BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Blaesilla

Life, prayer and novena

Feast day: January 22

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IN BRIEF

Saint Blaesilla

Young Roman widow, daughter of Saint Paula and disciple of Saint Jerome, who died in 384.

Feast day	January 22
Born	c. 364, Rome
Died	384, at about age 20, Rome
Canonized	immemorial cult
Era	4th century

In this booklet

Life

Prayer to Saint Blaesilla for the Young and for Those Who Grieve

Novena to Saint Blaesilla

Credits and sources

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LIFE

Saint Blaesilla

Saint Blaesilla (Blésille in French) was a young Roman noblewoman, the eldest daughter of Saint Paula. Widowed after a few months of marriage, she turned to a life of prayer and study of the Scriptures under the guidance of Saint Jerome, and died in Rome in 384, at about twenty. We know her through the letters of Saint Jerome. Her feast day is January 22.

Who was Saint Blaesilla?

Blaesilla was born around 364 in Rome, into one of the greatest families of the aristocracy. Her father, Toxotius, and her mother, Paula, had five children: Blaesilla, Paulina, Eustochium, Rufina and little Toxotius. After her husband's death, Paula turned to a life of prayer and charity, in the circle of Roman ladies gathered by the noblewoman Marcella on the Aventine Hill. There she met Saint Jerome, who had come to Rome in 382 as secretary to Pope Damasus.

All we know of Blaesilla comes from two letters of Jerome: one written to Marcella at the time of her conversion, the other written to Paula after her death. They are passionate texts, written by a demanding teacher who loved her as a spiritual daughter. They leave us the vivid portrait of a brilliant young woman who passed, in a few months, from a worldly life to an ardent faith.



Saint Jerome with Saint Paula and her family, disciples of his teaching in Rome.

Key dates

- **c. 364**: Born in Rome, the eldest daughter of Toxotius and Saint Paula.
- **c. 383**: Married very young, she is widowed after seven months of marriage.
- **383-384**: Struck by a severe fever, she recovers and turns to a life of prayer, penance and study, under the guidance of Saint Jerome.
- **384**: She learns Hebrew in a few months and begins to study the Book of Ecclesiastes with Jerome.
- **384**: She dies in Rome, a few months after her conversion, at about twenty; Jerome writes Paula a letter of consolation.
- **385**: Criticized in Rome, Jerome leaves the city for the East, soon followed by Paula and Eustochium.

A young widow who changed her life

Blaesilla was married very young, as the daughters of the Roman aristocracy were. Seven months later, her husband died. Jerome first describes her as an elegant young woman, careful of her hair and her clothes, who spent hours in front of her mirror. Then came a violent fever that kept her in bed for nearly a month. As she recovered, Blaesilla decided to change her life.

In his letter to Marcella, Jerome greets this conversion with enthusiasm. Blaesilla gave up her finery, wore simple clothes, prayed at length, fasted and visited the poor. She did this not out of sadness, but with a joy that surprised those around her.

A love for the Scriptures

Blaesilla had a quick mind. Jerome tells us that she spoke Greek as well as Latin, and that she learned Hebrew in a few months, well enough to rival her mother in chanting the psalms. She asked him to explain to her the Book of Ecclesiastes, the book that repeats that all is vanity under the sun. After her death, Jerome finished this commentary in her memory.

A death that shook Rome

A few months after her conversion, Blaesilla fell ill again and died, at about twenty. Her funeral was celebrated with the pomp of the great families. Paula, broken with grief, fainted during the procession. Part of the crowd then accused Jerome and the monks of having killed the young woman with excessive fasting. This hostility contributed to his departure from Rome the following year.

Jerome wrote Paula a long letter, which is among his finest writings. He himself wept for the young woman, but he asked her mother not to despair: Blaesilla was alive with Christ. He promised that as long as he had breath, she would live in his writings and her name would not die.

Devotion and memory

Blaesilla appears in the Roman Martyrology on January 22, among the holy women of Rome in the fourth century. Her cult has remained discreet, with no known shrine of her own. She is rarely depicted, and usually with her mother and her sister Eustochium around Saint Jerome, as a simply dressed young woman holding a book of the Scriptures.

Why pray to Saint Blaesilla?

Blaesilla's life was short, but it shows that it is never too early to give oneself to God, and that a conversion can renew everything in a short time. She also reminds us of the place of women in the study of the Bible from the earliest centuries. Her early death touches every parent who has lost a child: Jerome's letter to Paula still speaks to them. You can pray to her for young people seeking God, for the sick and for grieving families.

Where to pray to Saint Blaesilla

- **Rome**: the Aventine Hill, where the circle of Marcella, Paula and her daughters gathered around Saint Jerome.
- **Rome**: the Basilica of Saint Mary Major, which keeps the memory of Saint Jerome.
- **Bethlehem**: the Basilica of the Nativity, near the grottoes where Saint Paula and Saint Eustochium rest.

To pray with her at home, you can use the prayer to Saint Blaesilla or the novena to Saint Blaesilla.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Blaesilla for the Young and for Those Who Grieve

Saint Blaesilla, daughter of Saint Paula, was widowed very young. After a serious illness, she gave herself to God in prayer and the study of the Scriptures, under the guidance of Saint Jerome, and died in Rome in 384, at about twenty. This prayer is an original composition inspired by her life, not an official liturgical text. It entrusts to her young people seeking God, the sick and families grieving a child.

