

BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Cajetan

Life, prayer, novena and pilgrimage

Feast day: August 7

Saintspedia · saintspedia.com

IN BRIEF

Saint Cajetan

Renaissance priest, founder of the Theatines, patron saint of the unemployed and job seekers.

Feast day	August 7
Born	October 1480, Vicenza, Italy
Died	August 7, 1547, Naples, Italy
Canonized	April 12, 1671, by Pope Clement X
Era	16th century
Patron saint of	the unemployed, job seekers, workers, Theatines

In this booklet

Life

Prayer to Saint Cajetan for Work and Daily Bread

Novena to Saint Cajetan

Basilica of San Paolo Maggiore in Naples, Tomb of Saint Cajetan

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

Saint Cajetan

Saint Cajetan (Gaetano of Thiene) was an Italian priest of the Renaissance who founded, with Gian Pietro Carafa, the Theatines, one of the first congregations of clerics regular. At a time when the clergy was widely criticized, he wanted priests who lived poorly, prayed, celebrated the liturgy with dignity and served the sick. He died in Naples on August 7, 1547, was canonized in 1671, and is celebrated on August 7. In Latin America, and above all in Argentina, he has become the saint of people looking for work.

Who was Saint Cajetan?

Gaetano was born in October 1480 in Vicenza, then a city of the Republic of Venice. His father, Gaspare, was Count of Thiene; his mother, Maria Porto, was a deeply devout woman who raised him in the faith. Like many young noblemen, he studied law at the University of Padua and, at about twenty-four, earned a double doctorate in civil and canon law.

In 1506 he entered the service of Venetian diplomacy and joined the court of Pope Julius II, where he worked to reconcile the pope with Venice. There he saw at close range the wealth, intrigue and laxity of part of the Roman clergy. The experience marked him deeply. Instead of building a career, he set out to reform the Church from within, beginning with himself.



The Ecstasy of Saint Cajetan, by Francesco Solimena.

Key dates

- **October 1480**: Born in Vicenza.
- **c. 1504**: Doctorate in civil and canon law at Padua.
- **1506**: Diplomat at the court of Pope Julius II.
- **1516**: Ordained a priest, at thirty-six.
- **1524**: Founds in Rome, with Gian Pietro Carafa, the clerics regular known as Theatines, approved by Pope Clement VII.
- **1533**: The Theatines settle in Naples.
- **August 7, 1547**: Dies in Naples.
- **1629**: Beatified by Pope Urban VIII.
- **April 12, 1671**: Canonized by Pope Clement X.

A priest at the service of the incurable

Cajetan was ordained a priest in 1516, rather late for the time. In Rome he joined the Oratory of Divine Love, a confraternity of priests and lay people who wanted to live prayer, frequent Communion and charity more intensely. Called back to Vicenza by the death of his mother, he founded a hospital there for the incurables, patients with diseases for which there was no cure and whom other institutions turned away. He did the same in Venice. For him, caring for bodies and caring for souls went together.

Tradition relates that one Christmas night in Rome, in the Basilica of Saint Mary Major, he received the Child Jesus into his arms from the hands of the Virgin Mary. This vision, often painted, makes him a saint closely linked to the Nativity scene and to trust in Divine Providence.

The Theatines, priests who live like the apostles

In 1524 Cajetan founded in Rome, with a few companions including Gian Pietro Carafa, a new kind of community: priests who were not monks, but who lived together, took vows and devoted themselves to preaching, the liturgy and works of charity. Pope Clement VII approved it the same year. Carafa, Bishop of Chieti, in Latin *Theate*, became its first superior, and it is from this city that the religious took the name Theatines. Carafa later became pope under the name Paul IV.

Their rule was one of radical poverty: the Theatines owned nothing and did not beg, but relied on Providence to live. They wanted to show by example what a priest should be: prayerful, sober and available. Their declared model was the life of the apostles. Driven out of Rome by the Sack of 1527, they withdrew to Venice, then settled in Naples in 1533, around the Basilica of San Paolo Maggiore. Cajetan spent most of his last years there.

