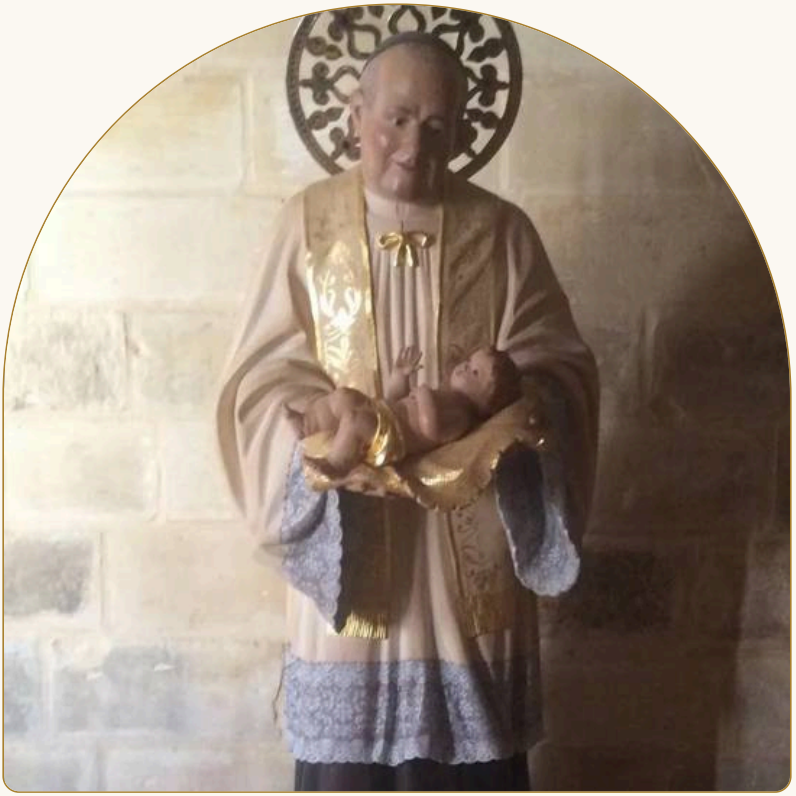


BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint George Preca

Life, prayer and novena

Feast day: July 26

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IN BRIEF

Saint George Preca

Maltese priest, founder of the Society of Christian Doctrine (MUSEUM) and pioneer of the lay apostolate.

Feast day	July 26, May 9 (in Malta)
Born	February 12, 1880, Valletta, Malta
Died	July 26, 1962, Santa Venera, Malta
Canonized	June 3, 2007, by Pope Benedict XVI
Era	20th century
Patron saint of	catechists

In this booklet

Life

Prayer to Saint George Preca for Catechists

Novena to Saint George Preca

Credits and sources

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LIFE

Saint George Preca

Saint George Preca, in Maltese Ġorġ Preca and affectionately known as "Dun Ġorġ," was a Maltese priest born in 1880 who died in 1962. He founded the Society of Christian Doctrine, better known as the MUSEUM, and trained generations of lay catechists long before the Second Vatican Council highlighted the mission of the laity. The first Malta-born saint to be canonized, he is called the "second apostle of Malta," after Saint Paul. The Roman Martyrology lists him on July 26, while Malta celebrates his feast on May 9.

Who was Saint George Preca?

George Preca was born on February 12, 1880, in Valletta, the capital of Malta, which was then a British colony. He was the son of Vincenzo Preca and Natalina Ceravolo. In 1888, the family moved to Ħamrun, where he made his First Communion. After secondary school, he entered the seminary of Malta to become a priest.

Malta was a deeply Catholic island, but teaching the faith was largely left to priests and religious. Dockyard workers and young people in working-class neighborhoods knew little of the Gospel. George Preca would give his life to them, with an idea that was new at the time: to make lay people themselves into catechists.

Key dates in the life of Saint George Preca

- **February 12, 1880**: Born in Valletta, Malta.
- **1888**: The family moves to Ħamrun.
- **Seminary years**: As a deacon, he falls seriously ill and attributes his recovery to Saint Joseph.
- **December 22, 1906**: Ordained a priest.

- **1907**: He gathers a first group of young workers in Ħamrun, the seed of the Society of Christian Doctrine.
- **1909**: The bishop orders the centers closed; he obeys, and they later reopen.
- **1910**: The women's branch is founded with Giannina Cutajar.
- **1918-1919**: He enters the Carmelite Third Order, taking the name Brother Franco.
- **April 12, 1932**: The Society receives canonical approval.
- **July 26, 1962**: Dies in Santa Venera, Malta.
- **May 9, 2001**: Beatified by Pope John Paul II in Floriana.
- **June 3, 2007**: Canonized in Rome by Pope Benedict XVI.

