

BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Mariam Thresia

Life, prayer and novena

Feast day: June 8

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IN BRIEF

Saint Mariam Thresia

Syro-Malabar religious sister from Kerala, India, foundress of the Sisters of the Holy Family in the service of the sick and of families.

Feast day	June 8
Born	April 26, 1876, Puthenchira, Kerala, India
Died	June 8, 1926, Kuzhikkattussery, Kerala, India
Canonized	October 13, 2019, by Pope Francis
Era	20th century

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Credits and sources

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LIFE

Saint Mariam Thresia

Saint Mariam Thresia (Mariam Thresia Chiramel Mankidiyan) was an Indian religious sister of the Syro-Malabar Catholic Church, born in 1876 and died in 1926 in Kerala. She served the sick, the poor and families in distress without regard to caste or religion, and founded the Congregation of the Sisters of the Holy Family. A mystic who knew deep trials, she was canonized by Pope Francis on October 13, 2019. Her feast day is June 8.

Who was Saint Mariam Thresia?

Mariam Thresia belonged to the Christians of Kerala, in southwestern India, who trace their faith back to the preaching of the apostle Saint Thomas. Their Church, known as the Syro-Malabar Church, is an Eastern Catholic Church in full communion with Rome. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Indian society was still deeply marked by caste, and it was not customary for a young woman to leave her home to work outside it. Mariam Thresia did exactly that, out of love for Christ and for the poor.

Her life joins two dimensions that can seem far apart: an intense mystical life, made of prayer, inner trials and, according to her biographers, extraordinary graces; and a very concrete commitment to the sick, to divided families and to abandoned children.

Key dates

- **April 26, 1876**: Born at Puthenchira, in the present-day district of Thrissur, Kerala.
- **c. 1888**: Death of her mother; she entrusts her life to the Virgin Mary.
- **Late nineteenth century**: With three companions, she visits the sick and the poor families of her parish.

- **1912**: At the bishop of Thrissur's request, she stays with the Carmelite sisters at Ollur.
- **May 14, 1914**: Return to Puthenchira and founding of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Holy Family.
- **June 8, 1926**: Dies at Kuzhikkattussery, aged fifty.
- **April 9, 2000**: Beatified by Pope Saint John Paul II.
- **October 13, 2019**: Canonized in Rome by Pope Francis.

A childhood turned toward God

Mariam Thresia was born into an old Christian family that had once been well off but had suffered reverses. Her mother taught her early on to love prayer, Bible stories and the lives of the saints. According to her biographers, by the age of ten she had vowed to consecrate herself to God. She was twelve when her mother died, and she then asked the Virgin Mary to be her mother.

The following years were marked by great physical and spiritual trials. Her biographers also report visions of the Holy Family, ecstasies and the stigmata. The Church, always careful, does not base holiness on such phenomena but on the heroic charity of a life. Her spiritual director, Father Joseph Vithayathil, faithfully accompanied her throughout this period.

At the bedside of the sick and of families

With three young women from her parish, Mariam Thresia set out to serve the poorest. They visited the sick in their homes, including those suffering from smallpox or leprosy whom everyone avoided; they cared for orphans and stayed with the dying. Mariam Thresia had a special concern for families: she went into homes in crisis to bring back peace and prayer.

This freedom drew criticism and even slander, because people did not understand why young women would commit themselves in this way outside their homes. She kept going, convinced that every person, whatever their caste or religion, is a child of God.

In 1912 the bishop of Thrissur, Bishop John Menachery, asked the group to withdraw to the Carmelite convent at Ollur. They obeyed. But Mariam Thresia felt that her calling was active service of the poor rather than the cloister. Father Vithayathil obtained the bishop's permission for them to return to Puthenchira.

The Sisters of the Holy Family

On May 14, 1914, the bishop formally established the Congregation of the Sisters of the Holy Family, and Mariam Thresia made her vows. The name says everything about her project: to serve families, following the example of Jesus, Mary and Joseph in Nazareth.

The sisters devoted themselves to the education of girls, care of the sick and help for the poor, without distinction of religion or social condition. Over twelve years, Mariam Thresia trained the novices and founded three new convents, two schools, two boarding houses, a study house and an orphanage. She died on June 8, 1926, at the age of fifty. Her congregation today numbers nearly two thousand sisters, in India and in other countries.

