

BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Charles Garnier

Life, prayer and novena

Feast day: October 19

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IN BRIEF

Saint Charles Garnier

French Jesuit priest, missionary among the Huron-Wendat and the Petun, martyred in 1649, one of the eight North American Martyrs.

Feast day	October 19, September 26 (Canada)
Born	May 25, 1606, Paris, France
Died	December 7, 1649, Etharita, Petun country (Ontario, Canada)
Canonized	June 29, 1930, by Pope Pius XI
Era	17th century
Patron saint of	Canada (with the North American Martyrs)

In this booklet

Life

Prayer to Saint Charles Garnier, North American Martyr

Novena to Saint Charles Garnier

Credits and sources

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LIFE

Saint Charles Garnier

Saint Charles Garnier was a French Jesuit priest, a missionary in New France and one of the eight North American Martyrs. Born in Paris in 1606, he spent thirteen years among the Huron-Wendat and the Petun (Tionnontaté) peoples, in present-day Ontario, where he was killed during an Iroquois attack on December 7, 1649. Canonized by Pope Pius XI in 1930, he is celebrated with his companions on October 19, and on September 26 in Canada.

Who was Saint Charles Garnier?

Charles Garnier is often described as the "lamb" of the Huron mission, in contrast with Saint John de Brébeuf, the "lion." The son of a wealthy Parisian family, he looked frail and was known for his great gentleness. Yet he showed remarkable endurance in one of the harshest missions of his time.

We know him through the *Jesuit Relations*, the yearly reports sent from New France and published in Paris, through the testimony of his superior, Father Paul Ragueneau, and through his own letters to his family, which reveal an ardent and tender soul.

Key dates

- **May 25, 1606**: Born in Paris into a well-to-do family; his father is a counselor to the king.
- **1624**: After his studies at the Collège de Clermont, he enters the Jesuit novitiate.
- **1635**: Ordained a priest, after overcoming his father's opposition to his leaving for the missions.
- **1636**: Sails for New France, reaches Quebec in June, then travels to the Huron country in the summer.

- **1636-1647**: Missionary in several Huron villages; in 1639-1640 he attempts a first mission to the Petun with Isaac Jogues.
- **1647**: Settles among the Petun at Etharita, at the mission of Saint John.
- **December 7, 1649**: Killed during the Iroquois attack on Etharita, on the eve of the feast of the Immaculate Conception.
- **1925**: Beatified by Pope Pius XI with the other North American Martyrs.
- **June 29, 1930**: Canonized by Pope Pius XI.

A young Parisian for New France

Charles was the second son of Jean Garnier, counselor to the king, and Anne de Garault. He grew up in a deeply Christian family and studied with the Jesuits at the Collège de Clermont in Paris. In 1624 he entered the Society of Jesus. He taught for a few years in a college, then studied theology.

The desire to go to the peoples of New France grew in him, nourished by the *Relations* that told of the Huron mission. His father opposed it for a long time, and Charles waited patiently. Permission finally came. Ordained a priest in 1635, he sailed in the spring of 1636 and reached Quebec in June. He then traveled for several weeks by canoe along the immense route of rivers and lakes to Georgian Bay.

Ouracha among the Hurons

The Hurons nicknamed him *Ouracha*, because his arrival coincided with the end of a long drought. He learned the language and shared the life of the villages: their smoky longhouses, their food and their travels.

He lived through the epidemics that were then devastating the population, against which the missionaries were powerless and for which they were sometimes blamed. He visited the sick tirelessly, baptized the dying, especially

children, and walked for hours through the snow to reach a cabin where he was needed.

His letters show a man burning with love for Christ and for those he served, and a deep devotion to the Virgin Mary. He lived in close communion with his fellow Jesuits, especially John de Brébeuf, with whom he shared several years of mission.

The mission to the Petun

West of the Hurons lived the Petun, or Tionnontaté, a people close to them in language and culture. In the winter of 1639-1640, Garnier set out with Isaac Jogues to bring them the Gospel, but they were poorly received. He returned later, and in 1647 he settled in the village of Etharita, where he founded the mission of Saint John. He worked there patiently and was gradually accepted by the people.

From 1648 onward, Iroquois attacks on Huronia multiplied. In March 1649, the villages of Saint-Ignace and Saint-Louis were destroyed, and John de Brébeuf and Gabriel Lalemant were martyred there. The Hurons scattered. Garnier knew his turn might come, but he refused to leave those entrusted to him.

The martyrdom at Etharita

On December 7, 1649, while the warriors of the village had gone out to meet the enemy, the Iroquois took Etharita by surprise. Garnier ran from cabin to cabin, baptizing, absolving and urging the faithful to flee. He was struck by two musket balls, in the chest and in the abdomen.

