

BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Joachim, Father of the Virgin Mary

Life, prayer, novena and pilgrimage

Feast day: July 26

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IN BRIEF

Saint Joachim, Father of the Virgin Mary

Father of the Virgin Mary and grandfather of Jesus according to tradition, husband of Saint Anne, patron saint of fathers and grandfathers.

Feast day	July 26
Canonized	Pre-congregation (immemorial cult)
Patron saint of	fathers, grandfathers, grandparents, married couples, couples hoping for a child

In this booklet

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Church of Saint Anne in Jerusalem, House of Joachim and Anne

Credits and sources

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LIFE

Saint Joachim, Father of the Virgin Mary

According to Christian tradition, Saint Joachim is the father of the Virgin Mary, the husband of Saint Anne and therefore the grandfather of Jesus. The Gospels do not name him: his story comes from a second-century text, the Protoevangelium of James, which deeply shaped Christian devotion and art. Patron saint of fathers and grandfathers, he is celebrated with Saint Anne on July 26.

Who was Saint Joachim?

The New Testament says nothing about Mary's parents. It is the Protoevangelium of James, an apocryphal writing from around 150, that gives their names and tells of Mary's birth. The Church did not include this text in the Bible, but it received the tradition it hands down about Joachim and Anne, honored as saints from the first centuries in the East.

In this account, Joachim is a wealthy and devout man who each year gives part of his goods to the poor and part to the Temple. His name means "God raises up" or "God prepares" in Hebrew. With his wife Anne, he suffers from having no child, which was then seen as a sign of God's disfavor.

Key dates

- **1st c. BC**: Joachim lives in Galilee or Jerusalem, according to different traditions, and marries Anne.
- **Years of waiting**: The couple long remains childless; at the Temple, Joachim's offering is refused.

- **In the desert**: Joachim withdraws for forty days to fast and pray; an angel announces the birth of a child.
- **At the Golden Gate**: Joachim and Anne meet again at a gate of Jerusalem and embrace.
- **Birth of Mary**: Celebrated by the Church on September 8.
- **c. 150**: The Protoevangelium of James is written, handing down these stories.
- **1969**: The feast of Saint Joachim, long kept separately, is joined to that of Saint Anne on July 26.

The rejected offering and the retreat to the desert

On a feast day, Joachim comes to the Temple in Jerusalem with his offerings. A priest refuses them, saying that a man without offspring has no place among the sons of Israel. Humiliated, Joachim does not go home: he goes into the desert, pitches his tent among his shepherds and fasts for forty days and forty nights, saying, "Prayer shall be my food." Meanwhile Anne weeps in her garden, believing herself both widowed and barren.

The meeting at the Golden Gate

An angel appears to Anne, then to Joachim, to announce that a child will be born to them. Joachim returns toward Jerusalem with his flocks, and Anne comes out to meet him. They embrace at the Golden Gate, one of the city's gates. This scene, painted by Giotto in the Scrovegni Chapel in Padua, has become one of the tenderest images in Christian art. Nine months later their daughter Mary is born.



Joachim among the shepherds, fresco by Giotto in the Scrovegni Chapel, Padua (around 1305).

When Mary is three, her parents bring her to the Temple to consecrate her to God, as they had promised. The Church remembers this Presentation of Mary on November 21. Nothing is known of Joachim's death; one tradition has him die shortly afterward, before the Annunciation.



Joachim driven from the Temple, by Giotto (Scrovegni Chapel, Padua).

A long-discreet cult

In the East, Joachim and Anne have been honored together since Byzantine times, on September 9, the day after the Nativity of Mary. In the West, the cult of Joachim developed later, at the end of the Middle Ages, in the shadow of Saint Anne's. His feast changed date several times over the centuries before being joined in 1969 to that of his wife, on July 26. Since 2021, the World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly, established by Pope Francis, has been celebrated on the fourth Sunday of July, close to this feast.

Why do Catholics pray to Saint Joachim?

