

BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Agabus, Prophet

Life, prayer and novena

Feast day: April 8

IN BRIEF

Saint Agabus, Prophet

Christian prophet of the first century, mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles.

Feast day	April 8
Died	Antioch (according to tradition)
Era	1st century

In this booklet

Life

Prayer to Saint Agabus for Courage and Truth

Novena to Saint Agabus the Prophet

Credits and sources

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LIFE

Saint Agabus, Prophet

Saint Agabus was a Christian prophet of the first century, mentioned twice by Saint Luke in the Acts of the Apostles. Coming from Jerusalem, he foretold a great famine in Antioch. Years later, in Caesarea, he predicted Saint Paul's arrest with a striking gesture: he bound his own feet and hands with the apostle's belt. According to tradition, he died a martyr in Antioch. The Catholic Church remembers him on April 8.

Who was Saint Agabus?

Agabus belonged to a group that the Acts of the Apostles calls "prophets": Christians who received from the Holy Spirit words to enlighten and warn the communities. In the early Church this gift was well known. Saint Paul lists it among the charisms, right after that of the apostles (1 Corinthians 12:28), and Luke mentions several prophets in Jerusalem and in Antioch.

Nothing is known of his family or of his life before these episodes. A later tradition counts him among the seventy disciples whom Jesus sent out on mission (Luke 10) and among the hundred and twenty disciples present at Pentecost. These details do not appear in the New Testament, and they should be read as pious tradition rather than history.

Key dates

- **The 40s AD**: Having come from Jerusalem to Antioch with other prophets, he foretells a great famine (Acts 11:27-28).
- **Reign of Claudius (41-54)**: Famine strikes Judea; the Christians of Antioch send help through Barnabas and Saul.
- **c. 57**: In Caesarea, he predicts Paul's arrest in Jerusalem (Acts 21:10-11).
- **According to tradition**: Martyrdom in Antioch.

The famine foretold

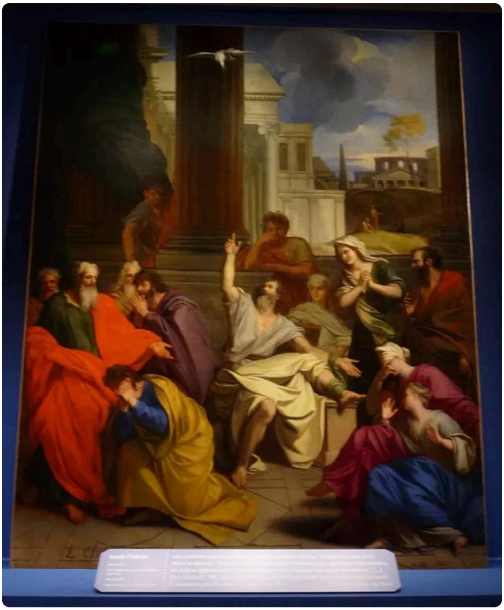
The first episode takes place in Antioch of Syria, the great city where the disciples were first called "Christians." Prophets came down from Jerusalem, and one of them, Agabus, stood up and announced through the Spirit a great famine over the whole world (Acts 11:27-28). Luke notes that it took place under the emperor Claudius, and ancient sources do speak of food shortages in several regions of the Empire in those years.

What matters most in the story is what happened next. The prophecy did not cause panic; it produced solidarity. Each according to their means, the disciples of Antioch decided to send help to the brothers and sisters living in Judea, and they entrusted the collection to Barnabas and Saul (Acts 11:29-30). The prophetic word led straight to concrete charity.

Paul's belt

The second episode takes place some fifteen years later in Caesarea, on the coast. Paul was staying there, in the house of Philip the evangelist, before going up to Jerusalem. Agabus arrived from Judea, took the apostle's belt, bound his own feet and hands with it and said: "Thus saith the Holy Ghost: The man whose girdle this is, the Jews shall bind in this manner in Jerusalem, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles" (Acts 21:11, Douay-Rheims).

This gesture recalls the prophets of the Old Testament, who acted out their messages. Paul's companions begged him not to go. Paul answered that he was ready not only to be bound, but also to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus. The prophecy came true soon after: Paul was arrested in the Temple of Jerusalem.



The Prophet Agabus Foretelling Saint Paul's Sufferings, by Louis Chéron, Notre-Dame de Paris.

What Saint Agabus teaches today

Agabus appears only briefly in Scripture, yet both of his scenes carry a lesson. The first is about listening. The community of Antioch did not argue with the warning or ignore it: it took it seriously and acted. Many parishes and families today face hard news, such as a crisis, an illness or a loss of work, and the response of Antioch is still a good one: share according to your means.

