

BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Crescentinus

Life, prayer and novena

Feast day: June 1

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IN BRIEF

Saint Crescentinus

Roman soldier martyred in Umbria in the early fourth century, patron of Urbino and Città di Castello.

Feast day	June 1
Born	c. 276, according to tradition, Rome, according to tradition
Died	June 1, 303, according to tradition, Tifernum Tiberinum (Città di Castello, Umbria)
Canonized	immemorial cult
Era	4th century
Patron saint of	Urbino, Città di Castello, Crescentino

In this booklet

Life

Prayer to Saint Crescentinus for Courage in Spiritual Combat

Novena to Saint Crescentinus

Credits and sources

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LIFE

Saint Crescentinus

Saint Crescentinus, in Italian *San Crescentino*, was a martyr of the early fourth century, honored in Umbria and the Marche. According to his Passion, he was a Christian Roman soldier who left the army during the persecution of Diocletian, preached the Gospel in the upper Tiber valley and was beheaded at Tifernum, today's Città di Castello, around 303. Legend credits him with slaying a dragon. His feast day is June 1.

Who was Saint Crescentinus?

Crescentinus is first of all a name: that of a martyr whose cult has long been attested around Città di Castello. We know his life through a *Passio* written around the seventh century, partly legendary. It says he was born in Rome around 276, the son of a converted Roman nobleman named Eutimius, and that he served in the emperor's guard under the command of Saint Sebastian.

These details are hard to verify. What is certain is that the Church honors Crescentinus as a martyr who died for Christ in the upper Tiber valley, and that his cult spread as far as Urbino, which took him as its patron. Like Saint George, he is shown as a Christian soldier who defeats the dragon.



Saint Crescentinus slaying the dragon.

Key dates

- **c. 276**: Born in Rome, according to the Passion, into a noble family that had become Christian.
- **Late third century**: A soldier in the imperial guard, he is said to have served alongside Saint Sebastian.
- **297**: According to the account, he leaves Rome with his parents to escape persecution and takes refuge in Perugia.
- **After 297**: Now an orphan, he gives part of his goods to the poor and sets out to evangelize the region of Tifernum Tiberinum.
- **June 1, 303**: Martyred at Tifernum, today's Città di Castello, according to tradition.
- **1068**: Bishop Mainard of Urbino has his relics moved to his cathedral.

A Christian soldier facing persecution

At the end of the third century, the emperor Diocletian wanted to purge the army of Christians. Many soldiers had to choose between their faith and their career, and some, like Saint Maurice and his companions, paid with their lives. According to his Passion, Crescentinus chose to leave Rome. After his parents died, he gave his goods to the poor and set out on horseback with a few companions toward the Tiber valley.

When he reached Tifernum Tiberinum, a town that was still pagan, he began to preach the Gospel. The account credits him with many conversions and miracles. Hearing of his influence, the emperor ordered Flaccus, the prefect of Etruria, to bring him back to the army and to the gods of Rome, on pain of death. Crescentinus refused and went on with his mission.

The legend of the dragon

Popular tradition tells that a dragon lived near a sulfur spring at Pieve de' Saddi, in what is now the town of Pietralunga. Its foul breath brought disease and laid waste to the countryside. Crescentinus fought it and killed it, and the people welcomed him as their liberator and were converted. A rib said to be "the dragon's" is still shown in the diocesan museum of Città di Castello.

As with Saint George or Saint Michael, the dragon is first of all an image: the image of evil, fear and idolatry, which retreat before the Gospel. Crescentinus's fight tells, in the language of legend, what his mission was: to set a people free through faith in Christ.

His martyrdom

According to the Passion, Flaccus had Crescentinus taken to a temple of Jupiter and ordered him to worship the gods. He refused. Condemned to be burned, he came out of the fire unharmed, singing God's praises in the middle

of the flames. The soldiers then dragged him through the streets, bound, with a rope around his neck, and cut off his head. Tradition places his death on June 1, 303.

Devotion and art

Crescentinus is honored by the Catholic Church with an immemorial cult, and he appears in the Roman Martyrology on June 1. In 1068, Bishop Mainard of Urbino had his relics moved to the cathedral of his city. Urbino still celebrates him every year: his statue is carried in procession, and an old custom has the faithful bring their heads close to the relics to be relieved of headaches. He is the patron saint of Urbino, of Città di Castello and of Crescentino, in Piedmont.

He is shown as a young soldier or a knight, often on horseback, piercing a dragon with his lance, with the palm of martyrdom or a banner.



The cathedral of Urbino, where his relics have rested since 1068.

What can we learn from Saint Crescentinus?

Behind the legend, Crescentinus is a witness to Christ who put his faith before his career, and then his faith before his life. He left his security behind, shared his goods and proclaimed the Gospel to a people who did not know it. You can pray to him for courage in times of trial, for Christians in the military, for those struggling against a fear or a temptation and, following the tradition of Urbino, for the sick who suffer from headaches.

Where to pray to Saint Crescentinus

- **Urbino** (Marche, Italy): the cathedral, which has kept his relics since 1068.
- **Città di Castello** (Umbria): the town of his martyrdom, of which he is patron, with its diocesan museum.
- **Pieve de' Saddi** (Pietralunga, Umbria): the church built on the site of his fight with the dragon.
- **Morra** (Città di Castello): the oratory of San Crescentino, dedicated in 1420.

To pray with him at home, you can use the prayer to Saint Crescentinus or the novena to Saint Crescentinus.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Crescentinus for Courage in Spiritual Combat

Saint Crescentinus, a Roman soldier who had become a Christian, left the army during the persecution of Diocletian, shared his goods with the poor and proclaimed the Gospel in the Tiber valley, where he died a martyr around 303. Tradition made him the slayer of a dragon. This prayer is an original composition inspired by his life, not an official liturgical text. It asks his help for courage, faithfulness and victory over evil.

