

BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Mariam Baouardy

Life, prayer, novena and pilgrimage

Feast day: August 26

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IN BRIEF

Saint Mariam Baouardy

Carmelite nun born in Galilee, Sister Mary of Jesus Crucified, who died at the Carmel of Bethlehem in 1878.

Feast day	August 26
Born	January 5, 1846, Ibillin, Galilee
Died	August 26, 1878, Bethlehem
Canonized	May 17, 2015, by Pope Francis
Era	19th century

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Carmel of Bethlehem, Tomb of Saint Mariam

Credits and sources

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LIFE

Saint Mariam Baouardy

Saint Mariam Baouardy, known in religion as Sister Mary of Jesus Crucified, was a Carmelite nun born in Galilee in 1846 who died in Bethlehem in 1878, at the age of thirty-two. An orphan and an illiterate servant, she traveled across the Middle East and France before entering the Carmel of Pau, then took part in founding the Carmels of Mangalore, in India, and of Bethlehem. Known for her simplicity, her humility and extraordinary mystical graces, she is often called "the Little Arab." Canonized in 2015, she is celebrated on August 26.

Who was Saint Mariam Baouardy?

Mariam's parents were Melkite Greek Catholic Christians of Lebanese origin who lived in Ibillin, a village in Upper Galilee, then part of the Ottoman Empire. They had lost all their children, twelve boys who died in infancy. According to the family account, they walked on pilgrimage all the way to Bethlehem to ask the Virgin Mary for a daughter. Mariam was born on January 5, 1846, and was baptized and confirmed in the Melkite rite. A little brother, Boulos, was born the following year.

At the age of three, Mariam lost both her parents within a few days of each other. The two children were separated and never saw each other again. Taken in by an uncle, the little girl made her First Communion at eight, then followed her adoptive family to Alexandria, in Egypt.



Sister Mary of Jesus Crucified, a 19th-century photograph.

Key dates in the life of Saint Mariam Baouardy

- **January 5, 1846**: Born in Ibillin, in Galilee.
- **Around 1849**: Her parents die; she is taken in by an uncle.
- **Around 1859**: At thirteen, she refuses the marriage arranged by her uncle and runs away.
- **1865**: Novice with the Sisters of Saint Joseph of the Apparition in Marseille.
- **1867**: Enters the Carmel of Pau, where she receives the name Sister Mary of Jesus Crucified.
- **1870**: Leaves to help found the first Carmel in India, at Mangalore.
- **November 21, 1871**: Makes her perpetual vows in Mangalore.
- **1872**: Returns to the Carmel of Pau.
- **1875**: Leaves to help found the Carmel of Bethlehem.

- **August 26, 1878**: Dies in Bethlehem, from the effects of a fall.
- **November 13, 1983**: Beatified by Saint John Paul II.
- **May 17, 2015**: Canonized by Pope Francis.

A youth marked by suffering

When Mariam was thirteen, her uncle wanted to marry her off. She refused, because she felt called to give herself to God, and she ran away. According to her own account, a man who had taken her in tried to force her to deny her Christian faith. When she refused, he cut her throat and left her for dead in an alley in Alexandria.

She later told her sisters that she woke up in a cave, where for weeks she was cared for by a nun dressed in blue, in whom she recognized the Virgin Mary. This story belongs to her personal testimony, and it deeply marked her spiritual life.

Then began a wandering life as a servant, from one household to another: Alexandria, Jerusalem, Beirut, then Marseille. She could neither read nor write and spoke French poorly, but everywhere people noticed her kindness and her piety.

In Carmel, from Pau to Bethlehem

At nineteen, she entered the novitiate of the Sisters of Saint Joseph of the Apparition in Marseille. After two years, she was not admitted to first vows. Her novice mistress, Mother Véronique of the Passion, pointed her toward Carmel. In 1867 she entered the Carmel of Pau as a lay sister, in charge of household work, and took the name Sister Mary of Jesus Crucified.

