

BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Henry Walpole

Life, prayer and novena

Feast day: April 7

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IN BRIEF

Saint Henry Walpole

English Jesuit priest, martyred at York in 1595, one of the Forty Martyrs of England and Wales.

Feast day	April 7
Born	1558, Docking (Norfolk, England)
Died	April 7, 1595, York (England)
Canonized	canonized October 25, 1970, by Paul VI
Era	16th century

In this booklet

Life

Prayer to Saint Henry Walpole for Those Seeking Faith

Novena to Saint Henry Walpole

Credits and sources

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LIFE

Saint Henry Walpole

Saint Henry Walpole is an English Jesuit priest who was martyred at York on April 7, 1595, under Elizabeth I. A young lawyer, he was shaken by the martyrdom of Saint Edmund Campion, whose blood stained his clothing. Ordained a priest, he was arrested as soon as he returned to England, tortured at length, then executed. Canonized in 1970 among the Forty Martyrs of England and Wales, he is celebrated on April 7.

Who was Saint Henry Walpole?

Henry Walpole belongs to the generation of English Catholics who grew up after the break with Rome. In the England of Elizabeth I, to be a Catholic priest ordained abroad and to return to the country was a crime of high treason. Yet dozens of young men went off to train in the English colleges on the continent so as to come back and serve the faithful in secret. Walpole was one of them. His life is well documented, notably by his letters and by the account of his debates in prison.

Key dates

- **1558**: Born at Docking, in Norfolk, into a well-off family.
- **1567-1574**: Studies at Norwich school, then at Peterhouse, Cambridge.
- **1578**: Studies law at Gray's Inn, in London.
- **December 1, 1581**: Witnesses the martyrdom of Edmund Campion at Tyburn; a drop of the martyr's blood stains his clothing.
- **July 7, 1582**: Enters the English College at Reims, then the English College in Rome in 1583.
- **February 2, 1584**: Enters the Society of Jesus.

- **December 17, 1588**: Ordained a priest, after finishing his studies at Pont-à-Mousson.
- **1589**: Chaplain to the Spanish troops in the Netherlands, he is taken prisoner and spends a year in prison at Flushing.
- **1590-1593**: Teaches in the English seminaries of Seville and Valladolid.
- **December 4, 1593**: Lands by night at Flamborough Head, in Yorkshire, and is arrested almost at once at Bridlington.
- **1594**: Transferred to the Tower of London, where he is tortured many times over about a year.
- **April 3, 1595**: Condemned at York for high treason, for being a priest ordained abroad.
- **April 7, 1595**: Hanged, drawn and quartered at York, after the priest Alexander Rawlins.
- **December 15, 1929**: Beatified by Pius XI.
- **October 25, 1970**: Canonized by Saint Paul VI, with thirty-nine other martyrs.

A drop of blood that changed a life

In the early 1580s, Henry Walpole was a promising young lawyer, already drawn to the Catholic faith. He followed closely the public debates the Jesuit Edmund Campion, once arrested, had to hold against Anglican theologians. On December 1, 1581, he was in the crowd that came to watch Campion's execution. When the martyr's body was thrown into a cauldron, a drop of blood splashed his clothing. Walpole saw in it a call from God. He left the law and decided to become a priest. He is also credited with a long poem in honor of Campion, which circulated in secret and earned heavy penalties for the man who had printed it.

The training of a missionary

Walpole left England for Reims, then Rome, where he entered the Jesuits. His fragile health led him to finish his studies at Pont-à-Mousson, in Lorraine. Once ordained, he first served as a military chaplain in the Netherlands, where he already knew prison, then taught future English priests in the seminaries of Spain. All that time, he asked to return to England. Permission came in 1593.

Arrested on his return

The Channel ports were closed because of an epidemic. So Walpole boarded a French ship at Dunkirk bound for Scotland and landed by night on the coast of Yorkshire. A few hours later, in an inn at Bridlington, he was denounced and arrested. He would never exercise his ministry in his own country. At York, he was allowed several times to debate with Anglican theologians, in the hope that he would give up his faith. He did not yield.