Prayer to Saint Blaesilla

Saint Blaesilla,
young woman of Rome,
you knew grief and sickness,
and the call of God in the midst of trial.

You left behind finery and mirrors
to seek the beauty that does not fade.
You learned the language of the psalms
and loved the Word of God
with all your mind and all your heart.

Pray for young people looking for their way,
for those whom illness stops in the prime of life,
for parents who have lost a child
and can no longer find the words to pray.
Help us believe that nothing is lost
of what is placed in the hands of Christ,
who is the resurrection and the life.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

When to pray to Saint Blaesilla

- On her feast day, January 22.
- For a young person with questions about faith or vocation.
- For a young person who is seriously ill.
- For parents grieving a child, or for a young widow.
- Before reading the Bible, to ask for a love of the Word of God.

A prayer for those who mourn

Saint Jerome comforted Saint Paula after the death of her daughter. You can make his hope your own with this short prayer:

> *Lord, the one I mourn is not lost, but is with you.*
> *Comfort my heart and keep me in hope.*
> *Saint Blaesilla, pray for us. Amen.*

To prepare for her feast, you can pray the novena to Saint Blaesilla from January 14 to January 22, and discover the life of Saint Blaesilla.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Blaesilla

This novena is an original composition by Saintspedia, inspired by the life of Saint Blaesilla, a young Roman widow, daughter of Saint Paula and disciple of Saint Jerome, who died in 384. It is not an official liturgical text. To end it on her feast day, January 22, begin on January 14. It is suited to young people, the sick and grieving families, and you can pray it at any 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 Blaesilla, pray for us." The small act proposed each day helps you live the novena concretely.

Day 1: A Christian family

Blaesilla grew up in a family where faith held a great place, with her mother Paula and her sisters. Faith is passed on first at home, by example more than by words.

Prayer: Lord, bless my family. Make our home a place where we learn to love you.

Today: Pray for a moment as a family, or pray for each member of your family.

Day 2: Early grief

Married very young, Blaesilla lost her husband after seven months. She learned early how fragile life is. Grief can close the heart, or open it to God.

Prayer: Lord, comfort young widows and widowers, and all who have lost a loved one too soon.

Today: Write a note to or call someone who is grieving.

Day 3: The mirror

Jerome tells us that Blaesilla spent hours caring for her appearance. There is nothing wrong with being beautiful, but the gaze of the mirror can imprison us. God looks at us with more love than our own reflection does.

Prayer: Lord, free me from too much worry about the image I give. Teach me to see myself as you see me.

Today: Give up a small vanity for today, or some of your screen time.

Day 4: The illness that awakens

A severe fever kept Blaesilla in bed for nearly a month. In this trial, she heard God's call. God does not will illness, but he can meet us in it.

Prayer: Lord, be with the sick in their hospital beds. Let their suffering not be without light.

Today: Visit someone who is sick, or pray for a sick person you know.

Day 5: Changing one's life

Once healed, Blaesilla changed her life: simple clothes, prayer, fasting, visits to the poor. Her conversion was quick and joyful. It is never too early, or too late, to turn to God.

Prayer: Lord, give me the grace of a true conversion. Show me what I must change today.

Today: Go to confession, or prepare for your next confession.

Day 6: Learning the Word

Blaesilla learned Hebrew in a few months to read the psalms in their own language. She loved the Word of God with all her intelligence. Faith is not afraid of study.

Prayer: Lord, give me a taste for your Word. May the Bible become a love letter for me.

Today: Read a psalm slowly, in a low voice.

Day 7: All is vanity

With Jerome, Blaesilla studied Ecclesiastes: "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." This book is not a book of despair: it invites us to look for what remains when everything passes away.

Prayer: Lord, teach me to tell what passes from what remains, and to hold fast to you.

Today: Give away an object or a piece of clothing you do not need.

Day 8: A mother's tears

When Blaesilla died, Paula collapsed with grief. Jerome wrote to console her, without denying her pain. The Church does not ask us to hide our tears: Jesus wept for his friend Lazarus.

Prayer: Lord, comfort parents who have lost a child. Stay close to them when words fail.

Today: Pray for a grieving family, or quietly let them know you are there.

Day 9: Alive with Christ

Jerome assured Paula that Blaesilla was alive with Christ and that her name would not die. Sixteen centuries later, we still pray with her. God's love is stronger than death.

Prayer: Lord, strengthen my hope in eternal life. Through the intercession of Saint Blaesilla, grant me the grace I ask in this novena, if it is your will.

Today: Pray for your departed loved ones, naming them one by one.

Living the novena with Saint Blaesilla

Saint Blaesilla is a young saint. Her life spans only a few years, but it speaks to young people today: the pressure of appearances, the trial that turns life upside down, the desire for a life that has meaning. She also speaks to parents, especially those who have lost a child. During this novena, you can entrust to God a young person you know, and open the Bible for a few minutes each day, as she loved to do.

Closing prayer

Saint Blaesilla,
young widow of Rome, disciple of the Word,
in a short time you found the way to God.
Present to the Lord the intention I have carried during these nine days.
Obtain for young people the courage to seek Christ,
for the sick, peace,
and for grieving families, the hope of the resurrection.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

You can also pray the prayer to Saint Blaesilla at any time, and discover the life of Saint Blaesilla.

Credits and sources

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