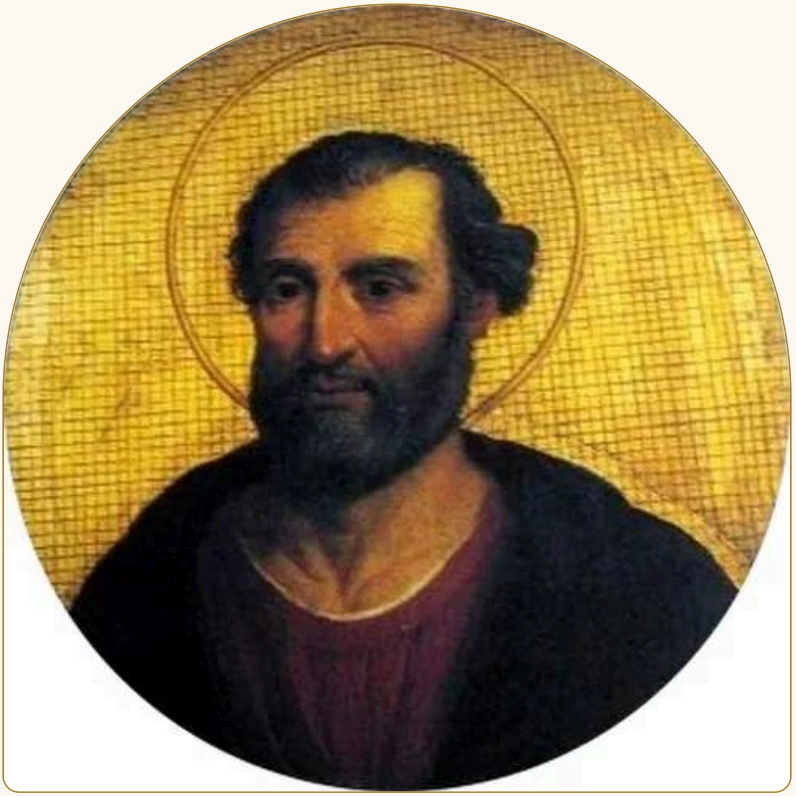


BOOKLET TO PRINT

Pope Saint Eugene I

Life, prayer and novena

Feast day: June 2

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IN BRIEF

Pope Saint Eugene I

Pope from 654 to 657, elected during the exile of Martin I, in the midst of the Monothelite crisis.

Feast day	June 2
Born	Rome
Died	June 2, 657, Rome
Era	7th century

In this booklet

Life

Prayer to Saint Eugene I for Faithfulness Under Pressure

Novena to Saint Eugene I

Credits and sources

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LIFE

Pope Saint Eugene I

Saint Eugene I was pope from 654 to 657. He was elected in a situation without precedent: his predecessor, Saint Martin I, was still alive, but had been arrested on the orders of the Byzantine emperor and taken to Constantinople. An elderly Roman priest known for his kindness to the poor, Eugene tried to keep the peace with the emperor without betraying the faith. His short pontificate shows a Church of Rome caught between political pressure and fidelity to doctrine. His feast day is June 2.

Who was Saint Eugene I?

Eugene was a Roman, born in the Aventine district of the city; his father's name was Rufinianus. He served for many years among the clergy of Rome, and he was already an elderly priest when he was chosen to govern the Church. The early sources describe him as a gentle and generous man, attentive to the poor. Little is known of his life before his election, and his pontificate lasted only about three years.

What makes his story worth telling is the moment in which he lived. Eugene became pope while the Church was divided by a quarrel over the person of Christ, and while the man who had led the resistance, Pope Martin I, was paying for it with prison and exile. Eugene's task was to hold the Church of Rome together in that storm.



Eugene I, medallion in the Basilica of Saint Paul Outside the Walls (19th century).

Key dates in the life of Eugene I

- **649**: The Lateran Synod, called by Martin I, condemns Monothelitism and the imperial edict known as the *Typos*.
- **June 17, 653**: Martin I is arrested in Rome on the orders of Emperor Constans II.
- **August 10, 654**: Eugene is elected bishop of Rome.
- **Around 654**: He receives the young Wilfrid, the future bishop of York, during his first stay in Rome.
- **655**: Martin I dies in exile in Crimea.
- **June 2, 657**: Eugene dies in Rome and is buried in Saint Peter's Basilica.

Elected while his predecessor was still alive

The Monothelite crisis

In the middle of the 7th century, the imperial court in Constantinople supported Monothelitism, the teaching that Christ had only one will. The Church had confessed since the Council of Chalcedon that Christ is truly God and truly man, and many bishops and theologians saw that denying him a human will meant denying the fullness of his humanity. To end the dispute, the emperor simply forbade anyone to discuss the question.

