. Peter's Square, and with special acts of kindness, the Holy Father cared for all those present, and in a special way Don Alvaro.

Following the example of St. Josemaria, Don Alvaro, having become Father in Opus Dei, untiringly wrote letters to all his children, and went on many arduous trips to visit them throughout the five continents.

Words of Blessed Alvaro

My children, what does the elevation of our Father to the altars mean for us? Certainly, it is a great joy, but also a great responsibility. I would like to point out to you, so that it does not fade into the background, an evident reality that is full of consequence: with the beatification of our Father, the Church elevates to the altars the founder of Opus Dei. This, on the one hand, provides another confirmation in a vivid way, of the certainty that the spirit of the Work is a path of holiness; and, on the other hand, it impels us to follow it faithfully until arriving, like our Father, to the glory of Heaven.

Prayer

We give thanks, Lord, that you poured into Blessed Alvaro an extraordinary spirit of fidelity to the holy founder of Opus Dei, and because it was your will that, with his life and word, he communicated this sense of loyalty to all the faithful of the Work. Thank you, Lord, because Blessed Alvaro continued and carried on the most holiest desires of St. Josemaria, and he fulfilled and helped others fulfill with fidelity even the smallest details of the spirituality and the apostolic endeavors of the Work. Thank you, Lord, because in Blessed Alvaro we had a new Father perfectly identified with St. Josemaria.

Grant us the grace of always maintaining that same loyalty that your servant lived with perfection, and of giving example, with our lives, of how to preserve the spiritual treasures of our Holy Mother the Church. And grant that we might inspire many in that way to love, to serve and to approach the Church with utmost devotion and zeal. Amen.

Aspiration

Lord, that we be faithful all the way to our death.

Prayer for each day

Ninth Day: Continuity. Expansion. New apostolates.

After the death of the founder on June 26, 1975, Don Alvaro headed the Work as its Secretary General; on September 15, 1975 he was unanimously elected by the women and men electors representing all regions to occupy the position of Father. For nineteen years, he performed with super-exemplary fidelity the task of succeeding a saint. He said many times that he wished to be nothing more than the shadow of the Father, and he truly adapted his being and his life to be a precise and loyal imitation of what St. Josemaria did and taught.

His apostolic trips multiplied in order to prepare or to increase the work of Opus Dei in all continents. Thus, during his period of pastoral governance, he extended the Work to many

countries: Bolivia, Congo, Ivory Coast, Honduras, Hong Kong, Singapore, Trinidad and Tobago, Sweden, Taiwan, Finland, Cameroon, Dominican Republic, Macao, New Zealand, Hungary, Czech Republic, Nicaragua, India and Israel.

He continued to provide valuable services to various Roman congregations and participated in two episcopal synods in the Eternal City. He wrote various articles and books about theological and canonical questions, and directed numerous pastoral letters to Opus Dei members.

His accomplishments of world transcendence also included the creation of what became the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross in Rome; the international seminary open to seminarians from dioceses of the whole world in the same city; various priestly conferences; and the erection of the prelate church of Our Lady of Peace.

He also initiated and brought to completion the construction of a church in Rome dedicated to the Founder, by then beatified and later, on October 6, 2002, canonized.

The entire life and work of don Alvaro was inspired by a tender and firm devotion to the Blessed Virgin, who he constantly invoked. He spoke untiringly about being good children of Holy Mary, to imitate her virtues, and to put all things under her protection. He asked his children in Opus Dei to live with singular intensity the devotion to the Mother of God during certain years that he declared “marian” in order to promote more and more filial love of her.

After his eightieth birthday, he made a final apostolic and penitential trip, visiting holy places: for a week, he prayed and piously celebrated the Holy Mass in the land of Jesus. He celebrated his final Mass at the Cenacle where Jesus Christ instituted the Holy Eucharist. He immediately returned to Rome, where he arrived at ten in the evening and, at dawn the next day, he felt poorly; he called for the Vicar General, Mons. Javier Echevarría; a physician did all he could to save his life; Don Alvaro received with full awareness and serenity the absolution and anointing of the sick, and gave his soul to the Creator with absolute peace, an hour after his heart attack had begun.

Countless cardinals, bishops, authorities and priests came to pray next to his remains, but it was especially consoling and encouraging to have the presence of St. John Paul II who had conferred Don Alvaro's episcopal ordination and esteemed him as a true friend. The Pope stayed for a long meditation and led the Salve Regina and other prayers afterwards.

From the time of his death, many people started to ask for his intercession to obtain favors from Heaven, and thousands of persons gave witness to his love for the Church, his charity with all and his untiring solicitude for the daughters and sons of Opus Dei, his goodness, the warmth of his smile, his humility and simplicity, his self-abandonment, his serenity, the interior peace that his words conveyed, his supernatural audacity and his prudence. In 2004, the process for his beatification and canonization was opened in Rome. On June 28, 2012, he was declared venerable and, on September 27, 2014, he was beatified in Madrid at a Mass presided by Cardinal Angelo Amato and attended by more than 200,000 people from all over the world. Pope Francis wished to have his presence at the ceremony felt with a letter in which he described this new blessed person: “Especially outstanding was his love for the Church, spouse of Christ, which he served with a heart free of all worldly interests, far from discord, receptive to all, and always looking for what is positive in others, what unites, what builds up. Never a complaint or criticism, not even in particularly difficult moments but rather, as he had learned from St. Josemaria, always prayerful response, pardon, understanding and sincere charity.

