

BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Casimir

Life, prayer, novena and pilgrimage

Feast day: March 4

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IN BRIEF

Saint Casimir

Prince of the Jagiellonian dynasty who died at twenty-five, patron saint of Lithuania and of young people.

Feast day	March 4
Born	October 3, 1458, Wawel Castle, Kraków, Poland
Died	March 4, 1484, Grodno (Hrodna), Belarus
Canonized	1522, by Pope Adrian VI
Era	15th century
Patron saint of	Lithuania, Poland, young people

In this booklet

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Novena to Saint Casimir

Saint Casimir Chapel in Vilnius Cathedral

Credits and sources

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LIFE

Saint Casimir

Saint Casimir was a prince of the Jagiellonian dynasty, son of King Casimir IV of Poland, who died at the age of twenty-five in 1484. Heir presumptive to the throne, he refused a royal marriage and lived a life of prayer, charity and penance in the midst of the court. Canonized in the early 16th century, he is the patron saint of Lithuania, a secondary patron of Poland and, since 1948, patron of young people. His feast day is March 4, the anniversary of his death.

Who was Saint Casimir?

Casimir, *Kazimierz* in Polish and *Kazimieras* in Lithuanian, was born on October 3, 1458, at Wawel Castle in Kraków. He was the second son of King Casimir IV Jagiellon, ruler of Poland and Grand Duke of Lithuania, and of Elizabeth of Habsburg. Through his two grandfathers, Władysław II Jagiełło and Emperor Albert II, he was connected to the greatest families of Central Europe.

From the age of nine, he was entrusted to two remarkable teachers: the priest and historian Jan Długosz, and the Italian humanist Filippo Buonaccorsi, known as Callimachus. He received an education that was both Christian and princely, designed to make him a statesman.



Saint Casimir, an old painting in Vilnius Cathedral.

Key dates in the life of Saint Casimir

- **October 3, 1458**: Born at Wawel Castle in Kraków.
- **1467**: Begins his education under Jan Długosz.
- **1471**: At thirteen, he goes to Hungary to receive a crown offered by opponents of King Matthias Corvinus; the venture fails.
- **c. 1479-1483**: Governs Poland in the name of his father, who is detained in Lithuania.
- **March 4, 1484**: Dies at Grodno (today Hrodna, in Belarus), probably of tuberculosis.
- **1522**: Canonized.
- **1613**: Declared patron of Lithuania.
- **June 11, 1948**: Pope Pius XII proclaims him special patron of young people.

- **March 4, 1989**: His relics are solemnly returned to Vilnius Cathedral.

The prince who gave up a crown

In 1471, Hungarian lords unhappy with their king, Matthias Corvinus, offered the crown of Hungary to the young Casimir. The prince accepted, hoping to defend Christendom against the Ottomans, as his uncle Władysław III had done before being killed at the Battle of Varna in 1444. But the expedition came to nothing: the expected support failed to appear, and Pope Sixtus IV did not back the venture. Casimir returned to Poland. His father, displeased, kept him apart for a time in a fortress. This failure seems to have matured the young man, who returned to his studies and deepened his inner life.

When his older brother Vladislaus became King of Bohemia, Casimir became heir presumptive to the Polish throne and was associated with the government. When the king resided in Lithuania, from 1479, Casimir administered the kingdom in his name, and his contemporaries praised his wisdom and his sense of justice.

A life of prayer at court

His father wanted him to marry Kunigunde, daughter of Emperor Frederick III. Casimir refused and chose to remain unmarried. Tradition says that he spent long hours in adoration before the Blessed Sacrament, that he was sometimes found at night praying at the locked doors of churches, and that he had a deep filial love for the Virgin Mary.

The Marian hymn *Omni die dic Mariae* ("Daily, daily, sing to Mary") is associated with him: he is said to have asked that a copy be placed in his coffin. The text is older and not his own, but it has remained known as the "Hymn of Saint Casimir." He was also very close to the poor, the sick and the oppressed, and lived simply, with fasts that weakened his health.

Suffering from a lung disease, probably tuberculosis, he died on March 4, 1484, at Grodno, during a stay in Lithuania. He was buried in Vilnius Cathedral.

The patron saint of Lithuania

Miracles were reported at his tomb, and his reputation for holiness grew. He was canonized in 1522; sources attribute the decision to Pope Adrian VI, sometimes to his predecessor Leo X. In 1613 he was declared patron of Lithuania. In the 17th century, a magnificent Baroque chapel was built for his relics in Vilnius Cathedral.

His cult survived the trials of Lithuanian history. In 1953, under the Soviet regime, the cathedral was turned into a picture gallery and his relics were moved to the Church of Saints Peter and Paul. On March 4, 1989, as Lithuania was about to regain its independence, they were solemnly returned to the cathedral, now given back to worship. Every year around March 4, the great Saint Casimir's Fair, the *Kaziuko mugė*, still fills the streets of Vilnius.

Why is Saint Casimir the patron saint of Lithuania and of young people?