"God has chosen you to teach his people"

Even before his ordination, George used to gather young people to talk to them about the Gospel. One of them, Eugenio Borg, a young dockyard worker to whom he explained the Passion according to Saint John, would become the first superior general of his Society. Ordained a priest on December 22, 1906, George took as his rule of life a sentence from his spiritual director: "God has chosen you to teach his people."

In 1907, he gathered a group of young men in Ħamrun and trained them to become catechists of their peers in turn. The group soon took the name MUSEUM, an acronym of the Latin motto *Magister, utinam sequatur Evangelium universus mundus*: "Master, may the whole world follow the Gospel." Its members are unmarried lay people who work in the world, live simply, pray and study every day, and then teach the catechism to children and adults in centers opened in the parishes.

Tested by misunderstanding

The idea of entrusting the teaching of the faith to young workers worried some of the clergy. In 1909, the diocesan authority ordered the centers closed. Dun Ġorġ obeyed, and the order was soon lifted. In 1914-1915, a press campaign attacked him fiercely; he was even accused of madness. He asked his disciples to keep the peace and not to answer the attacks. A diocesan inquiry opened in 1916 finally vindicated him, and the Society received canonical approval in 1932.

Carmelite, writer and man of prayer

In 1918, George Preca entered the Carmelite Third Order and made his profession the following year as Brother Franco. He wanted the members of his Society to wear the scapular of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. A tireless writer, he wrote more than one hundred and forty works in Maltese, including meditation booklets, catechisms and texts on the spiritual life, which he had printed himself. In 1957, he proposed meditating on five "mysteries of light" from the life of Christ, an intuition that foreshadowed the Luminous Mysteries that John Paul II added to the Rosary in 2002.

He died on July 26, 1962, in Santa Venera, a few months before the opening of Vatican II, and was buried in the crypt of his Society's mother house at Blata l-Bajda. The Society spread from Malta to Australia as early as 1952, then to the United Kingdom, Albania, Kenya, Sudan and Peru.

Why is Saint George Preca the patron saint of catechists?

George Preca believed that every baptized person can and should hand on the Gospel. He trained lay people not to replace priests, but to become competent and fervent witnesses in the middle of their work and their neighborhoods. For this reason, he is invoked as a patron of catechists, of young people, of lay

people committed to the Church, and of Malta. He also bore misunderstanding with patience and obedience, which makes him a companion for anyone whose good intentions are misjudged.

To pray with him, read the prayer to Saint George Preca or begin the novena to Saint George Preca.

Symbols and how to recognize Saint George Preca in art

As a twentieth-century saint, George Preca is known above all through photographs: an elderly Maltese priest, often smiling, in a black cassock. Statues show him in a cassock holding a book, a sign of his life as a teacher and writer. Maltese devotional images sometimes show him surrounded by children and young catechists.

Where to pray to Saint George Preca

- **Blata l-Bajda** (Malta): the mother house of the Society of Christian Doctrine, whose crypt holds his tomb.
- **Ħamrun**: the town where he founded the first MUSEUM center.
- **Santa Venera**: the place of his death, home to the Carmelite convent where he made his profession.
- **Around the world**: the MUSEUM centers in Malta, Australia, the United Kingdom, Albania, Kenya, Sudan and Peru.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint George Preca for Catechists

Saint George Preca wrote a great deal in Maltese, and members of his Society still recite prayers he composed, but these are not widely available in English. Saintspedia offers here the motto he gave to his work, followed by an original prayer inspired by his life as a catechist priest and a Secular Carmelite.

The MUSEUM motto

> *Magister, utinam sequatur Evangelium universus mundus! "Master, may the whole world follow the Gospel!"*

The name of the Society of Christian Doctrine, MUSEUM, comes from the initials of this Latin sentence. It can be prayed just as it is, as a short invocation during the day.

Prayer to Saint George Preca for catechists

Saint George Preca, you heard the words "God has chosen you to teach his people": help me to discover the mission God entrusts to me.

You made young workers into apostles of their brothers: bless catechists, parents, teachers and all who hand on the faith. Give them love for the Word of God and the joy of sharing it.

You obeyed without bitterness when your centers were closed, and you forgave those who slandered you: teach me patience in trials and trust in the Church.

You loved Mary, Queen of Carmel, and meditated on the mysteries of light in the life of Christ: lead me to Jesus, the Word made flesh. I entrust to you my intention: (name it in silence).

Watch over Malta and all Maltese people scattered throughout the world, and make us faithful friends of the Gospel. Amen.

