BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Daniel the Stylite

Life, prayer and novena

Feast day: December 11

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IN BRIEF

Saint Daniel the Stylite

Syrian monk of the 5th century, stylite near Constantinople for more than thirty years.

Feast day	December 11
Born	c. 410, Maratha, near Samosata (Syria, now Turkey)
Died	December 11, 493, Anaplous, near Constantinople
Canonized	immemorial cult
Era	5th century

In this booklet

Life

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Novena to Saint Daniel the Stylite

Credits and sources

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LIFE

Saint Daniel the Stylite

Saint Daniel the Stylite was a Syrian monk of the 5th century, born around 410 near Samosata and died in 493 at the gates of Constantinople. A disciple and imitator of Saint Simeon the Stylite, he lived for more than thirty years on top of a pillar overlooking the Bosphorus, where emperors and ordinary people came to ask for his prayer and advice. His feast day is December 11.

Who was Saint Daniel the Stylite?

The "stylites" (from the Greek *stylos*, pillar) were monks who chose to live on a pillar, between heaven and earth, to devote themselves to prayer and penance. The first was Simeon, in Syria. Daniel, who had met him, brought this way of life to the outskirts of Constantinople, the capital of the Eastern Roman Empire. His life was written shortly after his death by one of his disciples; it is rich in concrete details, which makes it one of the most valuable sources on religious life in 5th-century Constantinople, even if it also contains the wondrous stories typical of hagiography. A defender of the faith defined at the Council of Chalcedon, he is honored as a saint by Catholics and Orthodox alike.

Key dates in the life of Daniel

- **c. 410**: Born at Maratha (Meratha), near Samosata, into a Syriac-speaking family.
- **c. 422**: At the age of twelve, he enters a nearby monastery, where he remains for about twenty-five years.
- **440s**: He meets Saint Simeon the Stylite at Telanissos and receives his blessing.

- **c. 447**: Setting out for the Holy Land, he is redirected toward Constantinople, according to his Life, by a vision of Simeon.
- **451**: He settles near the oratory of Saint Michael at Anaplous, on the Bosphorus, and lives as a recluse in an old temple.
- **c. 460**: After Simeon's death, he climbs onto a pillar, which he will hardly ever leave again.
- **465**: At the request of Emperor Leo I, Patriarch Gennadius ordains him a priest.
- **475-476**: He comes down from his pillar to oppose the usurper Basiliscus, who favored Monophysitism.
- **December 11, 493**: He dies on his pillar, at about eighty-four years of age.

A child consecrated to God

According to his Life, Daniel's mother had long been childless and obtained him through prayer. She did not want to name him herself: when he was five, his parents took him to a monastery, where the abbot opened a holy book at random and came upon the prophet Daniel. Judged too young, the child went back to his family; then, at twelve, he left of his own accord and was accepted into a monastery. He spent about twenty-five years there and became his superior's favorite disciple.

During a journey to Antioch, he stopped at Telanissos, where Simeon the Stylite lived. This kind of asceticism was then much debated among monks. Daniel, however, was deeply moved: he climbed the ladder, received Simeon's blessing and the prediction that he would suffer much for Christ.

From hermit to stylite

Around 447, Daniel wanted to go to the Holy Land. His Life tells that Simeon appeared to him and sent him to Constantinople instead. In 451, he shut himself up in an old pagan temple near the oratory of Saint Michael at

Anaplous, on the shore of the Bosphorus, and spoke to visitors only through a small opening. Jealous clerics accused him of heresy, but Patriarch Anatolius, after hearing him, sent him back in peace.

Around 460, he learned of Simeon's death: one of Simeon's disciples even brought him his garment. Daniel then climbed onto a pillar, modest at first, then taller. He lived there, exposed to the cold and the winds of the Bosphorus, until his death. Crowds came to be healed, comforted or advised. Emperor Leo I, who attributed the birth of a son to his prayer, had an even taller pillar built for him; in 465, he had him ordained a priest by Patriarch Gennadius, who had to climb up to him.

A defender of the faith of the Church

Daniel did not live cut off from the world. He was consulted on the affairs of the Empire and received foreign visitors. His Life credits him with the gift of prophecy. In 475, when Basiliscus seized the throne and tried to impose measures favorable to Monophysitism, contrary to the Council of Chalcedon, Daniel came down from his pillar, something he never did, and led the people of Constantinople. The usurper had to back down.

In 493, sensing his end was near, he gathered his disciples for a final teaching. Patriarch Euphemius climbed up to him, and he died on December 11 before an immense crowd. He was buried in the nearby oratory, beneath the relics of the three young men of the fiery furnace in the Book of Daniel, Ananias, Azarias and Misael, so that, he said, the graces obtained at his tomb would be attributed to their intercession.

Devotion and art

Daniel is listed in the Roman Martyrology on December 11, and the Orthodox Churches celebrate him on the same day. The site of his pillar, north of Constantinople, has left no known remains. In Byzantine icons and

miniatures, such as the Menologion of Basil II, he is shown as a bearded monk standing on top of a pillar topped by a small railing.

What can we learn from Saint Daniel the Stylite?