Casimir lived and died as a prince of the Polish-Lithuanian union, and he is buried in Vilnius, which explains why Lithuania took him as its patron and Poland honors him too. Lithuanian and Polish immigrants brought his name with them, and many parishes in the United States and elsewhere are dedicated to him. Pius XII made him patron of young people because he made his life choices young: he put God first, kept his heart free and served the weak, without running away from his responsibilities. He is also prayed to for those who hold power and for purity of heart.

To pray with him, see the prayer to Saint Casimir and the novena to Saint Casimir, from February 23 to March 3.

Symbols and how to recognize Saint Casimir in art

Saint Casimir is shown as a young prince in a royal mantle, often wearing a crown or with a crown nearby, and holding a lily, the sign of purity. The old painting venerated on the altar of his chapel in Vilnius is famous for a popular legend: the prince appears to have three hands, because, it is said, the painter could not erase a hand he wanted to correct.



Vilnius Cathedral, where the relics of Saint Casimir rest.

Where to pray to Saint Casimir

- **Vilnius** (Lithuania): the Saint Casimir Chapel in the cathedral, where his relics rest in a silver sarcophagus.
- **Vilnius**: the Church of Saints Peter and Paul, which sheltered his relics from 1953 to 1989.
- **Kraków** (Poland): Wawel Castle, where he was born.
- **Hrodna** (Belarus): the city where he died.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Casimir, with the Hymn Omni die dic Mariae

Saint Casimir left no writings, but for centuries a prayer to Mary has been linked to his name: the hymn *Omni die dic Mariae*, known as the "Hymn of Saint Casimir." Below you will find its first stanza with its source, followed by an original prayer to Saint Casimir.

The Hymn of Saint Casimir

> *Omni die dic Mariae,*
> *mea laudes anima:*
> *eius festa, eius gesta*
> *cole devotissima.*
>
> *"Every day, O my soul, sing the praises of Mary; celebrate her feasts and her great deeds with deep devotion."*

Source: first stanza of a long medieval Latin Marian hymn, often attributed to Bernard of Cluny (12th century). According to tradition, Saint Casimir loved it so much that he asked for a copy to be placed in his coffin, and it has borne the name "Hymn of Saint Casimir" ever since. The English translation above is by Saintspedia. English-speaking Catholics know the hymn through the much-loved paraphrase "Daily, Daily, Sing to Mary."

Prayer to Saint Casimir for young people

Saint Casimir, prince with a free heart, you preferred God to honors and to a crown: teach me to put the Lord first in my choices.

You spent long hours before the Blessed Sacrament: give me a taste for prayer and adoration, even in the middle of my busy days.

You loved Mary as a mother and sang her praises every day: lead me to her with trust.

You served the poor and governed with justice: pray for those who hold authority, for Lithuania and Poland, and for all young people who are looking for their way. Keep their hearts pure and generous.

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

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

When to pray this prayer

Saint Casimir's feast day is March 4, the anniversary of his death in 1484. You can pray to him for young people, for purity of heart and for those who carry public responsibilities. Lithuanian and Polish communities around the world, including many parishes dedicated to him in the United States, pray to him in a special way on his feast.

For a longer time of prayer, follow the novena to Saint Casimir, and read the life of Saint Casimir. His relics rest in the Saint Casimir Chapel of Vilnius Cathedral, in Lithuania.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Casimir

This novena is an original composition by Saintspedia, inspired by the life of Saint Casimir. It is not an official liturgical text. To finish it on the eve of his feast day, March 4, begin it on February 23 (February 24 in leap years). It can also be prayed at any other time, for a young person, for purity of heart or for those who govern.

How to pray this novena

Each day, entrust your intention to God, read the meditation, say the prayer of the day, then a Hail Mary, in memory of Saint Casimir's love for the Virgin Mary. The suggested act helps carry the prayer into your day.

This novena is especially suited to young people preparing a life choice, to parents and grandparents praying for a teenager, to those who carry responsibility in public life, and to Lithuanian and Polish families who wish to honor their patron.

You may also begin each day by praying the first stanza of the Hymn of Saint Casimir: "Every day, O my soul, sing the praises of Mary."

Day 1: A king's son

Casimir was born at Wawel Castle, the son of the King of Poland. He was given everything, but little by little he understood that his true dignity was to be a child of God.

Prayer: Father, teach me to receive my life as a gift and to recognize that I am your child.

Today: Thank God for three gifts you have received in your life.

Day 2: Letting yourself be taught

His teachers, Jan Długosz and Callimachus, shaped his mind and his character. Casimir accepted to learn and to grow. Humility begins with the willingness to be taught.

Prayer: Lord, bless parents, educators and teachers, and make me open to whatever helps me grow.

Today: Pray for a teacher or mentor you have known.

Day 3: Getting through failure

At thirteen, the expedition to Hungary failed and Casimir came home humiliated. That trial led him to deepen his inner life. A failure can become a turning point when we bring it to God.

Prayer: Lord, make my failures a path toward you, without bitterness.

Today: Entrust a recent failure to God and draw one lesson from it.

Day 4: Governing with justice

Put in charge of Poland while his father was away, he was praised for his wisdom and sense of justice. Power, in his hands, became a service.

