

BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Josemaría Escrivá

Life, prayer, novena and pilgrimage

Feast day: June 26

Saintspedia · saintspedia.com

IN BRIEF

Saint Josemaría Escrivá

Spanish priest, founder of Opus Dei, apostle of holiness in ordinary life and work.

Feast day	June 26
Born	January 9, 1902, Barbastro, Aragon, Spain
Died	June 26, 1975, Rome, Italy
Canonized	October 6, 2002, by Pope John Paul II
Era	20th century

In this booklet

Life

Prayer to Saint Josemaría to Sanctify Work and Ordinary Life

Novena to Saint Josemaría Escrivá

Prelatic Church of Santa Maria della Pace, Tomb of Saint Josemaría in Rome

Credits and sources

Booklet offered by Saintspedia, the directory of Catholic saints: lives of the saints, prayers, novenas and places of pilgrimage, at saintspedia.com. Texts written by Saintspedia, except traditional prayers marked as such. Original prayers and novenas are not official liturgical texts. Free booklet, to print and share for personal, family or parish use; please do not sell it.

LIFE

Saint Josemaría Escrivá

Saint Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer was a Spanish priest of the twentieth century and the founder of Opus Dei. His whole message fits into one idea he never tired of repeating: every Christian, not only priests and religious, is called to holiness, and ordinary work, family life and friendships can become a path to God. He died in Rome on June 26, 1975, was canonized by Pope John Paul II in 2002, and his feast day is June 26.

Who was Saint Josemaría Escrivá?

José María Escrivá was born on January 9, 1902, in Barbastro, a small town in Aragon at the foot of the Pyrenees. He was the second of the six children of José Escrivá, a cloth merchant, and Dolores Albás. The family was deeply Christian but sorely tried: three of his younger sisters died in early childhood, and then his father's business went bankrupt. In 1915 the family moved to Logroño, where his father found a modest job. Josemaría always remembered his father as a man who had gone through ruin with dignity and serenity.

In Logroño, during the winter of 1917-1918, a small detail moved him deeply: the footprints of a barefoot Carmelite friar in the snow. He saw in them a sign that God was asking something of him, though he did not yet know what. To make himself available, he decided to become a priest.

Key dates in the life of Saint Josemaría

- **January 9, 1902**: Born in Barbastro, Spain.
- **1915**: The family moves to Logroño.
- **1918**: Enters the seminary of Logroño, then in 1920 the seminary of Zaragoza.
- **March 28, 1925**: Ordained a priest in Zaragoza.

- **1927**: Moves to Madrid to prepare a doctorate in law and becomes chaplain of the Patronato de Enfermos.
- **October 2, 1928**: During a retreat in Madrid, he "sees" Opus Dei.
- **February 14, 1930**: He understands that Opus Dei is also meant for women.
- **1936-1939**: Spanish Civil War; after hiding in Madrid, he crosses the Pyrenees in 1937.
- **1939**: Publication of *The Way*.
- **1946**: Moves to Rome.
- **June 26, 1975**: Dies in Rome.
- **May 17, 1992**: Beatified by John Paul II.
- **October 6, 2002**: Canonized by John Paul II in Saint Peter's Square.

October 2, 1928: the birth of Opus Dei

As a young priest in Madrid, Josemaría divided his time between his law studies and a very concrete ministry. He visited the sick and the poor in the outskirts of the city, heard confessions and taught catechism to children.

On October 2, 1928, during a retreat, he understood what God wanted from him: to open a path of holiness in the middle of the world to men and women of every background, without changing their state in life or their profession, by making their work and ordinary duties a place of encounter with Christ. He called this institution Opus Dei, "the Work of God."

The beginnings were slow. Josemaría gathered a few students and young professionals, opened a university residence in Madrid and preached tirelessly that one can be fully Christian as an engineer, a laborer, a mother or a teacher. In 1943 he also founded the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross, for priests linked to Opus Dei.



The cathedral of Barbastro, hometown of Saint Josemaría, where he was baptized.

The Civil War and The Way

From July 1936, the Spanish Civil War brought a violent religious persecution in the Republican zone, and many priests were killed. Josemaría had to hide, moving constantly from one refuge to another, and for a time found shelter in a foreign legation. In 1937 he crossed the Pyrenees on foot with a small group to reach the Nationalist zone. He settled in Burgos, from where he kept up a large correspondence with the young members of the Work, scattered by the war.

In 1939 he published *The Way*, a collection of 999 short spiritual points that grew out of a first small book published in 1934. Translated into a great many languages, it became one of the most widely read spiritual books of the twentieth century, alongside later posthumous works such as *Furrow* and *The Forge*.