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

When to pray this prayer

Saint George Preca is listed in the Roman Martyrology on July 26, the day of his death in 1962; in Malta, his feast is celebrated on May 9, the anniversary of his beatification. You can pray to him at the start of the catechism year, before teaching or bearing witness to your faith, or while meditating on the Luminous Mysteries of the Rosary. To pray over several days, follow the novena to Saint George Preca, and to know him better, read the life of Saint George Preca.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint George Preca

This novena to Saint George Preca is an original composition by Saintspedia; it is not an official liturgical text. Over nine days, it follows the Maltese priest who trained lay people to become catechists and who is called the second apostle of Malta. To end on July 26, the day he is listed in the Roman Martyrology, begin it on July 18. In Malta, where his feast is kept on May 9, you can begin it on May 1. It is also well suited to the weeks before the start of the catechism year.

How to pray this novena

Each day, take a few quiet minutes. Begin with the Sign of the Cross and entrust your intention to God. Read the short meditation, say the prayer of the day, then an Our Father, a Hail Mary and a Glory Be. You may add the MUSEUM motto: "Master, may the whole world follow the Gospel!" End with the small act proposed for the day. If you miss a day, simply continue: a novena is a path of trust, not a test.

Day 1: A child of Valletta

George Preca was born in Valletta in 1880 and made his First Communion in Ħamrun. The faith he would spend his life teaching was first received in a family and a parish. Every vocation begins with what others have handed on to us.

Prayer: Saint George, I thank God for those who first taught me the faith. Bless them and reward them. Amen.

Today: Pray by name for the person who first taught you to pray.

Day 2: Healed and given back

As a deacon, George fell seriously ill and attributed his recovery to Saint Joseph. He received his life back as a gift to be spent for others. Our health and our years are not ours alone.

Prayer: Saint George, pray for the sick, and help me to use my strength in the service of God. Amen.

Today: Visit, call or write to someone who is ill.

Day 3: "God has chosen you to teach his people"

George took this sentence from his spiritual director as his rule of life. Every Christian receives, in one way or another, a share in the mission of handing on the Gospel.

Prayer: Saint George, help me to discover how God wants me to share my faith with those around me. Amen.

Today: Ask God in prayer: to whom are you sending me?

Day 4: Young workers become apostles

In 1907, in Ħamrun, George gathered young workers and trained them to teach the catechism. He trusted ordinary lay people with the most precious thing he had. The Church grows when each member takes up his or her part.

Prayer: Saint George, bless all catechists, volunteers and teachers of the faith in our parishes. Amen.

Today: Thank a catechist or religious education teacher, in person or in prayer.

Day 5: Daily formation

Members of the MUSEUM pray and study every day before they teach. One cannot give what one has not received. Faith grows through time spent with the Word of God.

Prayer: Saint George, give me a hunger for the Word of God and faithfulness in daily prayer. Amen.

Today: Read one chapter of a Gospel slowly.

Day 6: Obedience in the dark

In 1909, the centers George had founded were ordered closed. He obeyed without bitterness, and the order was soon lifted. Obedience in a time of misunderstanding is a hidden form of trust in God.

Prayer: Saint George, when my efforts are misunderstood or stopped, keep me in peace and in trust. Amen.

Today: Accept a setback or a "no" without complaining.

Day 7: Silence under attack

In 1914-1915, a press campaign attacked George, and some even called him mad. He asked his disciples not to answer back and to keep the peace. In time, the truth came to light.

Prayer: Saint George, pray for all who are slandered, and help me to forgive those who speak ill of me. Amen.

Today: Refuse to repeat gossip, and say something good about someone instead.

Day 8: Brother Franco and Our Lady of Mount Carmel

In 1918, George entered the Carmelite Third Order and later took the name Brother Franco. He loved the scapular of Our Lady of Mount Carmel and wanted his Society to wear it. Mary leads every catechist to her Son.

Prayer: Saint George, teach me to love Mary and to let her lead me to Jesus. Amen.

Today: Pray one decade of the Rosary, perhaps one of the Luminous Mysteries.

Day 9: Mysteries of light

In 1957, George proposed meditating on five mysteries of light in the life of Christ, long before John Paul II added the Luminous Mysteries to the Rosary. He died in 1962, and his work continues in Malta and well beyond. Light shared is never lost.

Prayer: Saint George, pray for Malta, for the members of the MUSEUM and for all who hand on the faith, that the whole world may follow the Gospel. Amen.

Today: Share a word of the Gospel, or a reason for your hope, with one person.

Closing prayer

> *Lord Jesus, Word made flesh, you chose Saint George Preca to teach your people and to awaken lay apostles among them. Through his intercession, raise up generous catechists, strengthen parents and teachers in their mission, give us patience in misunderstanding and grant the intention I have carried during these nine days: (name it in silence). Master, may the whole world follow the Gospel! Amen.*

Saint George Preca, pray for us.

CREDITS

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