

BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Enrique de Ossó

Life, prayer and novena

Feast day: January 27

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IN BRIEF

Saint Enrique de Ossó

Catalan priest, catechist and writer, founder of the Society of Saint Teresa of Jesus.

Feast day	January 27
Born	October 16, 1840, Vinebre, Catalonia, Spain
Died	January 27, 1896, Gilet, Valencia, Spain
Canonized	June 16, 1993, by Pope John Paul II
Era	19th century
Patron saint of	catechists of Spain

In this booklet

Life

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Novena to Saint Enrique de Ossó

Credits and sources

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LIFE

Saint Enrique de Ossó

Saint Enrique de Ossó y Cervelló (1840-1896), known in some languages as Henry de Ossó, was a Catalan priest, catechist, journalist and spiritual writer, and the founder of the Society of Saint Teresa of Jesus, a congregation of teaching sisters. Passionate about Saint Teresa of Avila, he wanted to form Christians who "think, feel and love like Jesus." He died in a Franciscan friary near Valencia and was canonized by Pope John Paul II in Madrid in 1993. His feast day is January 27, and he is the patron saint of catechists in Spain.

Who was Saint Enrique de Ossó?

Enrique de Ossó was one of those nineteenth-century Spanish priests who responded to political upheaval and rising anticlericalism with tremendous apostolic energy: catechism classes, youth associations, the press, prayer books, pilgrimages and schools. At the heart of it all was one conviction: faith is handed on through education and nourished by mental prayer.

He found in Saint Teresa of Avila his model and his teacher in the spiritual life, to the point of wanting to make the "Holy Mother" known and loved everywhere. Yet his life ended in trial, misunderstanding and loneliness, which gives his holiness a particular depth.

Key dates

- **October 16, 1840**: Born in Vinebre, in the province of Tarragona, on the banks of the Ebro.
- **1854**: His mother dies of cholera; soon afterward, he walks to the shrine of Montserrat and consecrates himself to Christ.
- **c. 1855-1866**: Studies at the seminary of Tortosa and in Barcelona.

- **September 21, 1867**: Ordained a priest in Tortosa; first Mass at Montserrat on October 6.
- **1870s**: Director of catechesis for the diocese of Tortosa; founds associations for young people and children.
- **1872**: First issue of the *Monthly Review of Saint Teresa of Jesus*; publishes the *Practical Guide for the Catechist*.
- **1874**: Publishes *A Quarter of an Hour of Prayer*, his most widely read book.
- **1876**: Founds the Society of Saint Teresa of Jesus.
- **1877**: Leads more than four thousand pilgrims to the places of Saint Teresa, in Ávila and Alba de Tormes.
- **1879-1896**: A long lawsuit with Carmelite nuns of Tortosa, and trials within his own congregation.
- **January 27, 1896**: Dies at the Franciscan friary of Gilet, near Valencia.
- **October 14, 1979**: Beatified by John Paul II.
- **June 16, 1993**: Canonized by John Paul II in Madrid.

From Vinebre to Montserrat

Enrique was born into a Christian family in the Ebro valley; he would later say he had "good parents and holy grandparents." As a child, he said he wanted to become a schoolteacher. At fourteen, his mother's death shook him deeply. He left home, leaving a few farewell letters, and set out on foot for Montserrat. Before the Black Madonna, the *Moreneta*, he decided to give himself entirely to Jesus. His family eventually agreed to let him enter the seminary.

A brilliant student, first in Tortosa and then in Barcelona with the Jesuits, he was also passionate about science, drawing and sculpture. Above all, he discovered the writings of Saint Teresa of Avila, which would become the source of his whole spirituality. Ordained a priest in 1867, he first taught physics at the seminary of Tortosa.

Apostle of catechesis

The revolution of 1868 drove out Queen Isabella II and closed the seminaries. When calm returned, the bishop of Tortosa entrusted Enrique with catechesis in the diocese. With seminarians and lay people, he organized a lively teaching of Christian doctrine: within a short time, hundreds of children were attending his catechism classes. He founded associations for young women, children and men, notably the Association of Daughters of Mary Immaculate and Teresa of Jesus, which spread quickly through Catalonia, the Valencia region and Aragon.

He was also a man of the press. He founded a popular weekly and a monthly review devoted to Saint Teresa, which he edited until his death. He wrote many books of prayer and formation. The most famous, *A Quarter of an Hour of Prayer*, published in 1874, teaches the faithful to spend a time of personal prayer each day following Teresa's method; it went through dozens of editions.