Rome and the spread of Opus Dei

In 1946 Josemaría moved to Rome to seek the approval of Opus Dei by the Holy See, which came step by step between 1947 and 1950. From Rome he guided the growth of the Work in many countries of Europe, the Americas, Africa and Asia, and encouraged educational and social initiatives, among them the University of Navarre. He followed the Second Vatican Council closely, which in its turn affirmed the universal call to holiness. In his last years he made long catechetical journeys through Spain and Latin America, answering the questions of thousands of people.

On June 26, 1975, he died suddenly in Rome, in his office, before an image of the Virgin Mary. In 1982 John Paul II made Opus Dei a personal prelature, the juridical form its founder had hoped for. His cause for beatification, opened soon after his death, was one of the fastest of its time. It also sparked debate, which the Church took into account before recognizing his heroic virtues.



The Marian shrine of Torreciudad in Aragon, built at the wish of Saint Josemaría.

Why do people pray to Saint Josemaría for their work and family?

Saint Josemaría is not the official patron of a country or profession, but many Catholics turn to him as the saint of ordinary life. He forcefully recalled an old Gospel truth: holiness is not reserved for an elite, it is lived out in everyday life. He invited people to "sanctify work," that is, to do it well, out of love for God and in the service of others, and to make family, friendship and small tasks a place of prayer.

That is why people ask his help at the start of a working day, when looking for a job, before an exam, or for peace at home. His own piety was simple and filial: love for the Eucharist, devotion to the Virgin Mary and to Saint Joseph, and trust in God's mercy. At his canonization, John Paul II presented him as the saint of ordinary life.

Symbols and how to recognize Saint Josemaría in art

Because he lived in the age of photography, Saint Josemaría is usually known through photographs rather than symbolic paintings. He is shown as a priest in a black cassock, often smiling. Statues and paintings in churches generally follow these photographs. As a modern saint he has no traditional attributes like the keys of Saint Peter or the lamb of Saint Agnes: you recognize him by his face, his priestly dress and his warm, approachable expression.

To pray with him, read the prayer to Saint Josemaría, or follow the novena to Saint Josemaría from June 17 to 25, finishing on the eve of his feast.



The tomb of Saint Josemaría in the prelatic church of Santa Maria della Pace, Rome.

Where to pray to Saint Josemaría

- **Rome**: the prelatic church of Santa Maria della Pace, where his body rests.
- **Torreciudad** (Aragon, Spain): the Marian shrine near Barbastro that he wanted built, inaugurated in 1975.
- **Barbastro**: his hometown and the cathedral where he was baptized.
- **Logroño**: the town where his vocation was born.
- **Madrid**: the city where Opus Dei began in 1928.

Wherever you are, his message invites you to pray where you already are: at your desk, in your kitchen, on your daily commute.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Josemaría to Sanctify Work and Ordinary Life

Saint Josemaría Escrivá is a twentieth-century author whose writings are not in the public domain, so we quote only one sentence from one of his best-known homilies to give its tone. Opus Dei also spreads an official prayer, approved by the Church, for asking graces through his intercession, which is easy to obtain from the prelature. This page then offers an original prayer by Saintspedia to Saint Josemaría.

"Passionately loving the world"

On October 8, 1967, Josemaría Escrivá celebrated an open-air Mass on the campus of the University of Navarre in Pamplona. In his homily he summed up the heart of his message: we do not meet God by fleeing the world, but in the middle of the most ordinary tasks.

> *"There is something holy, something divine, hidden in the most ordinary situations, and it is up to each one of you to discover it."*

Source: homily "Passionately Loving the World," given in Pamplona on October 8, 1967, published in the collection *Conversations with Monsignor Escrivá*. Translated from the Spanish by Saintspedia.

Prayer to Saint Josemaría Escrivá

Saint Josemaría, you reminded everyone that work, family and the tasks of each day can become a path to God: teach me to discover what is holy in my ordinary life.

Help me to do my work well, with skill and honesty, out of love for God and in the service of others. May I know how to offer the difficult hours, the repetitive tasks and the tiredness of the day, and may I never forget to give thanks for simple joys.

You who loved the Eucharist, the Virgin Mary and Saint Joseph, keep me in a simple and trusting faith. Make me attentive to my family, my coworkers and my friends, and make me a joyful witness to the Gospel wherever I live.

I entrust to you my family, those who are looking for work, those who are worn out by their work, and my intention: (name it in silence). Amen.

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

When to pray this prayer

Saint Josemaría's feast day is June 26, the day he died in Rome. You can pray to him at the start of a working day, before an exam or a job interview, or for your family. For a longer time of prayer, follow the novena to Saint Josemaría, and read the life of Saint Josemaría Escrivá.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Josemaría Escrivá

This novena is an original composition by Saintspedia, inspired by the life of Saint Josemaría Escrivá. It is not an official liturgical text, nor the novena spread by Opus Dei. To finish it on the eve of his feast, begin on June 17; it ends on June 25, the day before his feast on June 26. You can also pray it at any time of year, especially in a season of heavy work or family worries.

