

NOVENA FOR A HAPPY & FAITHFUL MARRIAGE



REFLECTIONS FROM ST. JOSEMARIA ESCRIVA

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NOVENA FOR A HAPPY & FAITHFUL MARRIAGE

ST. JOSEMARIA ESCRIVA

INTRODUCTION

St Josemaria Escriva (1902-1975), priest and founder of Opus Dei, believed that “those who are called to the married state will, with the grace of God, find within their state everything they need to be holy, to identify themselves each day more with Jesus Christ, and to lead those with whom they live to God.”

The Novena for a Happy and Faithful Marriage is inspired by St Josemaria's desire to help all married couples, and those preparing for marriage, to find meaning and encouragement in their vocation through a commitment to daily prayer and friendship with God, especially when facing inevitable difficulties and times of trial.

The novena reflections are all taken from the homily by St Josemaria Escriva, “Marriage: A Christian Vocation”, published in the book *Christ is Passing By* (Scepter Publishers, 1974).

WHAT IS A NOVENA?

A novena is a personal commitment that one makes to pray 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.

WHO SHOULD PRAY THIS NOVENA?

The *Novena for a Happy and Faithful Marriage* is ideal for engaged couples and for married couples. St Josemaria's reflections on marriage would also be helpful in guiding those who are discerning their state in life.

HOW TO PRAY THIS NOVENA:

- Choose a date and time (e.g. end of day, after dinner) to start the novena
- Read the reflection of the day slowly in front of a crucifix or image of the Holy Family
- Meditate on the reading and ask God to let you see what you need to understand
- Pray one of the two prayers indicated for the day (for the married or engaged)
- End with the *Prayer for the Family* and ask God for your specific request(s)



“‘What is our purpose in the world?’ To love God with all our heart and all our soul and to spread this love to all. Does that seem little? God does not abandon any soul to a blind destiny. He has a plan for all and He calls each to a very personal and non-transferable vocation.”

ST. JOSEMARIA ESCRIVA
Conversations, no. 106

REFLECTION:

“Christian marriage is not just a social institution, much less a mere remedy for human weakness. It is a real supernatural calling. A great sacrament, in Christ and in the Church, says St Paul. At the same time, it is a permanent contract between a man and a woman. Whether we like it or not, the sacrament of matrimony, instituted by Christ, cannot be dissolved. It is a permanent contract that sanctifies in cooperation with Jesus Christ. He fills the souls of husband and wife and invites them to follow him. He transforms their whole married life into an occasion for God’s presence on earth.”

ST. JOSEMARIA ESCRIVA
Christ is Passing By, no. 23

PRAYER FOR THE DAY

For the Married

Lord Jesus Christ, You have elevated the covenant of marriage between man and woman to the dignity of a sacrament, making of our relationship a true pathway to holiness. Help us never to lose sight of the holiness of our bond. You will that husband and wife should image Your own spousal relationship with the Church. May we always reflect the beauty of that relationship by the holiness of our lives and our fidelity to each other. Amen.

For the Engaged

Lord Jesus Christ, help us to appreciate how great the calling to marriage is, as we together prepare for the *great sacrament* (cf. Eph 5:32). Grant that we might seek to reflect the love that You have for Your Church by our sincere and sacrificing love for each other. May we be pure in our hearts, chaste in our bodies, and generous in our service to one another, so that our love for each other may truly imitate the love with which You laid down Your life for Your bride, the Church. Amen.

Turn to page 24 for the concluding prayer.

REFLECTION:

“Marriage is a sacrament that makes one flesh of two bodies. Theology expresses this fact in a striking way when it teaches us that the matter of the sacrament is the bodies of husband and wife. Our Lord sanctifies and blesses the mutual love of husband and wife. He foresees not only a union of souls but a union of bodies as well. No Christian, whether or not he is called to the married state, has a right to underestimate the value of marriage.”

ST. JOSEMARIA ESCRIVA
Christ is Passing By, no. 24

PRAYER FOR THE DAY

For the Married

Lord Jesus Christ, as spouses we are no longer two, but one flesh. As we are united in body, may we always be united in heart, mind, and spirit as well: seeking to grow in holiness together, seeking to give ourselves more to You as we give ourselves to each other. May we cherish each other's bodies as Your temple, never dishonoring the place where You are most pleased to dwell. Amen.