The fate of Martin I

Martin I refused to keep silent. At the Lateran Synod of 649 he condemned the doctrine and the imperial edict. For this he was arrested in Rome in June 653, tried for treason in Constantinople and sent into exile. In Rome, the imperial exarch pressed for a new election, and Eugene was chosen in August 654.

How far Martin accepted this choice is not known. Historians remain divided, and the letters Martin wrote from exile show his disappointment with the Roman clergy, who he felt had forgotten him. Martin died in exile in 655, and Eugene then governed as the undisputed bishop of Rome.

The letter booed in Saint Mary Major

To calm the emperor, Eugene sent legates to Constantinople. They came back with a letter from Patriarch Peter, written in such a tangled style that it avoided saying how many wills Christ has, and the imperial envoy asked the pope to enter into communion with this patriarch.

When the letter was read aloud in the Basilica of Saint Mary Major, the clergy and people of Rome protested loudly. They would not let the pope leave the church until he promised to reject it. The emperor then threatened Eugene

with the same fate as Martin, but his wars against the Arabs kept him from acting on the threat, and the pope died in peace on June 2, 657.

During these three years, Eugene also consecrated twenty-one bishops for various regions. His successor was Saint Vitalian.



The Basilica of Saint Mary Major, where the patriarch's letter was rejected.

A meeting with an English pilgrim

Around 654, during his first stay in Rome, a young Northumbrian named Wilfrid came to the city. He would later become bishop of York and one of the great figures of the Church in Anglo-Saxon England. Wilfrid was received by Pope Eugene, a small detail that links this Roman pope to the early history of Christianity in the English-speaking world.

What does his holiness teach us?

Eugene I does not have the glory of a martyr. He governed in the shadow of a persecuted predecessor, with prudence, perhaps with weakness in the eyes of some. But the scene in Saint Mary Major is a reminder that the faith of the Church is not the business of the pope alone: it was the whole people of Rome who refused an ambiguous formula, and Eugene sided with that shared fidelity.

His charity toward the poor also left a lasting memory. He shows that a pastor does not need to be a hero to be holy: listening to his people, refusing to sign what is unclear, and caring for the needy were his way of serving Christ. His cult took root after his death, and the Roman Martyrology commemorates him on June 2.

Why is Saint Eugene I not the patron of a particular cause?

No traditional patronage is attached to Saint Eugene I. Catholics can still turn to him in situations that echo his life: for leaders who must make decisions under pressure, for unity in the Church when doctrine is at stake, and for those who care for the poor. His name is also honored in California, where the cathedral of the Diocese of Santa Rosa is dedicated to Saint Eugene.

Symbols and how to recognize Saint Eugene I in art

Like most early popes, Eugene I has no well-established tradition of images. He is usually represented as a pope, in liturgical vestments. The best-known portrait is the mosaic medallion in the Basilica of Saint Paul Outside the Walls in Rome, part of the 19th-century series showing every pope. It is an imaginary portrait, since no likeness of him has survived.

Where to pray to Saint Eugene I

- **Rome**: Saint Peter's Basilica, where he was buried in the old basilica; he is counted among the popes whose remains are in the Vatican Grottoes.
- **Santa Rosa, California**: the Cathedral of Saint Eugene, seat of the Diocese of Santa Rosa, is dedicated to him.



The Cathedral of Saint Eugene in Santa Rosa, California.

Pray with Saint Eugene I

You can pray with him through the prayer to Saint Eugene I or the nine-day novena to Saint Eugene I, which ends on his feast day, June 2.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Eugene I for Faithfulness Under Pressure

No traditional prayer to Saint Eugene I has come down to us. This gentle Roman priest, elected pope while his predecessor was in exile, tried to keep the peace with a hostile emperor, but refused, together with the people of Rome, to accept an ambiguous statement of faith. He can be invoked by all who must hold firm under pressure and by those who serve the poor. Here is an original prayer inspired by his life.

Prayer to Saint Eugene I

Saint Eugene, faithful priest of Rome, you were called to lead the Church in a time of fear, while your predecessor suffered in exile: help me to accept the responsibilities God gives me, even when the times are hard.

You sought peace with the powerful, but you did not accept words that obscured the truth about Christ: give me the wisdom to seek peace and the courage to say no when the faith is at stake.

You listened to the clergy and people of Rome when they defended the faith together: teach me to listen to my brothers and sisters, and to remember that the faith is a treasure we carry together.

You were known for your gentleness and your generosity to the poor: open my hands and my heart to those in need around me.

Pray for the Pope and the bishops, for Christians who suffer for their faith, and for all who must decide under pressure. I also entrust to you my intention: (name it in silence).

Through Christ our Lord, true God and true man. Amen.

This prayer is an original text by Saintspedia, free to use for personal and community prayer.

When to pray this prayer

- On his feast day, June 2, or during the novena to Saint Eugene I that leads up to it.
- When you must make a decision under pressure and are tempted to compromise on what is right.
- For the Pope, bishops and all who carry responsibility in the Church.