How to pray this novena

Each day, entrust your intention to God, read the meditation, say the prayer of the day, then an Our Father and a Hail Mary. The suggested act is deliberately simple: the point is to sanctify one small thing in your day, as Saint Josemaría taught.



Saint Josemaría Escrivá, church statue.

Day 1: A family in trial

In Barbastro, Josemaría saw three of his sisters die, then watched his father lose his business. From his parents he learned to accept trials without losing peace or faith. His father, ruined, kept his dignity and serenity, and the boy never forgot it. Trials do not cancel God's love; they can become the place where we learn to trust it.

Prayer: Lord, I entrust to you the families tried by grief, illness or material hardship. Keep them in your peace.

Today: Call a family member you have somewhat forgotten.

Day 2: Footprints in the snow

In Logroño, the bare footprints of a friar in the snow made the teenager understand that God was asking something of him. God uses very simple signs to call us. Josemaría did not yet know what was being asked of him, but he said yes to being available. Sometimes faithfulness begins long before we see the whole road.

Prayer: Lord, make me attentive to the signs you place along my path.

Today: In the evening, look back over your day and ask where God was present.

Day 3: Priest of the poor and the sick

As a young priest in Madrid, Josemaría visited the sick in hospitals and poor families in the outskirts of the city. It was among them that he found the strength for his mission. The great work he would found was born not in an office but at the bedside of the sick and in the homes of the poor.

Prayer: Lord, open my heart to those who suffer, and let me recognize you in them.

Today: Visit or call someone who is sick or alone.

Day 4: Holiness for everyone

On October 2, 1928, Josemaría understood that everyone is called to holiness, in the middle of the world, in their profession and their family. No one is left out. The office worker, the farmer, the nurse, the parent at home and the student all have a vocation to holiness, here and now.

Prayer: Lord, help me believe that you are calling me too to holiness, right where I am.

Today: Begin the day by offering God everything it will hold.

Day 5: Doing your work well

For Saint Josemaría, sanctifying work begins with doing it well, with care and competence, down to the details. Sloppy work cannot be offered wholeheartedly. Work done well, finished properly and done for others becomes a prayer, even when no one notices it.

Prayer: Lord, I offer you my work. Help me to do it with care, out of love for you and for others.

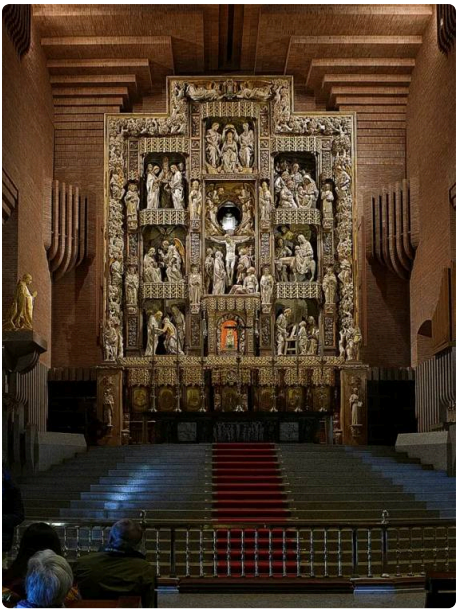
Today: Carefully finish a task you have been putting off.

Day 6: Faithful in persecution

During the Spanish Civil War, Josemaría had to hide, flee and cross the Pyrenees on foot. He held on to prayer, to hope and to his care for those entrusted to him. From Burgos, he kept writing letters to the young members of the Work scattered by the war, so that none of them would feel abandoned.

Prayer: Lord, sustain persecuted Christians and all those who must flee their country.

Today: Pray for refugees, or support an organization that welcomes them.



Our Lady of Torreciudad, Aragon, Spain.

Day 7: Friendship and apostolate

Saint Josemaría liked to speak of an "apostolate of friendship": passing on the faith naturally, through sincere friendship and example, without calculation. It is not a technique: it is simply loving people as they are and wanting the best for them, including God.

Prayer: Lord, make me a good friend to those around me, and let my friendship bring them closer to you.

Today: Take time for a real conversation with a friend.

Day 8: With Mary and Joseph

Josemaría loved to pray to the Virgin Mary and to Saint Joseph, the carpenter of Nazareth. The hidden life of the Holy Family, made of work and prayer, was a model for him. Thirty years of quiet work in Nazareth show that hidden, ordinary days are precious in God's eyes.

Prayer: Virgin Mary and Saint Joseph, teach me to live each day with Jesus.