The Society of Saint Teresa of Jesus

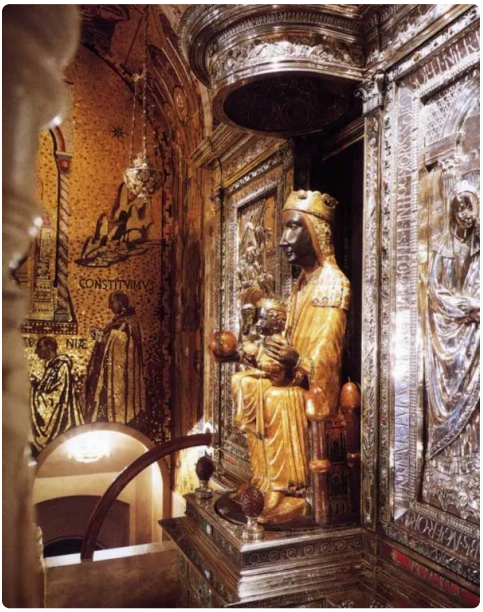
In 1876, with a few young women from his associations, Enrique founded the Society of Saint Teresa of Jesus, devoted to Christian education, especially of girls. Its aim: to spread the knowledge and love of Jesus through prayer, teaching and self-giving. The first sisters made their vows in 1879. During his lifetime, the congregation took root in Spain, Portugal, Latin America and Algeria. Today it is present on several continents, with schools and educational works.

The time of trial

Enrique's last years were marked by suffering. From 1879, a long lawsuit set him against a community of Carmelite nuns in Tortosa over a plot of land on which he had built the motherhouse of his congregation. He was accused of

injustice, friends turned away from him, and documents that would have proved his good faith disappeared. More painful still, tensions arose within the Society he had founded, which distanced itself from him.

Exhausted, he withdrew in January 1896 to the Franciscans at Gilet, near Valencia. He died there during the night of January 27, without having given up any of his trust in God. First buried among the friars, he has rested since 1908 in the novitiate chapel of the Society in Tortosa.



Our Lady of Montserrat, where Enrique de Ossó consecrated himself to God.

Why is Saint Enrique de Ossó the patron saint of catechists?

Enrique de Ossó believed that the Church is renewed through education and prayer. He wanted every Christian, even the busiest, to give God a quarter of an hour of mental prayer each day. He placed his trust in women and young people at a time when they were given little responsibility in the apostolate.

And he went through apparent failure, slander and abandonment with his faith intact. John Paul II canonized him in Madrid before a huge crowd, and the Church in Spain chose him as patron of its catechists. We can pray to him for catechists, teachers, Christian educators and all who go through misunderstanding.

Symbols and how to recognize Saint Enrique de Ossó in art

He is usually shown as a nineteenth-century priest in a cassock, often holding a book, a reminder of his writings and of his work as a catechist.

To pray with him, see the prayer to Saint Enrique de Ossó and the novena to Saint Enrique de Ossó.

Where to pray to Saint Enrique de Ossó

- **Tortosa** (Catalonia, Spain): the novitiate chapel of the Society of Saint Teresa of Jesus, which has kept his relics since 1908.
- **Vinebre** (province of Tarragona): his home village.
- **Montserrat** (Catalonia): the Marian shrine where he consecrated himself to Christ and celebrated his first Mass.
- **Gilet** (province of Valencia): the Franciscan friary where he died.
- The schools and houses of the Society of Saint Teresa of Jesus around the world.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Enrique de Ossó, Apostle of Catechesis

Saint Enrique de Ossó wrote a great deal to teach Christians how to pray, especially in his book *A Quarter of an Hour of Prayer*. This page offers a saying to meditate on that sums up his ideal, then an original prayer by Saintspedia for catechists, educators and those going through trials.

A saying to meditate on

One phrase is often quoted as the summary of his spiritual program:

> *"To think like Jesus, to feel like Jesus, to love like Jesus, to act like Jesus."*

Source: a phrase attributed to Saint Enrique de Ossó, as handed down by the Society of Saint Teresa of Jesus; free translation by Saintspedia.



Saint Enrique de Ossó, founder of the Society of Saint Teresa of Jesus.

Prayer to Saint Enrique de Ossó

Saint Enrique de Ossó, as a young boy you walked all the way to Montserrat to give yourself entirely to Jesus: help me to offer him my life without holding back.

You learned to pray in the school of Saint Teresa of Avila: teach me to give God real time each day, even if only a quarter of an hour, in silence and friendship with him.

You gave your life to catechesis and education: support catechists, teachers, parents and all who hand on the faith to children and young people. Give them patience, joy and creativity.

You knew slander, apparent failure and abandonment by those you loved, without losing your trust in God: come to the help of those who are misunderstood or unjustly accused. I entrust to you my intention: (name it in silence).

Obtain for me the grace to think, feel, love and act like Jesus, for the glory of God. Amen.

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

Intentions to entrust to Saint Enrique de Ossó

- For catechists, whose patron he is in Spain, and for catechists everywhere.
- For teachers and Catholic schools, especially those of the Society of Saint Teresa of Jesus.
- For young people discerning a vocation.
- For faithfulness to daily prayer.
- For people who are slandered, in conflict or rejected by those close to them.

