BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Manaen

Life, prayer and novena

Feast day: May 24

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IN BRIEF

Saint Manaen

1st-century Christian, prophet and teacher of the Church of Antioch, childhood companion of Herod Antipas (Acts 13:1).

Feast day	May 24
Born	late 1st century BC
Died	1st century, Antioch (according to tradition)
Canonized	immemorial cult
Era	1st century

In this booklet

Life

Prayer to Saint Manaen for Teachers of the Faith and Missionaries

Novena to Saint Manaen

Credits and sources

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LIFE

Saint Manaen

Saint Manaen (Manahen) was a Christian of the 1st century, mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles among the "prophets and teachers" of the Church of Antioch. Brought up with King Herod Antipas, he was one of those who, at the command of the Holy Spirit, laid hands on Barnabas and Saul (Saint Paul) to send them on mission. According to tradition, he died at Antioch. His feast day is May 24.

Who was Saint Manaen?

All that we know for certain about Manaen fits in one sentence of the New Testament. In chapter 13 of the Acts of the Apostles, Saint Luke lists the leaders of the Christian community of Antioch, in Syria: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen, and Saul. Of Manaen he notes that he was the *syntrophos* of Herod the tetrarch, that is, his "foster brother" or "childhood companion". The other details of his life come from later traditions, which must be received with caution. Yet his figure is an appealing one: a man brought up at the court of a prince who became a prophet and teacher in one of the first great Churches of the world.

Key dates in the life of Manaen

- **Late 1st century BC**: He grows up alongside Herod Antipas, the future tetrarch of Galilee, whose foster brother or childhood companion he is.
- **The 30s**: According to a late tradition, he follows the teaching of Jesus and is counted among the seventy-two disciples.
- **The 40s**: He is one of the "prophets and teachers" of the Church of Antioch (Acts 13:1).

- **c. 45**: With the other leaders of the community, he lays hands on Barnabas and Saul and sends them on mission (Acts 13:2-3).
- **1st century**: According to tradition, he dies a natural death at Antioch.
- **May 24**: The Church commemorates him on this day.

A childhood companion of Herod

The Greek word used by Saint Luke means someone who was nursed or brought up with another child. In the royal courts of antiquity, it was not unusual for children of good families to be raised with princes to become their companions. Manaen therefore grew up beside Herod Antipas, the son of Herod the Great, the one who had John the Baptist put to death and before whom Jesus appeared during his Passion. Tradition concluded that he was of noble birth and later chose poverty to follow Christ. The contrast is striking: two children raised together, one of whom grew hard, while the other became a servant of the Gospel.

Some commentators have suggested that Manaen was one of Saint Luke's sources. Luke is indeed the only evangelist to tell of Jesus' appearance before Herod (Luke 23:8-12). It is a plausible hypothesis, but nothing proves it.

Prophet and teacher at Antioch

Antioch, a great city of Syria, was one of the first communities where the Gospel was proclaimed to the Gentiles, and it was there that the disciples were first called "Christians". Acts describes a group of leaders there called "prophets and teachers": men able to teach the faith and to discern God's will. Manaen was one of them.

The account in Acts is sober: "While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.' Then, completing their fasting and prayer, they

laid hands on them and sent them off" (Acts 13:2-3). Manaen thus took part in sending out Saint Paul's first great mission, from which the evangelization of Asia Minor and then of Europe was born.

Tradition and devotion

Ancient traditions counted Manaen among the seventy-two disciples sent out by Jesus (Luke 10:1), and report that he died a natural death at Antioch. Neither the date of his death nor the place of his burial is known. The Catholic Church commemorates him on May 24, and the Eastern Churches honor him as well. He is rarely depicted; when he does appear, it is most often in scenes of Paul and Barnabas being sent on mission.

What can we learn from Saint Manaen?

Manaen shows that the Gospel can reach every milieu, even the entourage of a hostile prince. He also reminds us that the Church's mission is the work of a whole community: before Paul set out on the roads, others prayed, fasted and sent him. Manaen is one of those who stay in the background and whose name is mentioned only once, but without whom the mission would not have begun. You can pray to him for catechists and teachers of the faith, for those who send and support missionaries, and for those who live their faith in circles of power.

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

Where to pray to Saint Manaen

- **Antioch** (today Antakya, Turkey): the city where he was a prophet and teacher, and where he is said to have died.
- **In any church**, on May 24, by rereading chapter 13 of the Acts of the Apostles.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Manaen for Teachers of the Faith and Missionaries

Saint Manaen, childhood companion of Herod Antipas, became one of the prophets and teachers of the Church of Antioch, and took part in sending Barnabas and Saint Paul on mission. Prayer composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. It is not an official liturgical text. It entrusts to him teachers of the faith, missionaries and those who send them.

