

Memorial of Saint Severinus

The relics of Saint Severinus are preserved in Villa Tevere in Rome, where the central offices of Opus Dei are located. In the centers of the Prelature the votive Mass in honor Saint Severinus is celebrated on 8 November.

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In 1957, Cardinal Marcello Mimmi, Archbishop of Naples, gave Saint Josemaría the saint's relics, which had been kept in the sacristy of the Gesù Vecchio church in Naples. The writer Carmela Politi Cenere recounts the history in her book *Napoli e le certezze di san Josemaría* (Rolando Editore, 2010).

The relics of Saint Severinus had been donated in the mid-nineteenth century by Pope Gregory XVI to the Neapolitan church of Saints Matthew and Francis, from where years later they were transferred to Gesù Vecchio.

In Naples, devotion to relics is one of most striking things that attracts the attention of those who visit churches there. The church of Gesu Vecchio, where the relics of Saint Severinus had been kept, has a chapel with two side walls totally covered with reliquaries, each one clearly

identified for the saint whose remains they preserve.

The city's cathedral houses, as one of its greatest treasures, the famous relic of the blood of Saint Gennaro, patron saint of Naples.

A Roman soldier in the first centuries of Christianity

Little is known about the life of Saint Severinus. According to tradition, he is a Roman soldier who was martyred in the second or third century under Diocletian, and his relics were preserved in the Roman catacombs. The name “Severinus” means austere, firm, and may be a posthumous title in memory of his martyrdom.

A summary on the complete history of these relics, in which there are still points to clarify, is found in this article by Juan Miguel Ferrer.

Relics of Saint Severinus in Rome

At present, the martyr's relics are venerated in an oratory dedicated to Saint Joseph in Villa Tevere. In 1958, the Holy See granted the faculty of celebrating the Mass of Saint Severinus in the centers of Opus Dei on the first day of the month of November free from other memorials.

On March 25, 2013, the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments – in continuity with that faculty – fixed November 8 (or the closest unimpeded day) as the date for celebrating the votive Mass in honor of St. Severinus.

Thus his memorial is linked to the very ancient tradition of the martyrs of the *Via Labicana*, celebrated for centuries on that date.

Saint Josemaria wanted the concession from the Holy See to celebrate this Mass to be an occasion for his children to reinforce their union with the heart of the Work, since his relics are preserved in Villa Tevere, the central offices in Rome.

For Carmela Politi Cenere, the relics of Saint Severinus are “a symbol of communion with the Church and with all the cities of the world.” The relics of the martyrs are never blood calling for revenge, but rather just the contrary. They are a call to union among all men and women in Christ the Savior of the world.
