

BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Alberto Hurtado

Life, prayer, novena and pilgrimage

Feast day: August 18

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IN BRIEF

Saint Alberto Hurtado

Chilean Jesuit priest, founder of the Hogar de Cristo and apostle of the poor.

Feast day	August 18
Born	January 22, 1901, Viña del Mar, Chile
Died	August 18, 1952, Santiago, Chile
Canonized	October 23, 2005, by Pope Benedict XVI
Era	20th century
Patron saint of	the homeless, the poor, workers

In this booklet

Life

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Novena to Saint Alberto Hurtado

Padre Hurtado Sanctuary in Santiago, Chile

Credits and sources

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LIFE

Saint Alberto Hurtado

Saint Alberto Hurtado was a Chilean Jesuit priest of the first half of the twentieth century. Trained as a lawyer, he was an educator and retreat preacher, and in 1944 he founded the Hogar de Cristo, a shelter for the homeless that remains one of Chile's great charitable institutions. He also fought for Christian trade unionism and founded the journal *Mensaje*. He died of cancer on August 18, 1952, and was canonized by Benedict XVI in 2005. His feast day is August 18, which in Chile has become the National Day of Solidarity.

Who was Saint Alberto Hurtado?

Alberto Hurtado Cruchaga was born on January 22, 1901, in Viña del Mar, on the Chilean coast, and was baptized the very next day. He was only four when his father died suddenly, leaving the family without means. His mother moved to Santiago with her two sons, who for a time lived in the homes of relatives. Thanks to a scholarship, Alberto studied at the Jesuit Colegio San Ignacio in Santiago from 1909 to 1917.

The young man wanted to become a Jesuit in order to be a "priest of the poor." But first he had to support his mother and brother. So he worked while studying law at the Catholic University of Chile, and he still spent his evenings in the poor neighborhoods, where he opened a youth club and then a night school. After earning his law degree in 1922 with a thesis on labor legislation, he was finally able to enter the Jesuit novitiate in Chillán on August 14, 1923.

Key dates in the life of Saint Alberto Hurtado

- **January 22, 1901**: Born in Viña del Mar, Chile.
- **1905**: Death of his father; the family moves to Santiago.

- **1922**: Law degree from the Catholic University of Chile.
- **August 14, 1923**: Enters the Jesuit novitiate in Chillán.
- **1925-1932**: Studies in Argentina and then Spain, until the Jesuits are expelled from Spain.
- **August 24, 1933**: Ordained a priest in Louvain, Belgium.
- **1935**: Doctorate in education and psychology from the University of Louvain.
- **January 1936**: Returns to Chile.
- **1941**: Publishes *¿Es Chile un país católico?* and becomes chaplain of Catholic Action youth.
- **October 1944**: The appeal during a retreat that gives birth to the Hogar de Cristo.
- **1947**: Begins his work for Christian trade unionism.
- **1951**: Founds the journal *Mensaje*.
- **August 18, 1952**: Dies in Santiago of pancreatic cancer.
- **October 16, 1994**: Beatified by Saint John Paul II.
- **October 23, 2005**: Canonized by Benedict XVI.

A Jesuit formed in Europe

His training took him far from Chile. In 1925 he studied humanities in Córdoba, Argentina, then left in 1927 for Spain to study philosophy and theology. In 1932 the Spanish Republic expelled the Jesuits, and Alberto continued his studies in Belgium, at Louvain, where he was ordained a priest on August 24, 1933. There he earned a doctorate in education and psychology in 1935, then completed his formation at Drongen, near Ghent.

Back in Chile in 1936, he threw himself into intense activity: religion classes at Colegio San Ignacio, teaching education at the university and the seminary, spiritual retreats and the guidance of young people. He led the students of the

Marian Congregation to teach catechism in poor neighborhoods. Many priestly vocations and lay commitments were born from contact with him.

The Hogar de Cristo

In 1941, his book *¿Es Chile un país católico?* ("Is Chile a Catholic Country?") shook Chilean Catholics: he denounced the gap between a faith on display and the poverty people tolerated. In October 1944, during a retreat he was preaching to women, he told them that the night before he had met a sick, shivering man with no home. He asked his listeners what the Church was doing for these children of God who slept outside.

