

BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Francis Caracciolo

Life, prayer and novena

Feast day: June 4

Saintspedia · saintspedia.com

IN BRIEF

Saint Francis Caracciolo

Neapolitan priest, co-founder of the Clerics Regular Minor, apostle of Eucharistic adoration and patron saint of Naples.

Feast day	June 4
Born	October 13, 1563, Villa Santa Maria, Abruzzo, Italy
Died	June 4, 1608, Agnone, Molise, Italy
Canonized	1807, by Pope Pius VII
Era	17th century
Patron saint of	Naples, cooks (in Italy)

In this booklet

Life

Prayer to Saint Francis Caracciolo for the Sick and Prisoners

Novena to Saint Francis Caracciolo

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 Francis Caracciolo

Saint Francis Caracciolo was a Neapolitan priest of the late sixteenth century, co-founder and first superior general of the Clerics Regular Minor, also known as the Caracciolini. Born into a great noble family and healed of a serious skin disease, he devoted himself to the poor, the sick and those condemned to death, and made adoration of the Blessed Sacrament the heart of his congregation. He died in 1608, was canonized in 1807, and is one of the patron saints of Naples. His feast day is June 4.

Who was Saint Francis Caracciolo?

Ascanio Caracciolo was born on October 13, 1563, in Villa Santa Maria, in the Abruzzo region, then part of the Kingdom of Naples. His father, Ferrante Caracciolo, was lord of the place and belonged to one of the most illustrious families of Naples; his mother was Isabella Barattucci. He received the education of a young nobleman and showed a religious inclination very early.

At twenty-two, he was struck by a disease that disfigured his face, possibly a form of leprosy. He promised to consecrate himself to God if he recovered. Once healed, he set out for Naples to keep his promise.

Key dates in the life of Francis Caracciolo

- **October 13, 1563**: Born in Villa Santa Maria, Abruzzo.
- **Around 1585**: Healed of a serious illness, he decides to become a priest and goes to study in Naples.
- **1587**: Ordained a priest; celebrates his first Mass.
- **1588**: Joins John Augustine Adorno and Fabrizio Caracciolo in their plan for a new foundation.

- **April 9, 1589**: Makes his religious profession and takes the name Francis.
- **1591**: On Adorno's death, becomes superior general of the Clerics Regular Minor.
- **1594**: First foundations in Spain.
- **1607**: Obtains release from all positions of government.
- **June 4, 1608**: Dies in Agnone, Molise.
- **1769**: Beatified by Pope Clement XIV; **1807**: canonized by Pope Pius VII.

The priest of the condemned

In Naples, Ascanio resumed his studies and read Saint Thomas Aquinas with passion. Ordained a priest in 1587, he devoted himself to the poor and the sick. He joined the *Bianchi della Giustizia*, the "White Brothers of Justice," a confraternity whose members, dressed in white, assisted prisoners and accompanied those condemned to death to the place of execution, to help them be reconciled with God.

A letter delivered by mistake

In 1588 a Genoese priest, John Augustine Adorno, and Fabrizio Caracciolo, a relative of Ascanio, were preparing to found a new congregation. They wrote to another Ascanio Caracciolo to invite him to join them, but the letter was delivered by mistake to our Ascanio. He came to see them, the misunderstanding was cleared up, and the two founders saw in it the hand of Providence: he was welcomed among them.

The three companions withdrew to a Camaldolese hermitage near Naples to write their rule. To the three usual vows they added a fourth: never to seek any ecclesiastical dignity, unless expressly ordered by the pope. They went to Rome, where Pope Sixtus V approved their institute. On April 9, 1589, Ascanio made his profession and took the name Francis, in honor of Saint Francis of Assisi.

Superior of the Clerics Regular Minor

When Adorno died in 1591, Francis Caracciolo was elected superior, and he was the first to bear the title of superior general. He spread the congregation in Italy and, from 1594, in Spain, where he traveled several times despite great difficulties. He organized the life of his religious around perpetual adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, each one taking his turn of prayer before the Eucharist, and around penance and the service of the poor. He is said to have spent long hours, often at night, in adoration, and he liked to sign his name "Francis, a sinner."

