

BOOKLET TO PRINT

Pope Saint Eutychian

Life, prayer and novena

Feast day: December 7

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IN BRIEF

Pope Saint Eutychian

Pope from 275 to 283, the last pope buried in the Crypt of the Popes in the Catacomb of Saint Callixtus.

Feast day	December 7
Born	Luni, Etruria (Italy)
Died	December 7, 283, Rome
Era	3rd century

In this booklet

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Credits and sources

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LIFE

Pope Saint Eutychian

Saint Eutychian was bishop of Rome from 275 to 283. His pontificate fell in a rare period of peace for the Church, between the persecution of Valerian and that of Diocletian. Very little is known about him, but one material witness has crossed the centuries: fragments of his Greek epitaph, found in the Crypt of the Popes in the Catacomb of Saint Callixtus, of which he was the last occupant. The Roman Martyrology commemorates him on December 7, the day of his death.

Who was Saint Eutychian?

According to the ancient lists, Eutychian (*Eutychianus* in Latin) came from Luni, in Etruria, near the present-day border between Liguria and Tuscany in Italy. He succeeded Saint Felix I at the beginning of 275 and governed the Church of Rome for almost nine years.

No authentic writing of his has been preserved. An exhortation to priests that was once attributed to him is in fact a much later text. The little information we have comes from the *Liber Pontificalis*, the book of the popes compiled several centuries after his death, and from archaeology.

His name comes from Greek and means something like "fortunate." It fits a pope whose time in office, unlike that of many of his predecessors and successors, was spared the violence of persecution. It also reminds us that his Church, a small community in a vast pagan city, could only live by trusting in God's providence.

Key dates in the life of Eutychian

- **January 4, 275**: Beginning of his pontificate, according to the traditional chronology.

- **275-283**: Five emperors follow one another in Rome: Aurelian, Tacitus, Probus, Carus and Numerian.
- **December 7, 283**: He dies in Rome and is buried in the Crypt of the Popes in the Catacomb of Saint Callixtus.
- **19th century**: The archaeologist Giovanni Battista de Rossi finds fragments of his epitaph.

A pope in a time of peace

Forty years without general persecution

In 260, Emperor Gallienus ended the persecution launched by his father Valerian and gave the Christians back their places of worship and their cemeteries. For about forty years the Church then lived without a general persecution. It organized itself, built and grew in every level of society.

Eutychian's pontificate belongs to this period, despite great political instability: in less than nine years, five emperors succeeded one another, often murdered by their own soldiers. The Church found a measure of calm while the empire around it was shaken.

The blessing of the harvest

A tradition reported by the *Liber Pontificalis* credits him with the custom of blessing the fruits of the fields, and some have seen in it a distant forerunner of the Rogation Days, when Catholics pray for the crops. Historians remain cautious about this attribution, as they are about most of the decisions that this source credits to the popes of the early centuries.

Martyr or confessor?

The old Roman Martyrology presented Eutychian as a martyr, who was said to have buried three hundred and forty-two martyrs with his own hands before dying for Christ himself under Emperor Numerian. This story belongs to

legend: no persecution is attested in Rome at that time, and the inscription found on his tomb does not give him the title of martyr.

Historians therefore think he died in peace. His holiness lies in his faithfulness as a shepherd in a Church that was catching its breath. The current Martyrology commemorates him on December 7; the older calendar celebrated him on December 8.

The last tomb in the Crypt of the Popes

The Crypt of the Popes, in the Catacomb of Saint Callixtus on the Appian Way, received several bishops of Rome in the 3rd century. Eutychian was the last to be buried there. Fragments of his epitaph have been found in it, bearing his name in Greek letters followed by the word "bishop."

It is one of the last papal epitaphs written in Greek, the language of the Church of Rome in its early days, before Latin took over. According to one tradition, part of his relics was transferred in the 17th century to Sarzana, near his hometown.

What does his holiness teach us?

Eutychian left no writings, no famous sayings, no dramatic story. What remains is a name on a stone and nine years of faithful service. That is a lesson in itself: most of the Church's life is made of quiet pastors who keep the flock together in ordinary times. Periods of peace are not empty periods; they are when communities grow, catechumens are prepared and the faith is passed on.

To pray with him, see the prayer to Saint Eutychian and the novena to Saint Eutychian, which ends on his feast day, December 7.

Is Saint Eutychian the patron saint of anything?

No traditional patronage is attached to Saint Eutychian. Because of the tradition that links him to the blessing of the fields, some Catholics may think of him when praying for farmers and for the harvest. He can also be invoked by pastors and parish leaders who serve faithfully without being noticed.

Symbols and how to recognize Saint Eutychian in art

There is no ancient tradition of images of Eutychian. He is shown as a pope in liturgical vestments, as in the 19th-century mosaic medallion in the Basilica of Saint Paul Outside the Walls in Rome, which is an imaginary portrait. The truest "image" of him is probably the humble fragment of his Greek epitaph, still bearing his name.



The cathedral of Sarzana, near Luni, where relics of Eutychian are said to have been transferred.

Where to pray to Saint Eutychian

- **Rome**: the Crypt of the Popes in the Catacomb of Saint Callixtus, on the Appian Way, where he was buried. The catacomb can be visited with a guide.
- **Sarzana** (Liguria, Italy): the cathedral, which claims part of his relics.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Eutychian for Faithfulness and the Harvest

No traditional prayer to Saint Eutychian has come down to us. This bishop of Rome of the 3rd century guided the Church for almost nine years during a rare time of peace, and he rests in the Crypt of the Popes in the Catacomb of Saint Callixtus. A tradition links him to the blessing of the fruits of the fields. Here is an original prayer inspired by what we know of him.