For the Engaged

Lord Jesus Christ, as we prepare to be united as two in one flesh, grant that we might grow in mutual respect and understanding of each other. Help us to deepen our union of mind and heart, so that we will better appreciate our union of body as the privileged expression of that spiritual union which Your Spirit accomplishes in us. Amen.

Turn to page 24 for the concluding prayer.

REFLECTION:

"Husband and wife are called to sanctify their married life and to sanctify themselves in it. It would be a serious mistake if they were to exclude family life from their spiritual development. The marriage union, the care and education of children, the effort to provide for the needs of the family as well as for its security and development, the relationships with other persons who make up the community, all these are among the ordinary human situations that Christian couples are called upon to sanctify.

"They will achieve this aim by exercising the virtues of faith and hope, facing serenely all the great and small problems which confront any family and persevering in the love and enthusiasm with which they fulfill their duties. In this way they practice the virtue of charity in all things. They learn to smile and forget about themselves in order to pay attention to others. Husband and wife will listen to each other and to their children, showing them that they are really loved and understood. They will forget about the unimportant little frictions that selfishness could magnify out of proportion. They will do lovingly all the small acts of service that make up their daily life together."

ST. JOSEMARIA ESCRIVA
Christ is Passing By, no. 23

PRAYER FOR THE DAY

For the Married

Lord Jesus Christ, You provide us with many opportunities in married life to grow in holiness by growing in charity. Grant that we might never overlook these occasions for growth, especially when they challenge us. May we never tire in our daily struggle to accept all things, the great and small trials as well as the greater and lesser joys, as ways in which we might praise You and deepen our share in Your Cross and Resurrection. Amen.

For the Engaged

Lord Jesus Christ, we are preparing to enter into married life, where times of joy are often mingled with moments of sorrow and difficulty. Grant that we may see all of these occasions as opportunities to grow in holiness and fidelity. By striving now to accept all things for love of You, may we strive ever more zealously to pursue holiness when we are united together in You. Amen.

Turn to page 24 for the concluding prayer.

REFLECTION:

“Human love — pure, sincere and joyful — cannot subsist in marriage without the virtue of chastity, which leads a couple to respect the mystery of sex and ordain it to faithfulness and personal dedication. I have never talked about impurity, and I have always avoided falling into a distasteful and meaningless casuistry. But I have spoken many times, as I have to do, about chastity, purity and the joyful affirmation of love.

“When there is chastity in the love of married persons, their marital life is authentic; husband and wife are true to themselves, they understand each other and develop the union between them. When the divine gift of sex is perverted, their intimacy is destroyed, and they can no longer look openly at each other.”

“This is the context in which we must see the Christian doctrine on sex. Our faith does not ignore anything on this earth that is beautiful, noble and authentically human. It simply teaches us that the rule of our life should not be the selfish pursuit of pleasure, because only sacrifice and self-denial lead to true love.”

ST. JOSEMARIA ESCRIVA

Christ is Passing By, no. 25 & 24

PRAYER FOR THE DAY

For the Married

Lord Jesus Christ, we thank you for the gift of human sexuality and the power you have given us to cooperate in bringing new life into this world. Help us to see our intimacy as a privilege. Help us to see each other as Your gift to us. Grant that we may have the courage to struggle against our selfish impulses so that our love may be truly a gift of self, a chaste and pure love, that only seeks the good of the other. Amen.

For the Engaged

Lord Jesus Christ, help us to prepare for a chaste married life by living chastity right now. As we work toward self-mastery, let us never lose sight of the beautiful gift of pure married love. Let us always remember that the quality of our married love depends upon our willingness to sacrifice ourselves for each other. Beginning now, give us strength to deny ourselves so that we can affirm the great dignity of the love to which You call us. Amen.

Turn to page 24 for the concluding prayer.

REFLECTION:

“A married couple should build their life together on the foundation of a sincere and pure affection for each other, and on the joy that comes from having brought into the world the children God has enabled them to have. They should be capable of renouncing their personal comfort; and they should put their trust in the providence of God.”

“People who are constantly concerned with themselves, who act above all for their own satisfaction, endanger their eternal salvation and cannot avoid being unhappy even in this life. Only if a person forgets himself and gives himself to God and to others, in marriage as well as in any other aspect of life, can he be happy on this earth, with a happiness that is a preparation for, and a foretaste of, the joy of heaven.”

