

BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Catherine Thomas

Life, prayer, novena and pilgrimage

Feast day: April 5

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IN BRIEF

Saint Catherine Thomas

Augustinian nun and mystic of Majorca, born in Valldemossa, died in Palma in 1574.

Feast day	April 5
Born	c. 1533, Valldemossa, Majorca, Spain
Died	April 5, 1574, Palma de Mallorca, Spain
Canonized	June 22, 1930, by Pope Pius XI
Era	16th century

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Novena to Saint Catherine Thomas

Monastery of Saint Mary Magdalene in Palma, Shrine of Saint Catalina Tomàs

Credits and sources

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LIFE

Saint Catherine Thomas

Saint Catherine Thomas, known in Majorca as Santa Catalina Tomàs, was an Augustinian nun and mystic, the most popular saint of the Balearic Islands. Born around 1533 in Valldemossa to a peasant family and orphaned very young, she worked as a servant in Palma before entering the monastery of Saint Mary Magdalene, of the Canonesses of Saint Augustine, in 1553. Humble and often rapt in ecstasy, she died there on April 5, 1574. Beatified in 1792 and canonized by Pope Pius XI in 1930, she is celebrated on April 5, and every summer Valldemossa honors her with a great popular festival.

Who was Saint Catherine Thomas?

Catalina Tomàs Gallard was born in Valldemossa, a mountain village in Majorca, northwest of Palma. The sources disagree on the year, 1531 or 1533, but tradition keeps May 1 as her birthday. Her parents, who were farmers, died while she was still a child, and she was taken in by an uncle on her father's side. Her childhood was poor and hard, spent between farm work and tending the flocks.

In Majorca she is affectionately called "la Beateta," the little blessed one, and she is part of the island's identity. She goes by several names: Catalina Tomàs in Catalan, Catalina Tomás in Spanish, and Catherine Thomas or Catherine of Palma in English.

Key dates in the life of Saint Catherine Thomas

- **Around 1533**: Born in Valldemossa, Majorca.
- **Childhood**: Orphaned, she is raised by an uncle on her father's side.
- **Around 1548**: At about fifteen she feels called to religious life; her confessor advises her to wait.

- **The following years**: Working as a servant in Palma, she learns to read and write.
- **1553**: She enters the monastery of Saint Mary Magdalene in Palma, with the Canonesses of Saint Augustine.
- **April 5, 1574**: Dies at the monastery in Palma.
- **1625**: Pope Urban VIII suspends her local cult pending an inquiry.
- **August 12, 1792**: Beatified by Pope Pius VI.
- **June 22, 1930**: Canonized by Pope Pius XI.

A patient vocation

When she was very young, around fifteen, Catalina felt the call to give herself to God. But she was poor, with no dowry and no schooling, and her confessor urged her to wait before deciding. She went to Palma and entered service with a family. There she learned to read and write, which was rare for a peasant girl of her time, and she nourished herself on spiritual reading. According to tradition, she did her work with great humility and gentleness.

Several convents in Palma refused to take her, because she had no dowry or because of her humble origins. In 1553 she was at last received at the monastery of Saint Mary Magdalene, run by the Canonesses Regular of Saint Augustine.

A nun at the monastery of Saint Mary Magdalene

In the monastery, Catalina chose to remain in the humblest tasks and declined positions of responsibility. She stood out for her obedience, her spirit of penance and her charity toward her sisters. People of every walk of life came to ask for her advice and prayers. A few spiritual letters, preserved as the *Cartes espirituals*, are also attributed to her.

Her inner life was marked by many mystical experiences. Testimonies gathered after her death speak of visions of angels, of Saint Anthony of Padua and of Saint Catherine, of gifts of prophecy, and of fierce struggles against the powers of evil, from which she sometimes came away injured. Her biographers say she was healed after praying to Saints Cosmas and Damian, the physician saints.

Her last years and death

In the last years of her life, Catalina was most often in ecstasy, sometimes for several days at a time. According to the accounts, she foretold the date of her death during one of these ecstasies. She died at the monastery on April 5, 1574, at about forty years of age.

By 1577, the people of Majorca were already calling her a saint. In 1625, under the new rules set by Pope Urban VIII to regulate the cult of servants of God not yet beatified, this local cult was suspended pending an inquiry. The process led to her beatification by Pius VI on August 12, 1792, and her canonization by Pius XI on June 22, 1930.

A saint at the heart of Majorca

Her body, moved several times, is displayed for veneration in a chapel of the church of the monastery of Saint Mary Magdalene in Palma. In Valldemossa, her birthplace has been turned into an oratory, and many houses in the village bear a ceramic tile with her image and the invocation "Santa Catalina Tomàs, pregau per nosaltres," Saint Catalina Tomàs, pray for us.