Prayer: God of justice, give those who lead our countries wisdom and care for the common good.

Today: Pray for a political leader, even one whose views you do not share.

Day 5: Adoration

Tradition says he spent long hours before the Blessed Sacrament, sometimes even at night, kneeling at the locked doors of churches. The prince knew where his true King was.

Prayer: Jesus, present in the Eucharist, draw me to you and keep me in your presence.

Today: Stop by a church to visit the Blessed Sacrament.



Saint Casimir, stained glass window.

Day 6: Every day with Mary

"Every day, O my soul, sing the praises of Mary." The hymn that bears his name speaks of his love for the Mother of God, a love so strong that he wanted it to go with him to the grave.

Prayer: Virgin Mary, I entrust myself to you today and every day of my life.

Today: Pray one decade of the Rosary.

Day 7: A free heart

His father wanted him to marry an emperor's daughter. Casimir refused and chose to remain unmarried in order to give himself to God. He has become a model of purity of heart.

Prayer: Lord, purify my heart and help me to love with freedom and truth.

Today: Give up something that clutters your heart or your eyes.

Day 8: Serving the poor

The prince drew close to the poor, the sick and the oppressed. His wealth and rank became a means of service rather than a reason for pride. Holiness does not depend on what we have, but on what we do with it.

Prayer: Lord, open my eyes to those who are suffering near me.

Today: Give concrete help to someone in need.

Day 9: A life offered

Weakened by illness, Casimir died at twenty-five, on March 4, 1484. His short life bore much fruit, and generations of Lithuanians and Poles have prayed to him. Even under Soviet rule, when his relics had to leave the cathedral, his people did not forget him.

Prayer: Lord, I place in your hands the intention of this novena. Through the intercession of Saint Casimir, grant me what is good for me. Amen.

Today: Pray for the young people in your family or your parish.

Closing prayer

Saint Casimir, at the end of these nine days, I entrust to you the intention I have placed before you. Pray for young people, for Lithuania and Poland, and for those who govern. Obtain for me a pure, prayerful and generous heart.

Amen.

To go further: the life of Saint Casimir and the prayer to Saint Casimir. His relics rest in the Saint Casimir Chapel of Vilnius Cathedral.

PILGRIMAGE

Saint Casimir Chapel in Vilnius Cathedral

The relics of Saint Casimir, patron saint of Lithuania, rest in Vilnius, in the chapel dedicated to him inside the cathedral. The prince died in Grodno in 1484 and was buried in this cathedral. After his canonization, a Baroque chapel was built to receive his remains: it is now one of the jewels of Vilnius and the heart of Lithuanian devotion to its patron saint.

Vilnius Cathedral

The cathedral, dedicated to Saint Stanislaus and Saint Ladislaus, rises at the foot of Castle Hill, on Cathedral Square. Rebuilt several times over the centuries, it now presents a Neoclassical, columned facade and a separate bell tower. Several grand dukes of Lithuania are buried here, and Casimir was laid to rest here after his death.



Vilnius Cathedral, on Cathedral Square.

The Saint Casimir Chapel

In the 17th century, after the canonization of 1522 and the proclamation of Casimir as patron of Lithuania in 1613, a chapel was built in the cathedral to house his relics. Clad in colored marble and adorned with stucco and frescoes, it is considered one of the finest Baroque ensembles in Lithuania. The saint's relics rest there in a silver sarcophagus. On the altar, an old painting of the saint is venerated; according to a popular legend, the prince is shown with three hands, because the painter could not manage to erase a hand he wanted to correct.

A tomb that has lived through history

Under the Soviet regime, the cathedral was closed to worship and turned into a picture gallery. In 1953, the relics of Saint Casimir were moved to the church of Saints Peter and Paul, in the Antakalnis district. On March 4, 1989, as Lithuania was preparing to regain its independence, they returned solemnly to the cathedral, which had been given back to the faithful. This return was experienced as a sign of rebirth for an entire people.



The Saint Casimir Chapel and the saint's sarcophagus.

Praying on site

Before your visit, you can read the life of Saint Casimir. In the chapel, take time to entrust to the saint young people, families and those who govern, then pray the prayer to Saint Casimir and the first stanza of the hymn *Omni die dic Mariae*. These suggestions are offered by Saintspedia.

Other places associated with Saint Casimir

- **Vilnius**: the church of Saints Peter and Paul, a Baroque masterpiece that sheltered his relics from 1953 to 1989.
- **Vilnius**: the Church of Saint Casimir, in the Old Town, placed under his patronage.
- **Kraków** (Poland): Wawel Castle, where he was born in 1458.
- **Hrodna** (Belarus): the city where he died in 1484.

Practical information

Vilnius Cathedral is in the heart of the Old Town, a UNESCO World Heritage site. Each year, around March 4, the great Saint Casimir's Fair (*Kaziuko mugė*) draws a large crowd to the city's streets. The cathedral's opening hours and Mass times vary: check the official website of the cathedral or of the Archdiocese of Vilnius before your visit. Proper dress is required.

Credits and sources

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