The second is about freedom. Agabus did not tell Paul what to do. He simply said what was coming. Paul, fully informed, chose to go on. The prophet respected the apostle's conscience, and the apostle accepted the cross with open eyes. Love tells the truth, and then leaves the other free.

Is Saint Agabus the patron saint of anything?

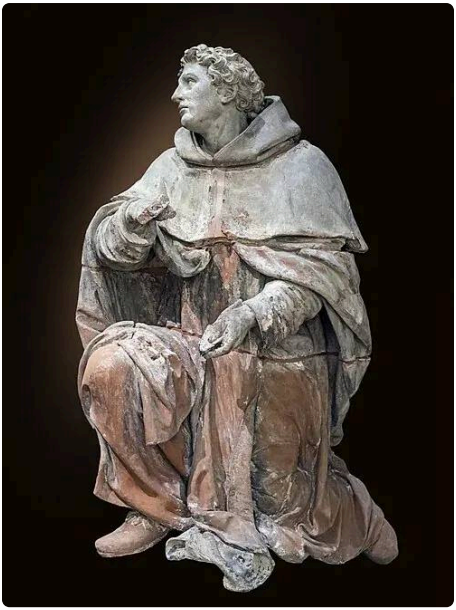
No particular patronage is traditionally attached to Saint Agabus. His story still speaks to many people. He can be invoked by those who must deliver a hard truth with love, by preachers and catechists, and by all who wish to turn bad news into an act of solidarity, as the Christians of Antioch did.

His witness also helps to understand Christian prophecy. It is not fortune telling: it serves the community. In Antioch it gave rise to generosity; in Caesarea it prepared Paul for his trial without turning him from his path. A true word, even one that is hard to hear, can be a service rendered to others.

Symbols and how to recognize Saint Agabus in art

- **A belt or cord** binding his hands or feet, the sign of his prophecy to Paul.
- **The features of an old prophet**, bearded, with an inspired look and a raised gaze.
- **A scene with Saint Paul and the disciples** in Caesarea, often weeping or pleading with the apostle.

He is a rare subject in art. Among the best known works are a painting by the Spanish artist Juan Bautista Maíno, a large canvas by Louis Chéron painted for Notre-Dame de Paris and a baroque sculpture by Marc Arcis in the Musée des Augustins in Toulouse.



The Prophet Agabus, sculpture by Marc Arcis, Musée des Augustins, Toulouse.

Where to pray to Saint Agabus

No major shrine is dedicated to Saint Agabus. Tradition places his martyrdom in Antioch, today Antakya in Turkey, the city where he first spoke. He can be prayed to anywhere, especially on April 8, or while reading chapters 11 and 21 of the Acts of the Apostles. The prayer to Saint Agabus and the novena to Saint Agabus can help you do so.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Agabus for Courage and Truth

Saint Agabus, the prophet of the Acts of the Apostles, has no traditional prayer of his own. His two short appearances in Scripture, the famine foretold in Antioch and the belt of Paul in Caesarea, offer a rich theme: listening to the Holy Spirit, speaking the truth with love and answering hard news with generosity. This prayer is an original text by Saintspedia.

Prayer to Saint Agabus

Saint Agabus, prophet of the early Church, you listened to the Holy Spirit and spoke His word without fear.

In Antioch, you announced a famine, and your word moved the disciples to share what they had. Teach me to answer bad news not with panic, but with charity. Open my hands to those who lack bread, work or hope.

In Caesarea, you told Paul the truth about the chains that awaited him, and you left him free to choose. Give me the courage to speak a true word when it is needed, with gentleness and respect, and the humility to receive the truth when others tell it to me.

Pray for those who must announce difficult things: doctors, parents, pastors, friends. Pray for those who are about to face a trial, that they may face it, like Paul, with trust in the Lord Jesus.

I entrust to you my intention: (name it in silence). Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

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

When to pray this prayer

- **On April 8**, the day the Church remembers Saint Agabus.
- **Before a difficult conversation**, when you must tell someone a hard truth.
- **When bad news falls** on your family, your parish or your town, to ask for a generous response.
- **Before a trial you can see coming**, such as surgery, a court case or a hard decision.
- **When reading the Acts of the Apostles**, especially chapters 11 and 21.