Beatification and canonization

Her cause for beatification opened in Thrissur in 1982. The miracle accepted for her beatification was the healing, unexplained by doctors, of a teenage boy born with both feet twisted (clubfoot), after prayers at her tomb. Pope John Paul II beatified her in Rome on April 9, 2000.

Pope Francis canonized her on October 13, 2019, on the same day as Saint John Henry Newman, Saint Dulce of the Poor and Saint Marguerite Bays. For the Catholics of Kerala, it was a day of great joy, a few years after the canonization of Saint Alphonsa.

Why pray to Saint Mariam Thresia for families and the sick?

Saint Mariam Thresia has no official patronage, but her life points clearly to the intentions for which people turn to her. She went into homes torn apart by conflict to restore peace, and she named her sisters after the Holy Family so that every family might rediscover the peace and love of Nazareth. She also cared for the sick no one else would touch. For this reason, Catholics invoke her for families in difficulty, for the sick and for those who care for them.

Her witness also speaks to a world still divided by social barriers. She crossed the lines of caste and religion to serve each person as a child of God, and she reminds us that Christian mysticism does not shut itself away: the more closely she was united to the suffering Christ, the more she went toward those who suffer.

Symbols and how to recognize Saint Mariam Thresia in art

Saint Mariam Thresia is usually shown in the habit of her congregation, often with hands joined in prayer. Some statues show her kneeling before a crucifix, recalling her deep union with the suffering Christ. Devotional images often associate her with the Holy Family, whose name her sisters bear.

Where to pray to Saint Mariam Thresia

- **Kuzhikkattussery** (Kerala, India): her tomb, a place of pilgrimage.
- **Puthenchira** (Kerala): her home village, where her congregation was founded.

- **Everywhere**: in the communities of the Sisters of the Holy Family, in India and abroad.

To pray with her, you can use the prayer to Saint Mariam Thresia or the novena to Saint Mariam Thresia.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Mariam Thresia for Families and the Sick

There is no widely known traditional prayer to Saint Mariam Thresia, who was canonized in 2019. Below is an original prayer inspired by her life of service to the sick and to families, and by her trust in the Holy Family, which she gave as a model to her congregation.

A saint for families

Mariam Thresia went into homes where people were suffering: to the contagious sick whom others abandoned, to the dying, to orphans, and also to households torn apart by quarrels. She brought care, food and prayer. She wanted her sisters to bear the name of the Holy Family, so that every family might find again, like the home of Nazareth, peace and love.

Prayer to Saint Mariam Thresia

Saint Mariam Thresia, you loved Jesus crucified so much that you shared in his sufferings: teach me to stay close to him in my own trials.

You went to the sick whom everyone avoided: give me a heart without fear or disgust before the suffering of others.

You crossed the barriers of caste and religion: help me to see in every person a child of God.

I entrust to you families that are divided, wounded or worn out, and especially my own. Through the intercession of Jesus, Mary and Joseph, obtain for them peace, forgiveness and the joy of praying together. I also entrust to you my intention: (name it in silence).

Saint Mariam Thresia, pray for us. Amen.

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

When to pray this prayer

Saint Mariam Thresia's feast day is June 8, the day of her death in 1926. You can pray to her:

- for a family going through conflict, separation or grief;
- for someone who is sick, especially a person who feels isolated;
- for caregivers, nurses and those who watch over a loved one;
- on the feast of the Holy Family, in the days after Christmas.

To pray with her over several days, follow the novena to Saint Mariam Thresia. To get to know her better, read the life of Saint Mariam Thresia.

A short prayer to the Holy Family

Mariam Thresia placed her whole work under the protection of Jesus, Mary and Joseph. You can end your prayer with this simple invocation, an original text by Saintspedia in her spirit:

> *Jesus, Mary and Joseph, holy family of Nazareth, make our homes places of peace, prayer and welcome. Watch over the sick, the lonely and the children without a family. Amen.*

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Mariam Thresia

This novena is an original composition by Saintspedia, inspired by the life of Saint Mariam Thresia, the Syro-Malabar sister from Kerala who founded the Sisters of the Holy Family. It is not an official liturgical text. To finish it on her feast day, June 8, begin it on May 31. It can also be prayed at any time of the year, especially for a family in difficulty or for someone who is sick.