In 1607 he obtained release from all responsibilities. The following year he left for Agnone, in Molise, to prepare a new foundation. There he fell ill and died on June 4, 1608, at the age of forty-four.

Devotion to Saint Francis Caracciolo

First buried in Naples, in the church of Santa Maria Maggiore alla Pietrasanta, he has rested since the nineteenth century in the church of Santa Maria di Monteverginella, entrusted to the Clerics Regular Minor. Beatified in 1769 and canonized by Pope Pius VII in 1807, he was proclaimed patron of the city of Naples in 1838.

Why is Saint Francis Caracciolo the patron saint of Naples and of cooks?

Francis Caracciolo belonged to a great Neapolitan family, became a priest in Naples, served its prisoners and condemned, and founded his congregation there. In 1838 the city officially made him one of its patrons, alongside its principal patron, Saint Januarius. In Italy he is also honored as a patron saint of cooks.

Beyond these official patronages, his life suggests other intentions: people pray to him for prisoners and those who visit them, for people suffering from skin diseases, recalling his own healing, and for all who give time to Eucharistic adoration.

Symbols and how to recognize Saint Francis Caracciolo in art

He is usually shown as a priest in the black cassock of the clerics regular, kneeling or standing in adoration before the Blessed Sacrament exposed in a monstrance. The monstrance, the sign of the perpetual adoration he made the center of his congregation, is his most recognizable emblem.

What can we learn from Saint Francis Caracciolo?

Francis Caracciolo united adoration and service. Before the Blessed Sacrament he found the strength to go out to prisoners, the sick and the condemned. His vow to refuse honors also shows his deep humility.

To pray with him, see the prayer to Saint Francis Caracciolo and the novena to Saint Francis Caracciolo.

Where to pray to Saint Francis Caracciolo

- **Naples**: the church of Santa Maria di Monteverginella, where his body rests.
- **Villa Santa Maria** (Abruzzo): his native village.
- **Agnone** (Molise): the place of his death.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Francis Caracciolo for the Sick and Prisoners

We know of no traditional prayer to Saint Francis Caracciolo whose text can be guaranteed. Saintspedia offers an original prayer inspired by his life: the young nobleman healed of a disfiguring illness, the priest of those condemned to death, and the founder who placed adoration of the Blessed Sacrament at the heart of his congregation.

Adoration and service

Among the Clerics Regular Minor, the religious took turns before the Blessed Sacrament, day and night. Francis Caracciolo himself spent long hours there. From this prayer he drew the strength to accompany prisoners and the condemned, to care for the sick and to refuse honors.

Prayer to Saint Francis Caracciolo for the sick and prisoners

> *Saint Francis Caracciolo, you were healed of an illness that disfigured your face. I entrust to you the sick, especially those who suffer in their appearance and feel rejected.*
>
> *You accompanied the condemned to the very end: bless prisoners and their families, prison chaplains and all who visit those in prison.*
>
> *You spent so many nights before the Blessed Sacrament: teach me to adore Christ present in the Eucharist and to recognize Him in the poorest.*
>
> *You refused honors: keep me from pride and from seeking the first places. I also entrust to you my intention: (name it in silence).*
>
> *Watch over the city of Naples and over all who pray to you. Amen.*

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

When to pray this prayer

Saint Francis Caracciolo is celebrated on June 4, the day of his death in Agnone. You can pray to him:

- before or during a holy hour of Eucharistic adoration;
- for a sick person, especially someone with a skin disease;
- for prisoners, those condemned to death and prison ministers;
- during a visit to Naples.

You can also pray over nine days with the novena to Saint Francis Caracciolo. To get to know him better, read the life of Saint Francis Caracciolo.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Francis Caracciolo

This novena is an original composition by Saintspedia, inspired by the life of Saint Francis Caracciolo, co-founder of the Clerics Regular Minor and apostle of Eucharistic adoration. It is not an official liturgical text. To end it on his feast day, June 4, begin on May 27. You can also pray it at any time: for a sick person, for prisoners, or to grow in love for the Eucharist.

