

BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Cleopas

Life, prayer and novena

Feast day: September 25

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IN BRIEF

Saint Cleopas

Disciple of Jesus who met the risen Lord on the road to Emmaus on Easter evening.

Feast day	September 25
Era	1st century

In this booklet

Life

Prayer to Saint Cleopas in Times of Discouragement

Novena to Saint Cleopas

Credits and sources

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LIFE

Saint Cleopas

Saint Cleopas is one of the two disciples who, on the evening of Easter Sunday, met the risen Jesus on the road to Emmaus without recognizing him, and then recognized him in the breaking of the bread. Saint Luke is the only evangelist to name him, in one of the best-loved stories of the Gospel. Christian tradition made him a close relative of Jesus. The Catholic Church commemorates him on September 25.

Who was Saint Cleopas?

Everything we know for certain about Cleopas is contained in a few verses of the Gospel of Luke (24:13-35). He appears there as a disciple of Jesus who did not belong to the Twelve but was part of the wider circle of those who had followed him.

On the day of the Resurrection, he left Jerusalem with a companion whom Luke does not name, heading for Emmaus, a village about sixty stadia away, roughly seven miles. Over the centuries, many readers have wondered who this second disciple was; the Gospel leaves the question open, as if to invite each reader to take that empty place on the road.

Key dates

- **Easter Sunday**: Cleopas and a companion leave Jerusalem for Emmaus, saddened by the death of Jesus.
- **Easter Sunday**: A stranger joins them on the road and explains the Scriptures to them.
- **Easter evening**: At table in Emmaus, they recognize the risen Jesus in the breaking of the bread.

- **Easter evening**: They return at once to Jerusalem and share the news with the Eleven.
- **2nd century**: The historian Hegesippus presents Clopas as the brother of Joseph and the father of Simeon, second bishop of Jerusalem.

Key moments in the story of Saint Cleopas

- **Easter Sunday evening**: on the road to Emmaus, Cleopas and his companion meet the risen Jesus.
- **That same evening**: they return to Jerusalem to tell the news to the Eleven.
- **2nd century**: the historian Hegesippus, quoted by Eusebius of Caesarea, mentions a Clopas who was the brother of Joseph.



The Supper at Emmaus, by Caravaggio (National Gallery, London).

The road to Emmaus

The two disciples were walking along, sad. A stranger joined them and asked what they were talking about. Cleopas answered with a touch of surprise: "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?"

He then told him about the condemnation of Jesus, about their disappointed hope ("we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel"), and about the disturbing testimony of the women who had found the tomb empty. The stranger explained the Scriptures to them, beginning with Moses and all the prophets.

"Stay with us"

When they reached the village, they urged him to stay: "Stay with us, for it is almost evening." At table, he took the bread, blessed it, broke it and gave it to them. Their eyes were opened, they recognized him, and he vanished from their sight.

"Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked to us on the road?" they said to each other. They set out at once for Jerusalem, where they found the Eleven, who told them: "The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!"

A story that shaped the Mass

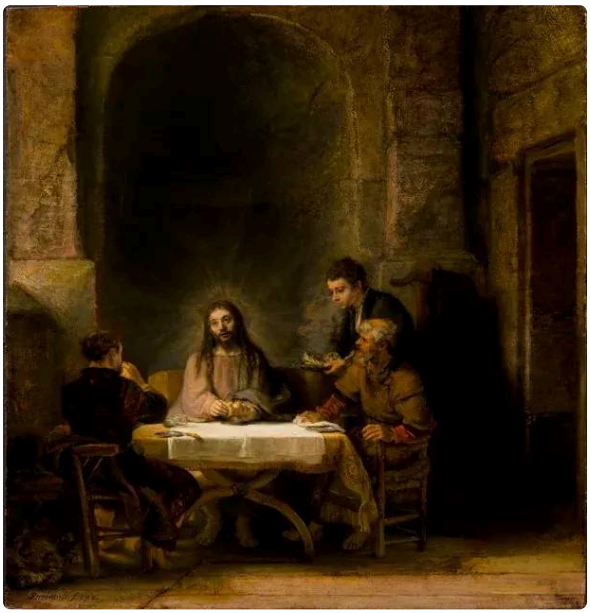
This account has shaped the way the Church understands the Mass: first the Word explained, then the bread broken. The two parts of every Eucharist, the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist, follow the same movement as that evening at Emmaus. Saint John Paul II took the words "Stay with us, Lord" as the theme of his apostolic letter for the Year of the Eucharist in 2004, *Mane Nobiscum Domine*.

Cleopas and Clopas: what tradition says

The Gospel of John mentions, at the foot of the cross, "Mary the wife of Clopas" (John 19:25). Very early, tradition identified this Clopas with Cleopas, even though the two names are not quite the same.

