

BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Simon de Rojas

Life, prayer and novena

Feast day: September 28

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IN BRIEF

Saint Simon de Rojas

Spanish Trinitarian friar, confessor to the queen, servant of the poor and apostle of the Holy Name of Mary.

Feast day	September 28
Born	October 28, 1552, Valladolid, Spain
Died	September 29, 1624, Madrid, Spain
Canonized	July 3, 1988, by Pope John Paul II
Era	17th century

In this booklet

Life

Prayer to Saint Simon de Rojas, Apostle of the Ave Maria

Novena to Saint Simon de Rojas

Credits and sources

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LIFE

Saint Simon de Rojas

Saint Simon de Rojas (in Spanish, *Simón de Rojas*) was a Spanish Trinitarian friar of the Golden Age, born in Valladolid in 1552 and died in Madrid in 1624. A theologian and preacher, tutor to the royal princes and confessor to the queen, he never stopped serving the poor and the sick. Because he spread devotion to the Holy Name of Mary so tirelessly, he was nicknamed "the apostle of the *Ave Maria*." Canonized by Pope John Paul II in 1988, he is celebrated on September 28.

Who was Saint Simon de Rojas?

Simon de Rojas belonged to the Order of the Most Holy Trinity, founded at the end of the twelfth century by Saint John of Matha and Saint Felix of Valois for the ransom of captives. He embodied the double vocation of his order, contemplative and active, in the Spain of Kings Philip III and Philip IV.

He moved in the circles of the royal court, yet he remained a poor friar who preferred hospitals to palaces. His whole program could be summed up in two words: Mary and the poor.

Key dates in the life of Simon de Rojas

- **October 28, 1552**: Born in Valladolid, son of Gregorio Ruiz de Navamuel and Constanza de Rojas.
- **c. 1564**: At twelve, he enters the Trinitarian convent of Valladolid.
- **October 28, 1572**: Religious profession.
- **c. 1573-1579**: Studies at the University of Salamanca; ordained a priest in 1577.
- **1581-1587**: Professor of philosophy, then theology, in Toledo.

- **From 1588**: Prior of several convents, visitor of the provinces of Castile and Andalusia.
- **April 14, 1612**: Founds in Madrid the Congregation of the Slaves of the Sweet Name of Mary.
- **1619**: Tutor to the royal princes of Spain.
- **1621-1622**: Provincial of Castile, then confessor to Queen Elisabeth of Bourbon.
- **September 29, 1624**: Dies in Madrid.
- **March 19, 1766**: Beatified by Pope Clement XIII.
- **July 3, 1988**: Canonized by Pope John Paul II, at the close of the Marian Year.

A child of Mary

Simon grew up in a very devout family in Valladolid. A tradition recalled at his canonization holds that his first words, at around fourteen months old, were "*Ave Maria*," the prayer his parents repeated constantly. Whether it is a family memory or a beautiful image, it sums up the direction of his whole life.

He entered the Trinitarians of his hometown very young and made his profession at twenty. He then pursued long studies at Salamanca, one of the most prestigious universities in Europe, and was ordained a priest in 1577. Afterward he taught philosophy and theology in Toledo.

Superior and reformer

From 1588 his brothers entrusted him with positions of leadership: he was prior of several convents, visitor of the provinces of Castile and Andalusia, and finally provincial of Castile in 1621. The Trinitarian order was then going

through a reform, with the birth of the Discalced Trinitarians around Saint John Baptist of the Conception, who was his friend. Simon remained faithful to the Calced branch, which he worked to renew from within.

A friar at the royal court

His reputation led the king to entrust him, in 1619, with the education of his sons, the princes Charles and Ferdinand. In 1622 he became confessor to Queen Elisabeth of Bourbon, daughter of Henry IV of France and wife of Philip IV. He refused the privileges attached to this office, such as a carriage and payment. He also wrote spiritual instructions for Anne of Austria, daughter of Philip III, on the occasion of her marriage to Louis XIII of France.

He used his influence for one thing above all: to make the name of Mary known and loved. According to his biographers, he had the words *Ave Maria* inscribed in gold letters on the facade of the royal palace.

Servant of the poor

None of these duties ever made him forget the poor. Faithful to the Trinitarian charism, he worked for the ransom of Christian captives held in North Africa and visited prisons, hospitals and the sick. He accepted the post of tutor to the princes only on condition that he could continue his works of charity. During an epidemic, when people wanted to forbid him from visiting hospitals for fear of contagion, he replied that he preferred his poor.