How to pray this novena

Each day, place your intention before God, read the short meditation, say the prayer of the day, then an Our Father, a Hail Mary and a Glory Be. If you can, pray it before the Blessed Sacrament, as Saint Francis loved to do. The small act suggested for the day helps you carry the prayer into daily life, in the spirit of a saint who never separated adoration from service. If you miss a day, simply continue the next day.

Day 1: A noble birth

Ascanio Caracciolo was born in 1563 into one of the great families of Naples. He had wealth and a name, but very early he showed an inclination toward God.

Prayer: Lord, everything I have comes from you. Through the intercession of Saint Francis Caracciolo, help me to use my gifts for your glory and for others. Amen.

Today: Thank God for three gifts you received without earning them.

Day 2: Illness and a promise

At twenty-two he was struck by a disease that disfigured his face. He promised to give himself to God if he recovered, and once healed he kept his word.

Prayer: Lord, you know the suffering of the sick. Through the intercession of Saint Francis Caracciolo, comfort those whose illness changes their appearance, and help me keep my promises to you. Amen.

Today: Keep a promise you have neglected, to God or to someone else.

Day 3: Beside the condemned

As a young priest, he joined the White Brothers of Justice, who accompanied those condemned to death to the place of execution, so that they could be reconciled with God.

Prayer: Merciful Father, no one is beyond your forgiveness. Through the intercession of Saint Francis Caracciolo, bless prisoners, those condemned to death and all who minister to them. Amen.

Today: Pray for a prisoner, or for the victims of a crime and their families.

Day 4: A letter delivered by mistake

A letter meant for another Ascanio Caracciolo reached him by error. The founders of a new congregation saw in this the hand of Providence and welcomed him.

Prayer: Lord, you write straight with crooked lines. Through the intercession of Saint Francis Caracciolo, help me to recognize your hand in the unexpected events of my life. Amen.

Today: Look back on an unexpected event that turned out to be a grace, and thank God for it.

Day 5: Refusing honors

He and his companions added a fourth vow: never to seek any ecclesiastical dignity unless ordered by the pope. Francis liked to sign his name "Francis, a sinner."

Prayer: Lord Jesus, meek and humble of heart, make my heart like yours. Through the intercession of Saint Francis Caracciolo, free me from the desire for recognition. Amen.

Today: Do a good deed in secret, without telling anyone.

Day 6: Nights of adoration

He organized his congregation around perpetual adoration, each religious taking a turn before the Eucharist. He himself often spent long hours there at night.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, truly present in the Blessed Sacrament, I adore you. Through the intercession of Saint Francis Caracciolo, increase my faith in your presence. Amen.

Today: Spend some time in Eucharistic adoration, or make a spiritual communion.

Day 7: Serving the poor

For Francis, adoration and service went together. From the Eucharist he went out to the poor and the sick, recognizing in them the same Lord he adored. His prayer did not shut him away from the world; it sent him toward those who suffered most.

Prayer: Lord, you are present in the least of my brothers and sisters. Through the intercession of Saint Francis Caracciolo, open my eyes and my hands to the poor. Amen.

Today: Give your time or a gift to someone in need.

Day 8: Letting go

In 1607 he asked to be released from all positions of government. He did not cling to authority, but handed it on freely. The following year, he was still ready to set out and serve wherever he was needed.

Prayer: Lord, teach me to hold everything with open hands. Through the intercession of Saint Francis Caracciolo, help me to let go of what I must leave behind. Amen.

Today: Hand over a responsibility or a control you do not need to keep.

Day 9: A life given to the end

He went to Agnone to prepare a new foundation, fell ill there and died on June 4, 1608, at the age of forty-four. Naples has honored him as one of its patrons since 1838.

Prayer: Lord, receive my life as an offering. Through the intercession of Saint Francis Caracciolo, grant me perseverance, and bless the city of Naples and all who call upon him. Amen.

Today: Pray for the dying of this day.

Closing prayer

Saint Francis Caracciolo, adorer of the Eucharist and friend of the condemned, you found before the Blessed Sacrament the strength to serve the poor, the sick and the prisoners. Teach me to adore Christ and to serve Him in others with humility. Present to the Lord the intention I have carried through these nine days, and help me to trust in His will. Amen.

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: MaryHenryettaCarson, public domain, 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