These were the years of the Protestant Reformation, of the election of Charles V as emperor and of the calling of the Council of Trent in 1545. Even before that council, Cajetan was one of those Catholic reformers who quietly renewed the life of the clergy. The Theatines contributed powerfully to the reform of morals in the sixteenth century and served as a model for other foundations.

Death in Naples and devotion

Cajetan died in Naples on August 7, 1547, at sixty-six, having faced many difficulties despite the success of his foundations. His remains rest in the crypt of the Basilica of San Paolo Maggiore. Beatified in 1629 by Urban VIII, he was canonized on April 12, 1671, by Clement X, together with Saint Francis Borgia, Saint Rose of Lima, Saint Louis Bertrand and Saint Philip Benizi.

Devotion to him spread widely in Italy, Spain and Latin America. In Argentina, *San Cayetano* is the patron of bread and work: every August 7, in Buenos Aires, an immense crowd gathers at his shrine, many coming to ask for a job or to give thanks for having found one. Baroque painters often portrayed him, among them Solimena, Ricci, Tiepolo and Vaccaro.

Why is Saint Cajetan the patron saint of the unemployed?

Cajetan's Theatines owned nothing and did not even beg: they trusted that God would provide their daily bread. This total reliance on Providence is the root of his patronage. Over the centuries, people who lacked bread and work turned to the saint who had trusted God for everything. He is invoked today as the patron of the unemployed, job seekers and workers, as well as the protector of the Theatines. People pray to him to find a job, for the holiness of priests and to learn to surrender to God.

Symbols and how to recognize Saint Cajetan in art

- **The black cassock** of a cleric regular, often with a white surplice.
- **The Child Jesus in his arms**, recalling his Christmas vision at Saint Mary Major.
- **A lily**, sign of purity, in some statues.
- **Ears of wheat or bread**, especially in Latin American images, for his patronage of bread and work.
- **A dying man or a sick person** at his side, as in Sebastiano Ricci's painting.

What his holiness teaches us

Saint Cajetan chose to reform the Church through holiness rather than polemics. A brilliant lawyer and diplomat, he gave up honors to serve the incurable and to form poor and prayerful priests. His complete trust in Providence, to the point of refusing all property, is the most striking feature of his spirituality.

To pray with him, see the prayer to Saint Cajetan for work and the novena to Saint Cajetan, prayed from July 29 to August 6.



Saint Cajetan comforting a dying man, by Sebastiano Ricci.

Where to pray to Saint Cajetan

- **Naples**: the Basilica of San Paolo Maggiore, where his remains rest in the crypt.
- **Vicenza**: his hometown, in the Veneto.
- **Rome**: the Basilica of Saint Mary Major, linked to his Christmas night vision.
- **Buenos Aires**: the Shrine of San Cayetano in the Liniers neighborhood, a great place of pilgrimage every August 7.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Cajetan for Work and Daily Bread

Saint Cajetan did not leave a prayer that became universal, but many popular prayers are addressed to him, in Italy and throughout Latin America, to obtain work and daily bread. Here you will find an original prayer inspired by his life and his trust in Divine Providence, which you can pray when you are looking for a job, have lost one or fear for your livelihood.

The saint of Providence

Cajetan wanted his religious to own nothing, not to beg, and to expect from God alone what they needed. This radical trust explains why, for centuries, those who lack work and bread have turned to him. In Argentina, where he is called *San Cayetano*, he is honored as the patron of bread and work.

Prayer to Saint Cajetan for work and daily bread

Saint Cajetan, you who left everything to entrust yourself to the Providence of God, teach me to surrender to him in my worries and to believe that he does not forget me.

I entrust to you those who are looking for work, those who have lost their job and those who are afraid of losing it. Obtain for them courage, perseverance and the meeting of people who will open a door for them. May no one lack their daily bread.

You who served the incurably sick, pray for those whom illness has kept from working, and for those who care for them.

You who wanted priests to be poor, prayerful and available, pray for the priests of today: may they be servants after the heart of Christ. I also entrust to you this intention: (name it in silence).

You who received the Child Jesus into your arms, keep me in the simplicity and trust of the children of God. Amen.

