BOOKLET TO PRINT

King David

Life, prayer and novena

Feast day: December 29

IN BRIEF

King David

Shepherd of Bethlehem who became king of Israel around 1000 BC, traditional author of the Psalms and ancestor of Jesus, remembered on December 29.

Feast day	December 29
Era	10th century BC
Patron saint of	musicians, poets, shepherds, penitents

In this booklet

Life

Prayer with King David

Novena with King David

Credits and sources

Booklet offered by Saintspedia, the directory of Catholic saints: lives of the saints, prayers, novenas and places of pilgrimage, at saintspedia.com. Texts written by Saintspedia, except traditional prayers marked as such. Original prayers and novenas are not official liturgical texts. Free booklet, to print and share for personal, family or parish use; please do not sell it.

LIFE

King David

David is the most famous king of Israel. A young shepherd from Bethlehem, he was chosen by God and anointed by the prophet Samuel, struck down the giant Goliath, then became king around 1000 BC and made Jerusalem his capital. Warrior, poet and musician, a sinner who asked forgiveness, he is the traditional author of many of the Psalms. God promised him that his line would reign forever, and the Gospels present Jesus as the "son of David." The Roman Martyrology commemorates him on December 29.

Who was King David?

David's story is told in the two books of Samuel, the first book of Kings and the books of Chronicles. The youngest son of Jesse, of the tribe of Judah, he was tending his father's flocks when God sent for him. He reigned for about forty years, first at Hebron, then in Jerusalem. He is no flawless hero: the Bible tells of his weaknesses frankly. But he always turned back to God, and Scripture calls him "a man after God's own heart" (1 Samuel 13:14).

Key dates

- **c. 1040 BC**: Born in Bethlehem, in the family of Jesse.
- **Youth**: The prophet Samuel secretly anoints him, among his brothers, as future king.
- **Youth**: He plays the harp to soothe King Saul, then faces and defeats Goliath.
- **Exile**: Hunted by a jealous Saul, he flees to the desert and twice spares the king's life.
- **c. 1010 BC**: After Saul's death, he is anointed king of Judah at Hebron.

- **c. 1000 BC**: King of all Israel, he takes Jerusalem and brings the Ark of the Covenant there, dancing.
- **Reign**: Through the prophet Nathan, God promises him an everlasting dynasty.
- **Reign**: He sins with Bathsheba and has her husband Uriah killed; rebuked by Nathan, he repents.
- **c. 970 BC**: He dies in Jerusalem, having named his son Solomon as successor.

The shepherd chosen by God

God sent the prophet Samuel to Bethlehem to anoint one of Jesse's sons. The seven eldest passed before him, tall and strong, but none was chosen: "Man looks at appearances, but the Lord looks at the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7). The youngest was sent for from the fields where he kept the sheep. Samuel poured the oil of anointing on his head, "and the spirit of the Lord rushed upon David from that day on."

Soon after, Israel's army trembled before Goliath, a gigantic Philistine warrior who had challenged them for forty days. David, who had come to bring food to his brothers, stepped forward with his sling and five smooth stones: "You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord of hosts" (1 Samuel 17:45). The first stone struck the giant on the forehead. Ever since, "David and Goliath" has meant the small overcoming the strong.

The king of Jerusalem

King Saul, jealous of David's success, tried to kill him. David fled and lived for a long time as an outlaw in the desert. Twice he had Saul at his mercy and refused to raise his hand against "the Lord's anointed." After the death of Saul and of his friend Jonathan, he became king, first of Judah, then of all Israel. He

took the fortress of Jerusalem, which became the "City of David," and brought the Ark of the Covenant there to the sound of trumpets, dancing with all his might before the Lord.

David wanted to build a house for God. Through the prophet Nathan, God answered that he would build David a house, a dynasty: "Your house and your kingdom shall endure forever before me" (2 Samuel 7:16). This promise fed Israel's whole hope for the Messiah, the future king descended from David.

Sin and forgiveness

At the height of his power, David saw from his rooftop a very beautiful woman, Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah, one of his officers. He took her, then, to hide his sin, had Uriah placed where the fighting was fiercest, and he was killed. The prophet Nathan came and told the king the story of a rich man who stole a poor man's only lamb. David was outraged, and Nathan said: "You are the man!" David did not make excuses: "I have sinned against the Lord."

Tradition attributes to him Psalm 51, the Miserere, the most famous prayer of repentance in the Bible: "Have mercy on me, O God, in your goodness... A clean heart create for me, O God." The end of his reign was darkened by family tragedies, above all the revolt and death of his son Absalom, whom he mourned bitterly.

The singer of the Psalms

A musician from his youth, David is the traditional author of seventy-three Psalms. The Psalms voice all of human life before God: trust ("The Lord is my shepherd, there is nothing I lack"), distress, anger, repentance and praise. Jesus prayed them, even on the cross ("My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?", Psalm 22), and the Church sings them every day in the Liturgy of the Hours.

David, ancestor of Jesus

The New Testament opens with these words: "The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham" (Matthew 1:1). Joseph is "of the house of David," Jesus is born in Bethlehem, the city of David, and the crowds in Jerusalem acclaim him: "Hosanna to the Son of David!" In Jesus, the promise made to David finds its fulfillment: a king whose reign will have no end.

Why do Catholics honor King David?

David shows that God chooses the little ones, that he looks at the heart rather than appearances, and that sin, even grave sin, does not have the last word when we turn back to him. Christians pray with David for courage before the "giants" in their lives, to ask forgiveness, and to learn to praise God in all circumstances. He is the patron of musicians and poets.

To pray with him, read the prayer with King David, or follow the novena with King David, from December 20 to 28.