Mangalore, the first Carmel in India

In 1870 she was part of the small group that founded the first Carmel in India, at Mangalore, where she made her perpetual vows. This link makes her especially dear to Catholics in India today.

Bethlehem

Back in Pau in 1872, she left in 1875 with ten Carmelites to found a Carmel in Bethlehem. As the only one who spoke Arabic, she closely followed the building of the monastery and talked with the workers. It was on this building site that she fell and broke her arm. Gangrene set in, and she died on August 26, 1878.



The Carmel of Bethlehem, founded with Mariam's help.

The graces of a humble soul

Her biographers and the sisters who knew her report many mystical phenomena: ecstasies, stigmata, visions, prophetic words, and even levitations to the top of a tree in the garden at Pau. One of her visions helped identify one of the sites proposed for the Emmaus of the Gospel. Another helped, in 1875, to obtain approval for the constitutions of the Priests of the Sacred Heart of Bétharram.

In canonizing her, the Church did not canonize these phenomena: it recognized the holiness of her life. Mariam herself saw them rather as trials, almost as illnesses, and never took pride in them.

Though she could not write, she composed poems and prayers of great freshness. "Between Jesus and the proud soul there is the thickness of a mountain; between Jesus and the humble soul there is the thickness of the finest muslin," she used to say.

What does her holiness teach us?

Saint Mariam is a saint of the little ones: an orphan, a servant, without schooling, she was filled with light. Her epitaph describes her as humble, obedient and charitable. A daughter of the Christian East, she links the Church of the Holy Land, Lebanon, Egypt, France and India. Today she is best known for her short prayer to the Holy Spirit, which has spread around the world.

Why do Christians of the Holy Land pray to Saint Mariam?

Saint Mariam has no official patronage, but she is a figure of hope for the Christians of the Middle East. Her canonization, in the presence of Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, made her a sign of hope for Christians of the

region. People entrust to her intentions of peace in the Holy Land, orphans and separated families, those persecuted for their faith, and all who wish to be led by the Holy Spirit.

Symbols and how to recognize Saint Mariam in art

Saint Mariam is shown in the habit of a Carmelite nun, often with her hands joined in prayer. Icons sometimes place the town of Bethlehem in the background, recalling the place of her death and her burial. Old photographs from the 19th century also show her young face under the Carmelite veil.



The tomb of Saint Mariam in the Carmel of Bethlehem.

Where to pray to Saint Mariam Baouardy

- **Bethlehem**: the Carmel of Bethlehem, where her tomb is found, a short distance from the places of the Nativity.

- **Pau** (France): the Carmel she entered in 1867 and where she lived her years of formation.
- **Mangalore** (India): the first Carmel of India, which she helped to found.
- **Ibillin** (Galilee): her native village.

To pray with her, use the prayer to the Holy Spirit of Saint Mariam and the novena to Saint Mariam, from August 17 to 25.

PRAYER

Holy Spirit Prayer of Saint Mariam Baouardy

Saint Mariam Baouardy, Sister Mary of Jesus Crucified, could neither read nor write, but she composed prayers that her sisters collected. The best known is a short prayer to the Holy Spirit, now prayed all over the world. You will find it below, followed by one of her sayings and an original prayer to Saint Mariam.

Prayer to the Holy Spirit of Saint Mariam

> *Holy Spirit, inspire me.*
> *Love of God, consume me.*
> *Along the true road, lead me.*
> *Mary, my Mother, look upon me.*
> *With Jesus, bless me.*
> *From all evil, from all illusion,*
> *From all danger, preserve me.*

Source: prayer attributed to Sister Mary of Jesus Crucified (1846-1878), handed down by the Carmelites who knew her and spread by the Carmel. Mariam had a great devotion to the Holy Spirit and urged those who came to her to pray to Him every day.

A saying of Mariam to meditate on

> *"Only love can fill the human heart."*

Source: a saying of Sister Mary of Jesus Crucified reported by the Carmelites of the Holy Land in the account of her life.



