

BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Leopold Mandić

Life, prayer, novena and pilgrimage

Feast day: July 30

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IN BRIEF

Saint Leopold Mandić

Croatian Capuchin priest, tireless confessor in Padua and apostle of Christian unity.

Feast day	July 30
Born	May 12, 1866, Herceg Novi (present-day Montenegro)
Died	July 30, 1942, Padua, Italy
Canonized	October 16, 1983, by Pope John Paul II
Era	20th century

In this booklet

Life

Prayer to Saint Leopold Mandić for Mercy and Forgiveness

Novena to Saint Leopold Mandić

Shrine of Saint Leopold Mandić in Padua

Credits and sources

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LIFE

Saint Leopold Mandić

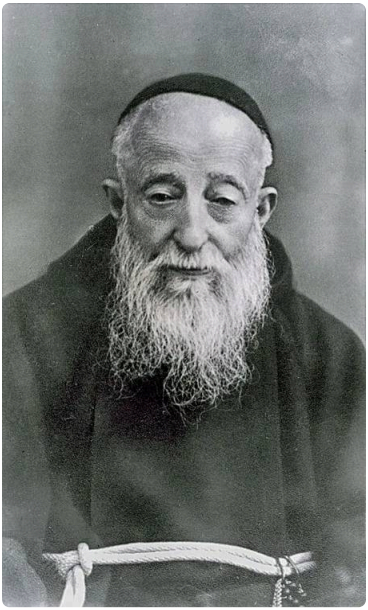
Saint Leopold Mandić, born Bogdan Mandić, was a Croatian Capuchin priest who spent most of his life in Padua, shut away in a tiny cell hearing confessions, sometimes for up to fifteen hours a day. Small, frail and hampered by a speech impediment that kept him from preaching, he dreamed of going on mission for the unity of Christians of East and West. He found his "East" in the confessional. He died in 1942, was canonized by Saint John Paul II in 1983, and is celebrated on July 30.

Who was Saint Leopold Mandić?

Bogdan Ivan Mandić was born on May 12, 1866, in Herceg Novi, then called Castelnuovo, on the Bay of Kotor along the Adriatic coast. The region belonged to the Austrian Empire; today it is part of Montenegro. He was the eleventh of twelve children in a Catholic Croatian family that had fallen on hard times, and he grew up in a borderland where Catholics, Orthodox Christians and Muslims lived side by side.

His first name, Bogdan, means "given by God." Very early he wanted to become a priest and to work for the reconciliation of the separated Christians of East and West.

In November 1882, his father brought him to the Capuchin friary in Udine, Italy. He was a frail, pale and very short teenager who stammered, but his determination impressed everyone. He entered the novitiate at Bassano del Grappa in 1884 and took the name Brother Leopold.



Saint Leopold Mandić, Capuchin of Padua.

Key dates

- **May 12, 1866**: Birth in Herceg Novi (Castelnuovo), on the Bay of Kotor.
- **November 1882**: He enters the Capuchins at Udine.
- **April 20, 1884**: He receives the habit at the novitiate of Bassano del Grappa and becomes Brother Leopold.
- **September 20, 1890**: Priestly ordination, after studies in Padua and Venice.
- **1897**: Superior of the Capuchin friary in Zara (Zadar), Dalmatia.
- **1906**: He settles in Padua, where he will spend nearly all the rest of his life.
- **1915-1919**: As an Austrian subject, he is interned in southern Italy during the First World War.
- **July 30, 1942**: Death in Padua, while praying the *Salve Regina*.
- **May 2, 1976**: Beatification by Saint Paul VI.

- **October 16, 1983**: Canonization by Saint John Paul II, during the Synod of Bishops on penance and reconciliation.

A dream of the East

After his ordination, Father Leopold studied the languages of his native region and the theology of the Eastern Churches: he wanted to be a missionary of unity. His superiors, however, judged him too frail for preaching.

