

BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Jude Thaddeus

Life, prayer, novena and pilgrimage

Feast day: October 28

Saintspedia · saintspedia.com

IN BRIEF

Saint Jude Thaddeus

One of the twelve apostles, also called Thaddeus, patron saint of hopeless causes.

Feast day	October 28
Died	1st century
Canonized	pre-congregation (venerated since the early Church)
Era	1st century
Patron saint of	hopeless causes, desperate situations, lost causes

In this booklet

Life

Prayer to Saint Jude for Hopeless Causes

Novena to Saint Jude

Relics of Saint Jude Thaddeus and Saint Simon at Saint Peter's Basilica

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 Jude Thaddeus

Saint Jude, also called Thaddeus, is one of the twelve apostles of Jesus. The Gospels record only one question from him, asked at the Last Supper, and tradition attributes to him a short letter of the New Testament. Long overlooked, partly because his name sounded like that of Judas, he has become since the 19th century one of the most prayed-to saints in the world, invoked as the patron saint of hopeless causes. His feast day is October 28, shared with the apostle Saint Simon.

Who was Saint Jude Thaddeus?

The lists of the Twelve do not quite agree on his name. The Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles name a "Jude, son of James" (Luke 6:16; Acts 1:13); the Greek expression can also be read as "brother of James." The Gospels of Matthew and Mark, at the same place in the list, name "Thaddeus" (Matthew 10:3; Mark 3:18). The Church has always understood these to be the same apostle known by two names, hence the title Jude Thaddeus.

Nothing is known of his family or of his life before Jesus called him. Part of the Latin tradition identifies him with the Jude named among the "brothers" of Jesus in the Gospels (Matthew 13:55; Mark 6:3), that is, one of his close relatives. This identification is still debated.

Key dates

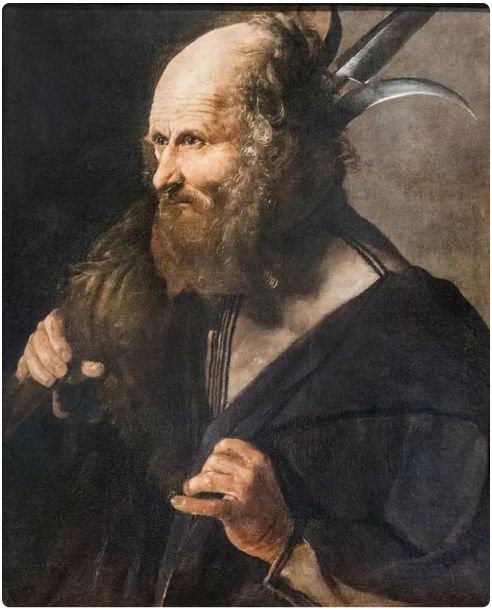
- **c. 28-30**: Called by Jesus to be one of the Twelve.
- **c. 30**: At the Last Supper, he asks Jesus how he will reveal himself (John 14:22).
- **After the Ascension**: Present with the apostles gathered in Jerusalem (Acts 1:13).

- **Late 1st century**: The Letter of Jude is written, according to most scholars.
- **1st century (date unknown)**: Death, as a martyr according to tradition, in Persia with Saint Simon, or in Armenia according to Armenian tradition.
- **1929**: Founding of the National Shrine of Saint Jude in Chicago.
- **19th-20th centuries**: Devotion to Saint Jude, patron of hopeless causes, spreads around the world.

Jude's question at the Last Supper

The only words of Jude recorded in the Gospels are found in the Gospel of John, which takes care to specify: "Judas, not the Iscariot." Jesus has just said that he will reveal himself to those who love him. Jude asks: "Lord, how is it that you will reveal yourself to us and not to the world?" Jesus answers: "Whoever loves me will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our dwelling with him" (John 14:22-23).

Jude's question is the question of many believers: why does God not show himself in a striking way? Jesus' answer shifts the focus. God does not force himself on the world; he comes quietly to dwell in the hearts of those who love him.



Saint Jude Thaddeus, by Georges de La Tour (Albi series of apostles, 17th century).

The Letter of Jude

The New Testament contains a short letter, only twenty-five verses long, which opens with the words: "Jude, a slave of Jesus Christ and brother of James." Tradition attributed it to the apostle; many scholars today think it was written by a disciple claiming the authority of Jude, brother of James of Jerusalem. It warns against teachers who were troubling the communities and urges Christians "to contend for the faith that was once for all handed down to the holy ones" (Jude 3). It ends with a hymn of praise to God, one of the most beautiful in the New Testament, often used in the liturgy.