The Congregation of the Ave Maria

On April 14, 1612, Simon founded in Madrid the Congregation of the Slaves of the Sweet Name of Mary. It was not a religious order but a confraternity of lay people of every rank, from the king himself to the humblest. Its members committed themselves to honor Mary by serving the poor, whom they saw as

her favorite children. The congregation still exists and continues to serve meals to people in need in the heart of Madrid, near the Puerta del Sol; its dining hall is called "Ave María."

Simon also distributed thousands of holy cards bearing the words *Ave Maria*, along with rosaries. He composed an office in honor of the Name of Mary and worked for its liturgical recognition. The feast of the Holy Name of Mary was extended to the whole Church by Pope Innocent XI in 1683; it is celebrated today on September 12.

Prayer and action

Simon left a *Treatise on Prayer and Its Greatness*, a collection of sermons on prayer, the life of Christ and of the Virgin, and the Passion. In it he teaches that contemplation must go hand in hand with the active life and bear fruit in works of mercy. Saint Louis de Montfort acknowledged his debt to him, and John Paul II, whose motto was *Totus tuus*, pointed out the kinship between his own spirituality and that of the Spanish Trinitarian.

Simon died in Madrid on September 29, 1624. His funeral drew an immense crowd, and the process for his beatification opened a few days later. His remains, long kept in Madrid, were desecrated and largely scattered during the Spanish Civil War.

Why do people pray to Saint Simon de Rojas?

Simon de Rojas is not widely invoked as the patron of a particular group, but his life points to clear intentions. He united what we often separate: prayer and service, the court and the poor, popular piety and theology. He reminds us that love for Mary always leads to concrete love for the least. People pray to him:

- for the homeless and the hungry, and those who feed them;
- for captives, hostages and prisoners;

- for those who hold public responsibilities;
- to grow in trust and devotion toward the Virgin Mary.

Symbols and how to recognize Saint Simon de Rojas in art

He is shown in the white habit of the Trinitarians, with the **red and blue cross** of the order on his chest. He is often accompanied by the words ***Ave Maria***, written on a banner or a scroll, the greeting he spread everywhere.



The church of San Simón de Rojas in Valladolid.

Where to pray to Saint Simon de Rojas

- **Madrid** (Spain): the chapel of the Congregation of the Ave Maria, near the Puerta del Sol, where his work with the poor continues.
- **Valladolid** (Spain): his hometown, where a parish church is dedicated to him.

- **Navalcarnero** (Spain): the parish of San Simón de Rojas.
- In Trinitarian churches and convents around the world, which celebrate his feast on September 28.

To pray with him, read the prayer to Saint Simon de Rojas or follow the novena to Saint Simon de Rojas.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Simon de Rojas, Apostle of the Ave Maria

Saint Simon de Rojas spent his life repeating, and teaching others to repeat, the angel's greeting: *Ave Maria*. The most fitting way to pray with him is therefore the Hail Mary, which he spread on thousands of holy cards. This page then offers an original prayer to Saint Simon de Rojas.

Saint Simon's prayer: the Hail Mary

> *Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.*

Simon used to greet everyone with these words, *Ave Maria*, and had them written everywhere. Following his example, you can say this prayer slowly while thinking of a person who is poor or suffering.

Prayer to Saint Simon de Rojas

Saint Simon de Rojas, apostle of the Ave Maria, whose first words, it is said, were the name of the Virgin: teach me to speak her name with love and trust.

You walked with kings without forgetting the poor: help those who hold power to serve the weakest, and never let me turn my eyes away from anyone who is hungry.

Son of the Most Holy Trinity, you worked for the ransom of captives and visited prisoners and the sick: watch over all who are in chains, whether through violence, illness or sin.

You joined prayer to works of mercy: obtain for me a contemplative heart and active hands. I entrust to you my intention: (name it in silence).

Through Mary, lead me to Christ, and through Christ, to the Father, in the Holy Spirit. Amen.

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

Intentions to entrust to Saint Simon de Rojas

- For the homeless and those who feed them.
- For prisoners, hostages and captives.
- For political leaders and those who advise them.
- For the Trinitarian family and Marian confraternities.
- To grow in devotion to the Virgin Mary.

When to pray this prayer

His feast is September 28. You can also pray to him on September 12, the feast of the Holy Name of Mary that he loved so much, or before serving the poor, for example at a soup kitchen or a food drive. For nine days of prayer, follow the novena to Saint Simon de Rojas, and discover the life of Saint Simon de Rojas.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Simon de Rojas

This novena is an original composition by Saintspedia, inspired by the life of Saint Simon de Rojas, the Spanish Trinitarian known as "the apostle of the Ave Maria." It is not an official liturgical text. To end it on his feast day, September 28, begin on September 20. You may also pray it at any time of the year, especially before the feast of the Holy Name of Mary on September 12, or for a person who is poor, sick or imprisoned.

