

BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Danacte

Life, prayer and novena

Feast day: January 16

Saintspedia · saintspedia.com

IN BRIEF

Saint Danacte

Reader of the Church of Aulona (Vlora), martyr, honored in Albania and in Apulia.

Feast day	January 16
Born	Aulona (present-day Vlora, Albania)
Died	date unknown (2nd, 4th or 9th century, depending on the tradition), near Vlora, or at Montesardo in Apulia according to another tradition
Canonized	immemorial cult
Era	10th century
Patron saint of	San Dana (Apulia)

In this booklet

Life

Prayer to Saint Danacte to Keep the Faith and Honor the Eucharist

Novena to Saint Danacte

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 Danacte

Saint Danacte, also called Danax, was a reader in the Church of Aulona, present-day Vlora on the coast of Albania. According to tradition, he was put to death for refusing to sacrifice to the god Bacchus. Another tradition, alive in Apulia, makes him a deacon killed while protecting the Eucharist. The time of his martyrdom is uncertain. His feast day is January 16.

Who was Saint Danacte?

Danacte is a very ancient saint, honored by both the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Churches. The Roman Martyrology lists him on January 16: "At Vlora in Illyria, in present-day Albania, Saint Danacte, martyr." Beyond that entry, his life is known only from late accounts that do not agree: some place his martyrdom in the second century, others in the fourth, and still others in the ninth, at the time of the Saracen raids in southern Italy. His story should therefore be read with care, as a pious tradition that keeps the memory of a faithful witness of Christ. This page is an original composition by Saintspedia, inspired by his life.

Key dates

- **Date unknown**: Born in Aulona (Vlora), on the Illyrian coast, according to tradition.
- **Date unknown**: Serves as a reader in the Church of Aulona.
- **Second or fourth century**: According to the Greek tradition, he is arrested during a persecution, refuses to sacrifice to Bacchus and is beheaded; his body is thrown into the sea.
- **Ninth century**: According to the tradition of Apulia, he is killed near Montesardo while protecting the Eucharist during an invasion.

- **Sixteenth century**: The parish church of San Dana, in the Salento, is dedicated to him.

The reader of Aulona

In the early Church, the reader was responsible for reading the Scriptures during the liturgy. It was a humble ministry, but an important one: the reader lent his voice to the Word of God. The Greek tradition reports that Danacte performed this service in Aulona, a port on the Illyrian coast. Some accounts make him a soldier who converted to Christianity instead.

When a persecution broke out, Danacte wanted to keep the sacred objects of his Church safe. He left the city and hid a few miles away. But he was discovered and captured. The pagans wanted to force him to pour out wine as an offering to Bacchus, the god of wine. He refused and confessed his faith in Christ. He was beheaded, and his body was thrown into the sea. A miniature in the Menologion of Basil II, a Byzantine manuscript made around the year 1000, shows his execution.

The deacon who protected the Eucharist

Another tradition developed across the Adriatic, in the Salento, at the southern tip of Apulia. According to it, Danacte left Aulona with fellow countrymen to settle in the region of Castrignano del Capo, and became a deacon at Santa Maria di Leuca. During an invasion, he took the ciborium containing the Eucharist and fled to put it in safety at Montesardo, a better-defended village. He was overtaken and killed at a place called "La Mora." Before dying, he had time to consume the consecrated hosts so that they would not be profaned.

A stele now marks the place of his death, about two hundred yards from the village that bears his name, San Dana, a hamlet of Gagliano del Capo. This account recalls that of Saint Tarcisius, the young Roman who died protecting

the Eucharist.

Devotion to Saint Danacte and how to recognize him in art

Danacte is celebrated on January 16 by the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Churches. In the Salento, the parish church of San Dana, built in the 16th century, is dedicated to him, and the village faithfully keeps his memory. A statue of the saint is venerated there. Byzantine art shows him at the moment of his beheading.

Why pray to Saint Danacte?

We do not know for certain when or how Danacte died. But both traditions agree on the essentials: he wanted to protect what is most precious to the Church, the sacred objects of worship in one account and the Eucharist itself in the other, and he preferred death to denying Christ. He invites us to respect what is sacred, to serve the liturgy with care, and to stay faithful to Christ when faith costs something. We can pray to him for lectors, altar servers and persecuted Christians.

Where to pray to Saint Danacte

- **San Dana** (Gagliano del Capo, Apulia, Italy): the parish church dedicated to him, and the stele erected at the place of his death according to local tradition.
- **Santa Maria di Leuca** (Apulia, Italy): the sanctuary at the tip of the Salento, where he is said to have been a deacon.
- **Vlora** (Albania): the ancient Aulona, his native city.

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

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Danacte to Keep the Faith and Honor the Eucharist

Saint Danacte was a reader in the Church of Aulona, present-day Vlora in Albania. According to tradition, he wanted to keep the sacred objects of his Church safe, refused to sacrifice to Bacchus and died a martyr; in Apulia it is told that he gave his life to protect the Eucharist. This prayer is an original composition inspired by his life, not an official liturgical text. It asks for faithfulness to Christ and respect for what is holy.