Prayer to Saint Manaen

Saint Manaen,
brought up at the court of a prince,
you preferred the word of Christ
to the honors of this world.
Help me to choose the Gospel
right where I live and work.

Prophet and teacher at Antioch,
you taught the faith to your brothers
and listened to the Holy Spirit
in prayer and fasting.
Teach me to pray with the Church
and to recognize God's calls.

You who laid hands on Barnabas and Paul
to send them far away,
bless the missionaries of today
and all who support them with their prayer.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

When to pray to Saint Manaen

- On his feast day, May 24.
- For catechists, teachers of the faith and preachers.
- When a missionary, a priest or a volunteer is sent on mission.
- For those who live their faith in the worlds of power, politics or business.
- To discern a call, in prayer and fasting.

A short invocation

> *Saint Manaen, friend of the apostles,*
> *obtain for us to be docile to the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

To prepare for his feast, you can pray the novena to Saint Manaen from May 16 to May 24, and read the life of Saint Manaen.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Manaen

This novena spends nine days with Saint Manaen, the childhood companion of Herod who became a prophet and teacher of the Church of Antioch. Novena composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. It is not an official liturgical text. To finish it on his feast day, May 24, begin on May 16. You can also pray it at any other time, for example before someone is sent on mission.

How to pray this novena

Each day, begin with the Sign of the Cross and 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. End with: "Saint Manaen, pray for us." The act suggested each day helps you live the novena concretely. The meditations are based on chapter 13 of the Acts of the Apostles and, with caution, on tradition.

Day 1: Raised with a prince

Manaen grew up beside Herod Antipas. He knew the luxury and power of a royal court. God can call anywhere, even in palaces.

Prayer: Lord, let me hear your call in the midst of my occupations and ambitions.

Act of the day: Pray for the political leaders of your country.

Day 2: Two paths

Herod and Manaen grew up together, but their paths parted. One put John the Baptist to death; the other became a servant of the Gospel. Each person remains free before God.

Prayer: Lord, keep me faithful, and help me to choose what is good each day.

Act of the day: Make an examination of conscience this evening.

Day 3: Choosing poverty

Tradition reports that Manaen, though of noble birth, chose poverty to follow Christ.

Prayer: Lord, let nothing keep me far from you, neither money nor reputation.

Act of the day: Give to a charity that helps the poor.

Day 4: One disciple among others

According to tradition, Manaen was among the seventy-two disciples sent out two by two by Jesus. He was not in the foreground, but he was sent.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for calling me, too, to bear witness to you where I am.

Act of the day: Speak simply about your faith to someone.

Day 5: Teaching the faith

At Antioch, Manaen was one of the "teachers": he taught the Word to the first Christians.

Prayer: Lord, bless catechists, teachers and parents who hand on the faith.

Act of the day: Thank a catechist, a priest or a teacher.

Day 6: Praying and fasting together

It was while the community was worshiping and fasting that the Holy Spirit spoke. Common prayer prepares us to hear God.

Prayer: Holy Spirit, speak to your Church when she gathers, and make us attentive.

Act of the day: Fast from a pleasure today, and offer that fast.

Day 7: Sending on mission

Manaen and his brothers laid hands on Barnabas and Saul. They agreed to let two of their own go, so that the Gospel could travel further.

Prayer: Lord, bless missionaries, and give us generous hearts to support them.

Act of the day: Support a missionary work with your prayer or a gift.

Day 8: Serving in the background

Manaen's name appears only once in the Bible. Yet he took part in one of the greatest adventures of the Church.

Prayer: Lord, teach me to serve without seeking to be seen, sure that you see in secret.

Act of the day: Do someone a discreet service.

Day 9: Finishing the race at Antioch

According to tradition, Manaen died in peace at Antioch, among the community he had served.

Prayer: Lord, grant me to persevere to the end. Through the intercession of Saint Manaen, grant me the grace I ask in this novena, if it is your will.

Act of the day: Reread chapter 13 of the Acts of the Apostles and, if possible, attend Mass.

Closing prayer

> *Saint Manaen,*
> *companion of a prince who became a disciple of Christ,*
> *prophet and teacher of the Church of Antioch,*
> *you sent the apostles out on the roads of the world.*
> *Present to the Lord the intention I have entrusted to you.*
> *Make me docile to the Holy Spirit*
> *and faithful to the mission God entrusts to me.*
> *Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

You can also pray the prayer to Saint Manaen at any time, and read the life of Saint Manaen.

Credits and sources

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