Saint Mariam Baouardy, Carmelite of Bethlehem.

Prayer to Saint Mariam Baouardy

Saint Mariam, Little Arab of Galilee, you knew grief, exile and violence very early in life: pray for orphaned children and for those who have lost everything.

You served in humility, without knowing how to read or write: teach us that God reveals Himself to the little ones, and that the humble heart is very close to Jesus.

You loved the Holy Spirit so much: obtain for us the grace to let Him lead us along the true road.

I entrust to you the Christians of the Holy Land and the Middle East, peace among the peoples of your native land, and my own intention: (name it in silence). Amen.

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

When to pray this prayer

Saint Mariam Baouardy is celebrated on August 26, the day of her death in Bethlehem in 1878. In the Carmelite Order, her memorial is kept on August 25, and in France on August 30. Her prayer to the Holy Spirit can be said every day, and it is particularly helpful:

- in the morning, to entrust the day to the Holy Spirit;
- before an important decision;
- in times of confusion or temptation;
- when praying for peace in the Holy Land.

For a longer time of prayer, follow the novena to Saint Mariam, and discover the life of Saint Mariam Baouardy.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Mariam Baouardy

This novena is an original composition by Saintspedia, inspired by the life and words of Saint Mariam Baouardy, Sister Mary of Jesus Crucified. It is not an official liturgical text. To finish it on the eve of her feast day, August 26, begin it on August 17. Each day, you can add her prayer to the Holy Spirit: "Holy Spirit, inspire me..." The novena can also be prayed at any time of the year, especially for peace in the Holy Land or for a child in difficulty.

How to pray this novena

Each day, entrust your intention to God, read the meditation, say the prayer of the day and then an Our Father, a Hail Mary and a Glory Be. Close with Mariam's prayer to the Holy Spirit. The small act proposed helps carry the prayer into the rest of the day.

Day 1: A child awaited

Her parents, who had lost all their sons, walked to Bethlehem to ask the Virgin Mary for a daughter. Mariam was born of that prayer. Her life began with the faith of a mother and a father who did not give up hope.

Prayer: Lord, I entrust to you couples who are hoping for a child and those who mourn a child they have lost. Amen.

Today: Pray for a family that is going through a trial.

Day 2: An orphan

At three, Mariam lost her parents and was separated from her little brother. She grew up far from her own family. Yet she never stopped believing that God was her Father. Many children today live the same loss, in war zones, refugee

camps or broken homes.

Prayer: Father, you abandon no one: be the support of orphaned children and of brothers and sisters who have been separated. Amen.

Today: Support a charity that serves children without a family.

Day 3: Faithful to the point of blood

As a teenager, Mariam refused to deny her faith, at the risk of her life. She would later tell of being cared for by a lady dressed in blue, in whom she recognized the Virgin Mary.

Prayer: Virgin Mary, watch over those who are threatened because of their faith. Amen.

Today: Pray a decade of the Rosary for persecuted Christians.

Day 4: A servant

For years, Mariam worked as a servant, moving from one city to another. She did the humblest tasks with love. No work is small when it is done for God. Mariam teaches us that the kitchen, the laundry and the workshop can become places of prayer.

Prayer: Lord, teach me to serve without looking for recognition. Amen.

Today: Thank someone whose work usually goes unnoticed.

Day 5: Turned away, then welcomed

Mariam was not admitted to vows in her first congregation. She did not lose heart, and the Carmel of Pau welcomed her. When one door closes, God often opens another.

Prayer: Lord, comfort those who feel rejected, and open another door for them. Amen.

Today: Welcome kindly someone who feels left out.

Day 6: Humility

"Between Jesus and the humble soul there is the thickness of the finest muslin," Mariam used to say. Pride separates us from God; humility brings us close to Him. Mariam, who received so many graces, always considered herself the least of all.

Prayer: Jesus, meek and humble of heart, make my heart like yours. Amen.

