

BOOKLET TO PRINT

# Saint Hyacintha Mariscotti

*Life, prayer and novena*

Feast day: January 30

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IN BRIEF

## Saint Hyacintha Mariscotti

*Franciscan nun of Viterbo, converted after a worldly life, founder of works of charity.*

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| **Feast day** | January 30 |
| **Born** | 1585, Vignanello, Lazio, Italy |
| **Died** | January 30, 1640, Viterbo, Italy |
| **Canonized** | May 24, 1807, by Pope Pius VII |
| **Era** | 17th century |

## In this booklet


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Novena to Saint Hyacintha Mariscotti

Credits and sources



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LIFE

# Saint Hyacintha Mariscotti

Saint Hyacintha Mariscotti (in Italian, *Giacinta Marescotti*) was an Italian Franciscan nun, born in 1585 at Vignanello, near Viterbo, and died in Viterbo on January 30, 1640. She entered the convent out of spite and for years lived there as a worldly nun, until a radical conversion turned her into a model of penance and charity, founder of works for the poor, the sick and prisoners. Canonized in 1807, she is celebrated on January 30.

## Who was Saint Hyacintha Mariscotti?

The story of Hyacintha Mariscotti is that of a late and dramatic conversion. Born into a great noble family of Lazio, she spent about ten years in the convent without a real vocation, surrounded by luxury and visitors, before changing her life completely. She reminds us that it is never too late to return to God, and that holiness can be born in the middle of lukewarmness.

Her name in religion was Hyacintha; at baptism she had received the name Clarice. Her name is also found in English as Hyacinth, and her surname as Marescotti.



*Saint Hyacintha Mariscotti, nun of Viterbo.*

## Key dates in the life of Hyacintha Mariscotti

- **1585**: Born at the castle of Vignanello, near Viterbo, to Count Marcantonio Marescotti and Ottavia Orsini; she is baptized Clarice.
- **Childhood**: She is sent to be educated at the monastery of San Bernardino in Viterbo, where her older sister is a nun.
- **c. 1604-1605**: Her younger sister marries the Marquis Cassizucchi, whom Clarice had hoped to marry herself; deeply hurt, she returns to the monastery at her father's decision.
- **c. 1605-1615**: As a nun under the name Hyacintha, she leads a comfortable and worldly life in her richly furnished cell.
- **c. 1615**: After a serious illness and deaths in her family, she is converted and makes a public confession before the community.

- **1615-1640**: A life of penance and prayer; she founds works of charity in Viterbo, including the confraternity of the Oblates of Mary.
- **January 30, 1640**: Dies in Viterbo, surrounded by immense popular veneration.
- **1726**: Beatified by Pope Benedict XIII.
- **May 24, 1807**: Canonized by Pope Pius VII.

## A young noblewoman in the convent against her will

Clarice Marescotti grew up in an aristocratic world, between the Marescotti and Orsini families. As a little girl she was devout, but adolescence made her vain, fond of beauty and pleasure. Her parents placed her at the monastery of San Bernardino in Viterbo, a community of sisters of the Franciscan Third Order where her older sister already lived.

At about twenty she hoped to marry a young nobleman, but her younger sister was chosen instead. Disappointed and humiliated, Clarice returned to the convent on her father's orders. She took the habit under the name Hyacintha, but, by her own admission, without a real vocation.

For about ten years she lived like a lady of the world behind the cloister walls: a decorated cell, costly clothes, her own food, frequent visitors. She kept the bare minimum of the rule. Her biographers stress, however, that she kept a sincere faith, a pure life and a real devotion to the Virgin Mary.

## The conversion

Several trials shook her: the death of people close to her, then a long illness. According to the traditional account, a Franciscan confessor called to her bedside, seeing the luxury of her cell, reminded her that heaven was not made for vain and proud souls. These words overwhelmed her.

Once she recovered, she asked the community for forgiveness publicly, gave away her possessions, exchanged her fine clothes for an old habit, went barefoot and ate very poorly. She imposed harsh penances on herself, so much so that her superiors sometimes had to restrain her. She spent long hours in adoration before the Blessed Sacrament and in meditation on the Passion of Christ.