Mission and martyrdom according to tradition

The Acts of the Apostles say nothing about the rest of Jude's life. According to a tradition widespread in the West, handed down in particular by the *Golden Legend* in the 13th century, he preached in Mesopotamia and Persia with the apostle Simon, and both were martyred there. This is why the Latin Church celebrates them together on October 28. The Armenian Church, for its part, honors Thaddeus as one of its two founding apostles, with Saint Bartholomew; the Saint Thaddeus Monastery in northwestern Iran is venerated as the site of his tomb. These accounts, handed down with devotion, cannot be verified historically.

Another tradition, reported by Eusebius of Caesarea, speaks of a Thaddeus sent to Edessa to King Abgar. Later accounts add that Jesus had an image of his face carried to this king.



The Saint Thaddeus Monastery in Iran, venerated by Armenians as the site of his tomb.

Why is Saint Jude the patron saint of hopeless causes?

For centuries Saint Jude was rarely invoked, most likely because his name recalled Judas, the betrayer. A popular explanation drew from this that the faithful turned to him as a last resort, when they had tried everything else. From the 19th century, and even more in the 20th, devotion to "Saint Jude, patron of hopeless causes" (also called desperate or lost causes) spread across Europe, Latin America and North America.

In the United States, the National Shrine of Saint Jude was founded in Chicago in 1929 and remains one of the great centers of his devotion. Saint Jude Children's Research Hospital in Memphis, Tennessee, also bears his name. For generations, newspapers in many countries printed small classified notices thanking Saint Jude for a favor received, a custom many English-speaking Catholics still remember.

Jude is the apostle of stubborn hope. Quiet in the Gospels, he asks a frank question and receives a consoling answer: God comes to live with those who love him. People pray to him in situations with no apparent way out, a serious illness, a family conflict, long unemployment, not to force God's hand, but so as not to lose heart.

To pray with him, read the prayer to Saint Jude for hopeless causes, or follow the novena to Saint Jude from October 19 to 27, the eve of his feast.

Symbols and how to recognize Saint Jude in art

- **A medallion with the face of Christ**, worn on his chest: it recalls the legend of the image sent to King Abgar of Edessa.
- **An axe, a club or a halberd**: the instruments of his martyrdom according to tradition.
- **A book or scroll**: the Letter of Jude, and the Gospel he preached as an apostle.

In popular statues and holy cards, he is often shown standing, bearded, holding the medallion against his chest and a staff or club in his hand.

Where to pray to Saint Jude

- **Rome**: Saint Peter's Basilica, where his relics rest with those of Saint Simon, beneath an altar in the left transept.
- **Toulouse** (France): the Basilica of Saint-Sernin, whose treasury claims relics of the apostles Simon and Jude.
- **Iran**: the Saint Thaddeus Monastery, a major pilgrimage site for Armenians and a UNESCO World Heritage site.
- **Chicago** (United States): the National Shrine of Saint Jude, one of the great centers of his devotion.
- **Mexico City**: the Church of San Hipólito, where crowds come to pray to him on the 28th of each month.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Jude for Hopeless Causes

Many prayers to Saint Jude circulate, often as printed novena cards, but none was written by the apostle himself. The most reliable text that tradition connects with his name is the hymn of praise that closes the Letter of Jude in the New Testament. Below you will find that passage, then an original prayer by Saintspedia to Saint Jude Thaddeus for difficult and hopeless causes.

Prayer to Saint Jude for hopeless causes

Saint Jude, apostle of the Lord, faithful friend of Jesus, you whom we call upon when everything seems lost, pray for me.

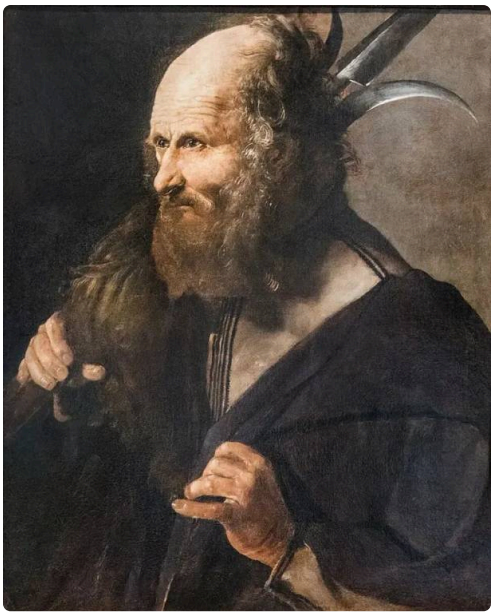
I turn to you in a situation that is beyond me: (name it in silence). I have done what I could, and I no longer see a way out. I do not ask you to force the will of God, but to help me not to lose heart.