The Tower of London and martyrdom

The persecutor Richard Topcliffe obtained his transfer to the Tower of London. Walpole was tortured there some fifteen times, in a way meant to make him suffer without killing him. He gave away no name and denied nothing. On the wall of his cell, he carved his name, along with those of Saints Peter, Paul, Jerome, Ambrose, Augustine and Gregory the Great: the inscription can still be seen today. In prison, he prayed his breviary, read Robert Bellarmine and wrote.

In the spring of 1595, he was brought back to York to be tried. Condemned on April 3, he was taken on April 7 to the place of execution at Knavesmire, with the priest Alexander Rawlins. Rawlins was executed before his eyes, in the hope of making him give way. Walpole stood firm, and suffered the same death without being allowed to finish his prayer.



The inscription left by Henry Walpole in his cell at the Tower of London.

Devotion and art

Henry Walpole is listed in the Roman Martyrology on April 7. He was beatified in 1929 and canonized on October 25, 1970, by Saint Paul VI, with thirty-nine other martyrs of England and Wales, who are also honored together. He is shown as a Jesuit priest, in a black cassock, sometimes with the palm of martyrdom or the rope.

What can we learn from Saint Henry Walpole?

A single drop of blood was enough to awaken Walpole's faith. He then gave everything: his career, his health, his freedom and his life, without even being able to exercise his ministry in his own country. His faithfulness under torture shows that grace can support human weakness. You can pray to him for those seeking faith, for persecuted Christians and for priests who serve in difficult conditions.

Where to pray to Saint Henry Walpole

- **London**: the Tower of London, where you can see the inscription carved in his cell.

- **London**: the Tyburn Convent, a shrine dedicated to the Catholic martyrs of England, near the place where Edmund Campion was executed.
- **York**: the city of his trial and martyrdom, at Knavesmire.

To pray with him at home, you can use the prayer to Saint Henry Walpole or the novena to Saint Henry Walpole.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Henry Walpole for Those Seeking Faith

Saint Henry Walpole, a young English lawyer, was converted when a drop of the blood of the martyr Edmund Campion fell on his clothing. Ordained a Jesuit priest, he was arrested as soon as he returned to England, tortured in the Tower of London and executed at York in 1595. This prayer is an original composition inspired by his life; it is not an official liturgical text. It entrusts to him those who seek faith and those who suffer for it.

Prayer to Saint Henry Walpole

Saint Henry Walpole,
one day a martyr's blood touched your clothing,
and the Lord touched your heart.
You left your career and your country
to become a priest and return to serve your own people.

In prison and under torture,
you betrayed no one and denied nothing.
On the wall of your cell, you wrote your name
beside those of the saints, as an act of hope.

Pray for those who seek God without daring to say so,
for those who hesitate before a calling,
for persecuted Christians and for prisoners,
for priests who serve at the risk of their lives.
Obtain for us the courage of truth
and faithfulness to the end.

May our faith, like yours,
become a witness that awakens others.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

When to pray to Saint Henry Walpole

- On his feast day, April 7.
- For a person who is seeking faith or preparing to enter the Church.
- When you are discerning a calling and hesitate to leave a secure situation.
- For persecuted Christians and for prisoners who are tortured.
- For law students and lawyers who want to serve justice.

A prayer in trial

In a moment of fear or suffering, you can simply repeat:

> *Lord, when my strength fails, be my strength.*
> *Keep me faithful, as you kept your servant Henry.*
> *Saint Henry Walpole, pray for us. Amen.*

To prepare for his feast, you can pray the novena to Saint Henry Walpole from March 30 to April 7, and read the life of Saint Henry Walpole.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Henry Walpole

This novena is an original composition by Saintspedia, inspired by the life of Saint Henry Walpole, an English Jesuit priest martyred at York in 1595. It is not an official liturgical text. To end it on his feast day, April 7, begin on March 30. It is suited to those who are seeking faith, discerning a calling or going through a trial, and you can pray it at any time of the year.

