

BOOKLET TO PRINT

Pope Saint Adeodatus I (Deusdedit)

Life, prayer and novena

Feast day: November 8

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IN BRIEF

Pope Saint Adeodatus I (Deusdedit)

Pope from 615 to 618, a Roman priest devoted to his clergy, credited with the first lead papal seals.

Feast day	November 8
Born	c. 550, Rome
Died	November 8, 618, Rome
Era	7th century

In this booklet

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Credits and sources

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LIFE

Pope Saint Adeodatus I (Deusdedit)

Saint Adeodatus I, also known as Deusdedit, was pope from 615 to 618. The son of a Roman subdeacon, he served the Church as a priest for forty years before being elected at an advanced age. The first simple priest to become pope in nearly a century, he showed great attachment to his clergy. He is credited with introducing lead seals, the "bullae," on papal documents. His feast day is November 8, the day of his death.

Who was Saint Adeodatus I?

What little we know of him comes from the *Liber Pontificalis*, the ancient book of the popes, and from an epitaph later composed for his tomb in Saint Peter's by Pope Honorius I. Born in Rome around 550, he was the son of a subdeacon named Stephen. He exercised his ministry as a priest in Rome for four decades.

A tradition, which nothing really confirms, makes him a Benedictine monk. He was elected on October 19, 615, to succeed Saint Boniface IV, and still had to wait several months for the approval of the emperor in Constantinople, as was the custom at the time.

Key dates in the life of Adeodatus I

- **Around 550**: Born in Rome.
- **October 19, 615**: Elected bishop of Rome.
- **During his pontificate**: Revolt of the Byzantine troops in Italy and murder of the exarch of Ravenna; the pope remains loyal to the emperor.
- **August 618**: An earthquake strikes Rome, followed by an epidemic.
- **November 8, 618**: He dies in Rome and is buried in Saint Peter's Basilica.

One name, several forms

The documents of his own time call him *Deusdedit*, "God has given." Another pope, elected in 672, bore the very similar name *Adeodatus*, "given by God." The lists eventually confused the two names and numbered these popes Adeodatus I and Adeodatus II. This explains the many forms found in different languages: Adeodatus, Deusdedit, or in French Adéodat and Dieudonné. In English-language sources he is most often called Pope Deusdedit, sometimes Saint Adeodatus I.

A pope from the clergy of Rome

Priests rather than monks

Since Saint Gregory the Great, the popes had readily entrusted the offices of the Roman Church to monks. Part of the secular clergy had grown bitter about this. Adeodatus represented that clergy: the *Liber Pontificalis* notes with satisfaction that he "greatly loved the clergy" and preferred to give responsibilities to priests rather than to monks.

He gave back to the clerics the administrative posts that his predecessor had given to monks, and he ordained fourteen priests for Rome. He also asked the Roman clergy to celebrate an evening office, on the model of the morning office.

A generous testament

At his death, he left each of his clerics the equivalent of a year's income. He is the first pope known to have left such a gift to his clergy, a gesture that says much about the bond between this old priest and those who worked with him.

The first papal bull

According to tradition, Adeodatus was the first pope to seal his acts with a lead seal, the *bulla*, which would later give its name to "papal bulls." An example from his time has been preserved. On one side it shows the Good Shepherd among his sheep, with the Greek letters alpha and omega; on the other, the inscription *Deusdedit Papae*.

The image chosen for the seal is telling: Christ the Good Shepherd, who knows his sheep and gives his life for them. It is a fitting emblem for a pope remembered above all for his care for those entrusted to him.

What does his holiness teach us?

The last years of his pontificate were marked by misfortune: a military revolt, the murder of the exarch, an earthquake and then an epidemic. His epitaph, written by Honorius I, describes him as simple, devout, wise and shrewd.

Adeodatus is a saint of the everyday life of the Church: an old and faithful priest, attentive to those who worked with him. Listed in the Roman Martyrology, he is also venerated by the Orthodox Church, among the popes who lived before the separation of 1054.