Saint Joachim is the saint of patient waiting and of trust in times of trial. Humiliated, he does not rebel: he turns to God in prayer and fasting. People pray to him for fathers, for grandfathers, for couples longing for a child and for

all who feel rejected or useless. With Anne, he reminds us that faith is passed on first of all within the family.

Where to pray to Saint Joachim

- **Jerusalem**: the Church of Saint Anne, built where tradition places the house of Joachim and Anne and the birth of Mary.
- **Padua** (Italy): the Scrovegni Chapel, whose frescoes by Giotto tell the story of Joachim and Anne.
- **Rome**: the church of San Gioacchino in Prati, built for the priestly jubilee of Pope Leo XIII, whose baptismal name was Joachim (Gioacchino Pecci).

To pray with him, read the prayer to Saint Joachim or follow the novena to Saint Joachim, from July 17 to 25.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Joachim

About this prayer

Saint Joachim is often prayed to together with his wife Saint Anne, but one can also turn to him alone, especially for fathers and grandfathers. The text below is an original composition by Saintspedia. It draws on what tradition tells of him: his generosity, the humiliation of the rejected offering, his prayer in the desert and the joy of Mary's birth.

Prayer to Saint Joachim

Saint Joachim, father of the Virgin Mary
and grandfather of Jesus,
you knew waiting, humiliation and the silence of God,
and you chose to pray rather than rebel:
I come to you with confidence.

Watch over fathers:
may they be present, patient and just,
and pass on faith and hope to their children.
Watch over grandfathers:
may they know they are useful and loved,
and may their wisdom be heard.

Support couples who are waiting for a child,
and all who feel rejected or forgotten.
Teach us, as you did, to turn our pain into prayer.

Today I entrust to you this intention: (name your intention).
With Saint Anne, your wife,
present it to your daughter Mary and to your grandson Jesus.

Saint Joachim, pray for us. Amen.

Original text by Saintspedia.

A prayer for a grandfather

Saint Joachim, I entrust to you my grandfather (or: my father), (name). Keep him in peace and good health, give him the joy of knowing he is loved, and help me to tell him my gratitude. Amen.

Original text by Saintspedia.

When to pray this prayer

You can pray to Saint Joachim at any time, especially on July 26, the feast of Saints Joachim and Anne, on the World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly (fourth Sunday of July), or on Father's Day. For a longer time of prayer, follow the novena to Saint Joachim and read the life of Saint Joachim.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Joachim

This novena is an original composition by Saintspedia, inspired by what tradition tells of Saint Joachim, father of the Virgin Mary. It is not an official liturgical text. To finish it on the eve of his feast, begin on July 17; it ends on July 25, before the feast of Saints Joachim and Anne on July 26. It can also be prayed at any time, for a father, a grandfather or the hope of a child.

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 and a Hail Mary. The suggested act helps carry the prayer into the day. If you miss a day, simply pick up where you left off.

Day 1: A just and generous man

According to tradition, Joachim divided his goods into three: a share for the Temple, a share for the poor, a share for his family. His faith showed in his generosity.

Prayer: Lord, I entrust my intention to you for these nine days. Give me a generous heart like Joachim's.

Act of the day: Make a gift, however small, to a person or a cause in need.

Day 2: The rejected offering

At the Temple, Joachim's offering was refused because he had no child. He knew public humiliation and the feeling of being rejected.

Prayer: Saint Joachim, support those who feel judged, excluded or humiliated.

Act of the day: Welcome kindly someone whom others reject.

Day 3: In the desert

Joachim did not go home in anger: he went into the desert to fast and pray for forty days. "Prayer shall be my food," he said.

Prayer: Lord, when I am hurt, teach me to turn toward you rather than against others.

Act of the day: Take some time of silence and prayer, away from screens.

Day 4: God's answer

An angel came to Joachim in his solitude to announce a birth. God does not forget those who wait for him.

Prayer: Saint Joachim, support couples who are waiting for a child and all who hope for an answer.