In 1897, named guardian of the friary in Zara, Dalmatia, he came closer to his homeland. He immediately began to welcome travelers arriving at the port and to speak with them about the faith. But this quiet apostolate was cut short: he was recalled to Italy, sent to the Marian shrine of Thiene, and then to Padua.

During the First World War, Italy went to war against Austria-Hungary. Father Leopold, still an Austrian subject, had to leave Padua and was interned in the region of Naples. He came back only in 1919. The longing for the East never left him, but he never went back.

"Your East is the souls"

In Padua, at the friary of Santa Croce, Father Leopold discovered his true mission. His biographers report that a penitent once told him: "Father, your East is every soul you help here in confession." He himself explained that since God had not given him the gift of speech for preaching, he wanted to bring souls back to God through the sacrament of penance.

For more than thirty years he received all kinds of penitents in a small cell: ordinary people, students, university professors, priests. Among the priests was the young Albino Luciani, the future Pope John Paul I. He was always available, smiling and patient, and he thanked those who came to him for their trust.

Some even criticized him for being too lenient. He never stopped believing that the mercy of God is greater than human sin.

A peaceful death, a cell spared

During the winter of 1941, his already fragile health grew worse; he was suffering from cancer of the esophagus. He nevertheless kept hearing confessions until his last days. On July 30, 1942, he received the anointing of the sick and died singing the final words of the *Salve Regina*.

Two years later, on May 14, 1944, a bombing raid destroyed the church and a large part of the friary of Santa Croce. His confessional cell remained standing. The Capuchins report that he had foretold it: the church would be hit, but not the little room where God had shown so much mercy.

His reputation for holiness spread quickly. Beatified by Saint Paul VI in 1976, he was canonized on October 16, 1983, by Saint John Paul II, on the fifth anniversary of the pope's election, during the Synod of Bishops devoted to reconciliation and penance. In February 2016, for the Jubilee of Mercy, Pope Francis had his body displayed in Saint Peter's Basilica alongside that of Saint Padre Pio, another great Capuchin confessor.

Why is Saint Leopold Mandić a patron of confessors and the sick?

Saint Leopold has no formal patronage in the Roman calendar, but popular devotion turns to him above all as a model and intercessor for confessors and penitents. His whole priestly life was spent in the confessional. Because he suffered from cancer and kept serving until the end, many people also pray to him for the sick, especially those with cancer. And because he offered his life for the unity of Christians, he is invoked for ecumenism.

His life shows that a seemingly failed life can become fruitful. He wanted to go far away; he stayed shut in a few square yards. He wanted to preach; he did not have the means. He accepted, day after day, the humble and hidden service of forgiveness. He remains a friend to all who hesitate to ask for forgiveness.

To pray with him, see the prayer to Saint Leopold Mandić and the novena to Saint Leopold Mandić, from July 21 to July 29.

Symbols and how to recognize Saint Leopold Mandić in art

Because he lived in the age of photography, Saint Leopold is usually shown as he really looked: a very small, bearded Capuchin in a brown habit, with a gentle expression. Statues show him raising his hand to bless, and stained glass windows depict him in the confessional, the setting most closely linked to his holiness.

Where to pray to Saint Leopold Mandić

- **Padua, Italy**: the shrine of Saint Leopold Mandić at the Capuchin friary of Santa Croce, in the city center, where pilgrims venerate his body in a chapel and visit the confessional cell spared in 1944. The Capuchins still offer regular confessions there. The shrine is not far from the Basilica of Saint Anthony, and Padua is about thirty minutes by train from Venice.
- **Herceg Novi, Montenegro**: his hometown on the Bay of Kotor, where a church is dedicated to him.
- **Zadar, Croatia**: the Dalmatian city where he was superior of the Capuchin friary.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Leopold Mandić for Mercy and Forgiveness

Saint Leopold Mandić left no written work intended for the public. What we know of his words comes mostly from his fellow friars and from those whose confessions he heard. Below you will find one of his sayings, with its context, followed by an original prayer to Saint Leopold by Saintspedia.

