

BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Malachi the Prophet

Life, prayer and novena

Feast day: January 3

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IN BRIEF

Saint Malachi the Prophet

Last of the twelve minor prophets of the Bible, who announced the messenger preparing the coming of the Lord.

Feast day January 3

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Credits and sources

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LIFE

Saint Malachi the Prophet

Saint Malachi is the last of the twelve "minor prophets" of the Old Testament. His short book is placed at the very end of the Old Testament in Christian Bibles, and it closes with the announcement of a messenger who will prepare the way of the Lord: the Gospels recognize this messenger as Saint John the Baptist. Almost nothing is known about the man himself, but his words still echo in the Catholic liturgy, at Mass and in Advent. He is commemorated on January 3 in several calendars, especially in the Eastern Churches.

Who was the prophet Malachi?

The name Malachi means "my messenger" in Hebrew. It may be a real personal name, but it could also be a title taken from the book itself (Malachi 3:1). The Talmud already records this debate, and one opinion there identifies Malachi with the scribe Ezra. No reliable biographical information has come down to us: neither his family, nor his town, nor his death.

He should not be confused with Saint Malachy of Armagh, a twelfth-century Irish bishop and friend of Saint Bernard, to whom a famous "prophecy of the popes" was wrongly attributed.

"Minor" does not mean less important

The twelve "minor prophets," from Hosea to Malachi, are called "minor" only because their books are short compared with those of Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel. In the Hebrew Bible they form a single book, "The Twelve." Malachi comes last in this collection, and in Christian Bibles he is the last voice of the Old Testament before the Gospels.



The prophet Malachi.

Key dates for the prophet Malachi

- **586 BC**: Destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem and exile in Babylon.
- **515 BC**: Completion of the Second Temple, after the return from exile.
- **5th century BC**: Preaching of Malachi, under Persian rule.

A prophet after the exile

The book bears no date, but it says enough to place its author. The Temple has been rebuilt and worship is celebrated there; Judea is ruled by a "governor," a title of the Persian administration. Malachi therefore spoke in the fifth century before Christ, after the return from exile, to a discouraged community. The enthusiasm of the return had faded, and routine had set in. The promises of the earlier prophets seemed slow to be fulfilled, and many wondered whether serving God was worth the effort.

The book is built as a series of dialogues: God makes a statement, the people object ("How have you loved us?"), and the prophet answers. He reproaches the priests for offering blind or lame animals, the people for neglecting their tithes, and the men for divorcing "the wife of their youth." The words "I hate divorce" (Malachi 2:16) make this book an important witness to the demand for faithfulness in marriage.

Words the Church has made her own

Several verses of Malachi have become familiar to Christians. "From the rising of the sun to its setting my name is great among the nations, and in every place incense is offered to my name, and a pure offering" (Malachi 1:11). The Fathers of the Church saw in it a prophecy of the Eucharist, and Eucharistic Prayer III of the Mass echoes it: "so that from the rising of the sun to its setting a pure sacrifice may be offered to your name."

The image of the "sun of justice" (or "sun of righteousness") rising with healing in its rays (Malachi 3:20, numbered 4:2 in many English Bibles) is applied to Christ, especially in the liturgy of Advent and Christmas. The great "O Antiphon" of December 21, *O Oriens*, greets Christ as the "Sun of justice."

The messenger and the return of Elijah

Above all, Malachi announces: "Behold, I send my messenger to prepare the way before me" (Malachi 3:1). He ends by promising the return of the prophet Elijah before the day of the Lord, to "turn the hearts of fathers to their children."

The Gospels apply these words to Saint John the Baptist. Jesus himself identifies John as this messenger, and the angel who announces John's birth to Zechariah takes up the verse about the hearts of fathers. The book thus opens

the door to the New Testament. Every year on February 2, the feast of the Presentation of the Lord, the Church reads Malachi's prophecy of the Lord coming suddenly to his Temple.

Why pray with Saint Malachi?

Malachi is not the patron saint of any particular group, but he is the prophet of ordinary times, when faith wears thin through habit. He reminds us that God deserves our best, that faithfulness in marriage is part of the covenant, and that waiting for the Lord is never in vain.

He can be prayed to for those whose faith has grown cold, for married couples, for priests, and to prepare for Advent and Christmas.

To pray with him, see the prayer to Saint Malachi and the novena to Saint Malachi, from December 25 to January 2.

Symbols and how to recognize the prophet Malachi in art

- **A scroll**: like the other prophets, he usually holds a scroll, sometimes unrolled with a verse of his book.
- **An old man with a beard**: the traditional appearance of the prophets in icons and stained glass.
- **Place among the prophets**: in Eastern iconostases and in series of stained glass windows, he appears among the prophets who foretold Christ.

Where to pray to Saint Malachi

No tomb or shrine of Malachi is known. He can be met wherever his words are proclaimed: at Mass, where Eucharistic Prayer III echoes his prophecy of the pure offering; in Advent, with the O Antiphons; and on the feast of the Presentation of the Lord. In Eastern churches, his icon may be found on the iconostasis, in the row of the prophets.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Malachi for a Renewed Faith

The prophet Malachi left no personal prayer, but his short book contains words that the Church has prayed for centuries, especially at Mass and during Advent. Below you will find two verses from his book, then an original prayer asking for a renewed faith and for faithfulness in love.

Two verses from the prophet Malachi

> *"From the rising of the sun to its setting my name is great among the nations, and in every place incense is offered to my name, and a pure offering."*

Source: Malachi 1:11. The Fathers of the Church read this verse as a prophecy of the Eucharist, and Eucharistic Prayer III of the Roman Missal echoes it.

