

brought from a pilgrimage to Rome. He was sent to jail, and was released after Ismael's father pleaded with someone he knew who had good connections in the republican system.

However, danger drew nearer when radicals came to Francisco's shop, demanding his blacksmith tools. Ismael and his brother Luis were hiding, but Ismael emerged and pleaded with his father not to do it, knowing that their intention was to break into the church. After a heated argument, the radicals left—but not without threatening them. Francisco sent the two boys to the lagoons of Ruidera, where they hid in a run-down farmhouse at least a month and a half before returning home.

Ismael's class of 1938 was drafted by the revolutionaries on September 18, 1937. He was transferred to Cuenca, where the anti-Catholic Republican Army converted the seminary into a barracks. He remained quiet and simple. Another transfer, and he was separated from his only friend. He knotted a frayed rope to use as a secret Rosary.

Finally, his company went to occupy Teruel, in one of the harshest winter climates in Spain. Ismael not only suffered from the weather, but also was deeply affected by how the other soldiers cursed God—sometimes, they yelled at him, demanding that he also swear. He answered with silence.

Finally, Ismael found himself in the middle of the Battle of Alfambra. According to eyewitnesses, he threw down his rifle as shells and soldiers flew past him, and he clutched his Miraculous Medal in prayer. The Nationalists won fairly quickly, and they took Ismael as one of their prisoners of war. As the prisoners were processed, many exaggerated their past merits in hopes that they would be released. Ismael could have revealed his status as a member of Catholic Action, but he didn't... "because I wanted to suffer, for God, for souls and for Spain."

Pneumonia turned into tuberculosis. He lived on a hospital bed for the last several months of his life, where he was able to receive the sacraments for the first time in two years. He died making an act of trust in the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

Socials with the Saints

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Sources incl. 1.) IsmaelDeTomelloso.com, 2.) Spanish Biographical Dictionary (DBE.RAH.es), 3.) Catholic News Agency 4.) Camacho Zancada, Blas. *Ismael de Tomelloso: In silentio...*



Ismael de Tomelloso

Ismael Molinero Novillo

Born: 1 May 1917, Tomelloso, Spain

Died: 5 May 1938

Cause for Canonization opened May 2008

The son of Francisco Antonio Lázaro Molinero Román and Ángela María Francisca Novillo y López, **Ismael** was baptized on May 6, 1917. In all, seven of his ten siblings survived infancy, supported by Francisco's work as a blacksmith. They lived a simple life in the Spanish countryside.

That summer, the nation entered what Spanish historians call "the crisis of 1917," comprising three simultaneous challenges to the government through military, political, and social movements. That winter, the Spanish Flu became the deadliest pandemic of its time.

In 1923, a coup overthrew Parliament. Ismael entered school, and was taught by the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul and St. Louise de Marillac, the same order as St. Catherine Labouré, who had received the apparition of the Virgin Mary which resulted in the creation of the "Miraculous Medal," with an image of the Virgin Mary standing on the globe—hands outstretched, wearing rings on her fingers. From some of these rings, rays of God's grace extend toward Earth.

Ismael was a good Catholic school student, but not particularly devout. He was confirmed and received First Communion at the age of eight. When he was about ten, he accompanied his mother to the local home for the homeless elderly, where they served meals and visited with residents.

Communist revolutions abroad inspired Spanish citizens to change their country, in hopes of a better life for commoners. Many revolutionaries held sentiments similar to those who had undertaken the French Revolution, associating traditionalism with oppression. Protests flooded streets, and the King turned rule over to the military.

This paired with a perfect storm of economic depression. At the age of fourteen, Ismael was pulled out of school to help support his family by working in a dry goods store. Disconnected from his schoolmates, he began to associate with gangs of boys known for impropriety. His personality being lively and charismatic, he became popular at parties.

His talents for guitar and bandurria (similar to a Mandolin), singing and poetry, provided hearty entertainment for his new compatriots.

Ismael grew disinterested in the dry goods store, and moved to another job, where he didn't last long, either. Then, when the owners of a new fabric store heard that lively salesman Ismael was ready for hire, they took him on. Ismael, keeping up with all the fashion trends, frequently changed the store displays and offered clever discounts that kept merchandise moving.

On January 6th, Kings' Day;

He dressed up a seven-foot-tall Gipsy nicknamed "Varal" as King Balthazar. Ismael outfitted him as a real magician and gave him a scroll to hold in his hands that read: "Write your letters to the Magi Kings and leave them in our Balthazar's mailbox."

An enormous crowd visited the store and sales soared. The grateful owners gave him a generous cash bonus.

This idea was perhaps a precedent for the custom in large department stores in the West, of having children write letters to the Magi [or to Santa Claus] at Christmas time.¹

A boy a few years older than Ismael named Miguel, who was a neighbor, invited Ismael to the newly erected Catholic Action Center in Tomelloso, making sure to note its regular poetry readings and musical sessions. Miguel gave Ismael a tour of the place, with its library and game tables. He also introduced him to the Center's priest advisor, Fr. Bernabé Huertas Molina. Ismael was initially impressed, and promised to visit. However, he began to make excuses that his Catholic education had been very limited. After a while, he compared his friends with the youth at the Catholic Action Center, and changed his mind.

Ismael started to see Fr. Bernabé for regular confession and spiritual direction. The Advisor's later testimony about Ismael was, "He communicated fire, a healthy restlessness, an anxiety for lofty ideals, and made us want to sacrifice ourselves."

Slowly, Ismael's parents began to see a change in their son: from apathy to light and joy, as well as a dedication to others. His happiness came forth in poems which he gifted to the outcasts he encountered: the poor, the elderly, young children, lonely neighbors. "Since I don't know how to

speaking and I'm not very smart," he said, "I wouldn't be able to talk about good things or about religion; for this reason, I want to be a life example."

On his frequent visits to the elderly, he played guitar and sang traditional Spanish dance songs, *jotas*, as well as performing poetry, skits, and organizing dances and theatrical plays. He particularly made it his mission to cheer up one old woman who always complained and hardly ate. He sat with her and joked, then playfully filled her spoon with food and helped her feed herself, as one would an infant. Each of the residents knew that Ismael loved them.

On the way to work, he would spread this joy and often quietly pay a visit to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. Sometimes, before the Tabernacle he would simply stop and gaze for a long time. He would often speak about how the Lord was 'all alone,' and began to visit the Holy Eucharist more frequently. In addition to daily morning and evening prayers, he often spent long times in silent prayer in the evenings, and he asked his friends for advice on how to practice bodily penances.

In 1935, he participated in Spiritual Exercises at the seminary of Ciudad Real, and grew fond of the priest who led the retreat as well as the seminarians. Soon, Ismael would find himself saying occasionally, "I'd like to be a priest," and by his example, many young men around him entered the seminary. Sadly, he knew that his family's situation would lead them to reject any proposal of his living in religious or clerical life.

This is particularly true given the social climate. After the 1931 elections had made evident the country's revolutionary ideals, the King had fled into hiding, and the monarchy had been abolished. Catholic institutions were separated from the State, which led to many priests losing their salaries and churches closing due to lack of income. The Jesuits were expelled. The Prime Minister declared that Spain would no longer be a Catholic nation. Citizens began to burn churches and murder priests.

Pro-military nationalists faced off against the republican revolutionaries, and the Spanish Civil War began on July 18, 1936. Ismael and his friends attended secret Mass until they were thrown in jail; only released after a hefty fine was paid. On July 26, the feast day of Saint Ann, radicals burned the sacred art in Tomelloso's church. Ismael managed to save a piece of ribbon from the Pontifical Flag that Catholic Action had