You asked Jesus why he would not show himself to the world, so you know what it is to wait for a sign. Obtain for me the grace to feel his presence in the middle of this trial, and the strength to take, today, the small step that is possible.

I also entrust to you all who are at the end of their strength: the sick with no hope of recovery, broken families, those who have lost their work or their home, those who think their life no longer has meaning.

May God, who is able to keep us from stumbling, lead us into his joy. Amen.

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



Saint Jude Thaddeus, apostle, in prayer.

The closing praise of the Letter of Jude (verses 24-25)

The letter ends with a doxology, a prayer of praise that entrusts believers to the power of God. Saintspedia translation from the Greek text of the New Testament.

> *To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glory, blameless and full of joy,*
>
> *to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, power and authority, before all ages, now and for all ages. Amen.*

Source: Letter of Jude, verses 24 and 25, attributed by tradition to the apostle Jude Thaddeus.

A word to meditate on

> *"But you, beloved, build yourselves up in your most holy faith; pray in the Holy Spirit; keep yourselves in the love of God, and wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life."*

Source: Letter of Jude, verses 20 and 21 (Saintspedia translation). These few lines sum up the path of anyone going through a trial: faith, prayer, love and confident waiting.

When to pray this prayer

Saint Jude's feast day is October 28, shared with the apostle Saint Simon. You can pray to him at any time for a difficult cause: a serious illness, a family in crisis, a job search that drags on, an addiction, a relationship that seems beyond repair. Many people pray to him on the 28th of each month. For a longer time of prayer, follow the novena to Saint Jude, from October 19 to 27, and read the life of Saint Jude Thaddeus.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Jude

This novena is an original composition by Saintspedia, inspired by what the Gospel and the Letter of Jude tell us about the apostle. It is not an official liturgical text. To finish it on the eve of his feast, begin on October 19; it ends on October 27, the day before the feast of October 28. You can also pray it at any time of the year for a difficult or seemingly hopeless cause.

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, a Hail Mary and a Glory Be. The small act suggested for each day helps carry the prayer into daily life. If you miss a day, simply pick up where you left off. A novena is not a formula that obliges God to answer; it is nine days of perseverance, in the company of an apostle who knew what it is to wait and to hope.



Saint Jude Thaddeus, apostle, in a church statue or stained glass window.

Day 1: Called by name

Jude is one of the Twelve, chosen by Jesus after a night of prayer (Luke 6:12-16). He is not the best known of the apostles, but he is called, like the others. In the eyes of Christ, no one is a minor character.

Prayer: Lord, you call me by my name, even when I feel small and forgotten. I entrust my intention to you, and I place it in your hands for these nine days.

Today: Write your intention on a piece of paper and place it near a crucifix or an image of Saint Jude.

Day 2: Carrying a difficult name

Jude bore the same name as the betrayer, and his memory long suffered for it. Yet God does not confuse us with what weighs on us. He sees the person beneath the label.

Prayer: Lord, free me from the labels that lock me in, and help me not to lock others in their past.

Today: Look with fresh eyes at someone you have judged for a long time.

Day 3: Daring to ask

"Lord, how is it that you will reveal yourself to us and not to the world?" (John 14:22). Jude dares to ask Jesus about what he does not understand. Faith is not the absence of questions; it is bringing them to God.

Prayer: Lord, I bring you my own "why" as well. Receive it as a prayer, and do not let it turn into bitterness.

Today: Tell God simply what you do not understand about your situation.

Day 4: God makes his home with us

Jesus answers Jude: "Whoever loves me will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our dwelling with him" (John 14:23). God is not far from our trial: he lives within it.

Prayer: Lord, come and make your home in me, in the very place of what frightens me.

Today: Spend ten minutes in silence, simply welcoming the presence of God.

Day 5: Building on faith

The Letter of Jude invites us to "build yourselves up in your most holy faith" (Jude 20). When everything shakes, faith is solid ground where we can still set our feet.

Prayer: Lord, strengthen my faith when everything around me seems to collapse.

Today: Pray the Creed slowly, pausing on each line.

Day 6: Praying in the Spirit

"Pray in the Holy Spirit" (Jude 20). When we no longer know what to ask for, the Spirit prays within us. Our weakness becomes room for God's strength.

Prayer: Holy Spirit, pray in me when I have no words left.

Today: Ask someone you trust to pray for your intention.



Praying with Saint Jude Thaddeus, apostle.