- For Christians persecuted or imprisoned for their faith, in memory of Saint Martin I, whom Eugene succeeded.
- Before serving the poor, in a food pantry, a parish outreach or a simple visit.

A short prayer for clarity in faith

> *Lord Jesus Christ, true God and true man, you took on our humanity and freely obeyed the Father's will. Through the intercession of Saint Eugene I, keep your Church faithful to the truth, gentle with the weak and generous to the poor. Amen.*

This short prayer is also an original text by Saintspedia. To learn more about this pope, read the life of Saint Eugene I.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Eugene I

This novena is an original composition by Saintspedia, inspired by the life of Pope Saint Eugene I. It is not an official liturgical text. To end on his feast, begin on May 25: the ninth day then falls on June 2. You can also pray it at any time of year, especially when you must stay faithful under pressure, for unity in the Church or for the poor.

How to pray this novena

Each day, place your intention before God, read the short meditation, then say the prayer of the day followed by an Our Father, a Hail Mary and a Glory Be. The small act suggested for each day helps turn prayer into a concrete step.

You may begin each day with this opening prayer: *Lord, you gave Saint Eugene I a gentle heart and a faithful spirit in a time of trial. Through his intercession, strengthen me and hear the prayer I bring you today. Amen.*

If you miss a day, simply pick up where you left off. Perseverance matters more than perfection.

Day 1: A priest of Rome

Eugene was born in the Aventine district of Rome and served for many years among its clergy. He was already old when he was called to lead the Church. A long, quiet life of service prepared him for the heavier task God had in store.

Prayer: Lord, help me to be faithful in small things, day after day, so that I may be ready for whatever you ask.

Today: Do one ordinary duty with special care, offering it to God.

Day 2: Called in a time of fear

Eugene was elected in August 654, while Pope Martin I was a prisoner of the emperor. He did not choose the moment. Many of us are asked to take up responsibilities at a time we would not have picked.

Prayer: Lord, when your call comes at a difficult hour, give me the grace to say yes.

Today: Accept, without complaining, a task or responsibility that you have been avoiding.

Day 3: Remembering those who suffer for the faith

Martin I died in exile in Crimea in 655, feeling forgotten by his own clergy. His suffering reminds us that the Church today still has members who are imprisoned or persecuted for believing in Christ.

Prayer: Lord, comfort all who suffer for your name, and never let me forget them.

Today: Learn about a country where Christians are persecuted and pray for them by name.

Day 4: True God and true man

The quarrel of Eugene's time was about Christ himself: did he have a truly human will? The Church answered yes. Jesus freely embraced the Father's will with a human heart, as in the garden of Gethsemane: "Not my will, but yours be done."

Prayer: Lord Jesus, teach me to unite my will to the Father's, as you did.

Today: Read slowly the account of the agony in the garden (Luke 22:39-46).

Day 5: Seeking peace

Eugene sent legates to Constantinople to calm the emperor's anger. He did not look for a fight. Seeking peace is a Christian duty, even with people who threaten us.

Prayer: Lord, make me a peacemaker in my family, at work and in my parish.

Today: Take a first step toward reconciliation with someone.

Day 6: Refusing what is unclear

The legates came back with a letter so tangled that it avoided the real question. The people of Rome would not accept it, and Eugene promised to reject it. Peace cannot be built on words that hide the truth.

Prayer: Lord, give me the courage to speak clearly and to refuse compromise with what is false.

Today: In a conversation, say honestly what you believe, with gentleness.

Day 7: A faith shared by the whole people

In Saint Mary Major, it was the clergy and laity together who defended the faith. The pope listened to them. The faith is not the property of a few: every baptized person is responsible for it.

Prayer: Lord, help me to know my faith better so that I may defend it and pass it on.

Today: Read a paragraph of the Catechism of the Catholic Church about Jesus Christ.

Day 8: Kindness to the poor

The sources remember Eugene as gentle and generous, attentive to the poor. Long after the debates of his time were forgotten by most, his charity remained in the memory of Rome.

Prayer: Lord, open my hands to those who lack what I have.

Today: Give food, money or time to someone in need.

Day 9: A peaceful death

The emperor threatened Eugene with exile, but the threat was never carried out. Eugene died in Rome on June 2, 657, and was buried in Saint Peter's. God does not ask us to be heroes, but to be faithful to the end.

Prayer: Lord, I place in your hands the intention of this novena. Through the intercession of Saint Eugene I, keep me faithful until my last day. Amen.

Today: Pray for the Pope and for the bishop of your diocese.

Closing prayer

Saint Eugene I, at the end of these nine days, I entrust to you the intention I have brought before God. You guided the Church with gentleness in a time of trial, you sought peace without betraying the truth and you loved the poor. Pray for me, that I may hold fast to Christ, true God and true man, and serve him in my brothers and sisters. Amen.

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

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