A saying of Saint Leopold to meditate on

> *"Since God has not given me the gift of speech for preaching, I want to devote myself to bringing souls back to him through the sacrament of penance."*

Source: words reported by his Capuchin biographers, about his vocation as a confessor in Padua. The Capuchin Friars Minor publish a biography of Saint Leopold on their official website.

Prayer to Saint Leopold Mandić for mercy and forgiveness

Saint Leopold, you spent your life welcoming sinners in the name of Christ: teach me not to be afraid of God's mercy. Give me the courage to ask for forgiveness and the peace of knowing I am forgiven.

You accepted not to go far away and to serve hidden in your little cell: help me to find my mission where the Lord has placed me, even when my life does not look like my dreams.

You offered your life for the unity of Christians of East and West: pray that the separated Churches may find one another again in charity.

You knew sickness and suffering: support the sick, especially those fighting cancer, and receive the intention I entrust to you: (name it in silence).

Obtain for priests the patience and kindness of good confessors, and for me a reconciled heart. Amen.

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

When to pray this prayer

Saint Leopold Mandić is celebrated on July 30, the day of his death in 1942; the Capuchins celebrate him on May 12, the anniversary of his birth. This prayer is especially fitting:

- before going to confession, especially after a long time away;
- for a relative or friend who has drifted away from God;
- for someone living with cancer or a serious illness;
- for priests who hear confessions, and for the unity of Christians.

Hail, Holy Queen

Saint Leopold died singing the *Salve Regina*. You can end your prayer with him in the traditional words of this Marian antiphon:

> *Hail, holy Queen, Mother of mercy, our life, our sweetness and our hope. To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve. To thee do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this valley of tears. Turn then, most gracious advocate, thine eyes of mercy toward us, and after this our exile show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus. O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary.*

For a longer time of prayer, follow the novena to Saint Leopold Mandić, and read the life of Saint Leopold Mandić.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Leopold Mandić

This novena is an original composition by Saintspedia, inspired by the life of Saint Leopold Mandić. It is not an official liturgical text. To finish it on the eve of his feast day, July 30, begin it on July 21. You can also pray it at any time of the year: before an important confession, for a sick person, or for someone who has drifted away from God.

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, Holy Queen* (*Salve Regina*), the Marian prayer Saint Leopold was singing as he died. The suggested act helps carry the prayer into your day. If you can, go to confession at some point during these nine days.

Day 1: Given by God

Bogdan, Saint Leopold's baptismal name, means "given by God." The eleventh of twelve children, he grew up in a family that had known hardship, but he understood very early that his life was a gift to be given back.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for the life you have given me. Help me to receive it as a gift and to offer it in turn. Saint Leopold, pray for me. Amen.

Today: Thank a member of your family for something they handed on to you.

Day 2: Strength in weakness

Small, frail and stammering, the young Bogdan hardly looked like a future apostle. Yet he did not let his limits decide his vocation. Saint Paul heard the Lord say: "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in

weakness."

Prayer: Lord, I present my weaknesses to you. Let your power work through them. Saint Leopold, pray for me. Amen.

Today: Accept one of your own limits in peace, without complaining.

Day 3: Longing for unity

Born in a land where Catholics and Orthodox lived side by side, he longed all his life for the unity of Christians of East and West, and he offered his life for it.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, you prayed that all may be one: heal the divisions among Christians. Saint Leopold, pray for us. Amen.

Today: Pray for Orthodox Christians and for one of the Eastern Churches.

Day 4: When our plans fail

He wanted to go on mission; he was kept in Italy, then interned during the war. He learned to look for the will of God in what upset his plans. What looked like failure became the place of his fruitfulness.

Prayer: Lord, I entrust to you the plans in my life that never came to be. Show me what you are asking of me today. Saint Leopold, pray for me. Amen.

Today: Do a task you did not choose, and do it willingly.

Day 5: Your East is the souls

In Padua, he understood that his mission was right there in front of him, in every person who knocked at his door. The faraway land he had dreamed of reaching was in the heart of each penitent.

