

BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Joseph Bilczewski

Life, prayer and novena

Feast day: March 20

Saintspedia · saintspedia.com

IN BRIEF

Saint Joseph Bilczewski

Latin-rite Archbishop of Lwów from 1900 to 1923, known as the apostle of the Eucharist.

Feast day	March 20
Born	April 26, 1860, Wilamowice, Poland
Died	March 20, 1923, Lwów (now Lviv, Ukraine)
Canonized	October 23, 2005, by Pope Benedict XVI
Era	20th century

In this booklet

Life

Prayer to Saint Joseph Bilczewski for Peace and Reconciliation

Novena to Saint Joseph Bilczewski

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 Joseph Bilczewski

Saint Joseph Bilczewski (in Polish, Józef Bilczewski) was the Latin-rite Archbishop of Lwów, today Lviv in Ukraine, from 1900 to 1923. The son of peasants who became a professor and university rector, he made himself the shepherd of a city torn apart by war, defended Poles, Ukrainians and Jews alike, and was called the "apostle of the Eucharist." He died in 1923, was canonized by Pope Benedict XVI in 2005, and his feast day is March 20.

Who was Saint Joseph Bilczewski?

Józef Bilczewski was born on April 26, 1860, in Wilamowice, in Galicia, a province then belonging to Austria-Hungary and now part of Poland. He was the eldest of nine children in a rural family. He attended secondary school in Wadowice, the town where Karol Wojtyła, the future Saint John Paul II, would later be born, and he graduated in 1880.

He then entered the seminary in Kraków and was ordained a priest in 1884 by Cardinal Dunajewski. Gifted for study, he earned a doctorate in theology at the University of Vienna in 1886 and specialized in dogmatic theology and Christian archaeology.



Saint Joseph Bilczewski, Archbishop of Lwów.

Key dates

- **April 26, 1860**: Born in Wilamowice, Galicia.
- **1884**: Ordained a priest in Kraków.
- **1886**: Doctorate in theology from the University of Vienna.
- **1890-1891**: Teaches in Kraków, then at the University of Lwów.
- **1900**: Appointed Archbishop of Lwów by Pope Leo XIII.
- **1911**: Consecrates the Church of Saint Elizabeth in Lwów.
- **1918-1921**: The Polish-Ukrainian and Polish-Soviet wars.
- **March 20, 1923**: Dies in Lwów.
- **June 26, 2001**: Beatified in Lviv by Pope John Paul II.
- **October 23, 2005**: Canonized in Rome by Pope Benedict XVI.

A scholar who remained a pastor

In 1890 Bilczewski joined the Jagiellonian University in Kraków, and the following year the University of Lwów, where he taught dogmatic theology. He became dean and then rector of the university, and he published many works on archaeology and Church history.

This brilliant career did not draw him away from prayer. The Divine Office and his devotions filled a large part of his days, as did catechesis and the spiritual guidance of his students. For him, study and holiness were not rivals: the search for truth was itself a way to God.

When the Latin metropolitan see of Lwów, capital of Galicia, fell vacant, his name was put forward to Emperor Franz Joseph. Pope Leo XIII appointed him archbishop in 1900.

Archbishop of a city at war

Apostle of the Eucharist and of social justice

As archbishop, he committed himself to the social teaching of the Church. He founded newspapers, supported the young movements that sought to protect workers, and took great care over the formation of the clergy and the faithful. His devotion to the Eucharist, which he placed at the center of Christian life, earned him the title "apostle of the Eucharist."

A Good Shepherd for all

Lwów was a city of many peoples and many rites. Poles, Ukrainians, Jews and Armenians lived there together, and the city was home to three Catholic archbishops: Latin, Greek Catholic and Armenian. Bilczewski led the Latin-rite faithful, but his concern as a pastor reached far beyond them. This openness would be tested to the limit.

The years of the First World War and its aftermath were terrible for Lwów. During the Polish-Ukrainian conflict of 1918-1919, he worked to stop the fighting between peoples who had lived side by side. He also defended the Church against Bolshevism during the Polish-Soviet war.

Above all, he intervened with each successive authority on behalf of all the people who were suffering, Poles, Ukrainians and Jews, without distinction of faith. Many came to see him as "the living icon of the Good Shepherd."



The Church of Saint Elizabeth in Lviv, consecrated by Archbishop Bilczewski in 1911.

Buried among the poor

Worn out by these years of struggle, and already in fragile health, Józef Bilczewski died on March 20, 1923. At his own wish, he was buried among the poor, in the part of the cemetery set aside for them. It was a last lesson: the archbishop who had defended the weakest in life wished to share their place in death.