ST. JOSEMARIA ESCRIVA

Christ is Passing By, no. 25 & 24

PRAYER FOR THE DAY

For the Married

Lord Jesus Christ, You will that children be the precious fruit of married love. We praise and thank you for the irreplaceable gift of new human life. May we always accept as a unique blessing each child that You wish to give us, seeing in them a sign of Your trust in our loving care. Grant that we might never allow fear or selfishness to restrict our openness to new life, but trusting in Your goodness and mercy, may we receive with gratitude and generosity the new lives that You entrust to us. Amen.

For the Engaged

Lord Jesus Christ, we ask You to prepare us for parenthood by enlarging our hearts. Deepen our love and generosity so that we will gratefully receive the children whom You wish to give us. Prepare us to make the necessary sacrifices that will not only ensure their wellbeing, but assure them that they are loved by You through our loving care. Amen.

Turn to page 24 for the concluding prayer.

REFLECTION:

“As long as we walk on this earth, suffering will always be the touchstone of love. If we were to describe what occurs in the married state, we could say that there are two sides to the coin.

“On the one hand, there is the joy of knowing that one is loved, the desire and enthusiasm involved in starting a family and taking care of it, the love of husband and wife, the happiness of seeing the children grow up.

“On the other hand, there are also sorrows and difficulties — the passing of time that consumes the body and threatens the character with the temptation to bitterness, the seemingly monotonous succession of days that are apparently always the same.

“We would have a poor idea of marriage and of human affection if we were to think that love and joy come to an end when faced with such difficulties. It is precisely then that our true sentiments come to the surface. Then the tenderness of a person’s gift of himself takes root and shows itself in a true and profound affection that is stronger than death.”

ST. JOSEMARIA ESCRIVA
Christ is Passing By, no. 24

PRAYER FOR THE DAY

For the Married

Lord Jesus Christ, You permit suffering to be a part of every human life, but You will that our afflictions be fruitful and redemptive. Help us to receive the trials and sufferings of our married life in a truly Christian spirit: as a way of making up for our sins and of bringing down many graces upon ourselves and others. May we, as husband and wife, be present to each other during times of suffering; may we never willingly cause each other to suffer. But grant that we might be strong with the strength of Your love, persevering and growing in our love until death. Amen.

For the Engaged

Lord Jesus Christ, we ask You to prepare us for the self-giving that marriage will ask of us. We know that our married life will be joyful and fulfilling only to the extent that we model our love on Your self-sacrificing love. Especially in times of trial and hardship, may we embrace the difficulties that You permit with a spirit of love and courage. Enlighten our minds and strengthen our hearts to receive all of the sufferings of married life with confidence in Your providence and mercy. Amen.

Turn to page 24 for the concluding prayer.

REFLECTION:

“When I think of Christian homes, I like to imagine them as being full of the light and joy that were in the home of the Holy Family. The message of Christmas is heard in all its forcefulness: ‘Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will.’ ‘And may the peace of Christ triumph in your hearts,’ writes the Apostle. It is a peace that comes from knowing that our Father God loves us, and that we are made one with Christ. It results from being under the protection of the Virgin, our Lady, and assisted by St Joseph. This is the great light that illuminates our lives. In the midst of difficulties and of our own personal failings, it encourages us to keep up our effort.

“Every Christian home should be a place of peace and serenity. In spite of the small frustrations of daily life, an atmosphere of profound and sincere affection should reign there together with a deep-rooted calm, which is the result of authentic faith that is put into practice.”

ST. JOSEMARIA ESCRIVA
Christ is Passing By, no. 22

PRAYER FOR THE DAY

For the Married

Lord Jesus Christ, grant that our home may be a place of peace, a place where You are always welcome, a place where charity and understanding are never absent. You call us to make our home a bright and cheerful place by taking advantage of every opportunity, both small and great, to serve each other. Help us to build up our home and our relationships by this attentive and constant love, loving one another as You have loved us. Amen.

For the Engaged

Lord Jesus Christ, help us to be devoted to Our Lady and St Joseph, who will teach us how to make our future home into a place where You are pleased to dwell. The Psalm tells us: "If the Lord does not build the house, those who build it labor in vain" (Ps 127:1). May we always allow You to build up our family and home life by accepting from Your hand all of the opportunities You give us to serve each other and grow in mutual love. Amen.