His appeal set off a wave of donations. On December 21, 1944, the Hogar de Cristo, the "Home of Christ," was born. A first house welcomed children, followed by a house for women and another for men. Chilean memory keeps the image of Father Hurtado driving through Santiago on winter nights in his green pickup truck to gather those sleeping in the street. The work quickly grew: rehabilitation centers, training workshops and shelters. In 1945 he traveled to the United States to study the experience of Boys Town and adapt it to Chile.

Social justice and Christian trade unions

For Alberto Hurtado, charity was not enough: unjust structures also had to change. He wrote on education and on the Christian social order, notably *Humanismo social* (Social Humanism, 1947). From 1947 he supported the creation of Christian trade unions and trained workers for public commitment. He visited mines, factories and ports. In 1951 he founded the journal *Mensaje*, which spreads the social teaching of the Church and is still published. This commitment earned him criticism in some Catholic circles, which found him too bold.

"Content, Lord, content"

In 1952 he was found to have pancreatic cancer. All of Chile followed his illness on the radio. To a priest who advised him to slow down, he is said to have replied that he would rather die young and worn out than old and useless. Those close to him remembered from these last months a prayer that became famous: "Contento, Señor, contento" ("Content, Lord, content"). He died on August 18, 1952, at fifty-one. His last words to his superior are reported to have been: "Believe me, Father, I am happy, deeply happy."

Why is Saint Alberto Hurtado a patron of the poor?

Alberto Hurtado brought together what is often kept apart: prayer and action, immediate charity and reflection on justice, intelligence and tenderness for the poorest. His conviction fits in one sentence that his followers repeat: the poor person is Christ. He was beatified in 1994, after the unexplained healing of a young woman, and canonized on October 23, 2005, together with Saint Joseph Bilczewski and three other saints. In Chile, stamps, a metro station and the Day of Solidarity keep his memory alive. People pray to him for the homeless, for workers and for all who serve the poor.

Symbols and how to recognize Saint Alberto Hurtado

- **The black cassock**: he is usually shown as a Jesuit priest of his time.
- **The poor and children**: statues and murals often show him with a child or a person in need.
- **The green pickup truck**: the vehicle in which he went out at night to gather the homeless.
- **"Contento, Señor, contento"**: his best-known motto, a prayer of joyful surrender.

Where to pray to Saint Alberto Hurtado

- **Santiago, Chile**: the Shrine of Padre Hurtado, where he is buried, next to the headquarters of the Hogar de Cristo.
- **Viña del Mar**: his hometown, where he was baptized in the church of Our Lady of Sorrows.
- **Santiago, Chile**: Colegio San Ignacio, where he was a student and later a teacher.

To pray with him, see the prayer to Saint Alberto Hurtado and the novena to Saint Alberto Hurtado, from August 10 to 18.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Alberto Hurtado for the Poor

Saint Alberto Hurtado did not leave a prayer that became traditional, but one short saying of his is known throughout Chile and is prayed like a short prayer. You will find it below with its context, together with the appeal that gave birth to the Hogar de Cristo, followed by an original prayer to Saint Alberto Hurtado.

Two sayings of Alberto Hurtado to meditate on

> *"Contento, Señor, contento." ("Content, Lord, content.")*

Source: words Father Hurtado often repeated, according to those close to him and his biographers, especially during his last illness in 1952. It has become the saint's best-known motto.

> *"And this man is our brother, a child of God like us!"*

Source: Father Hurtado's appeal during a retreat in Santiago in October 1944, about a homeless man he had met the night before; this appeal gave rise to the Hogar de Cristo (free English rendering).



Saint Alberto Hurtado, apostle of the poor.

Prayer to Saint Alberto Hurtado for the Poor

Saint Alberto Hurtado, you recognized Christ in the man shivering in the street: open my eyes to those I pass without seeing.

You drove through winter nights to give a roof to those who had none: give me a generous heart, quick to act and not only to be moved.

You fought for workers to be respected: inspire those who govern and those who run businesses with a concern for justice.

