

BOOKLET TO PRINT

# Saint Juan de Ribera

*Life, prayer and novena*

Feast day: January 6

IN BRIEF

## Saint Juan de Ribera

*Archbishop of Valencia and Latin patriarch of Antioch, a reforming bishop after the Council of Trent.*

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| **Feast day** | January 6 |
| **Born** | March 20, 1532, Seville (Spain) |
| **Died** | January 6, 1611, Valencia (Spain) |
| **Canonized** | June 12, 1960, by Pope John XXIII |
| **Era** | 17th century |

## In this booklet

Life

Prayer to Saint Juan de Ribera, Shepherd of the Eucharist

Novena to Saint Juan de Ribera

Credits and sources

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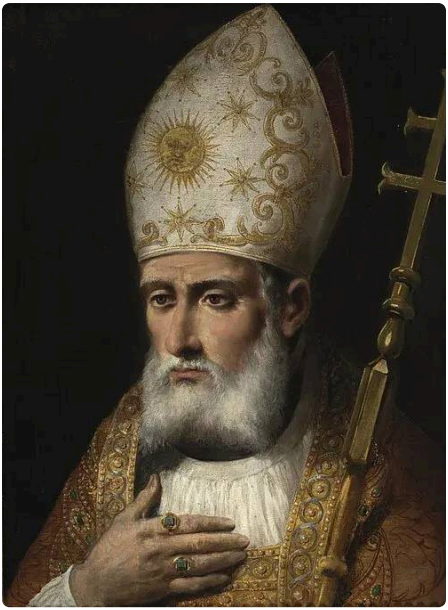
LIFE

# Saint Juan de Ribera

Saint Juan de Ribera, sometimes called Saint John of Ribera in English, was one of the great bishops of the Catholic Reformation in Spain. Born in Seville in 1532, he was bishop of Badajoz and then, for more than forty years, archbishop of Valencia and Latin patriarch of Antioch. He applied the decrees of the Council of Trent with energy, founded the College of Corpus Christi and lived with great austerity, although his role in the expulsion of the Moriscos remains a dark part of his record. He died in Valencia on January 6, 1611, the day on which the Roman Martyrology commemorates him.

## Who was Saint Juan de Ribera?

Juan de Ribera is often presented as the Spanish model of the bishop shaped by the Council of Trent, much like Saint Charles Borromeo in Milan: a pastor who lives in his diocese, visits it tirelessly, holds synods, trains his clergy and teaches the catechism himself. He was also a man of prayer, centered on the Eucharist and the Passion of Christ, and a friend of several great saints of his time. He was beatified by Pope Pius VI in 1796 and canonized by Pope John XXIII in 1960.



*Saint Juan de Ribera, painting by Salvador Martínez Cubells (Prado Museum).*

## Key dates

- **March 20, 1532**: Born in Seville, the natural son of Pedro Afán de Ribera, later Duke of Alcalá and viceroy of Naples.
- **c. 1544-1557**: Studies at the University of Salamanca, where his teachers include Domingo de Soto and Melchor Cano.
- **1557**: Ordained a priest.
- **1562**: Becomes bishop of Badajoz, where he immediately applies the decisions of the Council of Trent.
- **1568**: Saint Pius V names him Latin patriarch of Antioch, an honorary title, and then archbishop of Valencia.
- **1583-1604**: Construction of the College and Church of Corpus Christi in Valencia.
- **1602-1604**: He also serves as viceroy of the Kingdom of Valencia.

- **1609**: The royal decree expelling the Moriscos, which he supported, is published in Valencia.
- **January 6, 1611**: Dies in Valencia and is buried in the College of Corpus Christi.
- **June 12, 1960**: Canonized by Pope John XXIII.

## The making of a bishop

Destined for the Church from an early age, Juan received the tonsure as a child and went to study at Salamanca, then one of the leading universities in Europe. There he studied letters, law and theology, in contact with Dominicans and Jesuits. He also knew Saint John of Avila, the great Andalusian preacher whose influence on the Spanish clergy was immense. After his ordination he taught theology at Salamanca for a time.

In 1562, at only thirty years old, he was appointed bishop of Badajoz. He visited his whole diocese, preached, reformed the clergy and held a synod.

## Archbishop of Valencia for forty-two years

In 1568, Pope Pius V transferred him to Valencia, one of the largest dioceses in Spain. Juan de Ribera stayed there until his death. He made many pastoral visitations, whose records fill dozens of volumes, and called several diocesan synods. He published a short catechism in Valencian for ordinary people and another catechism for new converts. He reformed the training of priests and supported the new religious orders.