His example speaks especially to parish priests and to all who work in the background of the Church. He was not a great reformer or a celebrated writer. He was a man who knew his colleagues by name, defended their place, prayed with them morning and evening, and thought of them even in his will. In a Church that sometimes forgets its elderly priests, his memory is a quiet invitation to gratitude.

To pray with him, see the prayer to Saint Adeodatus I and the novena to Saint Adeodatus I, which ends on his feast day, November 8.

Is Saint Adeodatus I the patron saint of anything?

No official patronage is attached to him. Given his life, Catholics can naturally turn to him for priests, especially elderly priests and those who have served the same parish for many years, and for good relations between bishops and their clergy. Because of the earthquake and epidemic that struck Rome at the end of his life, he can also be invoked in times of natural disaster and disease.

Symbols and how to recognize Saint Adeodatus I in art

No ancient image of him has survived. He is shown as a pope in liturgical vestments, as in the 19th-century mosaic medallion of the Basilica of Saint Paul Outside the Walls in Rome, which is an imaginary portrait. His most authentic "image" is his lead seal, with the Good Shepherd surrounded by his sheep.



The church of San Bartolomeo in Valnogaredo, where his tomb was transferred.

Where to pray to Saint Adeodatus I

- **Rome**: Saint Peter's Basilica, where he was first buried.
- **Valnogaredo** (municipality of Cinto Euganeo, Veneto, Italy): the church of San Bartolomeo, where his tomb was transferred at the request of Pope Innocent XII at the end of the 17th century.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Adeodatus I for Priests

No traditional prayer to Saint Adeodatus I (Deusdedit) has come down to us. This Roman priest, elected pope after forty years of ministry, loved his clergy, cared for the people of Rome during an earthquake and an epidemic, and sealed his letters with the image of the Good Shepherd. He is a fitting intercessor for priests and for all who serve faithfully over a long life. Here is an original prayer inspired by his life.

Prayer to Saint Adeodatus I

Saint Adeodatus, whose name means "given by God," you served the Church of Rome as a priest for forty years before becoming its shepherd: teach me faithfulness in the long run, day after day, year after year.

You loved the priests who worked beside you and left them a gift at your death: bless the priests of my parish and my diocese, especially those who are old, tired or alone. Give them joy in their ministry and friends to support them.

You chose the image of the Good Shepherd to seal your letters: help me to know the voice of Christ and to follow him, and to care for those he entrusts to me.

You guided your people through an earthquake and an epidemic: comfort all who suffer from disasters and disease, and give strength to those who care for them.

I also entrust to you my intention: (name it in silence).

Through Christ, the Good Shepherd, who lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.

This prayer is an original text by Saintspedia, free to use for personal and community prayer.

When to pray this prayer

- On his feast day, November 8, or during the novena to Saint Adeodatus I, from October 31 to November 8.
- For priests, especially on the anniversary of a priest's ordination or at a jubilee.
- For vocations to the diocesan priesthood.
- After an earthquake, a natural disaster or during an epidemic.
- When you feel weary after many years of service, in your family, your work or your parish.

A short prayer for priests

> *Lord Jesus, Good Shepherd, through the intercession of Saint Adeodatus I, keep our priests close to your heart. Renew their strength, guard them in their trials and let them know they are loved by the people they serve. Amen.*

This short prayer is also an original text by Saintspedia. To learn more, read the life of Saint Adeodatus I.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Adeodatus I

This novena is an original composition by Saintspedia, inspired by the life of Pope Saint Adeodatus I, also called Deusdedit. It is not an official liturgical text. To end on his feast, begin on October 31: the ninth day then falls on November 8. These days include the solemnity of All Saints and the commemoration of All Souls, a fitting setting for a saint whose holiness was quiet and ordinary. You can also pray it at any time of year, especially for priests.