*The Vision of Saint Hyacintha Mariscotti, by Giuseppe Passeri.*

## Mother of the poor of Viterbo

The penitent became an apostle of charity. Without leaving her monastery, she mobilized lay people in Viterbo and founded two confraternities. The first, the Oblates of Mary, called *Sacconi* by the people because of the habit of rough sackcloth they wore, collected alms for convalescents, the "shamefaced poor"

(people who had fallen into poverty and were ashamed to beg) and prisoners, and brought them help. The second was devoted to welcoming and caring for elderly people who were alone and without resources.

She also carried on a wide correspondence as a spiritual guide and, according to her biographers, brought many sinners back to God.

## Death and canonization

She died on January 30, 1640. As soon as her death was announced, crowds pressed into the monastery church, trying to take away a fragment of her clothing. She was buried in the church of San Bernardino in Viterbo, which was destroyed by bombing in the Second World War and rebuilt in 1959. Beatified in 1726, she was canonized in 1807 by Pius VII.

## Why do people pray to Saint Hyacintha Mariscotti?

Hyacintha Mariscotti is the saint of second chances. She lost years to vanity and mediocrity, but she did not let her past discourage her: she made it the starting point of a greater love. Her penance was not a turning in on herself; it bore fruit in practical works for the sick, the elderly and prisoners. People pray to her:

- for those seeking conversion or a return to the faith;
- for religious men and women going through lukewarmness;
- for elderly people who live alone;
- for prisoners.

## Symbols and how to recognize Saint Hyacintha in art

She is shown in the **Franciscan habit** of her monastery, often **praying before a crucifix**, a sign of her meditation on the Passion, or in **ecstasy**, as in the painting by Giuseppe Passeri. A painting of her death by Marco Benefial is also

well known.

## Where to pray to Saint Hyacintha Mariscotti

- **Viterbo** (Italy): the church of the monastery of San Bernardino, where her body rests.
- **Vignanello** (Lazio): her native village, overlooked by the Marescotti castle.
- **Rome**: the church of San Lorenzo in Lucina, which holds a painting of her death by Marco Benefial (1750).

To pray with her, read the prayer to Saint Hyacintha Mariscotti or follow the novena to Saint Hyacintha Mariscotti.

PRAYER

# Prayer to Saint Hyacintha Mariscotti

Saint Hyacintha Mariscotti, a Franciscan nun of Viterbo who died in 1640, is known for her radical conversion after years of worldly life in the convent, and for her works for the sick, the elderly and prisoners. Since no traditional prayer to her is well attested, this page offers an original prayer.

## Prayer to Saint Hyacintha Mariscotti

> *Saint Hyacintha, you lived for a long time in vanity before turning to God with all your heart: look upon those who, like you, have drifted away from the Lord. Obtain for them the grace to hear his call and not to despair of their past.*
>
> *You asked forgiveness before your whole community: give me the humility to acknowledge my sins and the joy of receiving God's mercy in the sacrament of Reconciliation.*
>
> *You left luxury behind to serve the poor: teach me to let go of what weighs me down. Watch over the sick, the elderly who live alone and prisoners, whom you loved so much.*
>
> *You prayed before the Blessed Sacrament and meditated on the Passion of Christ: rekindle my prayer when it grows lukewarm. I entrust to you my intention: (name it in silence). Amen.*

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

## Intentions to pray with Saint Hyacintha

- For those seeking conversion or a return to the faith.
- For religious men and women going through lukewarmness or doubt.
- For elderly people who live alone, and those who visit them.
- For prisoners and prison chaplains.

## When to pray this prayer

Saint Hyacintha is celebrated on January 30, the anniversary of her death in Viterbo in 1640. You can also pray to her before going to confession, at the beginning of Lent, or for someone who is far from God. For nine days of prayer, follow the novena to Saint Hyacintha Mariscotti, and discover the life of Saint Hyacintha Mariscotti.

NOVENA

# Novena to Saint Hyacintha Mariscotti

This novena is an original composition by Saintspedia, inspired by the life of Saint Hyacintha Mariscotti, the Franciscan nun of Viterbo whose late conversion made her a mother of the poor. It is not an official liturgical text. To end it on her feast day, January 30, begin on January 22. You may also pray it at any time of the year, especially during Lent, before a confession, or for someone who has drifted away from God.