Turn to page 24 for the concluding prayer.

REFLECTION:

“Listen to your children. Give them your time, even the time that you have reserved for yourselves. Show them your confidence; believe whatever they tell you, even if sometimes they try to deceive you. Don't be afraid when they rebel, because, at their age, you yourselves were more or less rebellious. Go to meet them half-way and pray for them. If you act in this Christian manner, they will come to you with simplicity, instead of trying to satisfy their legitimate curiosity by taking it to some rough or vulgar friend. Your confidence, your friendly dealings with your children, will receive an answer in their sincerity in dealing with you. Then, even if there are quarrels and lack of understanding, they will never amount to much; and this is what peace in the family and a truly Christian life mean.

“At the same time, they [parents] should help their children to direct their efforts and to carry out their projects properly, teaching them to consider things and to reason them out. It is not a matter of imposing a line of conduct, but rather of showing the human and supernatural motives for it. In a word, parents have to respect their children's freedom, because there is no real education without personal responsibility, and there is no responsibility without freedom.”

ST. JOSEMARIA ESCRIVA

Christ is Passing By, no. 29 & 27

PRAYER FOR THE DAY

For the Married

Lord Jesus Christ, children are Your gift to us. Grant that we might receive them gratefully as gifts, while especially striving to remain open to how You speak to us through them. With both their strengths and weaknesses, help us to embrace them with love and patience, accepting them as You also mercifully accept us. May we teach and correct them lovingly, always remembering that we have the responsibility of forming them in the freedom of the children of God. Amen.

For the Engaged

Lord Jesus Christ, help us to appreciate deeply our status as adopted children of God. Help us to call upon God as *Our Father* with great tenderness and confidence. By learning to treasure our own dignity as God's children, we will also know better how to love and form the children that You wish to give us, in the same Spirit that has made us all Your brothers and sisters, and sons and daughters of the Heavenly Father. Amen.

Turn to page 24 for the concluding prayer.

REFLECTION:

“Couples should be convinced that they are really and truly called to take part in the fulfillment of God’s plan for the salvation of all men. For this reason, there is perhaps no better model for a Christian couple than that of the Christian families of apostolic times: the centurion Cornelius, who obeyed the will of God and in whose home the Church was made accessible to the gentiles; Aquila and Priscilla, who spread Christianity in Corinth and Ephesus, and who cooperated in the apostolate of St Paul; Tabitha, who out of charity attended to the needs of the Christians in Joppe.

“And so many other homes and families of Jews and Gentiles, Greeks and Romans, in which the preaching of our Lord’s first disciples began to bear fruit—families who lived in union with Christ and who made him known to others; small Christian communities which were centers for the spreading of the Gospel and its message; families no different from other families of those times, but living with a new spirit, which spread to all those who were in contact with them.

“This is what the first Christians were, and this is what we have to be: sowers of peace and joy, the peace and joy that Jesus has brought to us.”

ST. JOSEMARIA ESCRIVA
Christ is Passing By, no. 30

PRAYER FOR THE DAY

For the Married

Lord Jesus Christ, You will that our marriage be truly *apostolic*, that is, a relationship so loving and joyful that we naturally reach out to others in order to share what You have given us. Grant us true joy in You; grant us true joy in each other; grant us Your peace. Then we will more fully live the sacrament of holy matrimony, the more we draw souls to You by the witness of our married love, which is a true reflection of the surpassing love that You have for Your bride, the Church. Amen.

For the Engaged

Lord Jesus Christ, You call us to live a life of Christian witness in the world, reflecting the joy and peace that comes from belonging to You and to Your Church. Grant that our married love may radiate outward to many souls, inspiring them to come to You and to the Church. May we prepare for this by living authentically Christian lives right now—lives of generosity, self-restraint, and purity—so that by our example, the light of the Gospel may shine brightly before all. Amen.