Day 7: Having mercy on others

The letter asks us to have mercy on those who waver and to reach out to those in danger (Jude 22-23). A trial can make us more attentive to the trials of others, instead of closing us in on ourselves.

Prayer: Lord, do not let me shut myself up in my own pain. Open my eyes to those who suffer near me.

Today: Visit or call someone who is going through a hard time.

Day 8: A witness to the end

According to tradition, Jude carried the Gospel far from home and gave his life for Christ. His hope was not an illusion, but faithfulness kept day after day.

Prayer: Saint Jude, obtain for me the grace to remain faithful, even if the answer is slow in coming.

Today: Make an act of trust, "Jesus, I trust in you," several times during the day.

Day 9: The one who can keep us from falling

The letter ends with this praise: "To him who is able to keep you from falling... be glory." To end in praise is to hand our intention over to someone greater than ourselves.

Prayer: Lord, at the end of this novena, I give you my intention. Through the intercession of Saint Jude, keep me from falling and give me your peace. Amen.

Today: Give thanks for one good thing in your life, despite the trial.

Closing prayer

Saint Jude Thaddeus, at the end of these nine days, I entrust to you once more the cause that seems hopeless to me. Pray for me and for all who have lost courage. Obtain for us the grace never to despair of God, and to welcome his answer, whatever it may be. Amen.

To go further: the life of Saint Jude Thaddeus and the prayer to Saint Jude for hopeless causes.

PILGRIMAGE

Relics of Saint Jude Thaddeus and Saint Simon at Saint Peter's Basilica

The relics of the apostle Saint Jude Thaddeus are venerated in Rome, in Saint Peter's Basilica in the Vatican, where they rest with those of the apostle Saint Simon beneath an altar in the left transept. For the many faithful who pray to Saint Jude, it is the most important place of his memory in the West.

The apostles Simon and Jude together

Latin tradition closely associates Simon and Jude: it has them preaching together in Mesopotamia and Persia, and dying as martyrs in the same place. For centuries, the Church has celebrated them on the same day, October 28. Their relics were brought to Rome, according to tradition, and placed in the old Saint Peter's Basilica, then, after its Renaissance reconstruction, in the present basilica.

The altar of the left transept

In the left arm of the transept of Saint Peter's, an altar houses the remains of the two apostles. This altar is now dedicated to Saint Joseph, and a large painting of Mary's husband hangs above it. A little apart from the main flow of visitors, the transept is better suited to quiet prayer than the heavily trafficked nave.

Praying to Saint Jude at Saint Peter's

Before your visit, you can reread the life of Saint Jude Thaddeus or the Letter of Jude, which can be read in a few minutes. Before the altar, a time of silence lets you entrust a difficult cause. The prayer to Saint Jude for desperate cases

can accompany this moment. You can also pray very nearby, at the tomb of Saint Peter, the first of the apostles. These suggestions are offered by Saintspedia for a personal visit.

Other places of Saint Jude Thaddeus

- **Toulouse**: the Basilica of Saint-Sernin, whose treasury has claimed since the Middle Ages to hold relics of the apostles Simon and Jude.
- **Iran**: the Monastery of Saint Thaddeus (Qara Kelisa), in West Azerbaijan Province, venerated by Armenians as the site of his tomb; it is part of the Armenian monastic ensembles on the UNESCO World Heritage list.
- **Chicago** (United States): the National Shrine of Saint Jude, founded in 1929, one of the great centers of devotion to him in the world.
- **Mexico**: in Mexico City, the Church of San Hipólito, where crowds come to pray to him on the 28th of every month.

Practical information

Saint Peter's Basilica is open every day, except during certain celebrations; admission is free, but there is a security check in Saint Peter's Square, and modest dress is required. Hours change with the seasons and papal celebrations. Check the basilica's official website, basilicasanpietro.va, before you come.

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: Anthony van Dyck, public domain, via Wikimedia Commons. Source · License
- Saint Jude Thaddeus, by Georges de La Tour (Albi series of apostles, 17th century).: Image: Georges de La Tour, public domain, via Wikimedia Commons. Source · License
- The Saint Thaddeus Monastery in Iran, venerated by Armenians as the site of his tomb.: Image: Unknown author, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons. Source · License
- Saint Jude Thaddeus, apostle, in prayer.: Image: Georges de La Tour, public domain, via Wikimedia Commons. Source · License
- Saint Jude Thaddeus, apostle, in a church statue or stained glass window.: Image: Jusepe de Ribera, public domain, via Wikimedia Commons. Source · License
- Praying with Saint Jude Thaddeus, apostle.: Image: Dietmar Rabich, CC BY-SA 4.0, 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