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

When to pray this prayer

Saint Cajetan is celebrated on August 7, the day of his death in Naples in 1547. In Argentina, many people also pray to him on the 7th of every month. This prayer is especially suited to:

- a job search, before an interview or while waiting for an answer;
- a time of unemployment, financial hardship or worry about the future;
- a long illness that has kept you or a loved one away from work;
- prayer for priests and for the renewal of the Church.

A short daily invocation

> *Saint Cajetan, friend of Providence, pray for us, that we may never lack bread and work, and that we may share them with those in need.*

For a longer time of prayer, follow the novena to Saint Cajetan, and read the life of Saint Cajetan.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Cajetan

This novena is an original composition by Saintspedia, inspired by the life of Saint Cajetan (Gaetano of Thiene). It is not an official liturgical text. To finish it on the eve of his feast, begin it on July 29 and pray the last day on August 6, so that you celebrate his feast on August 7. Many people also pray it at any time of the year when they are looking for work.

How to pray this novena

Each day, entrust your intention to God, read the meditation, say the prayer of the day and then an Our Father. The small act suggested for the day helps you carry the prayer into your daily life. If you are praying for a job, you can make your job search itself part of the novena: each application, call or interview can be offered with trust.

You may begin each day with this opening prayer: "Lord, through the intercession of Saint Cajetan, who trusted entirely in your Providence, I place before you my intention. Give me what I need, and teach me to trust you. Amen."

Each day follows one stage of Cajetan's life, from his family home in Vicenza to his death in Naples. The intention of this novena can be your own job search, a loved one's, or the needs of all who are without work in your town.



Saint Cajetan, church statue.

Day 1: Faith received from a mother

Cajetan's mother, a deeply devout woman, awakened his faith. Many vocations begin in a family, through a parent who prays and teaches a child to pray.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for those who handed on the faith to me. Bless the parents who hand it on today. Saint Cajetan, pray for us.

Today: Pray for your mother, your father or someone who first helped you know God.

Day 2: Giving up a career

A brilliant lawyer and diplomat, Cajetan could have made a career at the papal court. He chose to serve instead, and found a deeper freedom.

Prayer: Lord, free me from the ambition that draws me away from you and from others. Saint Cajetan, pray for us.

Today: Do someone a favor without trying to be noticed.

Day 3: The incurables

In Vicenza and Venice, he welcomed the sick whom no one wanted to care for. He did not choose whom to love; he went where the need was greatest.

Prayer: Lord, teach me to reach out to those who are abandoned. Saint Cajetan, pray for us.

Today: Check in on someone who has been ill for a long time.

Day 4: The Child Jesus in his arms

Tradition tells that one Christmas night, the Virgin Mary placed the Child Jesus in his arms. God gives himself to the humble and the little ones.

Prayer: Mary, place in my heart the tenderness and humility of your Son. Saint Cajetan, pray for us.

Today: Spend a moment in prayer before a Nativity scene or an image of the Child Jesus.

Day 5: Reform begins with oneself

Faced with the scandals of his time, Cajetan did not simply criticize. He changed his own life and founded a community of exemplary priests.

Prayer: Lord, convert me first, before I judge others. Saint Cajetan, pray for us.

Today: Hold back a criticism and pray for the person you were about to criticize.



Saint Cajetan, by Giambattista Tiepolo.

Day 6: For priests

The Theatines wanted to show what a priest should be: prayerful, poor, attentive to the liturgy and to the poor.

Prayer: Lord, give your Church holy priests, and keep faithful those who serve you. Saint Cajetan, pray for us.

Today: Thank a priest, or pray for one by name.

Day 7: Surrendering to Providence

His religious owned nothing and did not beg. They expected everything from God, who did not let them go without.

Prayer: Father, I place in your hands my material worries. Give me the peace of those who trust in you. Saint Cajetan, pray for us.

Today: In prayer, hand over to God one worry about money or the future.

Day 8: Bread and work

Today crowds come to ask him for work. Work is a matter of dignity as much as of bread: it lets us provide for our families and use the gifts God has given us.

