

BOOKLET TO PRINT

# Saint César de Bus

*Life, prayer and novena*

Feast day: April 15

**Saintspedia** · saintspedia.com

IN BRIEF

## Saint César de Bus

*Converted priest from Provence, catechist of the countryside and founder of the Fathers of Christian Doctrine.*

| | |
|---|---|
| **Feast day** | April 15 |
| **Born** | February 3, 1544, Cavaillon, Comtat Venaissin (France) |
| **Died** | April 15, 1607, Avignon, France |
| **Canonized** | May 15, 2022, by Pope Francis |
| **Era** | 17th century |
| **Patron saint of** | Fathers of Christian Doctrine |

## In this booklet


Life

Prayer to Saint César de Bus for Conversion

Novena to Saint César de Bus

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 César de Bus

Saint César de Bus was a priest from Provence, born at Cavaillon in 1544 and died at Avignon in 1607. A worldly young nobleman who, after his conversion, became a tireless catechist of the poor and of country people, he founded in 1592 the congregation of the Fathers of Christian Doctrine, known as the "Doctrinarians." Beatified by Pope Paul VI in 1975, he was canonized by Pope Francis on May 15, 2022. His feast day is April 15.

## Who was Saint César de Bus?

César de Bus is one of the figures of the Catholic renewal in France after the Council of Trent. At a time marked by the Wars of Religion and by deep religious ignorance in the countryside, he understood that Christian people first needed to be taught, simply and patiently.

His life is also a story of conversion: a brilliant young man, drawn to the royal court and its pleasures, who ended up giving himself entirely to God. He was nicknamed the "living catechism."



*Saint César de Bus, founder of the Fathers of Christian Doctrine.*

## Key dates

- **February 3, 1544**: Born at Cavaillon, in the Comtat Venaissin, then papal territory.
- **1561-1563**: Serves in the royal army during the first War of Religion.
- **1565-1570**: Lives at the court of King Charles IX with his brother Alexandre.
- **1570-1573**: Worldly, dissipated life in Avignon.
- **1573**: Death of his father and his brother; he returns to Cavaillon.
- **1574-1575**: Conversion, under the influence of Antoinette Reveillarde and the sacristan Louis Guyot; general confession.
- **1582**: Ordained a priest; he becomes a canon of Cavaillon cathedral.
- **1587-1590**: Lives as a hermit on Saint-Jacques hill, above Cavaillon.

- **September 29, 1592**: Founds the Fathers of Christian Doctrine at L'Isle-sur-la-Sorgue.
- **1594**: Goes blind, but continues to hear confessions and teach.
- **1597**: Pope Clement VIII approves the congregation.
- **April 15, 1607**: Dies at Avignon, on Easter Sunday.
- **April 27, 1975**: Beatified by Pope Paul VI.
- **May 15, 2022**: Canonized by Pope Francis in Rome.

## A young nobleman drawn to the world

César was born into a noble family of Cavaillon; his father was a consul of the town. He studied in Cavaillon and then with the Jesuits in Avignon, and joined the confraternity of the Black Penitents while still young. A devout teenager, he enlisted at seventeen in the royal army to defend the Catholic faith against the Huguenots, and saw the violence of the Wars of Religion at close range.

His brother Alexandre, an officer of King Charles IX's guard, then called him to court. There César discovered luxury, honors, intrigue and pleasure. Little by little, he gave up prayer. Disappointed by promises that were never kept, he left the court in 1570 and settled in Avignon, where he led an increasingly dissipated life.

## The conversion

In 1573, the death of his father and then of his brother shook him deeply. He returned to Cavaillon. A simple, devout woman, Antoinette Reveillarde, spoke to him about God without beating around the bush. One evening she told him: "God is not mocked. He is calling you and you are not listening."

According to the traditional account, César was deeply moved and decided to change his life. The sacristan of the cathedral, Louis Guyot, became his guide. In 1575 he made a general confession, gave away his possessions and set himself to serve the poor and the sick, while his former friends mocked him.

He began studying for the priesthood and was ordained in 1582. As a canon of the cathedral of Saint-Véran in Cavaillon, he spent long hours in the confessional and took as his model Saint Charles Borromeo, the reforming archbishop of Milan, who died in 1584.



*Cavaillon cathedral, where César de Bus was a canon.*

## Catechist of the countryside

From 1587 to 1590, César withdrew as a hermit to Saint-Jacques hill, which overlooks Cavaillon. In prayer, he became aware of the religious ignorance of the peasants: many did not know the Our Father or the basics of the faith. He decided to devote his life to teaching the catechism.

With his cousin Jean-Baptiste Romillon, he traveled through the villages of the Comtat and Provence, as far as the Cévennes, preaching, hearing confessions and teaching with a simple method suited to ordinary people.