In the second century, Hegesippus presented Clopas as the brother of Saint Joseph, and therefore as an uncle of Jesus, and made his son Simeon the second bishop of Jerusalem. Another tradition gives him as sons James the Less and Joses, whom the Gospels of Mark and Matthew call the sons of a Mary present at Calvary.

These identifications cannot be verified, but they show that early Christians saw in him a relative of Jesus.



The Supper at Emmaus, by Rembrandt (Louvre).

Where was Emmaus?

The location of Emmaus remains uncertain. Several sites claim the name, including Emmaus Nicopolis, near Latrun, favored by many Fathers of the Church, and El-Qubeibeh, where the Franciscans maintain a shrine.

Why pray to Saint Cleopas?

Saint Cleopas has no official patronage, but he is the saint of disappointed people who set out again. He saw his hope die and admitted it to a stranger; he knew how to invite that stranger to his table; and he recognized Christ in a simple gesture. His story also reminds us that faith often grows through the questions we dare to ask. He can be prayed to in times of discouragement, for those who are journeying toward faith without yet seeing clearly, and for those who have walked away from the Church and may one day return.

To pray with him, see the prayer to Saint Cleopas and the novena to Saint Cleopas, from September 16 to 24.

Symbols and how to recognize Saint Cleopas in art

Cleopas is almost always depicted in scenes of the Emmaus story, which painters have loved for centuries:

- **The road**: two travelers walking with a third figure, often dressed as a pilgrim.
- **The table and the bread**: the moment of recognition, as in the paintings of Caravaggio and Rembrandt.
- **Pilgrim's clothing**: a staff, a hat or a cloak, as the disciples are often shown as travelers.
- **A gesture of astonishment**: arms flung open or hands gripping the chair as Christ breaks the bread.

Where to pray to Saint Cleopas

- **Emmaus Nicopolis** (near Latrun, between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv): one of the traditional sites of Emmaus, with remains of ancient churches.
- **El-Qubeibeh** (West Bank): the Franciscan shrine of Emmaus.
- **Any church at Mass**: the Eucharist itself renews the experience of Emmaus, the Word explained and the bread broken.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Cleopas in Times of Discouragement

Saint Cleopas left us no writings, but the Gospel of Luke has kept the words he and his companion spoke to the risen Christ on the evening of Easter: "Stay with us, for it is almost evening." Those words have become a prayer for countless Christians. Below you will find an original prayer to Saint Cleopas for times of discouragement, followed by a well-loved English hymn inspired by the same verse.

The prayer of the disciples of Emmaus

> *"Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now far spent."*

Source: Gospel of Luke 24:29.



The Supper at Emmaus, by Caravaggio.

Prayer to Saint Cleopas in Times of Discouragement

Saint Cleopas, disciple of the Lord, you walked away from Jerusalem with a heavy heart, saying, "We had hoped." Pray for all whose hope has been disappointed, who walk with their eyes lowered and no longer expect anything.

You opened your heart to a stranger and told him your sorrow. Teach me to speak honestly to the Lord about my disappointments, even when I do not recognize him walking beside me.

You listened as he explained the Scriptures, and your heart burned within you. Obtain for me the grace to hear the Word of God with an open heart.

You urged him to stay and gave him a place at your table. Help me to welcome Christ in the stranger, and to recognize him in the breaking of the bread at every Mass.

And as you ran back to Jerusalem in the night to share the good news, give me the joy and the courage to bear witness to the risen Lord.

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.

A traditional hymn: "Abide with Me"

Inspired by the plea of the two disciples, this hymn by the Anglican clergyman Henry Francis Lyte (1847) is sung in many English-speaking countries. Its first verse is a fitting prayer at the end of the day:

Abide with me; fast falls the eventide;
The darkness deepens; Lord, with me abide;
When other helpers fail and comforts flee,
Help of the helpless, O abide with me.

When to pray this prayer

- On September 25, the day the Church commemorates Saint Cleopas.
- During the Easter season, especially on the Wednesday of the Easter Octave, when the Emmaus Gospel is read at Mass.
- In a time of discouragement, grief or doubt.
- For a friend or relative who has drifted away from the faith.

For a longer time of prayer, follow the novena to Saint Cleopas, and read the life of Saint Cleopas.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Cleopas

This novena is an original composition by Saintspedia, which follows step by step the story of the disciples of Emmaus told in the Gospel of Luke (24:13-35). It is not an official liturgical text. To finish it on the eve of the commemoration of Saint Cleopas on September 25, begin on September 16; it then ends on September 24. It is also well suited to the Easter season, or to any time when you feel discouraged and need to find the Lord again on the road.

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. If you can, also read the few verses of Luke 24 that correspond to the day. The small act suggested for each day helps you carry the prayer into your daily life.