How to pray this novena

Each day, place your intention before God, read the short meditation, then say the prayer of the day followed by an Our Father, a Hail Mary and a Glory Be. The small act suggested for the day helps you live in Mariam Thresia's spirit of prayer and concrete charity. You can pray it alone, as a couple, as a family or with a parish group.

Day 1: Faith received at home

Mariam Thresia learned to pray from her mother, who told her the stories of the Bible and the lives of the saints. Faith is often passed on quietly, at home, through simple words and habits. Today we give thanks for those who first taught us to pray, and we ask for the grace to pass faith on in our turn.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for the people who taught me to know you. Make my home a place where faith is lived and shared.

Today: Pray for the person who first taught you to pray, living or dead.

Day 2: Mary as mother

When her mother died, the twelve-year-old Mariam Thresia asked the Virgin Mary to be her mother. In grief, she did not close in on herself but turned toward the Mother of Jesus. We entrust to Mary all those who have lost a parent, and all children who feel alone.

Prayer: Holy Mary, Mother of God, be a mother to all who mourn and to every child who lacks love.

Today: Pray a decade of the Rosary for orphans and grieving children.

Day 3: Faithful in the night

Mariam Thresia went through long physical and spiritual trials. She was not spared darkness, but she remained faithful, helped by her spiritual director. We pray for those who feel abandoned by God and for those who accompany others on the road of faith.

Prayer: Lord, when I do not feel your presence, keep me faithful. Give me wise and patient guides.

Today: Thank God for someone who has helped you in your spiritual life, and tell them if you can.

Day 4: Going toward the sick

With her companions, Mariam Thresia visited the sick in their homes, even those with smallpox or leprosy whom everyone avoided. She saw Christ in them. We pray for all who are sick, especially those who are isolated or feared.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, you touched the lepers. Give me a heart that does not turn away from those who suffer.

Today: Visit, call or write to someone who is sick or housebound.

Day 5: Peace in the home

Mariam Thresia went into families in crisis to bring back peace and prayer. She knew that many wounds are received at home, and that healing can also begin there. We place before God our own family, with its tensions and its hopes.

Prayer: Lord, bring peace where there is conflict in my family. Give us the grace to forgive and to begin again.

Today: Take one step toward reconciliation: a kind word, an apology, a call.

Day 6: Beyond every barrier

In a society divided by caste, Mariam Thresia served everyone without distinction of caste or religion. For her, every person was a child of God. We ask for the grace to recognize the dignity of those whom society keeps at a distance.

Prayer: Father of all, open my eyes to the dignity of every person, especially those I tend to overlook.

Today: Greet with real attention someone you usually pass by without seeing.

Day 7: Obedience and trust

When the bishop asked her to withdraw to the Carmel of Ollur, Mariam Thresia obeyed, even though she felt called to active service. In time, the way opened for her return to Puthenchira. We pray for the grace to trust God when our plans are put on hold.

Prayer: Lord, when my path seems blocked, teach me patience and trust. Your timing is better than mine.

Today: Offer to God a situation you cannot control, and let it rest in his hands.

Day 8: The Holy Family as a model

Mariam Thresia named her congregation after the Holy Family. In Jesus, Mary and Joseph she saw the model of every home: work, prayer, love and care for one another. We pray for families, for the Sisters of the Holy Family and for all who serve families.

Prayer: Jesus, Mary and Joseph, make our homes like your home in Nazareth, full of prayer and love.

Today: Pray together as a family, even briefly, or pray for a family you know is struggling.

Day 9: A life given to the end

Mariam Thresia died on June 8, 1926, at the age of fifty, after spending her strength for the sick, the poor and her sisters. Her congregation continues her work today. On this last day, we ask her to present all our intentions to God and to help us give our lives as she did.

Prayer: Lord, through the intercession of Saint Mariam Thresia, make my life a gift for others, until the end.

Today: Choose one concrete way to serve a sick person or a family in need in the coming weeks.

Closing prayer

Saint Mariam Thresia, faithful friend of the crucified Jesus and servant of the sick, you brought peace into troubled homes and crossed every barrier to love your neighbor. Look upon our families and upon all who suffer. Present to the Lord the intention we have carried during these nine days, and help us to live as true members of God's family. Jesus, Mary and Joseph, bless our homes. Saint Mariam Thresia, pray for us. Amen.

For a shorter prayer, see the prayer to Saint Mariam Thresia, and read her full life story.

Credits and sources

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