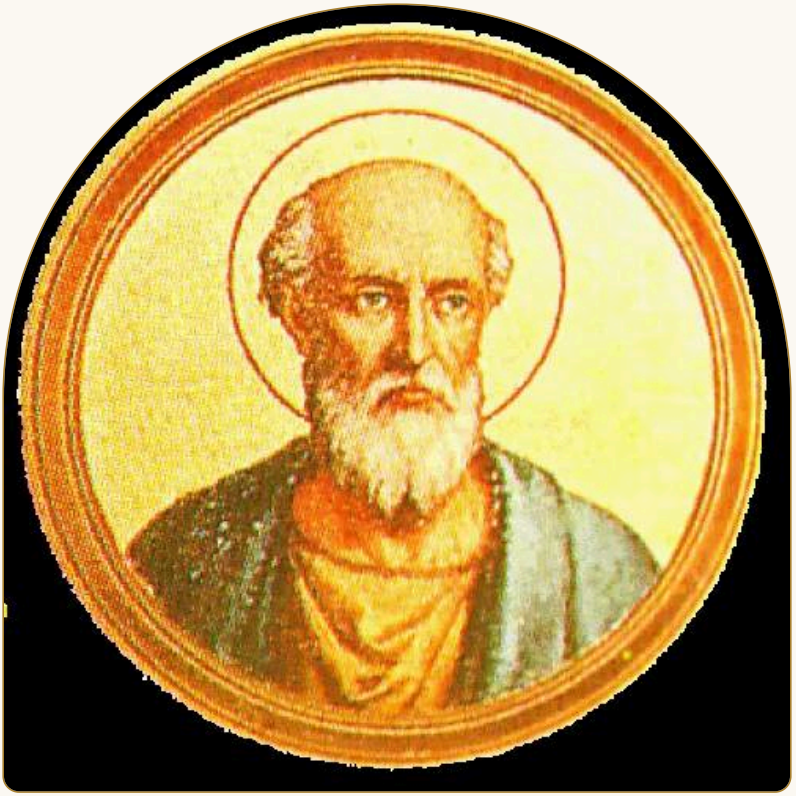


BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Evaristus

Life, prayer and novena

Feast day: October 26

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IN BRIEF

Saint Evaristus

Fifth bishop of Rome around the year 100, at the end of the apostolic age.

Feast day	October 26
Died	c. 105, Rome
Canonized	pre-congregation (immemorial veneration)
Era	2nd century

In this booklet

Life

Prayer to Saint Evaristus for Faithfulness to the Apostles

Novena to Saint Evaristus

Credits and sources

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LIFE

Saint Evaristus

Saint Evaristus was one of the very first bishops of Rome, counted as the fifth pope after Saint Peter. He led the Roman Church for about eight years, around the year 100, at the time when the last direct witnesses of the apostles were dying. Very little is known about him for certain, but his place in the oldest lists of the bishops of Rome shows that he truly held this office. The Roman Martyrology commemorates him on October 26 (some sources give October 27).

Who was Saint Evaristus?

Evaristus, whose Greek name means "well pleasing," succeeded Saint Clement of Rome. The lists of the bishops of Rome drawn up in the second century, handed down by Saint Irenaeus of Lyon and then by the historian Eusebius of Caesarea, place him fourth after the apostle Peter, following Linus, Anacletus and Clement. A later catalogue, the Liberian Catalogue, calls him Aristus. Eusebius says that he led the Church of Rome for eight years and died during the reign of Emperor Trajan.

Everything else comes from the *Liber Pontificalis*, a chronicle of the popes written several centuries later. It says that he was Greek by birth, the son of a Jew named Judah who came from Bethlehem. These details are late and cannot be verified.

This scarcity of information is not unusual. For the first generations of Christians in Rome, the essential thing was not to record the personal story of their bishop, but to keep an unbroken line of teachers who passed on the faith received from the apostles. That is precisely why Evaristus's name was carefully preserved.

Key dates in the life of Saint Evaristus

- **c. 97-99**: Succeeds Clement as head of the Church of Rome; the exact date is debated.
- **c. 100**: According to tradition, the apostle John dies during his pontificate.
- **c. 105**: Dies in Rome, under Emperor Trajan, after about eight years in office.

The end of the apostolic age

The interest of Evaristus's pontificate lies above all in its timing. According to tradition, Saint John, the last of the Twelve, died in Ephesus around the year 100. With him ended what is called the apostolic age.