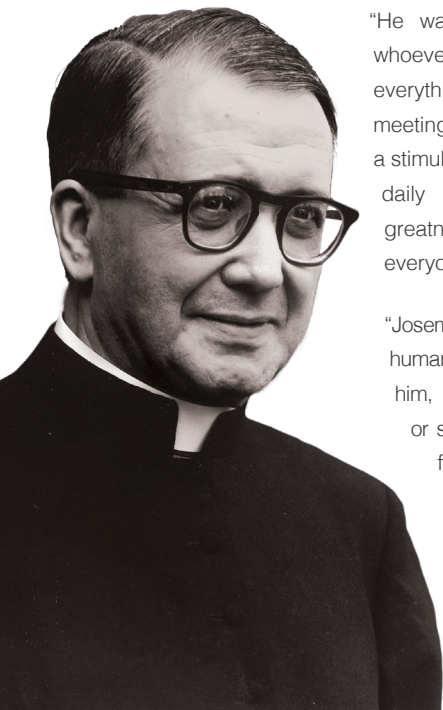
Turn to page 24 for the concluding prayer.

ST. JOSEMARIA ESCRIVA

PRIEST & FOUNDER OF OPUS DEI

(1902-1975)

"Saint Josemaria was chosen by the Lord to proclaim the universal call to holiness and to indicate that everyday life, its customary activities, are a path towards holiness. It could be said that he was the *saint of the ordinary*.



"He was really convinced that, for whoever lives with an outlook of faith, everything offers an opportunity for a meeting with God, everything becomes a stimulus for prayer. Seen in that way, daily life reveals an unsuspected greatness. Holiness is really put on everyone's doorstep.

"Josemaria Escriva was a saint of great humanity. All those who dealt with him, of whatever level of education or social condition, felt him to be a father, totally dedicated to the service of the others, because he was convinced that each soul is a marvelous treasure;

in fact, each person is worth all the Blood of Christ. This attitude of service is plain to see in his dedication to priestly ministry and in the magnanimity with which he pushed ahead so many works of evangelization and of human development to help the poorest.

“Saint Josemaria was profoundly convinced that Christian life entails a mission and an apostolate: we are in the world to save it with Christ. He loved the world passionately, with a ‘redemptive love’ (cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 604). It is precisely for this reason that his teachings have helped so many ordinary members of the faithful discover the redemptive power of faith, its capacity to transform the earth.”

POPE SAINT JOHN PAUL II
*Address after the Mass of
Thanksgiving for the Canonization
October 7, 2002*

To learn more about St Josemaria Escriva visit www.stjosemaria.org.

PRAYER FOR THE FAMILY

O God our Loving Father,

Creator of all things, you sent your Son, Jesus Christ, our Redeemer, into the home of Mary and Joseph forming the Holy Family of Nazareth; inspire us by their example to imitate their selfless charity in our family life.

Through the intercession of St Josemaria, help our families to be united in the heart of Christ, enjoying a loving communion with each other, recognizing and upholding the sacredness of marriage, generously welcoming the gift of life, and valuing the inestimable gift of each family member.

Help us to dedicate ourselves in generous service to our families and to reflect the love that Christ had for Mary and Joseph, making our family a true domestic Church with Christ at its center.

Teach us to find Christ in the crosses that occur in family life and help us to find joy in them and unite them to him.

Watch over and protect our family so that each member will be faithful to the Gospel and never stray from the path of holiness. We ask you, through the intercession of St Josemaria, to grant us the favor of (make your request). Amen.

Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, we give our hearts and souls to you.



"Christian couples should be aware that they are called...to be apostles and that their first apostolate is in the home. They should understand that founding a family, educating their children, and exercising a Christian influence in society, are supernatural tasks. The effectiveness and the success of their life — their happiness — depends to a great extent on their awareness of their specific mission."

ST. JOSEMARIA ESCRIVA
Conversations, no. 91

"Marriage is a divine path on earth", St Josemaria Escriva often explained in his writings and meetings with the laity. St Josemaria, priest and founder of Opus Dei, promoted the Catholic Church's teachings on the value and dignity of the Sacrament of Marriage by explaining precisely the fact that Marriage is a supernatural calling and it is the means to a husband and wife's holiness.

This novena booklet especially invites married couples and those preparing for marriage to reflect on the meaning of the Sacrament of Marriage in order to strengthen their relationship with their spouse, with their family, and with God.

The novena reflections are taken from St Josemaria's writings and encourage spouses to consider that, "Human love, the love we experience on earth when it is really genuine, helps us to savor divine love. That is how we grasp the love by which we rejoice in God and which we will share in heaven when the Lord is 'everything to everyone' (1 Cor 15:28). If we begin to understand God's love, we will feel impelled to become increasingly more compassionate, more generous, more dedicated" (*Christ is Passing By*, no. 166).

To order additional copies of this booklet contact the
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