Prayer: Lord, open my eyes to the people you place on my path. May they be my mission. Saint Leopold, pray for me. Amen.

Today: Truly listen, without hurrying, to someone who needs to talk.

Day 6: Mercy without measure

Saint Leopold sometimes heard confessions fifteen hours a day. When people said he was too lenient, he answered with trust in the goodness of God, which is greater than every sin.

Prayer: Father of mercy, I believe that your forgiveness is greater than my sin. Grant me the grace to return to you. Saint Leopold, pray for me. Amen.

Today: Prepare for confession, or go to confession.

Day 7: Serving priests

Many priests came to him for confession, among them the future Pope John Paul I. The confessor of sinners was also a support for shepherds, who carry heavy burdens and also need mercy.

Prayer: Lord, give your Church patient and kind priests, and sustain those who are tired or discouraged. Saint Leopold, pray for them. Amen.

Today: Pray for a priest you know, or send him a word of encouragement.

Day 8: In sickness

Suffering from cancer, Saint Leopold kept welcoming penitents until the end. His suffering did not put out his gentleness.

Prayer: Lord, I entrust to you the sick, especially those suffering from cancer. Give them strength, relief and peace. Saint Leopold, pray for them. Amen.

Today: Visit a sick person or call to ask how they are.

Day 9: With Mary, to the end

On July 30, 1942, Saint Leopold died singing the *Salve Regina*. He placed his life in the hands of the Mother of Mercy, to whom he had prayed all his life. Mary leads us to her Son, and she accompanies us at the hour of our death as she accompanied him.

Prayer: Lord, I place in your hands the intention of this novena. Through the intercession of Saint Leopold and of the Virgin Mary, grant me what is good for me. Amen.

Today: Pray the *Hail, Holy Queen* slowly.

Closing prayer

> *Saint Leopold, at the end of these nine days, I entrust to you the intention I have presented. You spent your life reconciling people with God: obtain for me a heart at peace, the grace of forgiveness received and given, and faithfulness in little things. Amen.*

To go further, read the life of Saint Leopold Mandić and pray the prayer to Saint Leopold Mandić.

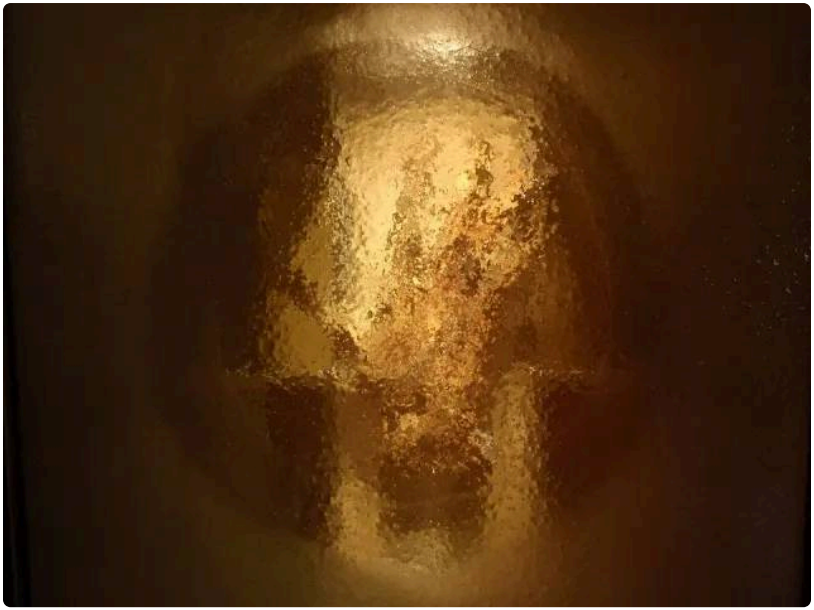
PILGRIMAGE

Shrine of Saint Leopold Mandić in Padua

The shrine of Saint Leopold Mandić is in Padua, at the Capuchin friary of Santa Croce, where the saint lived and heard confessions for more than thirty years. Pilgrims come to pray before his body and to see the small cell where he received penitents. It is also, to this day, a place where people come to go to confession.