From then on, the Churches were no longer led by eyewitnesses of Jesus, but by their successors, who received and handed on what they had heard. This is the meaning of apostolic succession, which Catholics still profess when they say in the Creed that the Church is "apostolic."

This was also the time when Saint Ignatius of Antioch, taken to Rome to be martyred, wrote his letters to the Churches, including one addressed to the Christians of Rome. In it, Ignatius speaks of the Roman Church with deep respect, as the Church that "presides in love."

The Church of Rome around the year 100

In Rome, the Christian community did not yet have buildings of its own. It met in houses, under the guidance of a group of leaders among whom a bishop gradually took a central place. Christians were a small and often suspected minority in the capital of the empire, and the memory of Nero's persecution, a few decades earlier, was still alive.

What tradition attributes to him

The *Liber Pontificalis* credits him with dividing Rome into districts entrusted to priests, the future "titles" or parish churches of the city, and with ordaining seven deacons. Historians see this as a projection backward in time: these institutions came about a century and a half later.

Two letters attributed to him, addressed to the bishops of Africa and of Egypt, are medieval forgeries belonging to the collection known as the False Decretals.

The *Liber Pontificalis* also presents him as a martyr, but no ancient source confirms this, and the Roman Martyrology mentions him without that title.

His burial

According to the *Liber Pontificalis*, he was buried near the tomb of Saint Peter on the Vatican Hill, like the first bishops of Rome. Another tradition places his remains in Naples, in the church of Santa Maria Maggiore alla Pietrasanta.

Why is Saint Evaristus remembered?

Saint Evaristus is not the patron saint of any particular cause or profession. He is remembered as a link in the chain that connects today's Church to the apostles. His name is almost all we have. But that name, inscribed in the oldest lists, says what matters most: as the apostles passed away, the Church of Rome continued to live and to hand on the faith it had received.

His holiness is the quiet holiness of pastors who ensured continuity without leaving any writings behind. He can be prayed to for the faithfulness of the Church to the teaching of the apostles, for the pope and the bishops, and for all who serve the Church without being noticed.

To pray with him, see the prayer to Saint Evaristus and the novena to Saint Evaristus, from October 17 to 25.

Symbols and how to recognize Saint Evaristus in art

No portrait of Evaristus from his own time exists. He appears mainly in the long series of mosaic medallions of the popes in the Basilica of Saint Paul Outside the Walls in Rome, where he is shown as a bishop of Rome among his successors. In later art, like other early popes, he may be shown with papal vestments and a book, the sign of the faith he transmitted.



The church of Santa Maria Maggiore alla Pietrasanta in Naples.

Where to pray to Saint Evaristus

- **Saint Peter's Basilica** (Vatican): near the tomb of Saint Peter, where the first bishops of Rome were buried according to the *Liber Pontificalis*.
- **Naples** (Italy): the church of Santa Maria Maggiore alla Pietrasanta, which according to another tradition holds his remains.
- **Basilica of Saint Paul Outside the Walls** (Rome): his medallion in the series of papal portraits.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Evaristus for Faithfulness to the Apostles

No prayer or writing of Saint Evaristus has come down to us: the two letters once attributed to him are medieval forgeries. What we know of him is his place in the oldest lists of the bishops of Rome, as a faithful link between the apostles and the generations that followed. The prayer below draws on that quiet role. It asks for faithfulness to the teaching of the apostles and for all who serve the Church without being noticed.

Prayer to Saint Evaristus for Faithfulness to the Apostles

Saint Evaristus, bishop of Rome in the days when the last apostles were leaving this world, you received the faith from those who had heard it from the witnesses of Jesus, and you handed it on without adding or taking away.

Pray for the Church, that she may remain faithful to the teaching of the apostles, to the breaking of bread and to the prayers. Pray for our Holy Father the pope, for the bishops and for all who are charged with guarding the faith.

You whose life is almost unknown to us, teach me the holiness of hidden service: to do faithfully what is entrusted to me, without seeking to be seen or remembered.

When the generations change and the witnesses I have loved pass away, help me to receive what they gave me and to pass it on in my turn.

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

Through Christ our Lord, the cornerstone on whom the apostles built. Amen.

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

When to pray this prayer

- On October 26, the day the Roman Martyrology commemorates Saint Evaristus.
- For the pope and the bishops, especially at the time of a conclave or the appointment of a new bishop.

- When an older generation of believers passes away in your family or parish, and you feel the responsibility of carrying on the faith.
- For catechists, parents and godparents who hand on the faith quietly.