How to pray this novena

Each day, begin with the Sign of the Cross and entrust your intention to God. Read the meditation, say the prayer of the day, then an Our Father, a Hail Mary and a Glory Be. End with: "Saint Henry Walpole, pray for us." The small act proposed each day helps you live the novena concretely.

Day 1: A searching heart

As a young lawyer in London, Henry Walpole asked himself questions about faith. He listened, compared, searched for the truth. God lets himself be found by those who seek him with an honest heart.

Prayer: Lord, give me a heart that seeks the truth without fear. Bless all who are searching.

Today: Pray for someone around you who is seeking God.

Day 2: The blood of a witness

At the martyrdom of Edmund Campion, a drop of blood stained Walpole's clothing, and his life turned. The witness of the saints continues to touch hearts.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for the witnesses who awakened my faith. Make me, in my turn, a witness.

Today: Read the life of a martyr, from the past or from today.

Day 3: Leaving everything

Walpole gave up the law, his career and his country to prepare for the priesthood. Following Christ sometimes means leaving what seemed secure.

Prayer: Lord, free me from whatever keeps me from following you. Give me the freedom of a true disciple.

Today: Give up something unnecessary today and give its cost to a charity.

Day 4: Letting yourself be formed

Reims, Rome, Pont-à-Mousson: Walpole spent years in training, despite fragile health. Patience is part of every vocation.

Prayer: Lord, teach me patience. Bless seminarians and all who are preparing to serve.

Today: Pray for the seminarians of your diocese.

Day 5: Already a prisoner

As a chaplain in the Netherlands, Walpole spent a first year in prison. He did not give up his mission for that. Trials can strengthen faithfulness.

Prayer: Lord, I entrust prisoners to you. Visit them by your presence and through people of good will.

Today: Support a prison ministry with a prayer or a gift.

Day 6: Going home

Walpole asked for a long time to return to England to serve the Catholics of his country, knowing the danger. Love draws us back toward our own people.

Prayer: Lord, let me serve first those who are near me, in my family and my country.

Today: Do a favor for a member of your family.

Day 7: Arrested at the first step

A few hours after landing, Walpole was denounced and arrested. He was never able to exercise his ministry in England. Yet his offered life bore fruit. God does not measure as we do.

Prayer: Lord, when my plans fail, teach me to offer you what I could not do.

Today: Entrust to God a project that did not succeed.

Day 8: Faithful under torture

In the Tower of London, Walpole was tortured many times. He betrayed no one and denied nothing. On the wall, he carved his name beside those of the saints. His strength came from God.

Prayer: Lord, support persecuted Christians and all who suffer for the truth. Be their strength.

Today: Learn about the situation in a country where Christians are persecuted, and pray for them.

Day 9: To the very end

On April 7, 1595, at York, Walpole saw Alexander Rawlins die before him, then gave his own life in turn. The martyr does not seek death: he prefers Christ to everything.

Prayer: Lord, let me prefer you to everything, in small things as in great. Through the intercession of Saint Henry Walpole, grant me the grace I ask in this novena, if it is your will.

Today: Pray for Christian unity, and in particular between Catholics and Anglicans.

Living the novena with Saint Henry Walpole

This novena often falls during Lent or Eastertide, which gives it a particular color: Walpole followed Christ even into his Passion. You may be praying it for yourself, at a moment of choice, or for a loved one who is seeking faith. You can also live it in communion with the Christians who, even today, pay for their faith with their freedom or their lives. The English martyrs did not fight their fellow countrymen: they prayed for them. May this novena make us, too, makers of peace and reconciliation.

Closing prayer

> *Saint Henry Walpole,*
> *touched by a martyr's blood*
> *and in your turn a witness of Christ,*
> *you left everything to serve your own people*
> *and remained faithful under torture.*
> *Present to the Lord the intention I have carried during these nine days.*
> *Obtain for me a living faith, the courage of truth*
> *and a heart that forgives.*
> *Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

You can also pray the prayer to Saint Henry Walpole at any time, and read the life of Saint Henry Walpole.

Credits and sources

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