When to pray this prayer

Saint Enrique de Ossó is celebrated on January 27, the day of his death in 1896. You can also pray to him at the start of the school and catechism year, or on October 15, the feast of Saint Teresa of Avila, whom he loved so much. The novena to Saint Enrique de Ossó can be prayed from January 19 to 27. Discover also the life of Saint Enrique de Ossó.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Enrique de Ossó

This novena to Saint Enrique de Ossó is an original composition by Saintspedia. Over nine days, it follows the Catalan priest who consecrated himself to Christ at Montserrat, gave his life to catechesis and education, taught countless people to pray a quarter of an hour each day, and remained faithful through slander and abandonment. To end on January 27, his feast day, begin it on January 19. You can also pray it at any time, especially at the start of a school or catechism year, or when you feel misunderstood.

How to pray this novena

In the spirit of Saint Enrique, try to give each day of this novena a true quarter of an hour of prayer. Begin with the Sign of the Cross, read the meditation, then spend a few minutes in silence with Jesus, as with a friend. Say the prayer of the day, an Our Father, a Hail Mary and a Glory Be, and end with the small act proposed. If you miss a day, simply continue.

Day 1: Good parents and holy grandparents

Enrique grew up in a Christian family in the Ebro valley, and he later spoke with gratitude of his "good parents and holy grandparents." Faith is often first received at home, in simple gestures and words.

Prayer: Saint Enrique, I thank God for those who passed on the faith to me. Bless Christian families and grandparents. Amen.

Today: Call or visit a grandparent or an elderly person, or pray for your deceased relatives.

Day 2: A grief that became a gift

At fourteen, Enrique lost his mother to cholera. In his grief, he walked to Montserrat and, before the Black Madonna, gave himself entirely to Jesus. Sorrow can open a door to God.

Prayer: Saint Enrique, I entrust to you all who are grieving, especially young people who have lost a parent. Amen.

Today: Pray a decade of the Rosary for someone who is mourning.

Day 3: The school of Saint Teresa

As a seminarian, Enrique discovered the writings of Saint Teresa of Avila. She taught him that prayer is a friendship, a time spent alone with the One we know loves us. She became the guide of his whole life.

Prayer: Saint Enrique, help me to discover prayer as a friendship with Jesus. Amen.

Today: Spend a quarter of an hour in silent prayer, speaking to Jesus as a friend.

Day 4: Teaching the faith to children

Entrusted with catechesis in Tortosa, Enrique gathered hundreds of children and taught them the faith in a lively way, with seminarians and lay people. He knew that a child who meets Jesus can change a family.

Prayer: Saint Enrique, bless catechists and all who teach the faith to children. Give them patience, joy and creativity. Amen.

Today: Pray for the catechists of your parish, and thank one of them if you can.

Day 5: Trusting the young

Enrique founded associations for young women, children and men, and gave them real responsibility at a time when few did. He believed in the young and in what God could do through them.

Prayer: Saint Enrique, pray for young people, that they may find Christ and discover their vocation. Amen.

Today: Encourage a young person in their faith or in their studies.

Day 6: A quarter of an hour

In *A Quarter of an Hour of Prayer*, Enrique asked every Christian, even the busiest, to give God fifteen minutes a day. Small, faithful steps build a life of prayer.

Prayer: Saint Enrique, give me faithfulness to daily prayer, even when I am busy or tired. Amen.

Today: Choose a fixed time for a daily quarter of an hour of prayer, and keep it today.

Day 7: Educators for the world

In 1876, Enrique founded the Society of Saint Teresa of Jesus, devoted to Christian education. The sisters soon carried his vision to Portugal, Latin America and Algeria. Education was, for him, a way of spreading the love of Jesus.

Prayer: Saint Enrique, bless teachers and Catholic schools, and the Society of Saint Teresa of Jesus. Amen.

Today: Pray for a teacher who has marked your life.

Day 8: Slandered and abandoned

A long lawsuit brought accusations of injustice against Enrique; friends turned away, and tensions arose within the very congregation he had founded. He suffered deeply, but did not let bitterness take hold.

Prayer: Saint Enrique, come to the help of those who are misunderstood or unjustly accused, and keep them in peace. Amen.

Today: Refuse to repeat a criticism or a rumor about someone.

Day 9: A quiet death, a faithful heart

Exhausted, Enrique withdrew to the Franciscan friary of Gilet, where he died on January 27, 1896, without losing his trust in God. The Church later recognized his holiness, and today he is the patron of catechists in Spain.

Prayer: Saint Enrique, help me to remain faithful to the end, trusting that God brings good out of every trial. Amen.

Today: Offer to God a disappointment or a failure, and ask him to bring good from it.

Closing prayer

Saint Enrique de Ossó, priest, catechist and friend of Saint Teresa, you taught many to pray and to love Jesus, and you remained faithful through slander and loneliness. At the end of this novena, I entrust to you my intentions. Pray for catechists, teachers and parents, for young people seeking their way, and for all who are misunderstood. Obtain for me the grace to think, feel, love and act like Jesus, and to give him each day a true time of prayer. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

CREDITS

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