Today: Simply admit a mistake to someone.

Day 7: Letting the Spirit lead

Mariam prayed constantly to the Holy Spirit. She asked Him to inspire her and to lead her along the true road. She believed that a soul docile to the Spirit could not go astray. Her short prayer, now known around the world, is a simple way to begin each day with Him.

Prayer: Holy Spirit, inspire me, lead me, preserve me from all illusion. Amen.

Today: Before each decision of the day, call on the Holy Spirit.

Day 8: Praising God with creation

"Everyone is asleep. And God, so full of goodness, is forgotten!" Mariam cried out, wanting to wake the whole universe to praise its Creator. The stars, the trees and the birds were for her a call to praise.

Prayer: God our Creator, with the sky, the stars and the trees, I want to praise you. Amen.

Today: Take a moment to praise God before the beauty of nature.

Day 9: Bethlehem

Mariam died in Bethlehem, where her parents had come to pray for her birth, and where the Son of God became a little child. Her life came full circle in the town of the Nativity. Today pilgrims from around the world come to pray at her tomb, a few steps from the place where Christ was born.

Prayer: Lord, I place in your hands the intention of this novena. Through the intercession of Saint Mariam, give peace to the Holy Land and make me little before you. Amen.

Today: Pray for peace in the Holy Land.

Closing prayer

> *Saint Mariam, at the end of these nine days, I entrust to you the intention I have placed before you. Pray for the little ones, for orphans, for the Christians of the East and for all who seek God. Obtain for us a humble heart, docile to the Holy Spirit, so that we may walk with you along the true road. Amen.*

To go further: the life of Saint Mariam Baouardy and the prayer to the Holy Spirit of Saint Mariam.

PILGRIMAGE

Carmel of Bethlehem, Tomb of Saint Mariam

The Carmel of Bethlehem is the Carmelite monastery founded in 1875-1876 by a group of nuns from the Carmel of Pau, among them Sister Mary of Jesus Crucified, Mariam Baouardy. She followed its construction closely and died there on August 26, 1878. Her tomb is there, and pilgrims from around the world come to pray at it, a few steps from the sites of the Nativity.

A foundation born in Pau

In 1875, ten Carmelites left Pau, led by Mother Veronica of the Passion, to found a Carmel in the Holy Land. As the only one who spoke Arabic, Mariam served as an intermediary with the workmen and watched over the progress of the work. It was on this building site that she suffered the fall that would lead to her death, at thirty-two. The monastery, still inhabited by a community of Carmelites, keeps her memory alive.



The Carmel of Bethlehem.

The tomb of Saint Mariam

Mariam was first buried in the monastery she had helped to build. After her beatification in 1983 and her canonization in 2015, her tomb became a well-frequented place of prayer for Christians of the Holy Land, notably Arab Christians, and for pilgrims passing through Bethlehem. People often entrust intentions of peace, healing and family there.



The tomb of Saint Mariam at the Carmel of Bethlehem.

Praying on site

Before your visit, you can read the life of Saint Mariam Baouardy. Before her tomb, it is natural to say her prayer to the Holy Spirit: "Holy Spirit, inspire me...", and then to entrust the peace of the Holy Land. These suggestions are offered by Saintspedia. The Carmel is a cloistered monastery: visits are limited to the areas open to the public, in silence.

Other places associated with Saint Mariam

- **Ibillin** (Galilee): her native village.
- **Pau**: the Carmel she entered in 1867, where she received the name Sister Mary of Jesus Crucified.
- **Mangalore** (India): the first Carmel in India, which she helped found in 1870.

- **Bethlehem**: the Basilica of the Nativity, where her parents had come to pray for her birth.

Practical information

Bethlehem is in the West Bank, about ten kilometers south of Jerusalem; access depends on the crossing conditions in force, which should be checked before departure. The opening hours of the Carmel's chapel may vary: ask the Carmel of Bethlehem or a Holy Land pilgrimage organizer before you come.

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