

BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Julius I

Life, prayer and novena

Feast day: April 12

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IN BRIEF

Saint Julius I

Pope from 337 to 352, defender of Athanasius and of the faith of Nicaea during the Arian crisis.

Feast day	April 12
Born	Rome
Died	April 12, 352, Rome
Era	4th century

In this booklet

Life

Prayer to Saint Julius I for the Unity of the Church

Novena to Saint Julius I

Credits and sources

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LIFE

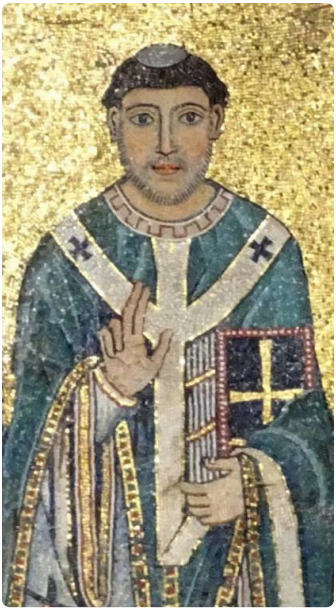
Saint Julius I

Saint Julius I was bishop of Rome from 337 to 352. A Roman by birth, he led the Church at the height of the Arian crisis, when bishops were bitterly divided over the divinity of Christ. He took the side of Athanasius of Alexandria, the great defender of the faith of the Council of Nicaea, and clearly affirmed the role of the Church of Rome as guardian of communion among the Churches. His remains rest in the basilica of Santa Maria in Trastevere, and his feast day is April 12.

Who was Saint Julius I?

Little is known about his personal life. He was a Roman, the son of a man named Rusticus, and he was elected on February 6, 337, after a four-month vacancy that followed the death of Pope Mark. It was the year the emperor Constantine died. The sources are thin: a fragmentary inscription, a few entries in chronicles and, above all, a partly preserved correspondence devoted entirely to the Arian controversy.

That correspondence is enough to show the kind of pastor he was. Julius did not write treatises of theology. He wrote letters: patient, firm, sometimes sharp, always concerned with keeping the Churches of East and West together in one faith.



Saint Julius I in the mosaic of Santa Maria in Trastevere.

Key dates

- **February 6, 337**: Elected bishop of Rome.
- **340 or 341**: A synod in Rome recognizes Athanasius as the legitimate bishop of Alexandria.
- **343**: Council of Serdica (today Sofia, Bulgaria).
- **346**: Athanasius returns to Alexandria.
- **April 12, 352**: Death in Rome; burial in the catacomb of Calepodius, on the Via Aurelia.
- **790**: Pope Adrian I transfers his remains to Santa Maria in Trastevere.

The defender of Athanasius

The crisis after Nicaea

In 325, the Council of Nicaea had proclaimed that the Son is "of one substance" (consubstantial) with the Father, the formula Catholics still profess every Sunday in the Creed. But the followers of the priest Arius, who taught that the Son was a creature, remained powerful, especially in the East, and they had the ear of the imperial court. Bishops who defended Nicaea were deposed and exiled one after another.

An appeal to Rome

Shortly after Julius's election, a delegation of bishops led by Eusebius of Nicomedia asked him to recognize an Arian bishop in Alexandria in place of Athanasius. Athanasius, in turn, sent his own representatives to Rome.

Julius first proposed a reconciliation. But Athanasius, driven from his see once again by the emperor Constantius II, took refuge in Rome with part of his clergy. Julius received him into his communion, and a synod gathered in Rome annulled the election of his rival.

The Eastern bishops protested: in their view, the bishop of Rome had made himself judge of a matter that was none of his business. Julius answered that he had only kept the ancient custom, according to which the Churches remain united through the exchange of letters of communion. His reply, preserved by Athanasius himself, is one of the most important papal documents of the fourth century.

Serdica and the voice of Rome

In 343, the emperors called a council at Serdica that was meant to reconcile the two sides. It failed: Eastern and Western bishops met separately and excommunicated each other. The Western bishops, presided over by Hosius of

Cordoba, adopted rules allowing a deposed bishop to appeal to the bishop of Rome.

