BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Antonio González

Life, prayer and novena

Feast day: September 24

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IN BRIEF

Saint Antonio González

Spanish Dominican priest, missionary in the Philippines and Japan, martyred in Nagasaki in 1637.

Feast day	September 24
Born	1593, León (Spain)
Died	September 24, 1637, Nagasaki (Japan)
Canonized	October 18, 1987 by John Paul II (beatified February 18, 1981)

In this booklet

Life

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Novena to Saint Antonio González

Credits and sources

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LIFE

Saint Antonio González

Saint Antonio González (Antoine Gonzales in French) was a Spanish Dominican priest of the 17th century, born in León in 1593 and died in prison at Nagasaki, Japan, on September 24, 1637. A missionary in the Philippines and then in Japan, where Christianity was forbidden at the time, he is one of the sixteen martyrs of Nagasaki canonized by John Paul II in 1987, together with Saint Lorenzo Ruiz. His feast day is September 24, and he is honored with his companions on September 28.

Who was Saint Antonio González?

Antonio González belongs to the last generation of missionaries who tried to enter Japan at the time when the Tokugawa shogunate had closed the country to Christianity. His life is known in its main lines through Dominican sources and the file prepared for his canonization: a religious from Spain, a man of study and preaching, who left a career as a teacher to go to the far side of the world, and who died without denying his faith after weeks of ill treatment. Several details of his youth remain poorly known; the main stages, however, are well established.

Key dates in the life of Antonio González

- **1593**: Born in León, in the kingdom of Castile.
- **c. 1609**: At about sixteen, he enters the Order of Preachers (Dominicans).
- **1620s**: As a priest, he is a preacher and professor of theology, especially in the region of Ávila, and takes part in the formation of young religious.
- **1631-1632**: He sails for the Philippines and reaches Manila, where he joins the Dominicans of the University of Santo Tomás.
- **Spring 1636**: For a short time he is rector of this university.

- **Summer 1636**: He leaves for Japan with five companions and lands in the Okinawa islands; he is arrested soon after.
- **1637**: Transferred to Nagasaki, he is tried there and tortured with his companions.
- **September 24, 1637**: He dies in prison, exhausted by abuse and fever, without having renounced his faith.
- **February 18, 1981**: Beatified in Manila by John Paul II, with the other martyrs of the group.
- **October 18, 1987**: Canonized in Rome by John Paul II.

A Dominican from Spain

Born in León in 1593, Antonio entered the Dominicans very young, the order founded by Saint Dominic for preaching. After his theological studies, he was ordained a priest and became a preacher and teacher in turn. He seems to have been given the task of forming the young friars of his province. It was a life of convent, study and teaching, which could have gone on peacefully in Castile.

But the order was then sending many religious to Asia by way of the Philippines, where the Dominican province of the Holy Rosary led the missions to China and Japan. Antonio answered this call. In 1631 he left Spain; after a long crossing, he reached the Philippines the following year.

In Manila, at the service of learning

In Manila he was at once made part of the Dominican team that ran the college that later became the University of Santo Tomás. He taught there and, in the spring of 1636, became its rector for a very short time. One might have expected him to stay in this post: instead he chose to leave for Japan, where Christians, deprived of priests, lived in hiding and where every missionary risked death.

The journey to Japan and the arrest

In the summer of 1636, Antonio González set sail with a small group: the French Dominican Guillaume Courtet, the Spaniard Miguel de Aozaraza, the Japanese priest Vincent Shiwozuka of the Cross, the Japanese interpreter Lazarus of Kyoto and the Filipino layman Lorenzo Ruiz, a father of a family from Manila. They landed in the Okinawa islands. The edicts of the shogun Iemitsu then forbade the presence of missionaries and punished with death those who refused to renounce their faith. About a month after their arrival, they were arrested and imprisoned.

In 1637 they were taken to Nagasaki to be tried. The interrogations were accompanied by tortures meant to obtain their apostasy. Antonio endured them with his companions and refused to deny Christ. Weakened by ill treatment and by fever, he died in his cell on September 24, 1637. His companions were executed in the days that followed.

The cult of the sixteen martyrs of Nagasaki

Antonio González is one of the sixteen martyrs of Nagasaki, a group of men and women, Japanese and foreign, linked to the Dominican order, who died for the faith between 1633 and 1637. They were beatified by John Paul II in Manila on February 18, 1981, then canonized in Rome on October 18, 1987. The liturgical calendar celebrates them together on September 28, under the title of Saint Lorenzo Ruiz and companions. His own memory is recalled on September 24, the day of his death, notably in the Nominis calendar of saints. He is especially honored in the Philippines, in the Dominican order and by the Catholics of Japan.

What can we learn from Saint Antonio González?

Antonio González was a man of the desk and the pulpit, a professor, a rector. Nothing forced him to leave. Yet he left the security of a studious life to join persecuted Christians, knowing what it would cost. His obscure death, in a cell rather than on a spectacular scaffold, reminds us that faithfulness is often lived out over time, through weariness and hidden suffering. You can pray to him for missionaries, for teachers and students, and for Christians who live their faith where it is forbidden.