> *"But for you who fear my name, the sun of righteousness shall rise, with healing in its wings."*

Source: Malachi 3:20 (4:2 in many English Bibles). Christians apply this image to Christ, the "Sun of justice" greeted in the O Antiphon of December 21.

Prayer to Saint Malachi for a Renewed Faith

Saint Malachi, messenger of the Lord, you spoke to a people grown tired, whose faith had become routine and whose offerings were given without love. Pray for me when my own faith grows cold, when I give God only what is left over.

You reminded Israel that the Lord loves his people and asks for the best of their hearts. Help me to offer God my time, my work and my prayer with generosity.

You defended the faithfulness of husband and wife, "the wife of your youth." Pray for married couples, for those who are going through difficulties, and for families where hearts have grown distant.

You announced the messenger who would prepare the way of the Lord, and the Sun of justice who rises with healing in his rays. Make my heart ready to welcome Christ when he comes.

I entrust to you my intention: (name it in silence).

Through Christ our Lord, the pure offering presented to the Father from the rising of the sun to its setting. Amen.

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

When to pray this prayer

- On January 3, the day the prophet Malachi is commemorated in several calendars.
- During Advent, as you prepare for the coming of the Lord.
- On February 2, the feast of the Presentation of the Lord, when Malachi's prophecy is read at Mass.

- When your prayer has become dry or routine, or for a couple going through a difficult time.

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

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Malachi the Prophet

This novena is an original composition by Saintspedia, inspired by the book of the prophet Malachi, the last book of the Old Testament in Christian Bibles. It is not an official liturgical text. To finish it on the eve of his commemoration on January 3, begin on December 25; it then ends on January 2, so that it accompanies the Christmas season. You can also pray it during Advent, or at any time when your faith needs to be renewed.

How to pray this novena

Each day, entrust your intention to God, read the meditation and, if you can, the verse of Malachi it refers to. Then say the prayer of the day followed by an Our Father. The small act suggested for each day helps you carry the prayer into your daily life.

Day 1: "I have loved you"

Malachi's book opens with a declaration of love: "I have loved you, says the Lord." The people answer, "How have you loved us?" (Malachi 1:2). In times of discouragement, we too may doubt God's love. Yet everything begins with it: before asking anything of his people, God reminds them that he has loved them first.

Prayer: Lord, help me to believe that you love me, even when I do not feel it.

Today: Write down three signs of God's love in your life.

Day 2: Giving God the best

Malachi rebukes the priests who offered blind or lame animals, keeping the best for themselves. It is easy to give God only what is left of our time and our energy. Malachi invites us to ask honestly what place the Lord really has in our days.

Prayer: Lord, teach me to give you the first and the best, not what is left over.

Today: Give God a time of prayer at the best moment of your day, not at its end.

Day 3: A pure offering

"In every place a pure offering is presented to my name" (Malachi 1:11). The Church sees in these words the Eucharist, offered from the rising of the sun to its setting all over the world.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, unite my life to your offering in the Eucharist.

Today: Attend Mass, or make a spiritual communion if you cannot.

Day 4: Priests according to God's heart

Malachi reminds priests that "the lips of a priest should guard knowledge" and that people should seek instruction from his mouth (Malachi 2:7). The people of God need pastors who are faithful and close to them, and pastors need the prayer and support of their people.

Prayer: Lord, give your Church holy priests, and sustain those who serve us.

Today: Pray for your parish priest and, if you can, thank him.

Day 5: The wife of your youth

Malachi defends the faithfulness of marriage: "Let none be faithless to the wife of his youth" (Malachi 2:15). Fidelity is not only a duty; it is a reflection of God's own faithfulness to his covenant.

Prayer: Lord, bless married couples, strengthen those in difficulty, and heal wounded families.

Today: Pray for a couple you know, or do something kind for your spouse.

Day 6: "Return to me"

"Return to me, and I will return to you, says the Lord of hosts" (Malachi 3:7). God always leaves the door open. Conversion is never too late, and it is God who first comes to meet us, like the father of the prodigal son running toward his child.

Prayer: Lord, turn my heart back to you, and come to meet me.

Today: Make an examination of conscience and, if possible, go to confession.

Day 7: The book of remembrance

Malachi tells that those who feared the Lord spoke with one another, and the Lord listened, and a book of remembrance was written before him (Malachi 3:16). No faithful act is forgotten by God, even the most hidden. A word of faith shared between friends is precious in his eyes.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for remembering every small act of faith and love.

Today: Speak with a friend about your faith, simply and sincerely.

Day 8: The Sun of justice

"For you who fear my name, the sun of righteousness shall rise, with healing in its wings" (Malachi 3:20). At Christmas, the Church welcomes Christ as this Sun who rises on our darkness and heals our wounds.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, Sun of justice, shine on my darkness and heal what is wounded in me.

Today: Take a moment of prayer before a nativity scene or a candle.

Day 9: Turning hearts

Malachi's book ends by announcing the return of Elijah, who will "turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers." The Gospel sees this fulfilled in John the Baptist, the messenger who prepared the way of Jesus.

Prayer: Lord, I place in your hands the intention of this novena. Through the intercession of Saint Malachi, reconcile families and prepare my heart for your coming. Amen.

Today: Take a step toward reconciliation with a family member.

Closing prayer

Saint Malachi, messenger of the Lord, at the end of these nine days, I entrust to you the intention I have brought before you. Pray for those whose faith has grown cold, for priests, for couples and for divided families. May the Sun of justice rise in our hearts, and may we be ready to welcome the Lord when he comes. Amen.

To go further, read the life of the prophet Malachi and the prayer to Saint Malachi.

CREDITS

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