This text had little immediate effect, but it revealed a lasting divide. The West began to claim the primacy of the see of Peter and Paul, while the East stressed its own antiquity in handing on the faith. The question of how the Churches remain in communion, and what role Rome plays in that communion, would run through the whole later history of Christianity.



Santa Maria in Trastevere, where the remains of Saint Julius I rest.

What his holiness teaches

Julius I left no theological work, but he stood firm at a time when many bishops changed sides according to the favor of the emperor. His faithfulness to the faith of Nicaea and to a persecuted brother served the unity of the Church. Athanasius, hunted for years, found in him a friend and a protector.

His way of acting is worth noticing. He did not begin by condemning: he first sought reconciliation, then listened to both parties, and only then took a position. Once he had decided, he did not retreat, even under pressure from powerful bishops and an emperor hostile to Nicaea. Patience and firmness, in that order, mark his whole pontificate.

Tradition also credits him with founding two great churches of Rome: Santa Maria in Trastevere and the Basilica of the Holy Apostles (Santi Apostoli), then called the *Basilica Juliana*.

Why is Saint Julius I remembered today?

Saint Julius I is not the patron saint of a particular profession or cause. He is remembered as a pope of the faith of Nicaea, the faith Catholics proclaim when they say that Jesus Christ is "consubstantial with the Father." Every recitation of the Nicene Creed owes something to the bishops who, like Julius, refused to let that formula be set aside. He is also a model for those who must defend someone who is unjustly accused, even at the cost of conflict.

Symbols and how to recognize Saint Julius I in art

The best-known image of Julius is the twelfth-century apse mosaic of Santa Maria in Trastevere, where he appears among the saints surrounding Christ and the Virgin Mary. He is shown as a pope, in liturgical vestments, as one of the figures connected with the history of the basilica. In series of papal portraits, he appears like other early popes, without a personal attribute.

Where to pray to Saint Julius I

- **Rome, basilica of Santa Maria in Trastevere**: his remains have rested there since the eighth century, when Pope Adrian I brought them from the catacomb of Calepodius.

- **Rome, Basilica of the Holy Apostles**: a church whose founding tradition attributes to him.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Julius I for the Unity of the Church

Saint Julius I, bishop of Rome from 337 to 352, defended the faith of the Council of Nicaea and welcomed Saint Athanasius when he was persecuted and driven from his see. He is a fitting intercessor for the unity of the Church, for those who are unjustly accused and for all who must stand firm in the truth. This prayer is an original text by Saintspedia.

Prayer to Saint Julius I for the unity of the Church

Saint Julius, faithful shepherd of the Church of Rome,
in a time of confusion and division
you held fast to the faith of Nicaea
and confessed that Jesus Christ is true God from true God.

You opened your door to Athanasius
when the powerful had driven him away,
and you did not abandon a brother falsely accused.
Teach me to stand beside those who are treated unjustly,
even when it costs me.

You sought reconciliation before you judged,
and you wrote letters to keep the Churches united.
Obtain for our Pope and our bishops
wisdom, courage and patience.
Heal the divisions among Christians,
and make us one in the truth and in charity.

Help me never to change my faith
according to fashion or the favor of the powerful,
but to keep it with a humble and steady heart.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

When to pray this prayer

Pray it especially on April 12, the feast of Saint Julius I, or during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (January 18-25). It is also suited:

- for the Pope and for the bishops of the Church;
- for Christians divided by conflict, in a parish, a diocese or a family;
- for someone who is falsely accused or treated unjustly;

- when you are tempted to soften your faith to please others.

Pray with the Creed of Nicaea

The best way to honor Saint Julius is to pray the faith he defended. You can conclude with the central words of the Nicene Creed, as Catholics profess it at Mass:

> *I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages. God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father; through him all things were made.*

To go further, read the life of Saint Julius I or pray the novena to Saint Julius I.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Julius I

This novena to Saint Julius I is an original composition by Saintspedia. Over nine days, it follows the bishop of Rome who, from 337 to 352, defended the faith of Nicaea, welcomed the persecuted Athanasius and worked for communion between the Churches of East and West. To end on his feast day, April 12, begin it on April 4. You can also pray it at any time of the year, especially for the unity of Christians.