A word of Scripture to pray with

Paul's answer to the warning of Agabus can become a prayer of its own:

> *"What do you mean, weeping and afflicting my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but to die also in Jerusalem, for the name of the Lord Jesus." (Acts 21:13, Douay-Rheims)*

Read slowly, this verse asks for the grace of a trust stronger than fear. Learn more on the page Saint Agabus, or pray for nine days with the novena to Saint Agabus.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Agabus the Prophet

This novena is an original composition by Saintspedia, built on the two passages of the Acts of the Apostles that speak of Saint Agabus. It is not an official liturgical text. To end it on the eve of his memorial, begin on March 30; it ends on April 7, the day before his feast on April 8. It can also be prayed at any time of the year, before a hard decision, a difficult conversation or a trial you see coming.

We know very little about Agabus. But what Scripture says is enough to guide nine days of prayer: a prophet who listened to the Holy Spirit, a community that answered with generosity, and an apostle who chose to go forward in trust.

The first five days follow the scene in Antioch, where a warning became a work of charity. The last four follow the scene in Caesarea, where a hard truth was spoken and freely received. Together they form a small school of discernment: listen, share, speak truly and trust.

How to pray this novena

Each day, place your intention before God, read the meditation and, if you can, the Bible passage it refers to (Acts 11:19-30 and Acts 21:1-14). Say the prayer of the day, then an Our Father, a Hail Mary and a Glory Be. The suggested act helps you carry the prayer into the day. If you miss a day, simply continue: a novena is a path, not an exam.

Day 1: Listening to the Spirit

Before he spoke, Agabus listened. Luke says that he spoke "by the Spirit." Every true word about God begins in silence and attention. Before asking anything in this novena, simply listen.

Prayer: Come, Holy Spirit, quiet the noise in me and teach me to listen to you.

Today: Spend ten minutes in silence, without your phone, before the Lord.

Day 2: A Church of many gifts

The early Church had apostles, prophets, teachers and many other gifts (1 Corinthians 12:28). Agabus served with the gift he had received, no more and no less.

Prayer: Lord, help me to recognize the gifts you have given me and to put them at the service of others.

Today: Thank someone for a gift you see in them.

Day 3: Bad news

In Antioch, Agabus announced a famine. No one likes such news. Yet it was a warning given out of love, so that the Church could prepare.

Prayer: Lord, when bad news comes, keep me from fear and despair. Help me to see what you ask of me.

Today: Pray for a person or a country struck by hardship in the news.

Day 4: Each according to their means

The disciples of Antioch decided to send help, each according to their means (Acts 11:29). No one was asked to give everything, but everyone gave something.

Prayer: Lord, make me generous in proportion to what I have received.

Today: Make a gift, even a small one, to a food bank or a charity.

Day 5: Barnabas and Saul

The help was entrusted to Barnabas and Saul. The word of the prophet became the work of the apostles. In the Church, everyone has a part to play.

Prayer: Lord, bless all who carry help to others: volunteers, social workers, missionaries.

Today: Offer an hour of your time for a service in your parish or neighborhood.

Day 6: A prophetic gesture

In Caesarea, Agabus bound himself with Paul's belt. Like the prophets of old, he made his message visible. Sometimes a gesture speaks more clearly than words.

Prayer: Lord, may my actions speak of you more than my words.

Today: Do one concrete act of kindness that needs no explanation.

Day 7: Telling the truth with love

Agabus did not soften the truth, but he did not force Paul either. He spoke, and then left the apostle free to choose.

Prayer: Holy Spirit, give me courage to speak the truth and gentleness to respect the freedom of others.

Today: Have an honest conversation you have been putting off, with kindness.

Day 8: The tears of friends

Paul's companions wept and begged him not to go. Their love was real, but Paul saw further. Sometimes those who love us want to spare us the cross.

Prayer: Lord, bless those who love me, and help me to discern your will even when it costs.

Today: Pray for a friend who is facing a difficult choice.

Day 9: Ready for the name of Jesus

Paul answered that he was ready to be bound and even to die for the name of the Lord Jesus. The prophecy of Agabus became an occasion of faith, not of flight.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, give me a trust in you stronger than my fears. I place my future in your hands.

Today: Name one fear before God and entrust it to Him in a short prayer.

Closing prayer

> *Saint Agabus, prophet of the early Church, you listened to the Spirit and spoke His word for the good of your brothers and sisters. During these nine days I have placed before God my intention and my fears. Obtain for me an attentive heart, a generous hand and the courage to walk forward in trust, as Saint Paul did. Pray for all who must face a trial, and for all who announce hard truths. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Read the life of Saint Agabus or the prayer to Saint Agabus.

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