

BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Castulus

Life, prayer and novena

Feast day: March 26

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IN BRIEF

Saint Castulus

Roman martyr of the late third century, officer of the imperial palace, venerated in Bavaria as patron of farmers.

Feast day	March 26
Died	c. 288, Rome
Canonized	Pre-Congregation (venerated since antiquity)
Era	3rd century
Patron saint of	farmers, shepherds, protection against lightning

In this booklet

Life

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Novena to Saint Castulus

Credits and sources

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LIFE

Saint Castulus

Saint Castulus (Kastulus in German) was a Roman martyr of the late third century, under the Emperor Diocletian. According to tradition, this officer of the imperial palace, husband of Saint Irene, hid persecuted Christians and led them to baptism before being buried alive. His relics, brought to Bavaria in the eighth century, made him a much-loved saint there, the patron of farmers and shepherds. His feast day is March 26.

Who was Saint Castulus?

The story of Castulus comes to us from the *Passion of Saint Sebastian*, an ancient but largely legendary text that brings together a whole group of Roman Christians around the famous martyr. His story must therefore be read with caution. What is certain is that his cult is old: a cemetery bearing his name existed on the Via Labicana in Rome, and his name appears in the Roman Martyrology.

According to this tradition, Castulus was an officer of the imperial household, perhaps a chamberlain or treasurer in the palace of Diocletian. His wife, Irene, is also honored as a saint: according to the same account, she is the one who nursed Saint Sebastian back to health after his first ordeal, when he had been shot with arrows and left for dead.

Key dates in the life of Castulus

- **Late third century**: An officer in the imperial palace in Rome, under Diocletian.
- **Around 286-288**: According to tradition, he shelters Christians and brings them to Pope Caius for baptism.

- **Around 288**: Betrayed by an apostate, he is arrested and martyred, buried alive in a pit.
- **Between 764 and 772**: His relics are brought from Rome to Moosburg, in Bavaria.
- **1514**: Hans Leinberger completes the great altarpiece of Moosburg.
- **1598**: The relics are moved to Landshut.

A protector of persecuted Christians

According to the *Passion*, Castulus was linked to Saint Sebastian, an officer like himself, whom he introduced at court. Having become a Christian, he used his position in the palace to help the faithful. He hid believers in his house, visited prisoners, in particular the martyrs Mark and Marcellian, and organized prayer meetings. With another Christian, Tiburtius, he led many men and women to the faith and presented them to Pope Caius for baptism.

The picture is that of a man who lived at the very heart of imperial power, in the household of the emperor who would launch the last great persecution, and who quietly turned that position into a shelter for those in danger.

The martyrdom

The group was betrayed by a false brother, Torquatus, who denounced the Christians to the prefect of the city. Castulus was arrested and tortured. According to tradition, he was thrown into a pit, which was then filled with sand and earth: he died buried alive. This is why he is often shown with a spade, alongside the palm of martyrdom.

A Bavarian saint

In the second half of the eighth century, probably between 764 and 772, two monks, Albin and Rhenobot, brought his relics from Rome to the Benedictine abbey of Moosburg, on the Isar River in Bavaria. They left a lasting mark on the history of the town and its monastery. In the early sixteenth century, the sculptor Hans Leinberger made for the collegiate church of Moosburg a great altarpiece with scenes from his life, one of the largest preserved in Bavaria. In 1598 the chapter was moved to Landshut, and the relics were placed in the Basilica of Saint Martin, where they still are.

Other relics have been venerated elsewhere: in Reichertshofen in Bavaria, in the Church of Saint Castulus (Saint Haštal) in Prague, and even in France, at Cassaniouze in the Cantal. Bavarians affectionately call him *Sankt Kastl*.

Why is Saint Castulus the patron saint of farmers and shepherds?

His patronages grew out of the popular devotion of rural Bavaria rather than from the details of his life in Rome. Once his relics arrived in Moosburg, in the heart of a farming region, the people of the countryside adopted him as their protector. For centuries they have invoked him as patron of farmers and shepherds, and as a protector against lightning, livestock diseases and horse thieves: all the dangers that threatened a farm and its animals.

His life also speaks to other situations. He can be invoked by Christians who hold responsibilities in hostile environments, and by those who hide or welcome people under threat.

Symbols and how to recognize Saint Castulus in art

Saint Castulus is often shown with a spade, recalling the pit in which he was buried alive, together with the palm of martyrdom. In Landshut, his statue stands beside that of Saint Martin, the patron of the basilica, on either side of

the chapter's coat of arms. The engraver Jacques Callot depicted his martyrdom, showing him being thrown into the pit.

What can we learn from Saint Castulus?

Even though his life has reached us through legend, Castulus embodies a quiet courage: that of someone who, from inside the halls of power, protects those who are persecuted. You can pray to him for Christians with responsibilities in hostile settings, for farmers and herders, and for those who shelter people in danger.

His story also shows how the memory of a martyr can live on. Little is known for certain about his life, yet the prayer of generations, from the Via Labicana in Rome to the farms of Bavaria, has kept his name alive for more than seventeen centuries.

To pray with him, see the prayer to Saint Castulus and the novena to Saint Castulus.

Where to pray to Saint Castulus

- **Landshut** (Bavaria, Germany): the Basilica of Saint Martin, which keeps his relics.
- **Moosburg an der Isar**: the collegiate church of Saint Castulus and its great altarpiece by Hans Leinberger.
- **Prague**: the Church of Saint Haštal (Castulus), in the Old Town.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Castulus for Farmers and the Persecuted

We know of no traditional English prayer to Saint Castulus whose text can be guaranteed. In Bavaria, where his relics have been venerated since the eighth century, farmers and shepherds have long called on *Sankt Kastl* to protect their fields and their animals. Saintspedia offers an original prayer inspired by his life and by this rural devotion.