Today: Pray a Rosary, or a single decade, on your way to work or school.

Day 9: A child of God

At the heart of Saint Josemaría's spirituality is the awareness of being a child of God. This certainty brings peace, joy and confidence, even in failure. A child who falls gets up again and runs back to his father; so can we, after every weakness.

Prayer: Father, at the end of this novena, I place my intention in your hands. Through the intercession of Saint Josemaría, grant me to live as your child, in joy and trust. Amen.

Today: Pray the Our Father slowly, pausing on its first word.

Closing prayer

Saint Josemaría, you showed that ordinary life can become a path to holiness. I entrust to you the intention of these nine days. Pray for my family, for my work and for the people I meet each day. Obtain for me the grace to seek God in all things. Amen.

To go further: the life of Saint Josemaría Escrivá and the prayer to Saint Josemaría.

PILGRIMAGE

Prelatic Church of Santa Maria della Pace, Tomb of Saint Josemaría in Rome

The body of Saint Josemaría Escrivá rests in Rome, in the prelatic church of Santa Maria della Pace, at the central headquarters of Opus Dei, in the Parioli district. It is the chief place of pilgrimage dedicated to the saint, where the faithful from around the world come to pray.

The prelatic church of Santa Maria della Pace

Not to be confused with the church of the same name in the historic center, near Piazza Navona, the prelatic church of Santa Maria della Pace is part of the complex of buildings that Saint Josemaría had built from the late 1940s on to house the headquarters of Opus Dei. It is the church of the prelate of Opus Dei. Saint Josemaría was first buried there in the crypt, after his death on June 26, 1975.



The prelatic church of Santa Maria della Pace, in Rome.

The tomb of Saint Josemaría

After his beatification, on May 17, 1992, his body was placed in an urn beneath the main altar of the church, where it is exposed to the veneration of the faithful. The crypt also holds his successors at the head of Opus Dei, including Blessed Álvaro del Portillo. The church is a well-frequented place of prayer, where people come to entrust intentions, especially those concerning family and work, and where priests are often available for confession.



The tomb of Saint Josemaría, the interior of the church.

Praying at the tomb of Saint Josemaría

Before your visit, you can reread the life of Saint Josemaría Escrivá. On site, a time of silence before the altar is a good moment to entrust to him your work, your family or a particular intention. The prayer to Saint Josemaría can accompany this moment. These suggestions are offered by Saintspedia.

Other places associated with Saint Josemaría

- **Torreciudad** (Aragon): the Marian shrine he had built near Barbastro, on the site of an old hermitage dedicated to the Virgin, inaugurated in 1975; it is the chief place of pilgrimage tied to the saint in Spain.
- **Barbastro**: his native town and the cathedral where he was baptized.
- **Logroño**: the city of his adolescence and his vocation.

- **Zaragoza**: the city of his priestly ordination, in 1925, and the Basilica of the Pillar, where he loved to pray.
- **Madrid**: the city where he founded Opus Dei in 1928.

Practical information

The church is in northern Rome, in the Parioli district, served by bus and tram. It is open for prayer at certain hours, and Mass is celebrated there daily. On June 26, the feast of Saint Josemaría, the main Mass is generally celebrated in a large Roman basilica. Ask the Prelature of Opus Dei about times before you come.

Credits and sources

Texts: Saintspedia (saintspedia.com). The sources cited in each part are those of the corresponding page of the website. Biographical data partly from Wikidata (CC0). Font: EB Garamond (SIL Open Font License).

Images

- Cover: Oficina de Información de la Prelatura del Opus Dei en España, CC BY-SA 2.0, via Wikimedia Commons. Source · License
- The cathedral of Barbastro, hometown of Saint Josemaría, where he was baptized.: Image: Zarateman, CC0, via Wikimedia Commons. Source · License
- The Marian shrine of Torreciudad in Aragon, built at the wish of Saint Josemaría.: Image: Preyes, CC BY 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons. Source · License
- The tomb of Saint Josemaría in the prelatic church of Santa Maria della Pace, Rome.: Image: Opus Dei Communications Office, CC BY-SA 2.0, via Wikimedia Commons. Source · License
- Saint Josemaría Escrivá, church statue.: Image: Carlosguhe, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons. Source · License
- Our Lady of Torreciudad, Aragon, Spain.: Image: Jl FilpoC, CC BY 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons. Source · License
- The prelatic church of Santa Maria della Pace, in Rome.: Image: Communications Office of Opus Dei in Rome, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons. Source · License
- The tomb of Saint Josemaría, the interior of the church.: Image: Jumanji2001, CC BY 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons. Source · License



More free booklets

Lives of the saints, prayers, novenas and places of pilgrimage: find all the booklets to print at

saintspedia.com