



NOVENA TO ST. JOSEMARIA ESCRIVA

ST. JOSEMARIA INSTITUTE

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INTRODUCTION

St. Josemaria stressed to all Christians the meaning and importance that God's will for us is that we be saints. During our novena this year, from June 17 – 25, we will turn to St. Josemaria to help us renew and strengthen our personal goal of holiness. Along with our individual intentions, we seek St. Josemaria's intercession to help us deepen our love and gratitude for our daily work and everyday life, which is the way along which God calls each one of us to holiness.

Each day of the novena includes excerpts for reflection from Scripture and the writings of St. Josemaria Escriva followed by the daily prayer for his intercession.

WHAT IS A NOVENA?

A novena is a private (or public) prayer repeated for nine consecutive days to ask God for answers to a specific request, struggle, or intention. The novena prayer is repeated each day and can be accompanied by reading and reflection. Novenas can be prayed throughout the year and are often prayed in preparation for a feast day of the Church.

DAY ONE

SCRIPTURE | *1 Thessalonians 4:3*

“For this is the will of God, your sanctification.”

REFLECTION | *Friends of God*, no. 294

We are deeply moved, and our hearts profoundly shaken, when we listen attentively to that cry of St Paul: 'This is God's will for you, your sanctification' (1 Thess 4:3). Today, once again, I set myself this goal and I also remind you and all mankind: this is God's Will for us, that we be saints.

In order to bring peace, genuine peace, to souls; in order to transform the earth and to seek God Our Lord in the world and through the things of the world, personal sanctity is indispensable. In my conversations with people from so many countries and from all kinds of social backgrounds, I am often asked: 'What do you say to us married folk? To those of us who work on the land? To widows? To young people?'

I reply systematically that I have only 'one stewing pot'. I usually go on to point out that Our Lord Jesus Christ preached the good news to all, without distinction. One stewing pot and only one kind of food: 'My food is to do the will of him who sent me, and to accomplish his work' (Jn 4:34). He calls each and every one to holiness; he asks each and every one to love him: young and old, single and married, healthy and sick, learned and unlearned, no matter where they work, or where they are. There is only one way to become more familiar with God, to increase our trust in him. We must come to know him through prayer; we must speak to him and show him, through a heart to heart conversation, that we love him.

PRAYER FOR THE INTERCESSION OF ST. JOSEMARIA

O God, through the mediation of Mary our Mother, you granted your priest St. Josemaria countless graces, choosing him as a most faithful instrument to found Opus Dei, a way of sanctification in daily work and in the fulfillment of the Christian's ordinary duties.

Grant that I too may learn to turn all the circumstances and events of my life into occasions of loving you and serving the Church, the Pope and all souls with joy and simplicity, lighting up the pathways of this earth with faith and love.

Deign to grant me, through the intercession of St. Josemaria, the favor of... (make your request).
Amen.

Our Father... Hail Mary... Glory be...

DAY TWO

SCRIPTURE | *Philippians 4:21*

“Greet every saint in Christ Jesus.”

REFLECTION | *Christ is Passing By*, no. 96

Our Lord is calling us, in our present state, to share his life and make an effort to be holy. I know holiness can sound like an empty word. Too many people think it is unattainable, something to do with ascetical theology — but not a real goal for them, a living reality. The first Christians didn't think that way. They often used the word "saints" to describe each other in a very natural manner: "greetings to all the saints" (Rom 16:15); "my greetings to every one of the saints in Jesus Christ" (Phil 4:21).

Take a look now at Calvary. Jesus has died and there is as yet no sign of his glorious triumph. It is a good time to examine how much we really want to live as Christians, to be holy. Here is our chance to react against our weaknesses with an act of faith. We can trust in God and resolve to put love into the things we do each day. The experience of sin should lead us to sorrow. We should make a more mature and deeper decision to be faithful and truly identify ourselves with Christ, persevering, no matter what it costs, in the priestly mission that he has given every single one of his disciples. That mission should spur us on to be the salt and light of the world (Cf. Mt 5:13-14).

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DAY THREE

SCRIPTURE | *John 3:30*

“He must increase, but I must decrease.”

REFLECTION | *Christ is Passing By*, no. 58

Since our first conscious decision really to follow the teaching of Christ, we have no doubt made good progress along the way of faithfulness to his word. And yet isn't it true that there is still much to be done? Isn't it true, particularly, that there is still so much pride in us? We need, most probably, to change again, to be more loyal and humble, so that we become less selfish and let Christ grow in us, for "He must become more and more, I must become less and less" (Jn 3:30).

We cannot stay still. We must keep going ahead toward the goal St Paul marks out: "It is not I who live, it is Christ that lives in me" (Gal 2:20). This is a high and very noble ambition, this identification with Christ, this holiness. But there is no other way if we are to be consistent with the divine life God has sown in our souls in baptism. To advance we must progress in holiness. Shying away from holiness implies refusing our Christian life its natural growth. The fire of God's love needs to be fed. It must grow each day, gathering strength in our soul...

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DAY FOUR

SCRIPTURE | *Proverbs 23:26*

“My son, give me your heart, and let your eyes observe my ways.”

REFLECTION | *Friends of God*, no. 211

Jesus is not satisfied with a wavering assent. He expects, and has a right to expect, that we advance resolutely, unyielding in the face of difficulties. He demands that we take firm, specific steps; because, as a rule, general resolutions are just fallacious illusions, created to silence the divine call which sounds within our hearts. They produce a futile flame that neither burns nor gives warmth, but dies out as suddenly as it began.

