

NOVENA FOR A HAPPY
AND
FAITHFUL MARRIAGE



REFLECTIONS FROM ST. JOSEMARIA ESCRIVA

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Novena for a Happy and 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.” (*Conversations with Saint Josemaria*, 91)

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

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.

HOW TO PRAY THE NOVENA FOR A HAPPY AND FAITHFUL MARRIAGE:

- Choose a date and time (e.g. end of day, after dinner) to start the novena
- Read the reflection of the day slowly. You may want to do it in front of a crucifix or image of the Holy Family
- Meditate on the reading and ask God for light and inspiration
- 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, 106

DAY 1

The Vocation to Marriage: A Supernatural Calling

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.”

PRAYER FOR THE FAMILY

Turn to page 18 for the concluding prayer.

Marriage is the Union of Soul and Body: Husband and Wife Become One (Genesis 2:24)



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.”

PRAYER FOR THE FAMILY

Turn to page 18 for the concluding prayer.

Husband and Wife are Called to Holiness



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.”

PRAYER FOR THE FAMILY

Turn to page 18 for the concluding prayer.



The Grandeur and Dignity of Marital Life is Founded on Pure and Joyful Love



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.”

PRAYER FOR THE FAMILY

Turn to page 18 for the concluding prayer.

“Purity is a consequence of the love that prompts us to commit to Christ our soul and body, our faculties and senses. It is not something negative; it is a joyful affirmation.”

ST. JOSEMARIA ESCRIVA
Christ is Passing By, 5

Marriage is Marked by a Complete Self-Giving and Openness to God's Gift of Life



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.”

PRAYER FOR THE FAMILY

Turn to page 18 for the concluding prayer.

True Love Requires Sharing Joys and Sorrows, and the Capacity to Forgive



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.”

PRAYER FOR THE FAMILY

Turn to page 18 for the concluding prayer.



“A sincere resolution: to make the way loveable for others and easy, since life brings enough bitterness with it already.”

ST. JOSEMARIA ESCRIVA
Furrow, 63

DAY 7

Creating a Bright and Cheerful Home is the Beauty and Goodness of Marriage



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.’

PRAYER FOR THE FAMILY

Turn to page 18 for the concluding prayer.

Building True Family Friendships with Your Spouse and Children



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.”

PRAYER FOR THE FAMILY

Turn to page 18 for the concluding prayer.

Life of Communion with Christ in Marriage is a Means of Spreading the Gospel



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.”

PRAYER FOR THE FAMILY

Turn to page 18 for the concluding prayer.

“THE RICHNESS OF ORDINARY LIFE”

St. Josemaria Escriva



“Interior life. We need it, if we are to answer the call that the Master has made to each and every one of us ... God marks us out and gives us his grace to strive for sanctity in the everyday world, he also puts us under an obligation to do apostolate. I want you to realize that, even looking at things humanly, concern for souls follows naturally from the fact that God has chosen us.

It may seem hard to believe, but both God and our fellow men require from us an unswerving faithfulness that is true to its name and is consequent down to the last detail, with no half measures or compromises, a faithfulness to the fullness of the Christian vocation which we lovingly accept and caringly practice.

To put it simply, God is urging us to make our actions consistent with the demands of our faith ... 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’; 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,’ holding back nothing for ourselves. This is what sanctity is all about.”

St. Josemaria Escriva
Friends of God, 5-6

ST. JOSEMARIA ESCRIVA
Priest and 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 John Paul II
*Address After the Mass of
Thanksgiving for the Canonization*
October 7, 2006

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.



“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.” (I 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*, 166)

To order additional copies of this booklet and to learn more about St. Josemaria Escriva, visit the St. Josemaria Institute online at www.stjosemaria.org or call 1-877-785-6736.



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