Day 1: Leaving Jerusalem

On the evening of Easter, Cleopas and his companion leave Jerusalem. They turn their backs on the city where everything happened, and perhaps on the group of disciples. Sometimes we too walk away, tired and hurt, from the places where we once met God.

Prayer: Lord, you know the roads on which I walk away from you. Come and find me there.

Today: Name before God an area of your life where you have grown distant from him.

Day 2: Talking along the way

The two disciples talk and discuss everything that has happened. They do not hide their confusion. Sharing what weighs on us is already a way of opening the door to grace.

Prayer: Lord, give me friends with whom I can share my questions and my faith.

Today: Take time for a real conversation with someone close to you.

Day 3: Not recognizing him

Jesus himself draws near and walks with them, but their eyes are kept from recognizing him. The Lord is often closer than we think, even when we do not feel his presence.

Prayer: Lord, open my eyes to see you walking beside me.

Today: Look back over your day this evening and look for a sign of God's presence in it.

Day 4: "We had hoped"

Cleopas tells the stranger the whole story and ends with these painful words: "We had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel." He does not hide his disappointment. The Lord does not ask us to pretend; he wants to hear our real sorrows.

Prayer: Lord, I bring you my disappointed hopes. Do not let me remain closed in on my sadness.

Today: Tell the Lord honestly, in your own words, about a disappointment you carry.

Day 5: Opening the Scriptures

Beginning with Moses and all the prophets, Jesus explains to them what the Scriptures said about him. The Word of God sheds new light on events that seemed absurd.

Prayer: Lord, let your Word shine on my life, and help me understand what I am living.

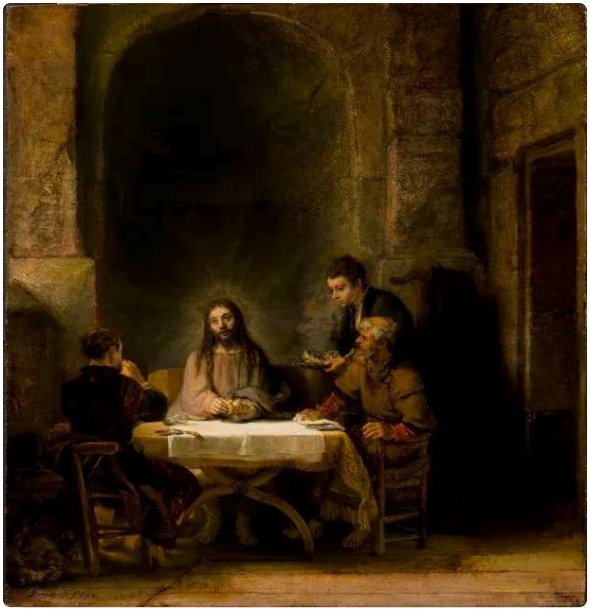
Today: Read the Gospel of tomorrow's Mass and take one sentence with you.

Day 6: "Stay with us"

When they arrive, Jesus acts as if he will go farther. The two disciples urge him: "Stay with us, for it is almost evening." The Lord never forces his way in; he waits for our invitation.

Prayer: Stay with us, Lord, for it is almost evening. Stay in my home and in my heart.

Today: Offer hospitality to someone: a meal, a coffee, a moment of your time.



The Supper at Emmaus, by Rembrandt.

Day 7: The breaking of the bread

At table, Jesus takes the bread, blesses it, breaks it and gives it to them. Then their eyes are opened and they recognize him. These are the gestures of the Last Supper, the gestures of every Mass.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, make me recognize you in the Eucharist, and let me receive you with faith.

Today: Attend Mass, even on a weekday, or spend a few minutes before the Blessed Sacrament.

Day 8: Hearts burning

After he vanishes, the disciples say to each other: "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked to us on the road?" Only afterward do they understand what they had been living. Faith often reads our life in hindsight.

Prayer: Lord, set my heart on fire with your Word and your love.

Today: Remember a moment when you felt God close, and thank him for it.

Day 9: Returning to bear witness

That same hour, despite the night, Cleopas and his companion set out again for Jerusalem. They find the Eleven and share what happened on the road. The sad disciples have become joyful witnesses. An encounter with the risen Christ is never meant to be kept to ourselves.

Prayer: Lord, I place in your hands the intention of this novena. Through the intercession of Saint Cleopas, turn my sadness into joy and make me a witness of your Resurrection. Amen.

Today: Share with someone a reason for hope that your faith gives you.

Closing prayer

Saint Cleopas, at the end of these nine days, I entrust to you the intention I have brought before you. Pray for all who are discouraged, for those who have left the Church, and for those who are looking for God without knowing it. May the risen Lord walk with us, open the Scriptures to us and make himself known to us in the breaking of the bread. Amen.

To go further, read the life of Saint Cleopas and the prayer to Saint Cleopas.

Credits and sources

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