Every summer, at the end of July, Valldemossa celebrates her feast with processions and a popular parade in which a girl from the village plays the part of the saint. Majorcan tradition also invokes her for travelers at sea, to protect them from seasickness.



The birthplace of Saint Catherine Thomas in Valldemossa.

Why is Saint Catherine Thomas invoked?

She has no official patronage, but Catalina Tomàs is a saint of humility and patience. Orphaned and poor, she waited years before she could answer her vocation, and in the convent she chose the lowest place. Her life shows that God gives himself to the little ones and that holiness can flourish in hidden service. She is prayed to for orphans and unhappy children, for domestic workers, for those waiting for a vocation to be fulfilled, for travelers at sea, and for growth in humility.

Symbols and how to recognize Saint Catherine Thomas in art

- **The habit of the Augustinian canonesses**, with a veil.

- **Ceramic tiles** on the houses of Valldemossa, with the invocation in Catalan.
- **Scenes of ecstasy** or of struggle against the devil, drawn from her biographies.

Where to pray to Saint Catherine Thomas

- **Palma de Mallorca**: the church of the monastery of Saint Mary Magdalene, where her body is displayed.
- **Valldemossa** (Majorca): her birthplace, now an oratory, and the parish church.
- **Everywhere**: on April 5, her feast day, and at the end of July, during the festival in Valldemossa.

To pray with her, see the prayer to Saint Catherine Thomas for humility and patience and the novena to Saint Catherine Thomas.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Catherine Thomas for Humility and Patience

Saint Catherine Thomas, the "Beateta" of Majorca, has been prayed to in the Balearic Islands since the 16th century, where many houses bear her image with the Catalan invocation "Santa Catalina Tomàs, pregau per nosaltres" (Saint Catalina Tomàs, pray for us). Below is an original prayer in English, inspired by her life of humility and patience.

The little servant of Valldemossa

Orphaned, working as a servant in Palma, turned away by several convents for lack of a dowry, Catalina waited years before she was received by the Canonesses of Saint Augustine. In the monastery she chose the humblest tasks and lived in deep union with God.

Prayer to Saint Catherine Thomas

Saint Catalina, you grew up an orphan and poor, and you served with gentleness in the simplest tasks: pray for us.

Watch over orphans, over children who lack love, and over those who work in the service of others without being noticed. Let them know that they are precious in the eyes of God.

You waited a long time before you could answer your vocation: support those who hope, those who are looking for their path, and those whose plans are delayed. Teach us patience and trust.

Protect travelers at sea and on the roads, and keep us humble, so that we may choose the last place and serve with joy.

I entrust to you my intention: (name it in silence). Present it to the Lord, who lifts up the lowly. Amen.

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

The traditional Majorcan invocation

The simplest prayer to her is the one written on the ceramic tiles of Valldemossa:

Santa Catalina Tomàs, pregau per nosaltres.
Saint Catalina Tomàs, pray for us.

It can be repeated slowly, like a short litany, during the day or before a journey.

When to pray this prayer

Saint Catherine Thomas is celebrated on April 5, and Valldemossa honors her at the end of July. You can pray to her:

- in a time of waiting, when a plan or a vocation is delayed;
- before a sea crossing or a long journey;
- for an orphan or a child who is struggling;
- for domestic workers and all who serve without recognition.

To know her better, read the life of Saint Catherine Thomas, or pray the novena to Saint Catherine Thomas.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Catherine Thomas

This novena is an original composition by Saintspedia, inspired by the life of Saint Catherine Thomas (Santa Catalina Tomàs), the Augustinian nun of Majorca. It is not an official liturgical text. To finish it on her feast day, April 5, begin on March 28. You can also pray it before the festival of Valldemossa at the end of July, or at any time of the year.

How to pray this novena

Each day, 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. You may end with the Majorcan invocation: "Santa Catalina Tomàs, pregau per nosaltres." The suggested act helps carry the prayer into daily life.

This novena is suited to those who are waiting for something important, to orphans and those who care for them, to people who serve others in hidden ways, and to travelers. Its nine days follow the path of a humble life: from the mountain village of Valldemossa to the monastery in Palma, from years of patient waiting to deep union with God. Catalina reminds us that God does not look at rank, wealth or education, but at the heart.

If you are praying for a specific intention, write it down on the first day and keep it with you. On the last day, read it again and give thanks for whatever God has done during these nine days, even if the answer is not yet the one you hoped for.

Day 1: A child of the mountains

Catalina was born in Valldemossa, a village in the mountains of Majorca, to a family of farmers. Her childhood was spent among fields and flocks. God often chooses the simple and the poor.

Prayer: Lord, bless the families who work the land, and teach me to see you in simple things.

Today: Take a moment to thank God for the beauty of creation.

Day 2: An orphan in God's hands

Catalina lost her parents as a child and was raised by her uncle. Even without a father and mother, she was never without God's care.