Where to remember King David

- **Bethlehem**: David's birthplace, where Jesus, his descendant, would be born.
- **Jerusalem**: the City of David, excavated south of the Old City, and Mount Zion, where a medieval tradition places his tomb, beneath the Upper Room.
- **Hebron**: where he was anointed king and reigned for seven and a half years.
- **Florence**: Michelangelo's David, in the Galleria dell'Accademia, one of the most famous statues in the world.

PRAYER

Prayer with King David

About this prayer

King David is not first of all a saint we invoke: he is a master of prayer. For three thousand years, Jews and Christians have prayed the Psalms that bear his name, in joy and in distress. The prayer below was composed for Saintspedia. It draws on the great moments of his life and a few verses of the Psalms: the shepherd's trust, courage before Goliath, the plea for mercy after sin, and the musician's praise.

Prayer with King David

Lord, God of David,
you chose a little shepherd from Bethlehem
because you look at the heart and not at appearances:
look at my heart too, just as it is.

"The Lord is my shepherd, there is nothing I lack."
Like David, I want to trust you
when the road passes through the dark valley.
Give me his courage before the giants in my life:
fear, illness, troubles that seem too great.

"Have mercy on me, O God, in your goodness."
Like David, I own my sins without excuses.
Create a clean heart in me,
and restore to me the joy of your salvation.

Today I entrust to you this intention: (state your intention).
May my life become a psalm,
a song of praise rising to you in every circumstance.

Through Jesus, Son of David, our Lord.
Saint David, king and prophet, pray for us. Amen.

Prayer composed for Saintspedia.

When to pray this prayer

You can pray this way at any time, especially on December 29, when the Roman Martyrology commemorates Saint David, before going to confession (with Psalm 51, the Miserere), in a trial that seems impossible to overcome, or for a musician or an artist. To go further, follow the novena with King David and read about the life of King David.

NOVENA

Novena with King David

This novena was composed for Saintspedia and follows King David's life in nine steps, with a Psalm for each day. It is not an official liturgical text. To finish on the eve of his commemoration, begin on December 20; it ends on December 28, before December 29, and so accompanies the days of Christmas, the feast of the birth of the "Son of David." It can also be prayed at any time.

How to pray this novena

Each day, entrust your intention to God, read the meditation, then slowly read the Psalm given in your Bible, and end with the prayer of the day. The suggested act helps carry the prayer into the day. If you miss a day, simply pick up where you left off.

Day 1: The least of his brothers

Samuel seeks the future king among Jesse's sons. God chooses the youngest, left out in the fields: "The Lord looks at the heart." Psalm of the day: Psalm 139.

Prayer: Lord, I entrust to you my intention for these nine days. You who know me, look at my heart and not my appearance.

Act of the day: Notice someone nobody ever looks at and speak a word to them.

Day 2: The shepherd

David learned to keep the sheep and defend them against the lion and the bear. He would sing of God as his shepherd. Psalm of the day: Psalm 23.

Prayer: Lord, my shepherd, guide me and reassure me when I walk through the dark valley.

Act of the day: Take care of someone who depends on you.

Day 3: Facing Goliath

Young David faces the giant with a sling and five stones, "in the name of the Lord." Psalm of the day: Psalm 27.

Prayer: Lord, give me the courage to face the giants in my life, relying on you and not on my own strength alone.

Act of the day: Take one concrete step toward a difficulty you have long put off.

Day 4: Sparing his enemy

Hunted by Saul, David could kill him in the cave of En-gedi. He only cuts off a corner of his cloak and spares his life. Psalm of the day: Psalm 57.

Prayer: Lord, keep me from revenge. Teach me to return good for evil.

Act of the day: Pray by name for someone who has wronged you.

Day 5: Dancing before the Ark

David brings the Ark of the Covenant up to Jerusalem and dances with all his might before the Lord, careless of what people think. Psalm of the day: Psalm 150.

Prayer: Lord, give me back the joy of praising you, simply, with my whole being.

Act of the day: Sing or listen to a song of praise.

Day 6: The promise

Through the prophet Nathan, God promises David a house and a kingdom that will last forever. Psalm of the day: Psalm 89.

Prayer: Lord, you are faithful to your promises. Strengthen my trust in what you are preparing for me.

Act of the day: Find one of God's promises in the Bible and copy it out.

Day 7: "You are the man!"

David has taken Bathsheba and caused Uriah's death. The prophet Nathan confronts him, and David admits: "I have sinned against the Lord." Psalm of the day: Psalm 51.

Prayer: Have mercy on me, O God, in your goodness. Create a clean heart in me.

Act of the day: Make an honest examination of conscience and, if you can, go to confession.

Day 8: The weeping father

His son Absalom rebels against him and dies. David weeps: "My son Absalom! If only I had died instead of you!" Psalm of the day: Psalm 3.

Prayer: Lord, I entrust to you torn families and parents who mourn a child.

Act of the day: Make a gesture of reconciliation in your family.

Day 9: The Son of David

A thousand years after David, in Bethlehem, Jesus is born, "Son of David," the king whose reign will have no end. Psalm of the day: Psalm 110.

Prayer: Jesus, Son of David, reign over my life. I place in your hands the intention of this novena. Amen.

Act of the day: Spend a moment before a Nativity scene or image.

Closing prayer

God of David, you made a shepherd a king and a sinner a saint: receive the intention I have entrusted to you during these nine days. Make my life a song of praise, like the Psalms of David. Through Jesus, Son of David, our Lord. Saint David, king and prophet, pray for us. Amen.

Credits and sources

Texts: Saintspedia (saintspedia.com). The sources cited in each part are those of the corresponding page of the website. Biographical data partly from Wikidata (CC0). Font: EB Garamond (SIL Open Font License).



More free booklets

Lives of the saints, prayers, novenas and places of pilgrimage: find all the booklets to print at

saintspedia.com