Prayer to Saint Danacte

Saint Danacte,
reader of the Word of God,
you lent your voice to the Scriptures
in the assembly of Christians.

When persecution came,
you wanted to guard what was holy,
and you refused to offer to idols
what belongs to God alone.
You chose death rather than denial.

Teach us to love the Word
and to honor the Body of Christ.
Keep us faithful when faith is costly,
brave when we are mocked,
and careful not to sacrifice to the idols of our time.

Pray for lectors and altar servers,
for the Christians of Albania and Italy,
and for all who suffer because of their faith.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

When to pray to Saint Danacte

- On his feast day, January 16.
- Before reading the Word of God at Mass.
- Before receiving Communion, to receive it with reverence.
- When it is hard to speak up about your faith at work, at school or in the family.
- For persecuted Christians around the world.

A prayer before reading the Word

If you serve as a lector at Mass, you can say before going up to the ambo:

> *Lord, open my lips so that your Word may be heard, and not my own. Saint Danacte, pray for me. Amen.*

To prepare for his feast, you can pray the novena to Saint Danacte from January 8 to 16, and read about the life of Saint Danacte.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Danacte

This novena is an original composition by Saintspedia, inspired by the life of Saint Danacte, a reader of the Church of Aulona (Vlora) and martyr. It is not an official liturgical text. To end it on his feast day, January 16, begin on January 8. It is particularly suited to asking for faithfulness in the faith and a deeper love for the Word and the Eucharist, and you can pray it at any time of the year.

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 Danacte, pray for us." The small act proposed each day helps you live the novena concretely.

Day 1: A forgotten witness

All that remains of Danacte is a name, an entry in the Martyrology and two accounts that do not agree. But the Church has never forgotten him. God knows each of his witnesses, even those whose story has faded.

Prayer: Lord, you know each of us by name. Thank you for all the hidden witnesses of the faith.

Today: Pray for Christians who died for their faith and whose names no one knows.

Day 2: Lending your voice to the Word

Danacte was a reader. He read the Scriptures in the assembly. This service is humble: the reader steps aside so that God may speak.

Prayer: Lord, help me to love your Word and to let it speak through my life.

Today: Read the Gospel of the day, slowly, out loud.

Day 3: Guarding what is holy

When persecution came, Danacte wanted to keep the sacred objects of his Church safe. He knew that some things are not ordinary, because they are given to God.

Prayer: Lord, teach me reverence for churches, for the objects of worship and for everything consecrated to you.

Today: Go into a church and spend a moment in silence before the tabernacle.

Day 4: Refusing idols

They tried to force Danacte to offer wine to Bacchus. He refused. Our idols no longer go by those names: money, success, pleasure, the opinion of others. But they still demand our hearts.

Prayer: Lord, free me from the idols that take your place in my life. You alone are God.

Today: Give up one thing today that takes up too much room in your life.

Day 5: Confessing Christ

Before his judges, Danacte proclaimed his faith in Christ. He did not look for a way out. We too are called not to be ashamed of the Gospel.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, give me the courage to speak of my faith simply, without fear and without arrogance.

Today: Do not hide your faith in a conversation where it belongs.

Day 6: The treasure of the Eucharist

According to the tradition of Apulia, Danacte fled with the ciborium to protect the Eucharist, and consumed the hosts before he died so they would not be profaned. For him, the Body of Christ was worth more than his life.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, present in the Eucharist, increase my faith and my love for you.

Today: Attend a weekday Mass, or spend some time in adoration.

Day 7: Crossing the sea

The tradition of Apulia says that Danacte left Albania with fellow countrymen to settle across the sea. He took his faith with him and served the Church in his new land.

Prayer: Lord, watch over migrants and exiles. May they find a brotherly welcome among us.

Today: Greet or help someone who has come from another country.

Day 8: To the very end

Danacte was beheaded, or killed at the place called La Mora, according to the accounts. He did not seek death, but he did not flee it at the price of his faith. Martyrdom is an act of love stronger than fear.

Prayer: Lord, sustain the Christians who are persecuted today. Give them strength and peace.

Today: Learn about the situation of a persecuted Church and pray for it.

Day 9: A name given to a village

A village in Apulia now bears his name, San Dana. Centuries later, Christians still pray where he died. The faithfulness of one person can bear fruit for many.

Prayer: Lord, make my life fruitful for those who will come after me. Through the intercession of Saint Danacte, grant me the grace I ask in this novena, if it is your will.

Today: Give thanks for those who handed on the faith to you.

Living the novena with Saint Danacte

Few people know Saint Danacte, and that may be a blessing: he reminds us that holiness is lived first in the quiet service of the liturgy and in daily faithfulness. If you are a lector, an altar server, a sacristan or a member of a liturgy team, entrust your service to him. During these nine days, pay attention to the way you enter church, listen to the Word and receive Communion. And remember those who, even today, risk their lives to go to Mass.

Closing prayer

Saint Danacte,
reader of the Word and martyr of Christ,
you guarded what was holy
and refused to serve idols.
Present to God the intention I have carried during these nine days.
Give me a love for the Scriptures,
reverence for the Eucharist,
and faithfulness in days of trial.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

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

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: Lupiae, 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