

# Novena for Forgiveness



► to St Josemaria Escriva

# Prayer to Saint Josemaria



## Saint Josemaría Escrivá

Founder of Opus Dei

### PRAYER

*O God, through the mediation of Mary our Mother, you granted your priest St. Josemaría 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. Josemaría, the favor of ... (make your request). Amen.*

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be to the Father.

# 1st Day

## For Peace of Heart

### ► **Reflection:** In St Josemaria's Words

*What takes away your peace of soul cannot come from God (The Way, no. 258).*

*A clear mark of the man of God, of the woman of God, is the peace in their souls: they have peace and they give peace to the people they have dealings with (The Forge, no. 649).*

*We must bring people together, we must understand others, we must make allowances. Never put up a cross just to keep alive the memory that some people have killed others. Such a cross would betoken the devil. Christ's Cross is to keep silent, to forgive and to pray for those on both sides, so that all may attain peace (The Way of the Cross, 8th Station, no. 3).*

*Just as Christ "went about doing good" (Acts 10:38) throughout Palestine, so must you also spread peace in your family circle, in civil society, on the job, and in your cultural and leisure activities (Christ is Passing By, no. 166).*

### ► **Intention**

Lord, you know how much I desire to have your peace within me. But I know very well that I cannot obtain it as long as I harbor bitterness and resentment in my heart, like wounds that never heal over.

I would like to be able to say what St Paul said: "forbearing one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other... And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts" (Col 3:13.15). Without your help, Lord, by my efforts alone, I will never be able to attain that peace.

And so I humbly beg you, through St Josemaria's intercession, for the grace to be able to forgive. Cleanse my heart from the infection of hatred, anger, dislikes, and other bitter feelings that divide, however much I feel my reaction is justified by other people's faults and offenses.

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# 2nd Day

## For understanding and forgiveness

### ► Reflection: In St Josemaria's Words

*Never think badly of anyone, not even if the words or conduct of the person in question give you good grounds for doing so (The Way, no. 442).*

*Charity does not consist so much in "giving" as in "understanding". Therefore, seek an excuse for your neighbor – there is always one to be found, – if it is your duty to judge (The Way, no. 463).*

*Put yourself always in your neighbor's shoes. You will then see the various issues or problems calmly. You will not get annoyed. You will be understanding. You will make allowances and will correct people when and as required. And you will fill the world with charity (The Forge, no. 958).*

### ► Intention:

Jesus, you see how difficult I find it to understand other people, to see the best in them, and forgive their faults, big or little, when they upset me and hurt me.

I want to ask you for the grace to fulfill your command: "Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven" (Lk 6:37).

You know, Lord, that very often the first thing I notice about people is the negative things, the things that annoy me, that I see as ridiculous or unbearable, the things that embitter me. And so I develop the vice of thinking badly and speaking badly about others.

Lord, have mercy on me, who am so unmerciful. Although I don't deserve it, I beg you to grant me, through St Josemaria's intercession, a heart that is able to understand, excuse and forgive.

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# 3rd Day

## For overcoming pride

### ► Reflection: In St Josemaria's Words

*If you are so weak, is it surprising that others too have their weaknesses? (The Way, no. 446).*

*All right: that person has behaved badly towards you. But – haven't you behaved worse towards God? (The Way, no. 686).*

*Force yourself, if necessary, always to forgive those who offend you, from the very first moment. For the greatest injury or offense that you can suffer from them is as nothing compared with what God has pardoned you (The Way, no. 452).*

*Let's reject all pride, be compassionate, show charity; help each other with prayer and sincere friendship (The Forge, no. 454).*

### ► Intention:

Lord, it's true that I pray, and ask you to forgive me..., but I still don't forgive those who offend me. Forgive me for despising the words of your Son Jesus, which I say so often when I pray the Our Father: "forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us" (Matt 6:12).

I realize that if I were sincere, beneath all that hardness I would see my own pride. I recognize that I am touchy, I take offense easily, I take the things people say or do the wrong way, and the slightest insinuation upsets me... And you, Jesus: how did you behave when people treated you badly? What do you do to me when I mistreat you with my sins? I know perfectly well that every time I go and confess my sins, you say to me: "I absolve you."