Act of the day: Pray for a couple longing for a child.

Day 5: Reunited

Joachim and Anne met again at the Golden Gate and embraced. Their love came through the trial without breaking.

Prayer: Lord, bless married couples, and heal those going through a crisis.

Act of the day: Make a gesture of tenderness or reconciliation toward someone close to you.

Day 6: A father

At Mary's birth, Joachim became a father. He welcomed his daughter as a gift from God, not as something owed to him.

Prayer: Saint Joachim, watch over fathers: may they be present, patient and just.

Act of the day: Thank your father, or pray for him if he has died.

Day 7: Passing on the faith

Joachim and Anne brought Mary to the Temple to consecrate her to God. They passed on to her what they held most precious: their faith.

Prayer: Lord, help parents and grandparents pass on the faith with love.

Act of the day: Pray with a child, or tell them a Bible story.

Day 8: A grandfather

Joachim is the grandfather of Jesus. The elderly have an irreplaceable place in the family and in the Church.

Prayer: Saint Joachim, watch over grandfathers and over elderly people who are alone or sick.

Act of the day: Call or visit a grandparent or an elderly person.

Day 9: With Anne and Mary

Joachim's quiet, hidden life leads to Mary, and Mary leads to Jesus. His faithfulness prepared the coming of the Savior.

Prayer: Saint Joachim, together with Saint Anne, present to Mary and Jesus the intention I have entrusted to you. Amen.

Act of the day: If you can, go to Mass on July 26, or pray the prayer to Saint Joachim again.

PILGRIMAGE

Church of Saint Anne in Jerusalem, House of Joachim and Anne

The Church of Saint Anne in Jerusalem stands in the Old City, near the Lions' Gate, where tradition places the house of Joachim and Anne and the birth of the Virgin Mary. Built by the Crusaders in the twelfth century, it is one of the best-preserved Romanesque churches in the Holy Land, famous for its exceptional acoustics. It has belonged to France since 1856.



The Church of Saint Anne, in the Old City of Jerusalem.

The house of Joachim and Anne

As early as Byzantine times, a church dedicated to Mary stood near the Pool of Bethesda mentioned in the Gospel of John. Tradition placed the house of Mary's parents there. In the twelfth century the Crusaders built the present church, entrusted to a community of Benedictine nuns. Its crypt, carved into the rock, is venerated as the birthplace of Mary.

From Quranic school to French national property

After Saladin took Jerusalem in 1187, the church was turned into a Quranic school; an inscription above the doorway recalls this foundation of 1192. By the nineteenth century the building was dilapidated. In 1856 the Ottoman sultan gave it to France in thanks for its support during the Crimean War. Restored, the church was entrusted in 1878 to the Missionaries of Africa, the "White Fathers" founded by Cardinal Lavigerie, who still care for it. It is one of France's national domains in the Holy Land.

What to see

- **The church**, very plain, renowned for its acoustics: pilgrim groups often sing a hymn there.
- **The crypt**, the traditional birthplace of the Virgin Mary.
- **The Pool of Bethesda**, in the garden: excavations show the pools where, according to the Gospel of John (5:1-9), Jesus healed a paralyzed man.
- **The statues** of Saint Anne with the child Mary, and images of Joachim.

Practical tips

- **Getting there**: the church is just inside the Lions' Gate (Saint Stephen's Gate), at the start of the Via Dolorosa.

- **Visiting**: there is a modest entrance fee; the site is closed on Sundays and at lunchtime, so check opening hours before you go.
- **Feasts**: July 26 (Saints Joachim and Anne) and September 8 (Nativity of Mary) are celebrated solemnly.
- **Dress**: shoulders and knees covered.

Praying to Saint Joachim

Before or after your visit, you can say the prayer to Saint Joachim or follow the novena to Saint Joachim. To get to know him better, read the life of Saint Joachim, and discover Saint Anne, his wife.

CREDITS

Credits and sources

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