### The College of Corpus Christi

His most visible work is the College of Corpus Christi, known in Valencia as *el Patriarca*. He wanted it to train priests in the spirit of the Council of Trent and to be a place of dignified liturgy centered on the Eucharist. He wrote its constitutions himself.

He returned the income of his office to the diocese and lived on his personal fortune, following the example of his predecessor Saint Thomas of Villanova, whom he admired.

## A life of prayer

His contemporaries report that he celebrated Mass slowly and with deep devotion, that he practiced fasting and penance, and that he spent long hours studying Scripture. He was close to Saint Louis Bertrand, Saint Francis Borgia and Saint Lawrence of Brindisi, and he was in contact with Saint Teresa of Avila. The Dominican Luis de Granada dedicated to him his *Life of Master Avila*.



*The cloister of the College of Corpus Christi in Valencia.*

## The shadow of the expulsion of the Moriscos

The diocese of Valencia had a large population of Moriscos, descendants of Muslims who had been forcibly converted in the early sixteenth century. Juan de Ribera first put great effort into their Christian instruction, creating parishes and organizing missions. But, seeing that these conversions remained superficial, he eventually came to support the idea of their expulsion and recommended it to King Philip III.

The decree of 1609 led to the forced departure of tens of thousands of people, often in tragic conditions. In canonizing him, the Church recognized the holiness of his personal life and of his pastoral ministry, not each of his political decisions. Historians today judge this episode severely, and it is right to say so.

## Why is Saint Juan de Ribera a model for bishops?

Saint Juan de Ribera has no widely recognized official patronage, but he is naturally invoked for bishops, priests and seminarians. He was a tireless bishop, a lover of the Eucharist and a poor man in the midst of honors. He reminds the Church of the importance of training priests and teaching the faith. His story also shows that a saint remains a person of his time, capable of serious mistakes. He can be prayed to for bishops, for seminarians and for reconciliation between Christians and Muslims.

## Symbols and how to recognize Saint Juan de Ribera in art

Saint Juan de Ribera is usually painted as an archbishop dressed in red, often seated at his work table, as in the portrait by Salvador Martínez Cubells at the Prado Museum. His close link with the Eucharist and with the College of Corpus Christi is a key to understanding his images.

## Where to pray to Saint Juan de Ribera

- **Valencia** (Spain): the Real Colegio del Corpus Christi, known as *el Patriarca*, which keeps his tomb.
- **Valencia**: the cathedral, seat of his ministry for forty-two years.
- **Badajoz** (Extremadura): the cathedral of his first diocese.
- **Seville**: his birthplace.

To pray with him, see the prayer to Saint Juan de Ribera and the novena to Saint Juan de Ribera.

PRAYER

# Prayer to Saint Juan de Ribera, Shepherd of the Eucharist

Saint Juan de Ribera, archbishop of Valencia from 1568 to 1611, lived his life as a pastor at the foot of the altar. He wanted the college he founded in Valencia to bear the name of Corpus Christi, the Body of Christ. It is natural to pray to him for bishops, priests and seminarians, and to grow in love for the Eucharist. Since there is no widely known traditional prayer to him in English, this page offers an original prayer. This prayer is an original text by Saintspedia, free to use for personal and community prayer.

## Prayer to Saint Juan de Ribera

*Saint Juan de Ribera, faithful shepherd of the Church of Valencia,*
*you loved Christ present in the Eucharist*
*so much that you spent long hours before him:*
*teach me to adore him and to receive him with a pure heart.*

*You who tirelessly visited the villages of your diocese,*
*pray for our bishops and priests:*
*may they be close to their people,*
*poor in heart and eager to proclaim the Gospel.*

*You who founded a college to train priests,*
*watch over seminarians*
*and over those who hesitate to answer the Lord's call.*

*You who knew, like every human being, the limits of your time,*
*obtain for us the grace to recognize our mistakes*
*and to seek peace between peoples and believers.*
*May no one be rejected because of where they come from.*

*Saint Juan de Ribera, I entrust to you my intention: (name it in silence).*
*Present it to the Lord, the source of all charity.*
*Amen.*

## Intentions to entrust to Saint Juan de Ribera

- Bishops and priests, especially those who are overburdened.
- Seminarians and vocations to the priesthood.
- Catechists and all who pass on the faith.
- Peace and respect between Christians and Muslims.

## When to pray this prayer

Saint Juan de Ribera is commemorated on January 6, the day of his death in 1611. You can pray to him during Eucharistic adoration, at an ordination or for a priest you know. For nine days of prayer, see the novena to Saint Juan de Ribera, and read the life of Saint Juan de Ribera.