How to pray this novena

Each day, find a quiet moment. Begin with the Sign of the Cross, read the short meditation, then say the prayer of the day, followed by an Our Father, a Hail Mary and a Glory Be. End with the small act proposed for the day. If you miss a day, simply continue: a novena is a path of trust, not a test.

Day 1: A son of Rome

Julius was a Roman, the son of a man named Rusticus. We know almost nothing else about his early life. God often prepares his servants in obscurity, through ordinary family and parish life. Our own ordinary life is the place where he forms us.

Prayer: Saint Julius, help me to recognize God's work in the ordinary days of my life, and to be faithful in small things. Amen.

Today: Thank God for your family and for the parish where you received the faith.

Day 2: Called after a time of waiting

Julius was elected on February 6, 337, after a four-month vacancy. The Church had waited and prayed. Times of waiting are not wasted: they prepare hearts to receive what God gives.

Prayer: Saint Julius, teach me patience in times of waiting, and trust that God's timing is good. Amen.

Today: Entrust to God one thing you are waiting for, and let go of the need to control it.

Day 3: True God from true God

The Council of Nicaea had confessed that the Son is consubstantial with the Father. Julius held to that faith when many bishops wavered. Our faith is not an opinion among others: it is a gift received from the apostles, which we are called to keep.

Prayer: Saint Julius, strengthen my faith in Jesus Christ, true God and true man, and help me to proclaim it with joy. Amen.

Today: Pray the Nicene Creed slowly, pausing on the words about Christ.

Day 4: Seeking reconciliation first

When the Eastern bishops asked him to recognize a rival bishop in Alexandria, Julius first proposed a reconciliation. Before judging, he tried to bring people together. Peace is worth the effort of listening.

Prayer: Saint Julius, give me a heart that seeks reconciliation before condemnation. Amen.

Today: Listen fully to someone you disagree with, without interrupting.

Day 5: Welcoming the persecuted

Driven from Alexandria, Athanasius took refuge in Rome with part of his clergy. Julius received him into his communion. Welcoming a brother whom the powerful have rejected is an act of faith and of courage.

Prayer: Saint Julius, pray for refugees and for all who have been driven from their homes, and open my heart to welcome them. Amen.

Today: Support a work that helps refugees or displaced people, by a gift or a prayer.

Day 6: Defending the falsely accused

Athanasius was the target of slanders and accusations. Julius refused to abandon him. It is easy to stay silent when someone is unjustly attacked; it takes courage to speak up for them.

Prayer: Saint Julius, pray for all who are falsely accused, and give me the courage to defend the truth about others. Amen.

Today: Refuse to repeat or listen to gossip about someone today.

Day 7: Firm without bitterness

When the Eastern bishops protested, Julius answered by letter, explaining that he had only followed the ancient custom of communion. He did not respond with insults but with reasons. Firmness and charity can go together.

Prayer: Saint Julius, teach me to speak the truth with gentleness and to remain calm when I am criticized. Amen.

Today: Before answering a difficult message, pray for the person who wrote it.

Day 8: One Church, many voices

The Council of Serdica ended in division, with East and West excommunicating each other. Julius knew the pain of a divided Church. The wound of Christian division is still with us, and Christ still prays "that they may all be one."

Prayer: Saint Julius, pray for the unity of all Christians, and help me to be an artisan of communion in my own surroundings. Amen.

Today: Pray for Christians of another Church or tradition whom you know.

Day 9: Building houses for God

Tradition credits Julius with founding Santa Maria in Trastevere and the Basilica of the Holy Apostles, where Christians still pray today. Beyond stone churches, he built up the living Church through his fidelity. Every faithful life is a dwelling place for God.

Prayer: Saint Julius, help me to build up the Church by my faith, my prayer and my charity, and pray for my parish community. Amen.

Today: Offer an hour of your time or a gift to your parish.

Closing prayer

> *Lord God, you gave your Church Saint Julius I, a shepherd faithful to the faith of Nicaea and a friend to the persecuted. Through his intercession, keep us steadfast in the true faith, make us defenders of those who suffer injustice, and gather all Christians into one flock under one Shepherd. Hear also the intention I have entrusted to you during these nine days. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

To learn more, read the life of Saint Julius I and the prayer to Saint Julius I.

CREDITS

Credits and sources

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