## 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. You may end with the invocation: "Saint Hyacintha, saint of second chances, pray for us." The small act suggested for each day helps you live a little of her conversion and her charity.

## Day 1: A child of faith

Clarice Marescotti was a devout little girl in a noble family. The seed of faith planted in childhood may seem to disappear for a time, but God never forgets it. He waits patiently for the moment when it can grow again.

**Prayer:** Lord, revive in me the faith of my childhood. Through the intercession of Saint Hyacintha, watch over the children and young people I love.

**Today:** Pray for a young person who seems far from the faith.

## Day 2: Wounded pride

When her younger sister married the man she had hoped to marry, Clarice felt humiliated. She returned to the convent out of spite, not out of love. Our wounds can harden us, unless we let God touch them.

**Prayer:** Lord, heal the wounds of my pride and my disappointments. Let them not make me bitter.

**Today:** Name before God a disappointment that still weighs on you, and give it to him.

## Day 3: The years of lukewarmness

For about ten years Hyacintha lived as a worldly nun, in a richly furnished cell, keeping only the minimum of the rule. Yet she kept a sincere faith and a devotion to Mary. Even lukewarm hearts are not abandoned by God.

**Prayer:** Lord, shake me out of my lukewarmness and my comfortable habits. Do not let me settle for mediocrity.

**Today:** Identify one area of your spiritual life where you have grown careless, and take one step forward.

## Day 4: The trial that awakens

The deaths of people close to her, then a long illness, shook Hyacintha. Suffering became the door through which God entered her life. What seemed only a loss became the beginning of a new birth.

**Prayer:** Lord, in times of illness and grief, open my heart to your presence. Comfort those who suffer today.

**Today:** Visit or call someone who is sick or grieving.

## Day 5: A word of truth

A Franciscan confessor, seeing the luxury of her cell, reminded her that heaven is not made for vain and proud souls. The word stung, but it saved her. Sometimes love speaks with frankness.

**Prayer:** Lord, give me the humility to hear the truth about myself, and bless those who dare to tell it with love.

**Today:** Make a careful examination of conscience.

## Day 6: Asking forgiveness

Once healed, Hyacintha asked forgiveness publicly before her whole community. She did not hide behind her rank. Humility opened the way to a new life.

**Prayer:** Lord, give me the courage to ask forgiveness from those I have hurt, and the joy of receiving your mercy.

**Today:** Go to confession, or ask someone's forgiveness.

## Day 7: Letting go

Hyacintha gave away her possessions, exchanged her fine clothes for an old habit and lived in poverty. She spent long hours before the Blessed Sacrament and meditating on the Passion. Letting go made room for God. Her penances were sometimes so severe that her superiors had to moderate them, but the heart of her conversion was love, not severity.

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, crucified for love, free me from what clutters my heart and draw me to you.

**Today:** Give away something you are attached to, and spend ten minutes before a crucifix.

## Day 8: Mother of the poor

Without leaving her monastery, Hyacintha founded confraternities to help convalescents, the poor who were ashamed to beg, prisoners and elderly people living alone. Her conversion became charity. True penance does not turn us in on ourselves: it opens our hands to others.

**Prayer:** Lord, make me attentive to the hidden poor around me, to prisoners and to the elderly who are alone.

**Today:** Visit or call an elderly person who lives alone.

## Day 9: The saint of second chances

Hyacintha died in 1640, venerated by the whole city of Viterbo. The woman who had wasted years in vanity became a saint. With God, it is never too late.

**Prayer:** Lord, at the end of this novena, I place my intention in your hands. Through the intercession of Saint Hyacintha Mariscotti, grant me a true conversion of heart and a love that serves. Amen.

**Today:** Pray by name for someone who is far from God, trusting that it is never too late.

## Closing prayer

Saint Hyacintha Mariscotti, you who knew vanity and lukewarmness before giving yourself wholly to God, I entrust to you the intention of these nine days. Obtain for me the grace of a sincere conversion, the humility to ask forgiveness and the generosity to serve the sick, the elderly and prisoners. Pray for all who have drifted away from the Lord, that they may find again the joy of his mercy. Amen.

To go further: the life of Saint Hyacintha Mariscotti and the prayer to Saint Hyacintha Mariscotti.

CREDITS

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