You will convince me that you sincerely want to achieve your goals when I see you go forward unwaveringly. Do good and keep reviewing your basic attitudes to the jobs that occupy you each moment. Practice the virtue of justice, right where you are, in your normal surroundings, even though you may end up exhausted. Foster happiness among those around you by cheerfully serving the people you work with and by striving to carry out your job as perfectly as you can, showing understanding, smiling, having a Christian approach to life. And do everything for God, thinking of his glory, with your sights set high and longing for the definitive homeland, because there is no other goal worthwhile.

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DAY FIVE

SCRIPTURE | *Ephesians 5:8-10*

“Once you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of light (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), and try to learn what is pleasing to the Lord.”

REFLECTION | *Christ is Passing By*, no. 58

Conversion is the task of a moment; sanctification is the work of a lifetime. The divine seed of charity, which God has sown in our souls, wants to grow, to express itself in action, to yield results which continually coincide with what God wants. Therefore, we must be ready to begin again, to find again — in new situations — the light and the stimulus of our first conversion. And that is why we must prepare with a deep examination of conscience, asking Our Lord for his help, so that we'll know him and ourselves better. If we want to be converted again, there's no other way.

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DAY SIX

SCRIPTURE | *Galatians 5:9*

“A little leaven leavens the whole batch of dough.”

REFLECTION | *Friends of God*, no. 9

When we meditate on the words of Our Lord, 'And for them do I sanctify myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth,' (Jn 17:19) we clearly perceive our one and only end: sanctification, or rather, that we have to become saints in order to sanctify others. Then, like a subtle temptation, the thought may come that there are very few of us who have really taken to heart this divine invitation. Moreover, we see that those of us who have, are instruments of very little worth. It is true; we are few, in comparison with the rest of mankind, and of ourselves we are worth nothing. But our Master's affirmation resounds with full authority: Christians are the light, the salt, the leaven of the world and 'a little leaven leavens the whole batch' (Gal 5:9). That is precisely why I have always taught that we are interested in each and every person. Out of a hundred souls we are interested in a hundred. We discriminate against no one, for we know for certain that Jesus has redeemed us all, and that he wishes to make use of a few of us, despite our personal nothingness, to make his salvation known to all.

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DAY SEVEN

SCRIPTURE | *1 Thessalonians 2:12*

“Lead a life worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.”

REFLECTION | *Friends of God*, no. 10

I wish to continue this conversation with Our Lord with an observation I made use of years ago, but which is just as relevant today. I had noted down some remarks of St Teresa of Avila: 'All that passes away and is not pleasing to God, is worth nothing, and less than nothing.' Now do you understand why a soul loses all sense of peace and serenity when it turns away from its goal, and forgets that it was created by God to be a saint? Strive never to lose this supernatural outlook, not even at times of rest or recreation, which are as important in our daily lives as is work itself. You can climb to the top of your profession, you can gain the highest acclaim as a reward for your freely chosen endeavors in temporal affairs; but if you abandon the supernatural outlook that should inspire all our human activities, you will have gone sadly astray.

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DAY EIGHT

SCRIPTURE | *John 8:31-32*

“If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

REFLECTION | *Friends of God*, no. 6

Some of you might think I am referring only to a select few. Don't let the promptings of cowardice or easygoing ways deceive you so easily. Feel, instead, God urging each one of you on, to become another Christ, ipse Christus, Christ himself. To put it simply, God is urging us to make our actions consistent with the demands of our faith. For our sanctity, the holiness we should be striving for, is not a second-class sanctity. There is no such thing. The main thing we are asked to do, which is so much in keeping with our nature, is to love: 'charity is the bond of perfection' (Col 3:14); a charity that is to be practiced exactly as Our Lord himself commands: 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind,' (Mt 22:37) holding back nothing for ourselves. This is what sanctity is all about.

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DAY NINE

SCRIPTURE | *1 Peter 2:4-5*

“Come to him, to that living stone, rejected by men but in God’s sight chosen and precious; and like living stones be yourselves built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”

REFLECTION | *Friends of God*, no. 7

Certainly our goal is both lofty and difficult to attain. But please do not forget that people are not born holy. Holiness is forged through a constant interplay of God's grace and the correspondence of man. As one of the early Christian writers says, referring to union with God, 'Everything that grows begins small. It is by constant and progressive feeding that it gradually grows big.' So I say to you, if you want to become a thorough-going Christian — and I know you are willing, even though you often find it difficult to conquer yourself or to keep climbing upwards with this poor body of ours — then you will have to be very attentive to the minutest of details, for the holiness that Our Lord demands of you is to be achieved by carrying out with love of God your work and your daily duties, and these will almost always consist of small realities.

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St. Josemaria Escriva dedicated his priestly life to helping men and women of all backgrounds to *understand that ordinary life can be holy and full of God* – naturally and simply, living in the middle of the world dedicated to one's work and family, sharing in the needs and interests of one's neighbor and society, respecting the freedom of every person, and striving towards holiness.

The St. Josemaria Institute seeks to increase devotion to St. Josemaria and to share his message among all men and women who desire to find meaning and happiness in their daily lives by growing closer to God. Our hope is that people everywhere will have the opportunity to hear the message of St. Josemaria and accept the challenge he set forth in the first point of his spiritual classic, *The Way*:

“Don't let your life be sterile. Be useful. Blaze a trail. Shine forth with the light of your faith and of your love... light up all the ways of the earth with the fire of Christ that you carry in your heart.”



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