Prayer to Saint Crescentinus

Saint Crescentinus,
soldier of Christ,
you chose faithfulness to your Lord
over the glory and security of arms.

You left everything, you shared your goods,
and you brought the Gospel to a people who did not know it.
Before the fire and the sword,
you did not deny your faith.

You who are shown slaying the dragon,
help us overcome what holds us captive:
fear, temptation, discouragement and hatred.
Protect those who serve their country in arms,
those who are persecuted for their faith,
and the sick who suffer in their bodies.

Obtain for us a brave and faithful heart,
until the day we see the victory of Christ.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

When to pray to Saint Crescentinus

- On his feast day, June 1.
- Before a trial that calls for courage or for witnessing to your faith.
- For soldiers, police officers and all who protect others.
- In an inner struggle against a temptation or a fear.
- For someone suffering from headaches, following the tradition of Urbino.

A prayer for spiritual combat

You can conclude with this short prayer:

> *Lord, be my strength when I am afraid.*
> *Let nothing separate me from you.*
> *Saint Crescentinus, pray for us. Amen.*

To prepare for his feast, you can pray the novena to Saint Crescentinus from May 24 to June 1, and read the life of Saint Crescentinus.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Crescentinus

This novena is an original composition by Saintspedia, inspired by the life of Saint Crescentinus, a Roman soldier martyred in Umbria in the early fourth century, as his Passion tells it. It is not an official liturgical text. To end it on his feast day, June 1, begin on May 24. You can also pray it at any other time of the year, especially in a time of trial.

How to pray this novena

Each day, begin with the Sign of the Cross and present your intention to God. Read the meditation, say the prayer of the day, then an Our Father, a Hail Mary and a Glory Be. End with: "Saint Crescentinus, pray for us." The small act proposed each day helps you live the novena concretely.

Day 1: A faith received at home

According to his Passion, Crescentinus grew up in Rome in a noble family that had converted to Christ. His parents passed the faith on to him. What we receive at home can bear fruit even to martyrdom.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for those who passed the faith on to me. Bless Christian families and help them hand on your love.

Today: Pray with your family, or call an elderly relative.

Day 2: A soldier of Christ

Crescentinus served in the imperial guard, alongside Saint Sebastian according to the account. He was the emperor's soldier, but first of all a disciple of Christ. We can serve our country without giving it first place in our hearts.

Prayer: Lord, bless those who serve in the armed forces. Keep them upright, just and safe.

Today: Pray for a soldier, a police officer or a firefighter you know.

Day 3: Choosing faithfulness

When Diocletian drove Christians out of the army, Crescentinus had to choose. He gave up his career rather than his faith. In our lives too, moments of choice come.

Prayer: Lord, when I must choose between the easy way and faithfulness, help me choose you.

Today: Refuse one small compromise with your conscience.

Day 4: Sharing what we have

After his parents died, Crescentinus gave part of his goods to the poor. He set out lighter, free for the mission.

Prayer: Lord, free me from attachment to what I own. Open my hands to the poor.

Today: Give an item or some money to someone in need.

Day 5: Proclaiming the Gospel

When he reached Tifernum, a pagan town, Crescentinus began to preach. He was neither a priest nor a bishop, but a layman who could not keep his faith to himself.

Prayer: Lord, make me a simple and joyful witness to the Gospel where I live.

Today: Tell someone, simply, why you believe.

Day 6: Defeating the dragon

The legend says that Crescentinus killed a dragon that spread disease. Each of us has our own dragons: a fear, an addiction, a grudge. Christ is stronger than all of them.

Prayer: Lord, I name before you what holds me captive. Set me free by your power.

Today: Take a first concrete step against a bad habit, or go to confession.

Day 7: Standing firm under threat

The prefect Flaccus threatened Crescentinus with death if he did not return to the gods of Rome. He went on preaching. Courage is not the absence of fear, but faithfulness in spite of fear.

Prayer: Lord, support Christians who are persecuted today. Let me never be ashamed of you.

Today: Pray for a country where Christians suffer for their faith.

Day 8: Praising God in trial

According to the Passion, Crescentinus sang God's praises in the middle of the flames. Praise is possible even in the heart of suffering, because God is still present there.

Prayer: Lord, even when I suffer, teach me to praise you and to trust you.

Today: Pray or sing a psalm of praise, for example Psalm 34 (33).

Day 9: The martyr's crown

Crescentinus was beheaded at Tifernum on a June 1, according to tradition. He gave his life for Christ, and Christ welcomed him into his victory. His blood was a seed for the Church in Umbria.

Prayer: Lord, through the intercession of Saint Crescentinus, grant me the grace I ask in this novena, if it is your will. Keep me faithful to the end.

Today: Thank God for the martyrs, and pray for those who risk their lives for their faith today.

Living the novena with Saint Crescentinus

Saint Crescentinus is a saint of courage. You may be praying this novena before a trial, in an inner struggle, or for a loved one who is sick. Do not let the legendary side of his story put you off: in the manner of the ancients, it expresses a very simple truth, that Christ is stronger than evil. During these nine days, name honestly the "dragon" that frightens you, and entrust it to God. If you travel to Italy, you can pray to Saint Crescentinus in Urbino, where his relics rest, or in Città di Castello.

Closing prayer

> *Saint Crescentinus,*
> *soldier of Christ and martyr,*
> *present to God the intention I have carried during these nine days.*
> *Teach me to prefer Christ to every security,*
> *to share with the poor,*
> *and to fight evil with the weapons of faith.*
> *Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

You can also pray the prayer to Saint Crescentinus at any time, and read the life of Saint Crescentinus.

CREDITS

Credits and sources

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