On September 29, 1592, at L'Isle-sur-la-Sorgue, he and a few companions founded the congregation of the Fathers of Christian Doctrine, devoted to teaching the catechism. Clement VIII approved it in 1597. César wrote short, accessible catechisms and also founded a women's branch, the Daughters of Christian Doctrine, to teach girls in the countryside.

## The blind man who kept on teaching

From 1594, César was blind. He gave up the office of superior but continued to hear confessions, preach and teach, offering up his sufferings. He died in Avignon on April 15, 1607, Easter Sunday. His body, first buried in Avignon, was moved to Rome in the nineteenth century and now rests in the church of Santa Maria in Monticelli, entrusted to the Doctrinarians.

## Beatification and canonization

Declared Venerable in 1821, he was beatified by Paul VI on April 27, 1975, after the recognition of the healing of an Italian farmer suffering from a tumor. A second miracle, the healing in 2016 of a young man from Salerno who had suffered a brain hemorrhage, opened the way to his canonization. Pope Francis canonized him on May 15, 2022, on the same day as Saint Charles de Foucauld. The Roman Martyrology commemorates him on April 15.

## Why is Saint César de Bus a patron of catechists?

César de Bus is the patron of the congregation he founded, the Fathers of Christian Doctrine. Because he gave his life to teaching the faith simply to the poor, he is naturally invoked for catechists and teachers. His own story makes

him an intercessor for those who are trying to return to God, and his blindness for those who are blind or visually impaired.

He shows that no life is too scattered for God to take it back in hand, and that a simple word, like Antoinette's, can change everything. See the prayer to Saint César de Bus, or pray the novena to Saint César de Bus from April 7 to April 15.

## Symbols and how to recognize Saint César de Bus in art

Portraits show him as a priest in a black cassock, with a thin, ascetic face. For his canonization in 2022, a tapestry with his image hung on the facade of Saint Peter's Basilica.



*The church of Santa Maria in Monticelli in Rome, where Saint César de Bus is buried.*

## Where to pray to Saint César de Bus

- **Rome**: the church of Santa Maria in Monticelli, where his body rests.
- **Cavaillon** (Vaucluse, France): the cathedral of Notre-Dame-et-Saint-Véran, where he was a canon, and Saint-Jacques hill, where he lived as a hermit.
- **L'Isle-sur-la-Sorgue** (Vaucluse): the town where he founded the Fathers of Christian Doctrine.
- **Avignon** (Vaucluse): the city of his death, and the chapel of the Black Penitents.

PRAYER

# Prayer to Saint César de Bus for Conversion

Saint César de Bus, a priest of Cavaillon, moved from a worldly life to a life given entirely to God, and he spent his strength teaching the catechism to the simplest people. Canonized in 2022, he is an intercessor for catechists, educators and all who are seeking to turn back to God. Here are two original prayers by Saintspedia.

## Prayer to Saint César de Bus

*Saint César de Bus, you knew the honors of the court and the pleasures of the world, then heard God's call through the words of a simple woman. Pray for those who have drifted away from him.*

*You took the step of confession and conversion. Give me the courage to return to the Lord with all my heart, without putting it off.*

*You traveled from village to village to teach the faith to the poor. Bless the catechists, parents and teachers who pass on the Gospel to children. Give them patience, clarity and joy.*

*When you lost your sight, you went on serving. Support those who are losing their sight, their health or their strength, and teach us to offer up our trials. I especially entrust to you: (name your intention). Amen.*

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

## Prayer for catechists

> *Lord, you made Saint César de Bus a living catechism for your people. Through his intercession, send your Church many faithful catechists. May they know your Word, live by it, and know how to speak it in simple words, so that everyone may know you, love you and serve you. Amen.*

This prayer is an original text by Saintspedia.

## Intentions to entrust to Saint César de Bus

- Catechists, teachers and Christian parents.
- Those who have drifted away from God, and those who pray for their return.
- People who are blind or visually impaired.
- Provence, Cavaillon and the Archdiocese of Avignon.
- The Fathers of Christian Doctrine and their works.

## When to pray this prayer

His feast day is April 15. To prepare for it, pray the novena to Saint César de Bus, from April 7 to April 15. You can also pray to him at the start of a catechism or school year. To learn more, read the life of Saint César de Bus.

NOVENA

# Novena to Saint César de Bus

This novena is an original composition by Saintspedia, inspired by the life of Saint César de Bus, priest of Cavaillon and founder of the Fathers of Christian Doctrine. It is not an official liturgical text. To finish it on his feast day, April 15, begin it on April 7. It is especially suited to those who want to return to God, or who are praying for a loved one who has drifted away from the faith.