The friary of Santa Croce

Father Leopold arrived in Padua in the early 20th century and, apart from the years of internment during the First World War, never left the Capuchin friary of Santa Croce. He died there on July 30, 1942. On May 14, 1944, a bombing destroyed the church and much of the friary. The cell where he heard confessions remained standing; according to the Capuchins, he had predicted that it would be spared. The church was later rebuilt, and devotion to the saint grew around his tomb and that cell, which became the heart of the shrine.



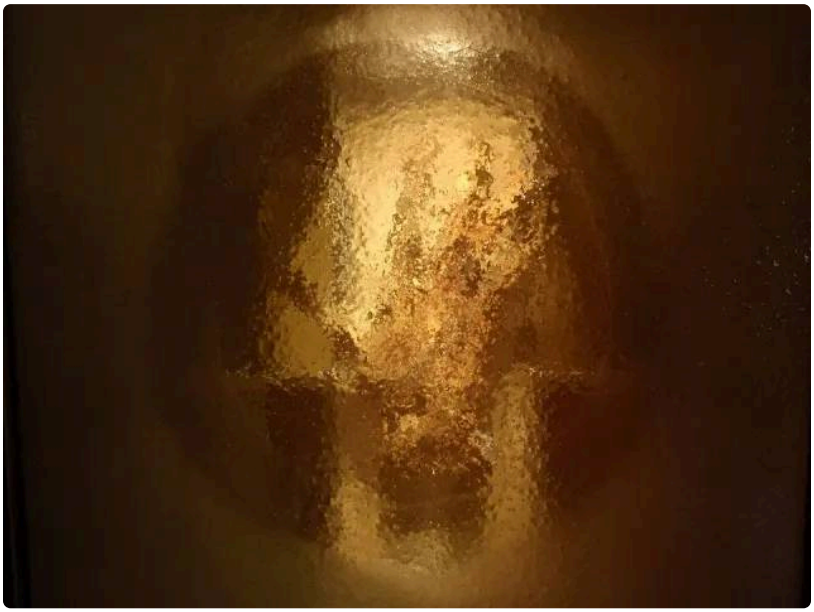
The Church of Santa Croce and the Shrine of Saint Leopold, in Padua.

Visiting the shrine

The pilgrim's route centers on two places. The chapel where the body of Saint Leopold rests welcomes the faithful who come to entrust their intentions to him. Nearby, the confessional cell keeps the chair and the modest setting where he listened to countless penitents. The Capuchins still provide a regular confession service, in continuity with his ministry. The shrine is in the center of Padua, not far from the Basilica of Saint Anthony and the Basilica of Saint Justina, which makes it possible to combine several pilgrimages in the same day.

Praying on site

Before your visit, you may wish to read the life of Saint Leopold Mandić. The most fitting thing to do here is probably the very thing the saint encouraged most: to receive the sacrament of reconciliation. You can also, before his cell, say the prayer to Saint Leopold Mandić, followed by a *Salve Regina*, or begin the novena to Saint Leopold Mandić. These suggestions are offered by Saintspedia.



The chapel of Saint Leopold, inside the shrine.

Other places connected with Saint Leopold Mandić

- **Herceg Novi** (Montenegro): his native town, on the Bay of Kotor, where a church is dedicated to him.
- **Udine**: the Capuchin friary he entered in 1882.
- **Bassano del Grappa**: the novitiate where he received the habit and the name Leopold in 1884.

- **Zadar** (Croatia): the friary in Dalmatia of which he was superior from 1897.

Practical information

Padua is easily reached by train from Venice, about thirty minutes away. The shrine is a place of prayer: modest dress and silence are requested, especially near the confessional cell. Opening, Mass, and confession hours vary with the seasons and feasts: consult the official website of the shrine before you come.

Credits and sources

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