Daniel's way of life seems strange today. But his message remains simple: he wanted to give his whole life to prayer, without abandoning people. From the top of his pillar, he listened, comforted and advised, and he did not hesitate to come down when the faith of the Church was threatened. You can pray to him to learn to make prayer the center of your life, to persevere in trials and to remain faithful to the truth.

To pray with him, see the prayer to Saint Daniel the Stylite and the novena to Saint Daniel the Stylite.

Where to pray to Saint Daniel the Stylite

- **In your parish**, on December 11, in union with the Church which remembers him that day.
- **Istanbul** (Turkey): the Bosphorus area where his pillar stood, of which no known trace remains.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Daniel the Stylite for Perseverance in Prayer

Saint Daniel the Stylite lived for more than thirty years on top of a pillar near Constantinople, in prayer and penance, while welcoming those who came to ask for help. Prayer composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. It entrusts to him the life of prayer, perseverance and faithfulness to the faith.

Prayer to Saint Daniel the Stylite

Saint Daniel,
child received from God and given to God,
you left everything to seek him,
and you chose to live between heaven and earth,
exposed to the wind, the cold and the gaze of others.

Teach me to pray without growing weary,
to hold firm when tiredness overcomes me,
to keep my eyes raised toward the Lord
amid the turmoil of the world.

You who listened to the crowds from your pillar,
and came down to defend the faith of the Church,
make me attentive to those who need me
and courageous in bearing witness to the truth.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

When to pray to Saint Daniel the Stylite

- On his feast day, December 11, in the heart of Advent.
- When prayer becomes difficult and you need perseverance.
- For monks, hermits and all who live a hidden life of prayer.
- When you must remain faithful to the faith under pressure.
- For parents who are expecting a child.

A short invocation

> *Saint Daniel, pillar of prayer, pray for us,*
> *that our hearts may remain turned toward God. Amen.*

To prepare for his feast, you can pray the novena to Saint Daniel the Stylite from December 3 to 11, and read the life of Saint Daniel the Stylite.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Daniel the Stylite

Novena composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. It is inspired by the life of Saint Daniel the Stylite, a 5th-century monk who lived on a pillar near Constantinople. It is not an official liturgical text. To finish it on his feast day, December 11, begin on December 3. You can also pray it at any other time of the year.

How to pray this novena

Each day, begin with the Sign of the Cross and entrust 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 Daniel, pray for us." The episodes recounted come from his Life, written by a disciple, which mixes precise memories and wondrous stories.

Day 1: A child of prayer

Daniel's mother waited a long time for a child and obtained him through prayer. She wanted his name to come from God: he was called Daniel, like the prophet.

Prayer: Lord, bless couples who are expecting a child and those who suffer from not having one.

Act of the day: Pray for a family awaiting a birth.

Day 2: Leaving at twelve

At twelve, Daniel left his family to enter the monastery. He stayed there twenty-five years, patiently learning obedience and prayer.

Prayer: Lord, give me the patience to grow slowly in faith, day after day.

Act of the day: Take ten minutes of silent prayer.

Day 3: Meeting Simeon

At Telanissos, Daniel met Simeon the Stylite. He climbed the ladder and received his blessing. One encounter can shape a whole life.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for the witnesses who showed me the way. Make me a witness for others.

Act of the day: Thank someone who helped you to believe.

Day 4: Changing course

Daniel was setting out for the Holy Land. According to his Life, a vision sent him to Constantinople instead. He agreed to change his path.

Prayer: Lord, when you change my plans, help me to follow you with trust.

Act of the day: Willingly accept something unexpected.

Day 5: The recluse of the Bosphorus

Daniel shut himself up in an old temple, near the oratory of Saint Michael. He spoke to visitors only through a small opening. Silence prepared him to listen.

Prayer: Lord, teach me the inner silence in which your voice can be heard.

Act of the day: Turn off all screens for an hour.

Day 6: Slandered and vindicated

Jealous clerics accused Daniel of heresy. He was brought before Patriarch Anatolius, who recognized his faith and let him go in peace.

Prayer: Lord, keep me from jealousy, and give peace to those who are unjustly accused.

Act of the day: Refuse all gossip today.

Day 7: Between heaven and earth

Around 460, Daniel climbed onto a pillar. He lived there for more than thirty years, in cold and wind, without ceasing to pray or to welcome others.

Prayer: Lord, help me to persevere in doing good, even when it is hard and I feel alone.

Act of the day: Offer God a small sacrifice.

Day 8: Coming down for the truth

In 475, when the usurper Basiliscus tried to impose a doctrine contrary to the faith of the Church, Daniel came down from his pillar and led the people. The hermit became a public witness.

Prayer: Lord, give me the courage to bear witness to my faith when it is challenged.

Act of the day: Read and pray the Creed slowly.

Day 9: A death among his own

In 493, Daniel gathered his disciples, taught them one last time and died on December 11, before a praying crowd. He wished to be buried beneath the relics of other saints, so that the glory would not go to him.

Prayer: Lord, keep me humble to the end. Through the intercession of Saint Daniel, grant me the grace I ask in this novena, if it is your will.

Act of the day: Attend Mass or pray for your departed.

Closing prayer

Saint Daniel,
man of prayer and penance,
you held firm on your pillar
for the love of Christ and of your brothers.
Present to the Lord the intention I have entrusted to you.
Keep me faithful in prayer
and steadfast in faith.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

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

Credits and sources

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