A traditional prayer to add

Since Evaristus is remembered as a successor of the apostles, you may close with the Apostles' Creed, the ancient baptismal profession of faith of the Church of Rome: "I believe in God, the Father almighty, Creator of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord..."

For a longer time of prayer, follow the novena to Saint Evaristus, and read the life of Saint Evaristus.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Evaristus

This novena is an original composition by Saintspedia, inspired by what history tells us of Saint Evaristus, fifth bishop of Rome around the year 100. It is not an official liturgical text. Since we know very little about his life, the meditations focus on the moment in which he lived: the passing of the apostles and the handing on of the faith to the next generations. To finish it on the eve of his commemoration on October 26, begin on October 17; it then ends on October 25.

How to pray this novena

Each day, entrust your intention to God, read the meditation, say the prayer of the day, then an Our Father. The small act suggested for each day helps you carry the prayer into your daily life. You may also pray the Apostles' Creed each day, as a sign of the faith Evaristus received and handed on.

Day 1: A name in a list

What remains of Evaristus is above all his name, carefully kept in the oldest lists of the bishops of Rome. For the early Christians, this list was not a dry record: it showed that the faith had been passed on from hand to hand, without a break, since Peter.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for all who handed on the faith to me, from the apostles to those who taught me to pray.

Today: Write down the names of the people who passed on the faith to you, and pray for each of them.

Day 2: Successor of the apostles

Evaristus did not invent a new message. He received what Clement, Anacletus and Linus had received before him, and they had received it from Peter. The Church is apostolic because she remains faithful to that first witness.

Prayer: Lord, keep your Church faithful to the teaching of the apostles.

Today: Read slowly Acts 2:42-47, the portrait of the first Christian community.

Day 3: When the witnesses pass away

Around the year 100, according to tradition, Saint John died in Ephesus, the last of the Twelve. The Christians of that time had to learn to believe without the presence of those who had seen Jesus. We too must one day carry on without the believers who supported us.

Prayer: Lord, welcome into your peace those who gave me the faith and have now left this world.

Today: Pray for a deceased grandparent, priest or catechist who mattered in your life of faith.

Day 4: A Church in the houses

The Christians of Rome had no churches of their own. They gathered in homes, around the Word and the breaking of bread. Their faith was lived first of all in the ordinary setting of daily life.

Prayer: Lord, make my home a place where you are welcomed and where people pray.

Today: Pray together with your household, even briefly, before a meal.

Day 5: A small minority

In the capital of the empire, Christians were few and often regarded with suspicion. Yet they did not lose heart. Their strength came not from numbers but from their communion with Christ and with one another.

Prayer: Lord, strengthen Christians who live as a minority, and those who suffer for their faith.

Today: Learn about a country where Christians are few, and pray for them.

Day 6: The Church that presides in love

In the same period, Saint Ignatius of Antioch wrote to the Christians of Rome, honoring their Church as the one that "presides in love." Authority in the Church is meant first of all to be a service of charity.

Prayer: Lord, bless our Holy Father the pope, and make his ministry a sign of unity and love.

Today: Pray a decade of the Rosary for the pope and his intentions.

Day 7: Hidden service

Evaristus left no writings, no famous deeds, no memorable words. His holiness is that of the many pastors and faithful whose names are known only to God. Hidden service is no less precious in God's eyes.

Prayer: Lord, teach me to serve without seeking to be seen.

Today: Do a service for someone without letting them know it was you.

Day 8: Distinguishing history from legend

Over the centuries, letters and achievements were attributed to Evaristus that were not his. The Church today distinguishes carefully between what is certain and what is legend. Truth honors the saints more than embellishment.

Prayer: Spirit of truth, help me to love what is true and to reject what is false.

Today: Take care not to repeat a rumor or an unverified story.

Day 9: Handing on in our turn

Evaristus received the faith and passed it on. Each Christian is in turn a link in this chain. What we have received is not meant to stop with us, but to reach those who come after.

Prayer: Lord, I place in your hands the intention of this novena. Through the intercession of Saint Evaristus, make me a faithful witness who hands on the faith. Amen.

Today: Share something of your faith with a child or a young person.

Closing prayer

Saint Evaristus, at the end of these nine days, I entrust to you the intention I have brought before you. Pray for the Church of Rome and for the whole Church, for the pope and the bishops, and for all who hand on the faith in silence. Obtain for us the grace to remain faithful to the teaching of the apostles until the day we see the Lord face to face. Amen.

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

CREDITS

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