Where to pray to Saint Antonio González

- **Nagasaki** (Japan): the city where he died, with Nishizaka hill, a place of remembrance of the martyrs of Japan.
- **Manila** (Philippines): the Dominican churches and the University of Santo Tomás, of which he was briefly rector.
- **León** (Spain): his home town.
- Any Dominican church, on September 24 or 28.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Antonio González for Missionaries and Persecuted Christians

Saint Antonio González, a Spanish Dominican, left his professor's chair and his post as rector in Manila to join the persecuted Christians of Japan. Arrested and tortured, he died in a prison in Nagasaki on September 24, 1637, without denying Christ. Prayer composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. It entrusts to him missionaries, teachers and all who suffer for their faith.

Prayer to Saint Antonio González

Saint Antonio González,
son of Saint Dominic,
you loved study and preaching,
and you left everything to bring the Gospel
to brothers and sisters who no longer had priests.
Give me a heart ready for God's call.

In the prison of Nagasaki,
you endured torture, fever and abandonment,
without denying the One you had followed.
Support those who are persecuted for their faith today,
and those who suffer in silence, far from all eyes.

Watch over missionaries and teachers,
over students and those who seek the truth.
Obtain for me the grace to stay faithful
in small trials as in great ones.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

When to pray to Saint Antonio González

- On September 24, the day of his death, or on September 28, feast of the martyrs of Nagasaki.
- For missionaries and missionary vocations.
- For persecuted Christians, especially in Asia.
- For teachers, students and Catholic universities.
- In sickness, weariness or a long trial.

A short invocation

> *Saint Antonio González and all you martyrs of Nagasaki,*
> *pray for those who suffer because of the name of Jesus. Amen.*

To prepare for his feast, you can pray the novena to Saint Antonio González from September 16 to 24, and read the life of Saint Antonio González.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Antonio González

This novena follows the life of Saint Antonio González, a Spanish Dominican who died in prison in Nagasaki in 1637. Novena composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. To finish it on his feast day, September 24, begin on September 16. You can also pray it from September 20 to 28, the feast of the martyrs of Nagasaki, or at any other time of the year.

How to pray this novena

Each day, begin with the Sign of the Cross and entrust your intention to God. Read the meditation, say the prayer of the day, then an Our Father, a Hail Mary and a Glory Be. End with: "Saint Antonio González, pray for us." The act of the day helps you live the novena concretely.

Day 1: A childhood in León

Antonio was born in León in 1593. We know little about his childhood, but it was in this Christian Spain that he received the faith and the desire to give himself to God.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for those who handed on the faith to me. Bless the families who raise their children in your love.

Act of the day: Pray for your parents, living or departed, and for those who made God known to you.

Day 2: Entering the Order of Preachers

At about sixteen, he entered the order of Saint Dominic. He chose a life of prayer, study and preaching, at the service of the truth.

Prayer: Lord, give me a taste for your Word, and raise up vocations in the Order of Preachers and in the whole Church.

Act of the day: Read a passage of the Gospel slowly and keep one sentence with you for the day.

Day 3: Teaching and forming

Once a priest, Antonio preached and taught theology. He was given the task of forming young religious. Handing on is also a way of loving.

Prayer: Lord, bless teachers and educators. Give them patience, skill and love for those they form.

Act of the day: Thank a teacher or mentor who left a mark on you.

Day 4: Answering a distant call

In 1631 he left Spain for the Philippines. He left his land, his language and his habits for a long and uncertain journey.

Prayer: Lord, make me ready for your calls, even when they take me out of my habits.

Act of the day: Pray for a missionary, or support a missionary work.

Day 5: Leaving a safe place

In Manila he taught and even became rector. He could have stayed. Yet he chose to leave for Japan, where Christians no longer had priests.

Prayer: Lord, free me from attachment to security and honors, so that I may seek your Kingdom first.

Act of the day: Give up a small comfort in order to help someone.

Day 6: Companions on the road

He left with a French priest, a Spaniard, a Japanese priest, an interpreter and a Filipino layman, Lorenzo Ruiz. The Church is a family of peoples.

Prayer: Lord, make us brothers and sisters beyond languages and borders, united in the same faith.

Act of the day: Pray for the Church in Asia, and greet kindly someone who comes from elsewhere.

Day 7: The arrest

Barely a month after their arrival, they were arrested. The missionary plan seemed broken. But witness begins where human plans stop.

Prayer: Lord, when my plans fail, teach me to trust you and to bear fruit in another way.

Act of the day: Entrust a failure or a disappointment to God, without bitterness.

Day 8: Holding firm in the trial

In Nagasaki, Antonio was tortured to make him deny his faith. He refused. His strength did not come from himself, but from Christ who had suffered before him.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, support the Christians who are persecuted today. Give me the courage not to be ashamed of you.

Act of the day: Pray for a country where Christians are persecuted, or learn about their situation.

Day 9: Dying in the shadow of a cell

On September 24, 1637, worn out by fever and abuse, Antonio died in prison. His death was hidden, but it is precious in the eyes of God.

Prayer: Lord, grant me to be faithful to the end. Through the intercession of Saint Antonio González, grant me the grace I ask in this novena, if it is your will.

Act of the day: Visit or call someone who is sick or alone and, if possible, attend Mass.

Closing prayer

> *Saint Antonio González,*
> *preacher of the Gospel and faithful witness,*
> *you left security to serve persecuted brothers and sisters*
> *and gave your life in a prison in Nagasaki.*
> *Present to the Lord the intention I have entrusted to you.*
> *Keep me faithful in trial,*
> *and support all who suffer for the name of Jesus.*
> *Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

You can also pray the prayer to Saint Antonio González at any time, and read the life of Saint Antonio González.

Credits and sources

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