How to pray this novena

Each day, place your intention before God, read the short meditation, then say the prayer of the day followed by an Our Father, a Hail Mary and a Glory Be. The small act suggested for each day helps turn prayer into a concrete step.

You may begin each day with this opening prayer: *Lord, you gave Saint Adeodatus I to your Church as a faithful priest and a caring shepherd. Through his intercession, hear the prayer I bring you today. Amen.*

If you miss a day, simply pick up where you left off. Perseverance matters more than perfection. You can pray this novena alone, with your family or with your parish community.

Day 1: Given by God

His name, Deusdedit or Adeodatus, means "God has given" or "given by God." Every life is a gift received from God, and every vocation is a gift to others.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for the gift of my life. Help me to become a gift for others.

Today: Write down three gifts you have received from God this week and thank him for them.

Day 2: The son of a subdeacon

Adeodatus grew up in a family that served the Church: his father Stephen was a subdeacon. Faith is often handed on first at home.

Prayer: Lord, bless Christian families and make them places where vocations can grow.

Today: Pray with your family, or pray for a family you know.

Day 3: Forty years of ministry

He served as a priest in Rome for four decades before becoming pope. His holiness was built in the patience of long, ordinary years.

Prayer: Lord, give me faithfulness in the long run, and joy in daily service.

Today: Thank a priest who has served your parish for many years.

Day 4: Elected in old age

Adeodatus was elected pope at an advanced age. God can call at any time of life; old age is not the end of fruitfulness. The experience and patience gathered over the years can become a treasure for the whole community.

Prayer: Lord, bless the elderly, and let them know how much they are needed.

Today: Visit or call an elderly person.

Day 5: Loving his clergy

The *Liber Pontificalis* says that he "greatly loved the clergy." He ordained fourteen priests for Rome and entrusted them with responsibilities. A good leader trusts those who work with him.

Prayer: Lord, bless our priests, and send workers into your harvest.

Today: Pray for vocations, or offer a word of encouragement to a priest or seminarian.

Day 6: Praying in the evening

He asked the clergy of Rome to celebrate an evening office, as they did in the morning. The day is meant to begin and end in God's presence. Today the whole Church still prays Evening Prayer, and lay people are invited to join in it.

Prayer: Lord, may my day begin and end with you.

Today: Pray Evening Prayer, or take a few minutes of prayer before going to bed.

Day 7: The Good Shepherd

His lead seal showed the Good Shepherd among his sheep. Christ knows each of us by name and does not abandon anyone. A pope who chose this image was reminding himself, and his readers, whose servant he was.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, Good Shepherd, seek me when I stray and bring me home.

Today: Read John 10:11-18 slowly.

Day 8: Earthquake and epidemic

In 618, an earthquake struck Rome, followed by an epidemic. The old pope lived his last months among a suffering people.

Prayer: Lord, comfort the victims of disasters and disease, and strengthen those who care for them.

Today: Give to a relief organization or pray for a region hit by a disaster.

Day 9: A generous farewell

At his death on November 8, 618, Adeodatus left each of his clerics a year's income. He ended his life as he had lived it, thinking of others. True generosity does not wait for the last moment, but it can be crowned by it.

Prayer: Lord, I place in your hands the intention of this novena. Through the intercession of Saint Adeodatus I, let me live and die with an open hand. Amen.

Today: Make a generous gift, of money or time, to your parish or to someone in need.

Closing prayer

Saint Adeodatus I, at the end of these nine days, I entrust to you the intention I have brought before God. You served the Church with simplicity and faithfulness for a whole lifetime, you loved your brother priests and you cared for your people in their trials. Pray for me, that I may follow Christ the Good Shepherd and serve my brothers and sisters with a generous heart. Amen.

You can end with the Our Father, the Hail Mary and the Glory Be, then thank God for the graces received during these nine days.

To go further, read the life of Saint Adeodatus I and the prayer to Saint Adeodatus I.

CREDITS

Credits and sources

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