Lord, I don't want to be a hypocrite! Through St Josemaria's intercession, grant me the grace to be humble, as an indispensable condition for learning to forgive.

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# 4th Day

## For conquering anger

### ► **Reflection:** In St Josemaria's Words

*Say what you have just said, but in a different tone, without anger, and your argument will gain in strength and, above all, you won't offend God (The Way, no. 9).*

*Never correct anyone while you are still indignant about a fault committed. Wait until the next day, or even longer. And then, calmly, and with a purer intention, make your reprimand. You will gain more by one friendly word than by a three-hour quarrel. Control your temper (The Way, no. 10).*

*Always remain silent when you feel the upsurge of indignation within you. And do so, even when you have good reason to be angry. For, in spite of your discretion, in such moments you always say more than you wish (The Way, no. 656).*

### ► **Intention:**

I think, Jesus, about you, and your words “learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart” (Matt 11:29). And then I think about myself: my irritations, my violent reactions, my sharpness, the anger that boils inside me, the conviction that it's fine to be hard on other people because “I'm right”. And I imagine that I'm a Christian!

St Paul was a Christian, and he said: “Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you” (Eph 4:31). St Josemaria was a Christian, and he responded to slander with a constant attitude of “keeping quiet, working, forgiving, and smiling”.

He stood up in defense of justice only when the injury done to him also offended God or innocent third parties. Heart of Jesus, meek and humble, through St Josemaria's intercession, make my heart like your own.

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# 5th Day

## For overcoming resentment

### ► Reflection: In St Josemaria's Words

*Those who zealously keep a "list of grudges" show themselves to be very narrow-minded souls! Such poor wretches are impossible to live with (Furrow, no. 738).*

*Forgiveness. To forgive with one's whole heart and with no trace of a grudge will always be a wonderfully fruitful disposition to have! That was Christ's attitude on being nailed to the Cross: "Father, forgive them, they know not what they are doing." From this came your salvation and mine (Furrow, no. 805).*

*Men do not scandalize God. He can put up with all our infidelities (Christ is Passing By, no. 64).*

*I have never ill-treated anyone who turned his back on me, not even when my offer of help was repaid with insolence (Friends of God, no. 59).*

### ► Intention:

My God, I know that resentment is a wound which self-love and pride keep open and stir up in the heart; it is gangrene, carefully cultivated in the soul by hatred. It scares me, my God, because I have discovered it inside myself, rooted there like a cancer.

Someone once said that resentment is the devil's oven. They were right. I too feel that it is a cursed fire that incinerates the love, understanding and peace that should always mark the relationships of God's children.

Free me from it, Jesus! Help me to get rid of this disease through frequent Confession. Grant me, through St Josemaria's intercession, the strength from Heaven to forgive and forget. My I never harbor resentment.

Instead, may I leave my bitterness within your Heart and learn there how to say: "Father, forgive them!" (Lk 23:34).

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# 6th Day

## For overcoming family quarrels

### ► Reflection: In St Josemaria's Words

*It is possible to live happily together when everyone tries to correct their own defects and makes an effort to overlook the faults of others (Conversations, no. 108).*

*It is patience that moves us to be understanding with others, for we are convinced that souls, like good wine, improve with time (Friends of God, no. 78).*

*Our love has to be a dedicated love, practiced every day and made up of a thousand little details of understanding, hidden sacrifice and unnoticed self-giving (Christ is Passing By, no. 36).*

*Remain silent, and you will never regret it: speak, and you often will (The Way, no. 639).*

### ► Intention:

My God, you know that I find it really hard to forgive, in family life, people's inconsiderateness towards me, their thoughtlessness, disrespect, impatience and impoliteness; and you know that I find it even harder to admit that I too fall into those same faults. I ask you, through St Josemaria's intercession, for help to overcome my mistaken self-esteem and to practice what St Paul tells us: "with all lowliness and meekness, with patience, forbearing one another in love" (Eph 4:2).