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 pray an Our Father, a Hail Mary and a Glory Be. Since Saint Simon loved to greet everyone with the words *Ave Maria*, you may add three Hail Marys at the end, slowly. The small act suggested for each day helps you live the novena as he lived his faith: with prayer and works of mercy together.

Day 1: A first word for Mary

A tradition says that Simon's first words, as a little child, were "Ave Maria," the prayer his parents repeated constantly. Whatever we hear often at home shapes the heart. The faith of a family can become the breath of a whole life.

Prayer: Lord, bless the homes where children learn to pray. Through the intercession of Saint Simon de Rojas, make the name of Mary dear to me and to those I love.

Today: Teach a child, or recall with a family member, a simple prayer to Mary.

Day 2: Given to God in youth

At twelve Simon entered the Trinitarian convent of his hometown, and at twenty he made his profession. He gave his youth to God without waiting for a perfect moment. God welcomes the generosity of those who say yes early, and also of those who say yes late.

Prayer: Lord, I offer you this day and all my days. Help young people to hear your call and to answer it with joy.

Today: Pray for vocations to the priesthood and religious life, especially in your parish.

Day 3: Study in the service of God

Simon studied at Salamanca and taught philosophy and theology in Toledo. For him, knowledge was not a source of pride but a way to know God better and to serve others. The mind, too, can become a place of prayer.

Prayer: Holy Spirit, enlighten my mind, and let all I learn lead me closer to you and to my neighbor.

Today: Read a page of the Gospel slowly, and keep one sentence in your heart.

Day 4: Leading as a servant

As prior, visitor and provincial, Simon carried the weight of responsibility for his brothers. He worked to renew his order from within, patiently and faithfully. Authority, in the Gospel, is a form of service.

Prayer: Lord, give those who lead communities, families and parishes a humble heart, wisdom and patience.

Today: Pray for your bishop, your pastor and the superiors of religious communities you know.

Day 5: At court, but poor

Tutor to the princes and confessor to the queen, Simon refused the carriage and the payment that came with his office. He was close to power without being seduced by it. He used his influence only to make Mary known and to help the poor.

Prayer: Lord, guide those who govern nations and cities. Free them from the love of privilege and teach them to serve the common good.

Today: Pray by name for a public official, whatever your opinion of him or her.

Day 6: Ransoming captives

Faithful to the Trinitarian charism, Simon worked for the release of Christians held captive in North Africa and visited prisons. Today, too, many people are prisoners: of war, of injustice, of addiction or of despair.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, you came to proclaim liberty to captives. Free those who are held hostage or unjustly imprisoned, and break every chain that keeps hearts from you.

Today: Pray for prisoners, or support an organization that serves prisoners or victims of persecution.

Day 7: "I prefer my poor"

During an epidemic, Simon was urged to stay away from hospitals for fear of contagion. He answered that he preferred his poor. His love was not theoretical: it went to the bedside of the sick.

Prayer: Lord, give me the courage to draw near to those who suffer, and bless all who care for the sick.

Today: Visit, call or write to someone who is sick or alone.

Day 8: The table of the Ave Maria

In 1612 Simon founded in Madrid a confraternity that brought together the king and the humblest people to serve the poor in Mary's name. More than four centuries later, it still serves meals in the heart of the city. A gesture of charity, repeated faithfully, can outlive us.

Prayer: Holy Mary, mother of the poor, open my hands to those who are hungry, and make my table a place of welcome.

Today: Give food, money or time to a soup kitchen or a food bank.

Day 9: Contemplative heart, active hands

In his writings on prayer, Simon taught that contemplation must go hand in hand with action and bear fruit in works of mercy. He died in Madrid in 1624, mourned by an immense crowd. His life shows that love of God and love of neighbor are one.

Prayer: Lord, at the end of this novena, I place my intention in your hands. Through the intercession of Saint Simon de Rojas, unite in me prayer and service, and lead me through Mary to you. Amen.

Today: Pray the Hail Mary slowly three times, then do one concrete act of kindness without being asked.

Closing prayer

Saint Simon de Rojas, son of the Most Holy Trinity and apostle of the Ave Maria, I entrust to you the intention of these nine days. You loved Mary and served the poor, the captives and the sick: teach me to do the same. Obtain for me a heart that prays and hands that serve, so that through Mary I may come to Jesus, and through Jesus to the Father, in the unity of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

To go further: the life of Saint Simon de Rojas and the prayer to Saint Simon de Rojas.

CREDITS

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