I entrust to you the homeless, abandoned children, the sick who are alone, and my intention: (name it in silence).

Teach me to give myself without counting the cost, and to say with you, in my weariness as in my joys: content, Lord, content. Amen.

This prayer is an original text by Saintspedia, free to use for personal and community prayer.

When to pray this prayer

Saint Alberto Hurtado's feast day is August 18, the anniversary of his death in 1952; in Chile, this day is also the Day of Solidarity. You can pray to him all year round:

- for the homeless, especially on cold nights;
- for workers, the unemployed and those seeking fair wages;
- for volunteers, social workers and all who serve the poor;
- when you feel tired from giving and need to find joy again.

For a longer time of prayer, follow the novena to Saint Alberto Hurtado, and read the life of Saint Alberto Hurtado.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Alberto Hurtado

This novena is an original composition by Saintspedia, inspired by the life and words of Saint Alberto Hurtado. It is not an official liturgical text. To end on his feast day, August 18, begin it on August 10. With Father Hurtado, prayer always leads toward our neighbor, so each day ends with a small concrete act of charity or justice.

How to pray this novena

Choose a regular moment each day, perhaps in the morning before work or in the evening when the day is done. Each day, entrust your intention to God, read the meditation, say the prayer of the day, then an Our Father, a Hail Mary and a Glory Be. Then try to live the act suggested for the day. You can pray this novena alone, with your family or with a parish or volunteer group. Father Hurtado often said that prayer and action belong together: the time you give to God in these nine days should make you more attentive, not less, to the people around you.



Statue of Saint Alberto Hurtado in Chile.

Opening prayer for each day

Lord Jesus, you gave Saint Alberto Hurtado eyes to recognize you in the poor man shivering in the street, and a heart quick to act for justice. He gave himself without counting the cost, and even in his last illness he could say that he was content, deeply content. Through his intercession, I come before you with my weariness and my desire to serve. Open my eyes to those I pass without seeing, make my love concrete, and teach me the joy of giving myself. Receive the intention I place before you during these nine days, for my own needs and for the poor of the whole world. Amen.

Saint Alberto Hurtado, pray for us.

Day 1: A poor childhood

At four, Alberto lost his father, and the family was left without means. He knew insecurity from the inside. His compassion for the poor was born there.

Prayer: Lord, protect the children who grow up in poverty, and give them adults they can count on. Amen.

Today: Support a charity that helps children in need.

Day 2: Waiting for a vocation

He wanted to be a Jesuit, but first he had to support his mother and brother. He waited for years without ceasing to serve. Present duty prepares the call.

Prayer: Lord, teach me patience when my plans must wait. Amen.

Today: Do a concrete favor for someone in your family.

Day 3: Intelligence at the service of others

Lawyer, doctor in education, writer: Father Hurtado put his studies at the service of others. Thinking clearly is already a way of loving.

Prayer: Holy Spirit, enlighten my mind so that I may serve my brothers and sisters better. Amen.

Today: Read a passage of the social teaching of the Church.

Day 4: Christ in the poor

One evening he met a sick, shivering man. The next day he told his listeners that this man was their brother, a child of God. The poor person is Christ.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, teach me to recognize you in those who are cold, hungry or alone. Amen.

Today: Greet a person who lives on the street, and truly look at them.

Day 5: A roof for Christ

From his appeal the Hogar de Cristo, the Home of Christ, was born. A house, a hot meal, a bed: charity begins with what the body needs.

Prayer: Lord, bless all who open their doors to the homeless. Amen.

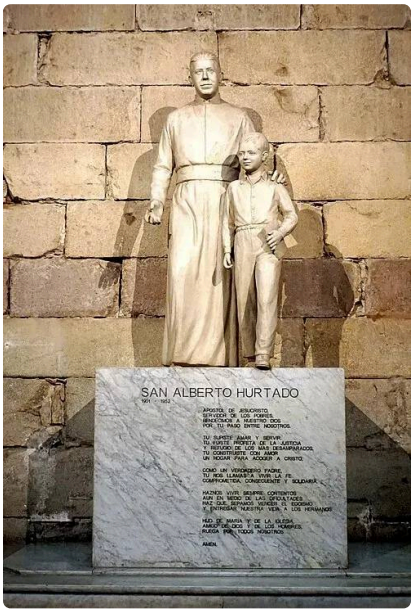
Today: Give to a shelter or soup kitchen, or offer some of your time.