Prayer to Saint Eutychian

Saint Eutychian, shepherd of the Church of Rome in a time of peace, you kept the flock of Christ united while emperors rose and fell around you: help me to stay faithful in ordinary days, when nothing seems to happen.

You served without leaving writings or famous words, and your name remains on a humble stone in the catacomb: teach me to serve without seeking to be noticed.

According to tradition, you blessed the fruits of the fields: bless the work of farmers, the harvest of the earth and the bread on our tables, and make us grateful for the gifts of God.

Pray for the Pope and for all pastors, that they may guide their communities with patience. Pray for the Church in times of peace, that she may grow, and in times of trial, that she may stand firm.

I also entrust to you my intention: (name it in silence).

Through Christ our Lord. 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, December 7, or during the novena to Saint Eutychian that leads up to it, at the start of Advent.
- For farmers, gardeners and all who work the land, especially at sowing time or before the harvest.
- For priests and parish leaders who serve faithfully in the shadows.
- When visiting the catacombs of Rome, in memory of the early Christians buried there.

A short grace before meals

> *Bless us, O Lord, and these gifts which we are about to receive from your bounty, through Christ our Lord. Saint Eutychian, pray for those who work the land and for those who go hungry. Amen.*

The first sentence is the traditional Catholic grace before meals; the invocation that follows is an original addition by Saintspedia. To learn more, read the life of Saint Eutychian.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Eutychian

This novena is an original composition by Saintspedia, inspired by what we know of Pope Saint Eutychian. It is not an official liturgical text. To end on his feast, begin on November 29: the ninth day then falls on December 7. These days usually fall at the beginning of Advent, a good time to rediscover the patience and faithfulness of the early Christians. You can also pray it at any time of year.

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 Eutychian to your Church as a faithful shepherd in a time of peace. Through his intercession, keep me faithful in ordinary days, 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. You can pray this novena alone, with your family or with your parish community, and you can offer it for someone who needs God's help.

Day 1: A man from Luni

Eutychian came from Luni, a small town in Etruria, far from the great centers of power. God chooses his servants where he wills, and no origin is too modest for his plans.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for the place where I was born and for those who handed on the faith to me.

Today: Pray for the parish where you were baptized.

Day 2: The successor of Felix

In 275, Eutychian succeeded Pope Felix I. The Church is a chain of faithful witnesses, each receiving the faith and handing it on to the next.

Prayer: Lord, make me a faithful link in the chain of believers.

Today: Thank, in person or in prayer, someone who taught you the faith.

Day 3: The gift of peace

Eutychian lived in a time without general persecution. The Church used it to grow, to build and to welcome new believers. Peace is a gift to be used well.

Prayer: Lord, help me not to waste the calm days you give me, but to use them to grow in love.

Today: Use a free moment for prayer or for reading the Gospel.

Day 4: Steady in an unstable world

In less than nine years, five emperors followed one another, often murdered by their own soldiers. Amid this instability, the Church of Rome remained steady under its shepherd.

Prayer: Lord, when the world around me is shaken, be my rock.

Today: Pray for those who govern your country and for peace in the world.

Day 5: Blessing the fruits of the earth

Tradition credits Eutychian with the custom of blessing the fruits of the fields. Everything we eat is first a gift of God and the fruit of human labor.

Prayer: Lord, bless farmers and all who feed us, and give bread to those who are hungry.

Today: Say grace before each meal, and give to a food bank if you can.

Day 6: Serving without being noticed

Eutychian left no writings and no famous words. He simply served. Many saints are like him: unknown to the world, known to God.

Prayer: Lord, free me from the need to be seen, and let me serve with a pure heart.

Today: Do a good deed in secret.

Day 7: Truth and legend

For centuries, Eutychian was presented as a martyr. Historians now think he died in peace. The Church does not need legends: the truth of a faithful life is enough.

Prayer: Lord, give me a love for the truth, even when it is less striking than a beautiful story.

Today: Avoid exaggerating or embellishing in what you say.

Day 8: A name on a stone

In the Crypt of the Popes, fragments of his epitaph still bear his name and the word "bishop." Our names, too, are written in the heart of God.

Prayer: Lord, write my name in the book of life, and remember all who have died in your peace.

Today: Pray for the dead of your family, or visit a cemetery.

Day 9: Resting with the early Christians

Eutychian died on December 7, 283, and was laid to rest among the popes and martyrs of the catacomb. He awaits the resurrection with the first generations of believers.

Prayer: Lord, I place in your hands the intention of this novena. Through the intercession of Saint Eutychian, keep me faithful until the day I see you face to face. Amen.

Today: Pray an Act of Hope, or read the Creed slowly, stopping at "the resurrection of the body and life everlasting."

Closing prayer

Saint Eutychian, at the end of these nine days, I entrust to you the intention I have brought before God. You guided the Church with faithfulness in a time of peace, and you rest with the early Christians in the catacomb. Pray for me, that I may serve God in ordinary days, give thanks for his gifts and keep my hope fixed on eternal life. Amen.

You can end with the Our Father, the Hail Mary and the Glory Be, then thank God for the graces received during these nine days, even those you do not yet see.

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

CREDITS

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