

Novena Prayer to St. Eugene de Mazenod

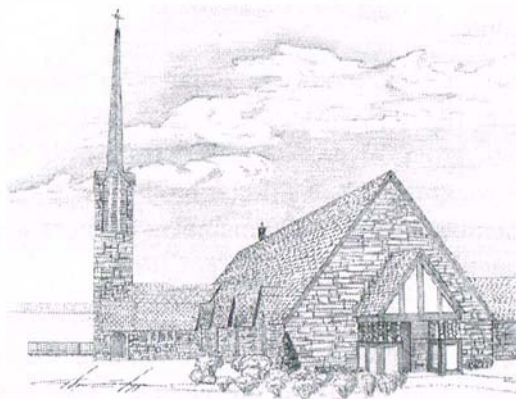
St. Eugene, Patron Saint of Dysfunctional Families, come to the aid of all families who suffer brokenness, misunderstanding, separation or divorce. You know well these difficulties and trials because of the separation and divorce of your own parents. May all who suffer these family hardships seek your intercession to discern more clearly how the light of Jesus Christ can help them in the midst of their darkness and despair. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.



The Missionary
Oblates of
Mary Immaculate

St. Eugene understands from his own experience the storms of life. He had to come to grips with his own hurts. The difficulties in his family would probably be labeled as *dysfunctional* by modern social scientists. Regardless of his family background, Eugene de Mazenod overcame these difficulties. And he can help others to do the same.

ST. EUGENE DE MAZENOD
A Patron Saint for the dysfunctional family



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August 1, 1782- May 21, 1861

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St. Eugene de Mazenod

A recently canonized saint might one day be known as the patron saint of families in crisis. Father Eugene de Mazenod, OMI, the 19th century founder of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, was added to the Church's long list of holy men and women on December 3, 1995 at a ceremony presided over by Pope John Paul II. Among countless stories about the lives of saints, St. Eugene's is unique in that his parents were divorced. Born on August 1, 1782 in southern France at a time in history when divorce was very rare, Eugene de Mazenod had far from an ideal family life. His mother, Marie-Rose Joannis, was of the bourgeois or middle class, convent educated and wealthy. His father, Charles Antoine, was an aristocrat, educated in the classics and poor.

An even more serious factor in their marriage was the constant interference from Marie-Rose's jealous mother and neurotic sister. When she was wed to Charles Antoine, Marie-Rose's family stipulated that the dowry given by them remain in her name. In 1791, when Eugene was 8 years old, the de Mazenod family was forced into exile.

In 1795 Marie-Rose returned to France with Eugene's sister, leaving her husband and son behind in Venice in one of their many temporary homes. Once back home, she divorced Eugene's father. That put her in a position to repossess their property. She took back her maiden name and, aided by her mother's shrewdness, Marie-Rose successfully recovered her dowry.

She later wrote to her ex-husband, "You now have nothing." At age 13, Eugene was the son of parents whose marriage of convenience ended over the question of money.

Precisely how this turn of events impacted him lies buried in time and history. Whatever emotional turmoil the young boy felt, however, he overcame. With God's healing help, Eugene was freed to use his gifts and talents to the benefit of others. Eugene had developed a passionate love for God, much of which was centered on Jesus the Crucified. He regarded the cross of Jesus as a sign of hope for all people. Eugene deepened his love for the Savior by daily praying in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament.

His profound and tender respect for the Virgin Mary is evidenced by the name of his religious community: **Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate.**

Eugene de Mazenod was ordained a diocesan priest in 1811. Five years later, he called together his first group of missionaries. Today, his religious congregation of priests, brothers and bishops number nearly 4,100 members in more than 59 countries.

The fact that Oblates who were approved as religious congregation in 1826, are often described as religious men "close to the people", may stem from Father de Mazenod's early years of priestly service. Though born into French high society, he stepped out and began each Sunday morning instructing the neglected blue-collar workers and street people of his hometown of Aix-en-Provence.

Father de Mazenod taught them about the love and compassion of God, but he did it in unpolished French. To the horror of his class conscious

relatives and friends, the young priest spoke "patois", the language of the commoners. It was a way to be "close to the people".

Eugene de Mazenod died as Archbishop of Marseilles, France, on May 2nd, 1861. His tomb is located in a chapel of that city's cathedral. His Feast Day was declared by Pope John Paul II for May 21st.

Since nearly half of all marriages in the United States end in divorce, St. Eugene can be close to a growing segment of the population, a group of people who often experience emotional brokenness and who even feel abandoned by God. The breakup of a marriage can destroy all sense of security and open the way to a scary world of uncertainty.

Since the Church continually looks for new ways to minister to families and marriages in crisis, a saint like Eugene de Mazenod is much needed. From his place in heaven, he knows what it's like to be abandoned by an unstable parent. St. Eugene's prayers can be supportive for the victims of nuptial tragedies who feel overwhelmed and are trying to cope with life minute-by-minute. The Church needs a saint who can reach out to those going through an unwanted divorce. It needs a model of grace to support the survivors of broken families, to provide hope and encouragement for those trying to recover from the myriad of disappointments of divorce.

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