At his canonization, Pope Benedict XVI summed up his holiness in three words: prayer, work and self-denial. Saint John Paul II, who had beatified him, liked to recall that he himself stood in Bilczewski's episcopal lineage: the bishop who ordained him had been consecrated by a bishop whom Bilczewski had ordained.

Why is Saint Joseph Bilczewski invoked for peace and reconciliation?

Joseph Bilczewski is not the official patron of a particular group, but his life makes him a natural intercessor in several situations. Because he defended Poles, Ukrainians and Jews alike in a city at war, he is prayed to for peace between peoples and for reconciliation between Poles and Ukrainians, a prayer that has taken on new urgency in our own time. Because he joined scholarship and prayer, he is a model for professors, researchers and students. And because he placed the Eucharist at the center of everything, he accompanies those who are discovering its power.

To pray with him, see the prayer to Saint Joseph Bilczewski and the novena to Saint Joseph Bilczewski.

Symbols and how to recognize Saint Joseph Bilczewski in art

Since he lived in the age of photography, Joseph Bilczewski is known above all through portraits of him as an archbishop, in episcopal dress with a pectoral cross. Religious images often show him in prayer, sometimes before the Blessed Sacrament, recalling his title of apostle of the Eucharist.

Where to pray to Saint Joseph Bilczewski

- **Lviv** (Ukraine): the Latin Cathedral, seat of his ministry as archbishop, in the city where he was beatified in 2001.

- **Wilamowice** (Poland): his native village.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Joseph Bilczewski for Peace and Reconciliation

Saint Joseph Bilczewski did not leave a prayer that has become traditional. However, the pope who canonized him summed up his holiness in three simple words, which can guide our prayer. Below you will find them, followed by an original prayer by Saintspedia.

Three words to meditate on

In his homily at the canonization Mass in Saint Peter's Square, Rome, on October 23, 2005, Pope Benedict XVI described the holiness of Józef Bilczewski in three words: **prayer, work and self-denial**. Prayer, because the Eucharist was the center of his life. Work, because he gave all his gifts as a scholar, teacher and bishop. Self-denial, because he spent himself for his people until he was exhausted, and chose to be buried among the poor.



Saint Joseph Bilczewski at prayer.

Prayer to Saint Joseph Bilczewski for peace and reconciliation

Saint Joseph Bilczewski, you were called the apostle of the Eucharist: teach me to draw from the Mass and from adoration the strength to serve my brothers and sisters.

You defended Poles, Ukrainians and Jews without making any distinction between them: obtain peace for nations at war, and reconciliation for those whom history has divided.

You united study and prayer: enlighten teachers, researchers and students, that they may seek the truth with humility.

You wished to rest among the poor: make me attentive to those whom no one notices. I also entrust to you my intention (name it in silence).

Help me to live, following your example, a life of prayer, work and self-denial, for the glory of God. Amen.

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

When to pray this prayer

Saint Joseph Bilczewski is celebrated on March 20, the day of his death in Lwów in 1923, the date entered in the Roman Martyrology. His feast usually falls during Lent, a season that fits his three words well.

You can also pray to him:

- for peace in Ukraine and throughout Central and Eastern Europe;
- for reconciliation between Poles and Ukrainians, and between Christians and Jews;

- before a time of Eucharistic adoration;
- before an exam, a lecture or a piece of research;
- for bishops who must lead their people through war or crisis.

A short prayer for peace

> *Saint Joseph Bilczewski, good shepherd of Lwów, pray for all peoples torn by war. May they find in Christ, present in the Eucharist, the strength to forgive and to live together in peace. Amen.*

Original text by Saintspedia.

To learn more about him, read the life of Saint Joseph Bilczewski, or pray the novena to Saint Joseph Bilczewski.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Joseph Bilczewski

This novena is an original composition by Saintspedia, inspired by the life of Saint Joseph Bilczewski, Archbishop of Lwów (Lviv), and by the three words Pope Benedict XVI used to describe his holiness: prayer, work and self-denial. It is not an official liturgical text. To end it on his feast day, March 20, begin on March 12. The novena usually falls during Lent and passes through the Solemnity of Saint Joseph on March 19, the feast of his patron saint. It can also be prayed at any time, especially for peace in Ukraine and among peoples at war.

How to pray this novena

Each day, place your intention before God, read the meditation, say the prayer of the day, then an Our Father, a Hail Mary and a Glory Be. If possible, spend a few moments before the Blessed Sacrament during these nine days, as the "apostle of the Eucharist" would have wished. The small act of each day helps you live the prayer.