Fallen to the ground, he raised himself several times to drag himself toward a dying man and give him absolution. It was then that he received blows of a hatchet to the head. He died on the eve of the feast of the Immaculate

Conception, which he loved so much. The next day his fellow Jesuit Noël Chabanel, who had left Etharita shortly before, was killed in turn. Two Jesuits from a neighboring village buried Garnier's body.

Devotion to Saint Charles Garnier

Charles Garnier was beatified in 1925 and canonized on June 29, 1930, by Pope Pius XI, together with John de Brébeuf, Isaac Jogues, Anthony Daniel, Gabriel Lalemant, Noël Chabanel, René Goupil and John de La Lande. These eight martyrs are celebrated together on October 19 in the Roman calendar, and on September 26 in Canada, of which they are secondary patrons.

Relics of Saint Charles Garnier are venerated at the Cathedral-Basilica of Notre-Dame de Québec and in several other places in Quebec. A municipality, parishes and a college bear his name.

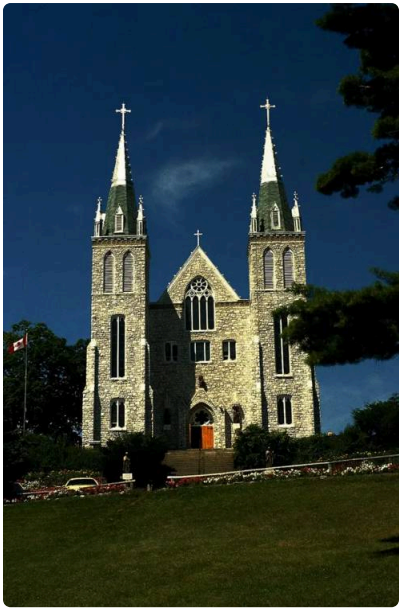
Why is Saint Charles Garnier a patron of Canada?

With the other North American Martyrs, Charles Garnier is a secondary patron of Canada. He is also a fitting intercessor for missionaries, for priests, for the Indigenous peoples of Canada, for those who accompany the dying, and for perseverance in trial.

His life shows that gentleness is not weakness. This delicate man held out for thirteen years in extreme conditions, carried by love for Christ and for the peoples he served. His last act, dragging himself, wounded, toward a dying man to give him God's forgiveness, sums up his whole life as a priest.

Symbols and how to recognize Saint Charles Garnier in art

He is shown as a young Jesuit in a black cassock, often holding a cross, sometimes with the palm of martyrdom. He often appears in group paintings of the North American Martyrs.



The Martyrs' Shrine in Midland, Ontario.

Where to pray to Saint Charles Garnier

- **Midland** (Ontario): the Martyrs' Shrine, a major place of pilgrimage dedicated to the eight martyrs.
- **Midland**: the reconstructed site of Sainte-Marie among the Hurons, center of the mission where he stayed.
- **Quebec City**: the Cathedral-Basilica of Notre-Dame de Québec, which keeps some of his relics.
- **Saint-Charles-Garnier** (Quebec): the parish and municipality that bear his name.

To pray with him, use the prayer to Saint Charles Garnier or the novena to Saint Charles Garnier, from October 11 to 19.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Charles Garnier, North American Martyr

Saint Charles Garnier is honored with the North American Martyrs, the Jesuits and lay helpers who died in New France in the seventeenth century. Called the "lamb" of the Huron mission for his gentleness, he died at Etharita in 1649 while giving absolution to a dying man. This page offers an original prayer to Saint Charles Garnier, then a prayer for missionaries and for those who accompany the dying.

Prayer to Saint Charles Garnier

Saint Charles Garnier, you left Paris, your family and your comfort
to proclaim Christ to the peoples of New France:
give me a generous heart, ready to serve wherever God calls me.

You waited patiently for your father's consent before you left:
teach me to join zeal with patience,
ardor with respect for others.

You were called the lamb of the mission:
keep me gentle, even in trials, weariness and failure.

You walked through the snow to reach the sick and baptize the dying:
make me attentive to those who suffer and to those who are about to die.

Mortally wounded, you still dragged yourself toward a dying man
to give him God's forgiveness:
obtain for me the grace of perseverance and of a charity that goes to the end.

Pray for the Indigenous peoples of Canada,
for reconciliation and peace between peoples,
and for the Church in Canada.
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.

Prayer for missionaries and those who accompany the dying

> *Lord Jesus, through the intercession of Saint Charles Garnier, bless the missionaries who proclaim your Gospel far from home, and all who keep watch beside the sick and the dying: priests, nurses, chaplains and families. Give them strength, tenderness and peace. And grant each of us, at the hour of death, a witness of your mercy. Amen.*

Original prayer by Saintspedia.