## How to pray this novena

Each day, place your intention before God, read the meditation, say the prayer of the day, then an Our Father, a Hail Mary and the Apostles' Creed: the very prayers César de Bus taught to the children of the countryside. The act suggested for the day carries the prayer into your life.

## Day 1: A devout child

As a child, César loved prayer and the liturgy, and he joined the confraternity of the Black Penitents while still young. God plants seeds of faith in us early, even if they seem to disappear for a time. Those seeds are never lost.

**Prayer:** Lord, rekindle in me the simple faith of my childhood.

**Today:** Remember a moment when you felt close to God, and give thanks for it.

## Day 2: The illusions of the world

At the court of Charles IX, César let himself be caught up in honors and pleasures, and little by little he forgot God. Then, disappointed, he lived a dissipated life in Avignon. What glitters often leaves the heart empty.

**Prayer:** Lord, show me what in my life is drawing me away from you.

**Today:** Give up, for today, a distraction that takes up too much room.

## Day 3: The trial of grief

In 1573, the deaths of his father and his brother shook César to the core. He came home to Cavaillon. A trial can become a call: grief opens questions that comfort had kept silent.

**Prayer:** Lord, console those who are grieving, and make their tears a path toward you.

**Today:** Pray for a deceased member of your family, or call someone who is grieving.

## Day 4: A word that wakes us up

Antoinette Reveillarde, a simple woman, told him frankly that God was calling him and that he was not listening. A true word, spoken with love, can change everything. Sometimes God speaks through the least expected people.

**Prayer:** Lord, help me hear your calls, and give me the courage to speak a true word to those I love.

**Today:** Really listen to someone who speaks to you about God or about your life.

## Day 5: The joy of forgiveness

Guided by the sacristan Louis Guyot, César made a general confession in 1575 and got back on his feet. He gave away his goods and served the sick, despite the mockery of his old friends. God never tires of forgiving.

**Prayer:** Lord, give me a contrite heart and the joy of your forgiveness.

**Today:** Prepare for confession with an examination of conscience.

## Day 6: The silence of the hermitage

From 1587 to 1590, on Saint-Jacques hill, César prayed and discerned his mission. It was there that he saw how many people did not know even the Our Father. Silence prepares great works. César did not rush into action: he first let God show him the need, then the response.

**Prayer:** Lord, teach me to listen to you in silence.

**Today:** Spend fifteen minutes in silence before God.



*L'Isle-sur-la-Sorgue, birthplace of the Fathers of Christian Doctrine.*

## Day 7: Teaching the simplest

César traveled through villages to teach the catechism to peasants and children, with a simple method suited to them. Faith grows when it is known and understood. He went as far as the Cévennes, and wrote short catechisms that

ordinary people could follow. He earned the nickname "living catechism" because his whole life taught what his words explained.

**Prayer:** Lord, bless catechists, and help me know my faith better.

**Today:** Read a page of the Catechism, or explain a prayer to a child.

## Day 8: Founding and serving together

On September 29, 1592, at L'Isle-sur-la-Sorgue, César founded a community of priests devoted to teaching the faith, and later a branch for women. No one serves the Gospel alone. Pope Clement VIII approved the congregation in 1597, and the Doctrinarians still watch over his tomb in Rome today.

**Prayer:** Lord, bless the communities that serve your Church, and help me work with others.

**Today:** Offer your help to your parish for a concrete service.

## Day 9: Light in the darkness

Blind from 1594, César kept on serving, hearing confessions and teaching. He died on Easter Sunday, April 15, 1607, passing from darkness into light. On his feast day, we ask him to open our eyes to the light of the risen Christ.

**Prayer:** Lord, at the end of this novena, I entrust my intention to you. Through the intercession of Saint César de Bus, light up my darkness with the light of your resurrection. Amen.

**Today:** Pray for a person who is blind or sick, or visit them.

## Closing prayer

> *Saint César de Bus, convert and catechist of the poor, I place in your hands the intention of these nine days. Pray for those who are seeking God, for those who proclaim him and for those who suffer. Obtain for me a true conversion of heart and the joy of knowing Christ. Amen.*

To go further, read the life of Saint César de Bus and the prayer to Saint César de Bus.

CREDITS

# 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: School of French School, public domain, via Wikimedia Commons. Source · License
- Saint César de Bus, founder of the Fathers of Christian Doctrine.: Image: School of French School, public domain, via Wikimedia Commons. Source · License
- Cavaillon cathedral, where César de Bus was a canon.: Image: Moleskine, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons. Source · License
- The church of Santa Maria in Monticelli in Rome, where Saint César de Bus is buried.: Image: Croberto68 at Italian Wikipedia, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons. Source · License
- L'Isle-sur-la-Sorgue, birthplace of the Fathers of Christian Doctrine.: Image: Finoskov, CC BY-SA 3.0, 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**