Prayer to Saint Castulus

Saint Castulus, servant in the emperor's palace and friend of persecuted Christians, you used your position to shelter those in danger and to lead them to Christ. Give me the courage to protect the weak and to bear witness to my faith wherever I am placed.

You were betrayed by a false brother and buried alive for the Lord: support those who suffer betrayal, and all Christians persecuted for their faith today.

Protector of farmers and shepherds, bless those who work the land and care for animals. Keep our fields, our flocks and our homes from lightning, sickness and harm, and give the farmer a fair reward for his labor.

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

Through your intercession, may I be faithful in small things and generous to those who need refuge. Amen.

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

When to pray this prayer

Saint Castulus is celebrated on March 26, at the start of spring and the farming season. You can pray to him:

- at the beginning of sowing or before a harvest;
- for a farm, a herd or animals that are sick;
- during a storm, asking for protection from lightning;
- for Christians who hold positions of responsibility in a hostile environment;
- for people who shelter refugees or those under threat.

You can also pray over nine days with the novena to Saint Castulus. To get to know him better, read the life of Saint Castulus.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Castulus

This novena is an original composition by Saintspedia, inspired by the tradition of Saint Castulus, the Roman martyr venerated in Bavaria as patron of farmers and shepherds. It is not an official liturgical text. To end it on his feast day, March 26, begin on March 18. You can also pray it at any time: for a farm or a harvest, for persecuted Christians, or when you are called to protect someone in danger.

How to pray this novena

Each day, place your intention before God, read the short meditation, say the prayer of the day, then an Our Father, a Hail Mary and a Glory Be. The small act suggested for the day helps you carry the prayer into daily life. If you miss a day, simply continue the next day. Remember that what we know of Castulus comes largely from legend: the meditations draw on the tradition handed down about him.

Day 1: In the emperor's house

Castulus served in the palace of Diocletian, perhaps as a chamberlain or treasurer. He lived close to power, in a world that was soon to persecute the Church. He did not flee that world; he stayed and served Christ within it.

Prayer: Lord, you place each of us somewhere for a reason. Through the intercession of Saint Castulus, help me to be faithful to you in my workplace, whatever its spirit. Amen.

Today: Pray for your colleagues and for those who lead your workplace.

Day 2: A Christian marriage

His wife, Irene, is also honored as a saint. Tradition says she cared for Saint Sebastian after his first ordeal. Together they made their home a place of faith and charity.

Prayer: Lord, bless Christian marriages. Through the intercession of Saint Castulus and Saint Irene, may husbands and wives help each other to holiness. Amen.

Today: Pray for a married couple you know, or for your own spouse.

Day 3: An open house

Castulus hid persecuted Christians in his home and organized prayer meetings there. His house became a refuge.

Prayer: Lord, make my home a place of welcome. Through the intercession of Saint Castulus, bless all who shelter refugees and people under threat. Amen.

Today: Invite someone who is alone to share a meal or a moment with you.

Day 4: Visiting prisoners

He visited Christians in prison, especially the martyrs Mark and Marcellian, to strengthen them. He did not forget those whom others feared to approach.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, you said: "I was in prison and you visited me." Through the intercession of Saint Castulus, comfort prisoners and those imprisoned for their faith. Amen.

Today: Pray for prisoners, or support a prison ministry.

Day 5: Leading others to baptism

With Tiburtius, he led many people to the faith and brought them to Pope Caius for baptism. He did not keep his faith to himself. Tradition remembers him not only as a protector but as someone who opened the way to the sacraments for others.

Prayer: Holy Spirit, make me a witness who draws others to Christ. Through the intercession of Saint Castulus, bless catechumens and those preparing for baptism. Amen.

Today: Pray for someone preparing for baptism, or thank God for your own.

Day 6: Betrayed by a brother

The group was betrayed by Torquatus, a false brother. Few wounds are deeper than betrayal by someone you trusted.

Prayer: Lord, you were betrayed by one of your friends. Through the intercession of Saint Castulus, heal the wounds of betrayal and give me the grace to forgive. Amen.

Today: Take one step toward forgiving someone who has hurt you.

Day 7: Buried alive

According to tradition, he was thrown into a pit and covered with sand and earth. The spade in his images recalls this death, but his palm proclaims victory.

Prayer: Lord, when I feel crushed or buried by trials, be my hope. Through the intercession of Saint Castulus, strengthen Christians persecuted today. Amen.

Today: Learn about a country where Christians are persecuted, and pray for them.

Day 8: The patron of the land

When his relics reached Bavaria, farmers and shepherds adopted him as their protector. For centuries they have called on him against lightning, sickness of animals and theft. A martyr of the imperial court became the friend of country people, close to their daily worries.

Prayer: Creator of all things, bless the land and those who work it. Through the intercession of Saint Castulus, protect farmers, shepherds and their animals. Amen.

Today: Thank God for your food, and pray for the farmers who produced it.

Day 9: A saint who travels

From Rome to Moosburg, then to Landshut, Prague and even France, his relics carried his memory far from where he died. The witness of a faithful life crosses centuries and borders.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for the communion of saints. Through the intercession of Saint Castulus, may my life too bear fruit beyond what I can see. Amen.

Today: Pray for the people of Landshut and Moosburg, and for your own parish.

Closing prayer

Saint Castulus, faithful servant and martyr, you protected persecuted Christians and gave your life for Christ. Watch over those who shelter the threatened, strengthen persecuted Christians, and bless farmers, shepherds and their work. Present to the Lord the intention I have carried through these nine days, and obtain for me the courage to be faithful, like you, wherever the Lord has placed me. Amen.

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