Prayer: Saint Catalina, watch over orphans and children who lack love, and bless those who take them in.

Today: Pray for children in orphanages or foster care, or support an organization that helps them.

Day 3: The call and the wait

At about fifteen, she felt called to religious life, but her confessor advised her to wait. She obeyed. Waiting can be a time of growth rather than lost time.

Prayer: Lord, teach me to wait with trust when my desires are not yet fulfilled.

Today: Offer to God something you are waiting for.

Day 4: A servant in Palma

Catalina worked as a servant in a family in Palma, doing her work with humility and gentleness. Every task can become an offering when it is done with love.

Prayer: Saint Catalina, bless domestic workers and all who serve others, and help me to do my work with love.

Today: Do an ordinary chore carefully, offering it to God.

Day 5: Learning to read

In Palma she learned to read and write, rare for a peasant girl of her time, and fed her soul on spiritual books. Learning can open the way to God.

Prayer: Lord, bless those who teach adults and children to read, and give me a love for your Word.

Today: Read a passage of the Gospel slowly.

Day 6: Doors that close

Several convents refused her because she had no dowry. She did not give up, and in 1553 the monastery of Saint Mary Magdalene opened its doors. Rejection is not God's last word.

Prayer: Saint Catalina, comfort those who have been rejected, and help them to keep hoping.

Today: Encourage someone who has just faced a disappointment.

Day 7: The last place

In the monastery, Catalina chose the humblest tasks and declined positions of honor. Jesus said that whoever humbles himself will be exalted.

Prayer: Lord, free me from the desire to be seen and admired, and make me glad to serve.

Today: Do a service for someone without letting anyone know.

Day 8: Strength in spiritual combat

Her biographers speak of fierce struggles against the powers of evil, and of healing after she prayed to Saints Cosmas and Damian. The Christian life includes combat, but Christ has already won the victory.

Prayer: Saint Catalina, protect me in temptation, and pray for the sick who need healing.

Today: Pray for someone who is struggling with temptation or illness.

Day 9: Lost in God

In her last years, Catalina was often in ecstasy, absorbed in God. She died in 1574, and Majorca has never stopped calling her a saint. Her humble life ended in the joy of God.

Prayer: Saint Catalina, help me to seek God above all, and present my intention to the Lord.

Today: Spend a few minutes in silent adoration, before the Blessed Sacrament if you can.

Closing prayer

> *Saint Catherine Thomas, little servant of Valldemossa, you knew poverty, waiting and rejection, and you chose the last place out of love for God. Watch over orphans and those who serve without recognition, support all who are waiting, protect travelers at sea, and teach us humility and patience. Present to the Lord the intention we have carried during these nine days. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

To learn more, read the life of Saint Catherine Thomas and her prayer for humility and patience.

PILGRIMAGE

Monastery of Saint Mary Magdalene in Palma, Shrine of Saint Catalina Tomàs

In the old town of Palma de Mallorca, the Monastery of Saint Mary Magdalene, in Catalan Santa Magdalena, is where Saint Catalina Tomàs lived her religious life from 1553 until her death on April 5, 1574. Her body is exposed for veneration in a chapel of the church, and the monastery remains the main shrine of the most popular saint of the Balearic Islands.

A monastery of Augustinian canonesses

The monastery is run by canonesses regular of Saint Augustine. It was here that Catalina, a young orphaned peasant girl from Valldemossa, was finally received in 1553 after being turned away elsewhere for lack of a dowry. She spent some twenty years there doing the humblest tasks, known for her humility, her ecstasies, and her spiritual counsel.

The saint's body

After her death, Catalina's body was moved several times within the monastery. It is now displayed in one of the chapels of the church, where the faithful come to pray and entrust their intentions. After her beatification in 1792 and canonization in 1930, the church became a place of pilgrimage for Mallorcans and visitors alike.

Extending the pilgrimage to Valldemossa

About twelve miles north of Palma, Valldemossa, her native village, preserves her birthplace, now an oratory, and many ceramic tiles bearing her image on the façades. At the end of July, the village celebrates her feast with processions

and a large popular parade.



The birthplace of Saint Catalina Tomàs in Valldemossa.

Praying at the monastery

Before your visit, you may wish to reread the life of Saint Catalina Tomàs. On site, a time of silence before her relics is a good moment to entrust to her orphans, people in service to others, and those awaiting the fulfillment of a vocation. The prayer to Saint Catalina Tomàs can accompany this moment. These suggestions are offered by Saintspedia.

Practical information

The monastery is in the historic center of Palma, reachable on foot from the cathedral and the main squares of the old town. It is a monastery with a living community, and its church is open for worship at times that may vary. Check

with the Diocese of Mallorca or the community before you come, especially around April 5.

CREDITS

Credits and sources

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