When to pray this prayer

Saint Charles Garnier is celebrated with the North American Martyrs on October 19, and on September 26 in Canada. You can also remember him on December 7, the anniversary of his death. Pray to him for the missions, for priests, for the sick at the end of life and for Canada. For a longer time of prayer, follow the novena to Saint Charles Garnier, and read the life of Saint Charles Garnier.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Charles Garnier

This novena is an original composition by Saintspedia, inspired by the life of Saint Charles Garnier, Jesuit and martyr in New France. It is not an official liturgical text. To end it on October 19, the feast of the North American Martyrs, begin on October 11. In Canada, where the martyrs are celebrated on September 26, begin on September 18. You can also pray it in the days leading to December 7, the anniversary of his death, by beginning on November 29.

How to pray this novena

Each day, entrust your intention to 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 carry the prayer into daily life. If you miss a day, simply continue the next day.

This novena follows the life of Charles Garnier from his call in Paris to his death at Etharita. It is especially suited to missionaries and their families, to priests and seminarians, to caregivers and hospital chaplains, and to all who pray for Canada and its Indigenous peoples.



Saint Charles Garnier, martyr in New France.

Day 1: A call that grows

At the Collège de Clermont, then in the novitiate, Charles felt the desire to go to the missions grow within him. God often calls through a desire that ripens slowly. Reading the *Jesuit Relations*, he discovered the needs of distant peoples, and his heart went out to them.

Prayer: Lord, help me recognize the desires you have placed in my heart, and give me the courage to follow them. Amen.

Today: Take a moment of silence to ask what God expects of you.

Day 2: Patience before obstacles

His father opposed his departure. Charles waited, without rebellion, until the door opened. Patience is a form of trust in God. Charles did not force his way; he prayed and let God prepare the road.

Prayer: Lord, give me patience when my plans are delayed, and peace while I wait for your time. Amen.

Today: Accept a delay or a setback without irritation.

Day 3: Leaving everything

Charles left Paris, his comfortable family and a secure future for a distant, unknown land. Following Christ sometimes means setting out. After the ocean crossing came weeks by canoe, with heavy loads to carry at every portage.

Prayer: Lord, set me free from everything that keeps me far from you. Amen.

Today: Give up an unnecessary comfort and offer its cost to a missionary work.

Day 4: Learning the language of others

Among the Hurons, Charles learned the language and shared their longhouses and their food. Proclaiming the Gospel begins with listening and understanding.

Prayer: Lord, teach me to truly listen to those who are different from me. Amen.

Today: Take time to listen to someone without interrupting.

Day 5: The gentleness of the lamb

He was called the lamb of the mission. His gentleness was not weakness: it came from his likeness to Christ, gentle and humble of heart.

Prayer: Jesus, gentle and humble of heart, make my heart like yours. Amen.

Today: Answer a harsh word with gentleness.

Day 6: At the bedside of the sick

During the epidemics, Charles walked for hours in the snow to visit the sick and baptize the dying. Charity does not count its trouble. Even when the missionaries were blamed for the diseases, he kept coming back to the sick.

Prayer: Lord, bless the sick and those who care for them, and make me close to those who suffer. Amen.

Today: Visit or call someone who is sick or alone.

Day 7: With Mary

Charles had a deep devotion to the Virgin Mary. He died on the eve of the feast of the Immaculate Conception, as if going to meet her.

Prayer: Virgin Mary, lead me to your Son and keep me faithful to the end. Amen.

Today: Pray a decade of the Rosary for missionaries.

Day 8: Staying with his people

When the attacks multiplied, Charles could have left. He stayed at Etharita with those entrusted to him. The good shepherd does not flee when the wolf comes. Months earlier, he had learned of the deaths of his friends John de Brébeuf and Gabriel Lalemant, and he knew the danger.

Prayer: Lord, bless priests and pastors, and give them the courage to remain faithful. Amen.

Today: Pray for your pastor and send him a word of encouragement.

Day 9: Forgiveness to the last breath

Mortally wounded, Charles dragged himself toward a dying man to give him absolution. His last act was an act of mercy. On this feast of the North American Martyrs, we give thanks for his witness.

Prayer: Lord, at the end of this novena I place my intention in your hands. Through the intercession of Saint Charles Garnier, give me a charity that goes to the end, and grant your mercy to all who are dying today. Amen.

Today: Forgive someone, or receive the sacrament of Reconciliation.

Closing prayer

> *Saint Charles Garnier, missionary and martyr, I entrust to you the intention of these nine days. Pray for missionaries, for priests, for the sick and the dying, for the Indigenous peoples and for Canada. Obtain for us a heart both gentle and courageous, faithful to the end in the love of Christ. Amen.*

To go further, read the life of Saint Charles Garnier and pray the prayer to Saint Charles Garnier.

CREDITS

Credits and sources

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