The feast of Blessed Alvaro is celebrated on May 12, the anniversary of his first communion.

Words of Blessed Alvaro

We have so many motives to feed our hope! In the first place, the fact that God sent His Son into the world to save us from our sins. And that He did not pardon His own Son but, rather, that He gave Him up for us all. How will he not give us everything with Him (Rm 8:32)? Think also in that permanent miracle of the real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist become, until the end of times, bread of eternal life for us (Cf. Jn 6:51), viaticum for those who are walking to the homeland in Heaven. How do we receive it each day? With what desires of improvement, of union, of identification? Let us meditate often on the example of our Father . . . who never became accustomed to receiving Him sacramentally, who felt his hunger for the Eucharist grow each day, inseparably united to that ardor of prayer that sprouted from his soul—*vultum tuum, Domine, requiram!* (Ps 26:8—with special intensity in the last years of his life.

Prayer

Oh God, who made Blessed Alvaro, bishop and successor of Saint Josemaria, a faithful servant of the Church, grant us also, through his intercession, to follow the footprints of Jesus Christ.

We give you thanks for the immense favors that you have granted us in the life of Don Alvaro, for the good of the universal Church, the Work of God and countless persons. We equally thank you, Lord, for so many favors you have granted through the intercession of your servant.

We want, like him, to make reparation for our sins, redress for all the offenses you received, and unite ourselves closely to the perfect reparation of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

We place ourselves spiritually near Blessed Alvaro, to adore you as you deserve to be adored, you who are our only God and Father, in union with Jesus Christ, your Son, and with the Holy Spirit who proceeds from Both. We fly for this to the protection and refuge of our mother Mary in whose hands we leave our pleas, our work, joys and sorrows, that she may offer them to your divine majesty. Amen.

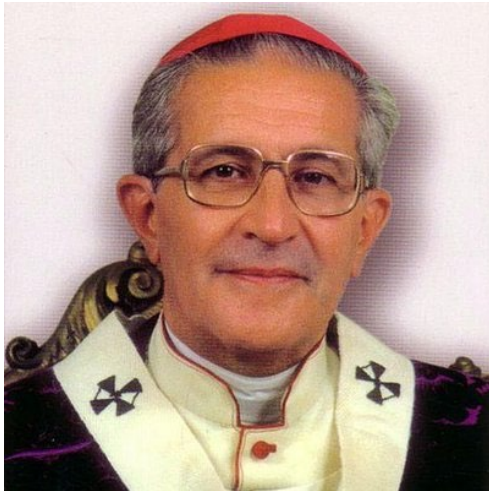
Aspiration

Immaculate heart of Mary, keep us on a safe pathway.

Prayer for each day

About the Author of this Novena

Mons. Juan Ignacio Larrea Holguín **(Buenos Aires, 1927 - Quito, 2006)**



Archbishop Larrea Holguín was born in Buenos Aires, Argentina, on August 9, 1927. He had a doctorate in Law from the University of Rome and from the University of Quito, and also in Canon Law from the University of Saint Thomas in Rome. He was also a Professor of Law in the Catholic Universities of Quito and Guayaquil, and at the Central University of Quito.

In 1948 during his university studies in Rome, Juan Larrea met St. Josemaria Escrivá, the founder of Opus Dei. He was the first Ecuadorian to join, in 1949, this institution of the Catholic Church.

In 1952 he returned to Ecuador. Taking advantage of his work as a lawyer and his involvement in public life, he carried out an intense apostolate with people from

every walk of life.

He was ordained a priest in 1962. In 1959, Pope Paul VI appointed him as auxiliary bishop of Quito. Later he was appointed as bishop of Ibarra, the first bishop of the Armed Forces, and as Archbishop of Guayaquil from 1989 to 2003. As a priest and later as a bishop he carried out a wide-ranging pastoral work, preaching numerous retreats, visiting the parishes in his diocese, and fostering the work of formation in the diocesan seminaries. Archbishop Larrea spread Catholic doctrine through his numerous publications (over a hundred articles and books about the Law), as well as through frequent radio broadcasts and appearances on television.

In 1996 he learned he had cancer. With courage and a smile on his lips, he bore that long illness without interrupting his pastoral and intellectual work or his spiritual life. He strove every day to make good use of time, without wasting even a minute. His motto as bishop was *Caritas Christi urget nos* (the love of Christ urges us on), which sums up his intense life of prayer and work.

He gave up his soul to God in a holy death on August 27, 2006, in Quito. His body reposes in the Cathedral of Guayaquil.

The cause of beatification and canonization of Archbishop Larrea Holguín is being promoted by the Archdiocese of Guayaquil. In 2016 the Congregation for the Causes of Saints granted the nihil obstat for the investigation of the cause.

Taken from Romana, the bulletin of the Prelature of the Holy Cross and Opus Dei