Set me free, Lord, from obstinately thinking that I alone am in the right; from being rude, getting impatient over little faults, and arguing about unimportant things... I ask you for the charity to be able to keep silent, smile, put a good face on things, and say sorry when I have corrected someone sharply. And if need be, I ask you for the heroic forgiveness with which you received Judas in the garden, when he was betraying you.

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# 7th Day

## To take the first step

### ► Reflection: In St Josemaria's Words

*Our Father in Heaven pardons any offense when his child returns to him, when we repent and ask for pardon. The Lord is such a good Father that he anticipates our desire to be pardoned and comes forward to us, opening his arms laden with grace (Christ is Passing By, no. 64).*

*It was the Lord who took the initiative by coming out to meet us. He gave us this example (Friends of God, no. 228).*

*It is in the Sacrament of Penance that you and I put on Jesus Christ and his merits (The Way, no. 310).*

### ► Intention:

O God, Father of Mercy, I open the Gospel and see that Jesus is asking me always to take the first step to reconciliation, to be the first to say sorry and offer forgiveness. "Leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother" (Matt 5:24).

It is only fair for you to ask me to do what you did yourself. Indeed, St Paul says that "while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rm 5:8). My God, how hard I find it to take that first step when I am convinced that I'm right, that I am the one who was offended! It seems something superhuman. I can only do it with your strength, Lord!

St Josemaria, intercede for me, so that I make up my mind to seek God's help by making a sincere Confession, because it is in the Sacrament of Reconciliation that I can find the grace I need.

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# 8th Day

## To return good for evil

### ► Reflection: In St Josemaria's Words

*To our falling again and again into evil, Jesus responds with his determination to redeem us, with an abundance of forgiveness (The Way of the Cross, 7th Station).*

*Men, their happiness and their life, are so important that the very Son of God gave himself to redeem and cleanse and raise them up (Christ is Passing By, no. 165).*

*The task for a Christian is to drown evil in an abundance of good (Furrow, no. 864).*

*Get used to replying to those poor "haters", when they pelt you with stones, by pelting them with Hail Marys (The Forge, no. 650).*

### ► Intention:

Good Jesus, I recognize that when I feel offended the desire to retaliate starts to boil up inside me. Exactly what you did not do!

How difficult it is to subdue the fantasy of the little or big acts of revenge constructed by my imagination! And yet I know that I should be thinking about forgiving!

Lord, when I feel like that, bring to my mind your words: "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (Matt 5:44); and the words of St Paul: "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (Rm 12:21).

I beg you, Lord, that my meditation on St Josemaria's words for today may awaken in me, through his intercession, the resolution of always praying for those who cause me any harm, and wanting good for them, "drowning evil in an abundance of good".

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# 9th Day

## For Our Lady's help

### ► **Reflection:** In St Josemaria's Words

*Mary's most sweet Heart (...) must have suffered immensely on seeing the collective cruelty and the ferocity of the executioners that led to the Passion and Death of Jesus. Mary, however, does not speak. Like her Son, she loves, keeps silent and forgives. Here we see the strength of love! (Friends of God, no. 237).*

*When we are truly Mary's children, we understand this attitude of our Lord, and our hearts expand and become tender (Christ is Passing By, no. 146).*

*Get accustomed to entrusting your poor heart to the Sweet and Immaculate Heart of Mary, so that she may purify it from so much dross, and lead it to the Most Sacred and Merciful Heart of Jesus (Furrow, no. 830).*

### ► **Intention:**

Mother of Mercy, Comfort of the afflicted, Refuge of sinners, you were united to the sacrifice of Jesus when he shed his Blood on the Cross to cleanse us from our sins: take pity on us poor sinners, when we cannot manage to forgive.

When we feel resentment, anger or the desire for revenge burning inside us, make us remember you; never let us forget that we have a Mother who loves us and who wants to soften our hard hearts with the warmth of her Immaculate Heart.

Enfold us, Mother, in your embrace like small children; calm our anger with your smile; obtain for us from your Son the gift of forgiving, forgetting, and not stirring up grudges; and also of loving and wanting good for those who do not love us. Lead us, Mother, as St Josemaria prayed, deep into the Sacred and Merciful Heart of Jesus.

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*Those who obtain favours through the intercession of  
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