Day 6: Justice and work

Father Hurtado did not only want to relieve poverty but to fight its causes. He supported workers and Christian trade unions.

Prayer: God of justice, give everyone dignified work and a fair wage. Amen.

Today: Thank someone whose work serves others without being noticed.



Father Hurtado and the children of the Hogar de Cristo.

Day 7: Forming lay people

He accompanied young people, led retreats and formed responsible lay Catholics. He knew he could not do everything alone.

Prayer: Lord, raise up Christians who take their part in the life of society. Amen.

Today: Encourage a young person in a commitment to serve others.

Day 8: Giving oneself until worn out

To a priest who advised him to rest, he is said to have answered that he would rather die young and worn out. His life was short, but fully given.

Prayer: Lord, may my life not be kept for myself, but offered to you and to others. Amen.

Today: Make an effort for someone, even when you are tired.

Day 9: Content, Lord, content

In his illness he repeated: "Content, Lord, content." His last words said he was deeply happy. The joy of self-giving passes even through suffering.

Prayer: Lord, I place in your hands the intention of this novena. Through the intercession of Saint Alberto Hurtado, give me the joy of serving. Amen.

Today: Thank God for one specific thing in your life, even a difficult one.

Closing prayer

Saint Alberto Hurtado, at the end of these nine days, I entrust to you the intention I have brought before God. Pray for the poor of the whole world, for those who serve them, and for me. Obtain for me the grace to recognize Christ in everyone and to live content, in trust. Amen.

To go further, read the life of Saint Alberto Hurtado and the prayer to Saint Alberto Hurtado.

PILGRIMAGE

Padre Hurtado Sanctuary in Santiago, Chile

Saint Alberto Hurtado rests in Santiago, Chile, in the sanctuary that bears his name, run by the Society of Jesus. It stands next to the headquarters of the Hogar de Cristo, the work he founded in 1944, and the nearby subway station has been renamed San Alberto Hurtado. It is the main place of pilgrimage tied to the saint, visited by Chileans from every walk of life.

A sanctuary at the heart of his work

After his death on August 18, 1952, Father Hurtado was buried near the chapel of the Hogar de Cristo. The poor he had welcomed, the workers he had supported, and the young people he had formed come to pray at his grave. With his beatification in 1994 and his canonization in 2005, the site has become a much-visited sanctuary. This closeness between the saint's tomb and the work that is still alive says a great deal about who he was: a priest whose prayer led to welcoming the poorest.



The Padre Hurtado Sanctuary in Santiago, Chile.

Visiting the sanctuary

The sanctuary includes a church, the saint's tomb, and spaces devoted to his memory, where visitors can learn about his life and see objects that belonged to him. August 18, the anniversary of his death and Chile's Day of Solidarity, gathers many pilgrims here each year. Many leave messages of thanks or written intentions.

Praying on site

Before your visit, you can read the life of Saint Alberto Hurtado. At his tomb, entrust to him someone poor or lonely whom you know, then say the prayer to Saint Alberto Hurtado. If you come in August, you can complete the novena to Saint Alberto Hurtado here. The best way to extend your visit is a concrete act of solidarity. These suggestions are offered by Saintspedia.

Other places of Saint Alberto Hurtado

- **Viña del Mar**: his birthplace, where he was baptized in 1901 in the Church of Our Lady of Sorrows.
- **Santiago, Chile**: the Jesuit-run Colegio San Ignacio, where he was a student from 1909 to 1917 and later a religion teacher.
- **Chillán**: the city where he entered the Jesuit novitiate in 1923.
- **Leuven** (Belgium): the city where he was ordained a priest in 1933 and earned his doctorate.

Practical information

The sanctuary is in the Estación Central district of Santiago and is easy to reach by subway at the San Alberto Hurtado station. Opening hours, Mass times, and guided tours are published by the sanctuary: check its official website before you come, especially around August 18, when it is very busy.

CREDITS

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