Day 1: A child of the countryside

Józef Bilczewski was born in 1860 in Wilamowice, the eldest of nine children in a rural family. His faith was formed in a simple home, close to the land and to hard work.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for the families that pass on the faith in simple ways. Through the intercession of Saint Joseph Bilczewski, bless large families, farming families and all who work with their hands. Amen.

Today: Thank God for one person in your family who taught you to pray.

Day 2: A priest for God's people

After studying in Wadowice and at the seminary in Kraków, he was ordained a priest in 1884. He gave his whole life to the service of the Church.

Prayer: Lord, bless all priests, especially those who serve in my parish. Give them holy hearts, strong faith and the joy of serving your people. Raise up new vocations. Amen.

Today: Pray for a priest by name, or thank him in person.

Day 3: Seeking the truth

A doctor of theology, professor and later rector of the University of Lwów, Bilczewski loved study. Yet he never separated knowledge from prayer: the search for truth led him to God.

Prayer: Lord, you are the Truth. Enlighten teachers, researchers and students, and help me to use my mind for your glory and the good of others. Amen.

Today: Spend fifteen minutes reading something that deepens your faith: Scripture, the Catechism or the life of a saint.

Day 4: Prayer at the heart of the day

Even as a busy professor, Bilczewski gave a large place to the Divine Office and to prayer. His work flowed from his prayer, not the other way round.

Prayer: Lord, I am often too busy to pray. Teach me, through Saint Joseph Bilczewski, to give you the first place in my day, and to find in prayer the strength for my work. Amen.

Today: Set a fixed time for prayer today, and keep it.

Day 5: The apostle of the Eucharist

As archbishop, Bilczewski placed the Eucharist at the center of Christian life. For him, Christ present in the Blessed Sacrament was the source of everything: charity, courage and peace.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, truly present in the Eucharist, increase my faith and my love for you. Let every Communion transform me and send me out to serve. Amen.

Today: Attend a weekday Mass, or spend time in Eucharistic adoration.

Day 6: Justice for workers

Bilczewski founded newspapers and supported the young movements that protected workers. He believed the Gospel had something to say about wages, labor and human dignity.

Prayer: Lord, I pray for workers who are exploited, for the unemployed and for those who cannot support their families. Through Saint Joseph Bilczewski, make me a builder of justice. Amen.

Today: Treat with special respect someone whose work often goes unnoticed: a cleaner, a cashier, a delivery driver.

Day 7: Shepherd of all peoples

During the wars of 1918-1921, Bilczewski defended Poles, Ukrainians and Jews without distinction. He worked to stop the fighting between peoples who had lived side by side.

Prayer: Lord, Prince of Peace, I entrust to you all nations at war, especially Ukraine. Heal old wounds between peoples, and give leaders the courage to choose peace. Amen.

Today: Pray for peace in a country at war, or support a work that helps refugees and war victims.

Day 8: Self-denial

Bilczewski spent himself for his people until his health gave way. When this novena is prayed before his feast, this day falls on March 19, the Solemnity of Saint Joseph, whose name he bore: a man who served in silence and gave himself completely for the Holy Family.

Prayer: Lord, teach me to give myself without counting the cost. Through the intercession of Saint Joseph and of Saint Joseph Bilczewski, free me from selfishness and make me generous. Amen.

Today: Make a small sacrifice for someone else: your time, your comfort or your preference.

Day 9: Among the poor

Bilczewski died on March 20, 1923, and asked to be buried among the poor. The archbishop who had defended the weakest in life chose to share their place in death.

Prayer: Lord, open my eyes to those whom no one notices. Through Saint Joseph Bilczewski, give me a humble heart, and grant me to share one day the joy of your kingdom with the poor. Amen.

Today: Give to the poor in a concrete way, or pray for the forgotten dead.

Closing prayer

> *Saint Joseph Bilczewski, apostle of the Eucharist and good shepherd of Lwów, you united study and prayer, defended all who suffered without distinction, and chose to rest among the poor. Present to the Lord the intention I have carried during these nine days. Obtain peace for peoples at war, and for me the grace to live a life of prayer, work and self-denial, for the glory of God. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

This novena is an original text by Saintspedia. To learn more, read the life of Saint Joseph Bilczewski or pray the prayer to Saint Joseph Bilczewski.

CREDITS

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: Unknown author, public domain, via Wikimedia Commons. Source
- Saint Joseph Bilczewski, Archbishop of Lwów.: Image: Aleksander Augustynowicz, public domain, via Wikimedia Commons. Source · License
- The Church of Saint Elizabeth in Lviv, consecrated by Archbishop Bilczewski in 1911.: Image: Aeou, CC BY 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons. Source · License
- Saint Joseph Bilczewski at prayer.: Image: Aleksander Augustynowicz, 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