NOVENA

# Novena to Saint Juan de Ribera

This novena to Saint Juan de Ribera is an original composition by Saintspedia, inspired by his life as archbishop of Valencia. It is not an official liturgical text. To finish it on the day he is commemorated, January 6, begin it on December 29, during the Christmas season. You can also pray it at any time of the year: for a bishop or a priest, for a seminarian, before an ordination or to grow in love for the Eucharist.

## How to pray this novena

Each day, begin with the sign of the cross and place your intention before God. Read the short meditation, say the prayer of the day, then an Our Father, a Hail Mary and a Glory Be. The small act suggested for each day helps you live in the spirit of Saint Juan de Ribera: prayer, faithfulness to the Church, and care for the people entrusted to you.

## Day 1: A life given to the Church

Juan de Ribera was born in Seville in 1532, the natural son of a powerful nobleman. He could have pursued wealth and honors. He chose instead to give his life to the Church, and he put his gifts and his fortune at its service.

**Prayer:** Lord, whatever my origins and my gifts, help me to place them at the service of your Kingdom.

**Today:** Thank God for one gift you have received, and use it to serve someone.

## Day 2: A student of the truth

At Salamanca, Juan studied letters, law and theology under great masters. Faith seeks understanding, and a pastor must know what he teaches. His long years of study prepared him to teach his people well.

**Prayer:** Lord, give me a love for the truth and the desire to know my faith better.

**Today:** Read a page of the Gospel or of the Catechism slowly.

## Day 3: Taught by a saint

In his youth, Juan knew Saint John of Avila, the great preacher and teacher of priests. Holiness is often passed on through friendship and example. We become saints with the help of the saints God places on our path.

**Prayer:** Lord, thank you for the people who have shown me the way to you. Make me a good example for others.

**Today:** Pray for a person who helped you grow in faith.

## Day 4: A shepherd on the road

As bishop of Badajoz and then of Valencia, Juan de Ribera visited his parishes again and again. The records of his visitations fill dozens of volumes. A shepherd does not wait for the flock to come to him; he goes out to find it.

**Prayer:** Lord, bless our bishops. Give them strength, wisdom and closeness to their people.

**Today:** Pray for your bishop by name.

## Day 5: Teaching the faith

Saint Juan wrote a short catechism in Valencian for ordinary people and another for new converts. He knew that faith must be taught simply, in the language of the people. Catechesis is a work of love.

**Prayer:** Lord, bless catechists, parents and teachers who pass on the faith. Help me to share it clearly and kindly.

**Today:** Explain one point of the faith to a child or a friend, or thank a catechist.

## Day 6: Forming good priests

Saint Juan founded the College of Corpus Christi to train priests according to the Council of Trent. He knew that the renewal of the Church depends greatly on holy and well-prepared priests.

**Prayer:** Lord of the harvest, send holy priests to your Church, and bless all seminarians and those who form them.

**Today:** Pray for a seminarian, or support the formation of priests in your diocese.

## Day 7: At the foot of the altar

Saint Juan celebrated Mass slowly and with deep devotion. He gave his college the name of the Body of Christ. All his pastoral work flowed from the Eucharist and returned to it.

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, present in the Eucharist, increase my faith and my love. May I receive you with a pure heart.

**Today:** Spend a few minutes before the Blessed Sacrament.

## Day 8: Poor among honors

Archbishop, patriarch and even viceroy, Juan de Ribera held many high offices. Yet he returned the income of his office to the diocese and lived austerely, fasting and doing penance. True greatness is found in service and simplicity.

**Prayer:** Lord, free me from the love of honors and possessions, and teach me to live simply.

**Today:** Give up a small comfort and offer it for the poor.

## Day 9: Recognizing our limits

Saint Juan supported the expulsion of the Moriscos in 1609, a decision that caused great suffering and that historians judge severely. The saints are not without faults. The Church honors his holiness of life, while we can ask for the grace to recognize our own errors and to work for peace between peoples and believers.

**Prayer:** Lord, through the intercession of Saint Juan de Ribera, grant the grace I ask in this novena. Help me to see my mistakes, to repair them, and to reject no one because of where they come from.

**Today:** Do something concrete to welcome or respect a person of another culture or faith.

## Closing prayer

*Saint Juan de Ribera, shepherd of Valencia and lover of the Eucharist,*
*you gave your life to teaching, sanctifying and guiding the people of God.*
*Present to the Lord the intention I have carried during these nine days.*
*Pray for our bishops and priests, for seminarians and catechists,*
*and for peace among all believers.*
*May I, like you, find in the Body of Christ*
*the strength to serve and to love.*
*Amen.*

Continue with the prayer to Saint Juan de Ribera or read his life.

CREDITS

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