Prayer: Saint Cajetan, pray for those who are looking for a job, and for those who are able to offer one.

Today: Help someone who is job hunting in a concrete way: advice, a contact, proofreading a resume.

Day 9: Persevering through trials

Cajetan faced many difficulties until the end of his life, without losing trust. His death in Naples was that of a faithful servant.

Prayer: Lord, I place in your hands the intention of this novena. Through the intercession of Saint Cajetan, grant me to persevere in trust. Amen.

Today: Give thanks for a prayer that has already been answered.

Closing prayer

Saint Cajetan, at the end of these nine days, I entrust to you the intention I have placed before you. Pray for those who lack work and bread, for the sick and for priests. Obtain for us the grace to live in trust in the Providence of God, to work with honesty and to share generously what we receive. Amen.

If your prayer is answered, do not forget to give thanks. In Buenos Aires, many pilgrims return to Saint Cajetan on August 7 not to ask, but to thank him for the job they found. You can do the same by helping someone who is still looking.

To go further, read the life of Saint Cajetan and pray the prayer to Saint Cajetan for work.

PILGRIMAGE

Basilica of San Paolo Maggiore in Naples, Tomb of Saint Cajetan

Saint Cajetan of Thiene rests in Naples, in the Basilica of San Paolo Maggiore, the Theatine church in the heart of the historic center. It was there that he lived his last years and died on August 7, 1547. His remains are venerated in the crypt of the basilica, the main pilgrimage site in his honor in Europe.

An ancient temple turned Theatine church

The Basilica of San Paolo Maggiore stands on the site of a Roman temple dedicated to the Dioscuri, two of whose ancient columns still adorn the facade. A first church was built there in the early Middle Ages. Shortly after the Theatines arrived in Naples in 1533, it was entrusted to them, and they rebuilt it in the following decades. Cajetan lived there among his brothers. After his death, he was buried there, and the basilica became the center of his veneration, with a crypt dedicated to him.



The Basilica of San Paolo Maggiore in Naples.

Visiting the basilica

The basilica faces Piazza San Gaetano, along Via dei Tribunali, one of the liveliest streets of old Naples. You enter by a grand staircase. The Baroque nave houses many works of art, including paintings by Francesco Solimena, among them an *Ecstasy of Saint Cajetan*. The saint's remains are venerated in the crypt, where the faithful come to entrust their intentions, especially their work worries.

Praying on site

Before your visit, you may read the life of Saint Cajetan of Thiene. In the crypt, you can entrust to God those looking for work, the sick, and priests, then say the prayer to Saint Cajetan of Thiene. These suggestions are offered by Saintspedia.

Other places of Saint Cajetan

- **Vicenza** (Veneto): his native city, where he founded a hospital for the incurable.
- **Rome**: the Basilica of Saint Mary Major, where tradition places his vision of the Christ Child one Christmas night.
- **Venice**: the city where the Theatines took refuge after the Sack of Rome in 1527.
- **Buenos Aires**: the shrine of San Cayetano, where crowds come every August 7 to pray for bread and work.

Practical information

The basilica is in the historic center of Naples, reachable on foot from the cathedral and the nearest metro station. It is an active church: visit outside of services and dress respectfully. Opening hours for the basilica and the crypt vary: inquire with the basilica or the Archdiocese of Naples before you come.

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).

Images

- Cover: Pedro Alonso de los Ríos, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons. Source · License
- The Ecstasy of Saint Cajetan, by Francesco Solimena.: Image: Francesco Solimena, public domain, via Wikimedia Commons. Source · License
- Saint Cajetan comforting a dying man, by Sebastiano Ricci.: Image: Sebastiano Ricci, public domain, via Wikimedia Commons. Source · License
- Saint Cajetan, church statue.: Image: Syrio, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons. Source · License
- Saint Cajetan, by Giambattista Tiepolo.: Image: Giovanni Battista Tiepolo, public domain, via Wikimedia Commons. Source · License
- The Basilica of San Paolo Maggiore in Naples.: Image: Mongolo1984, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons. Source · License



More free booklets

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

saintspedia.com