

BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Marko Krizin

Life, prayer and novena

Feast day: September 7

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IN BRIEF

Saint Marko Krizin

Croatian priest and canon of Esztergom, martyred in Košice in 1619.

Feast day	September 7
Born	c. 1589, Križevci, Croatia
Died	September 7, 1619, Košice, Slovakia
Canonized	July 2, 1995, by Pope John Paul II
Era	17th century

In this booklet

Life

Prayer to Saint Marko Krizin, Martyr of Košice

Novena to Saint Marko Krizin

Credits and sources

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LIFE

Saint Marko Krizin

Saint Marko Krizin (in Croatian, Marko Križevčanin, "Mark of Križevci") was a Croatian priest, teacher and canon of Esztergom who was put to death in Košice, in present-day Slovakia, on September 7, 1619. Arrested with two Jesuits when Calvinist troops from Transylvania took the city, he refused to renounce his faith in exchange for a Church estate. With his companions he forms the group known as the Martyrs of Košice, canonized by Pope John Paul II in 1995. The three are celebrated together on September 7.

Who was Saint Marko Krizin?

Marko was born around 1589 in Križevci, in northern Croatia, which is where his Croatian name comes from. He first studied at the Jesuit college in Vienna, then at the University of Graz, where he later taught philosophy. After a period in the service of the Diocese of Zagreb, he went to Rome. From 1611 to 1615 he studied at the German-Hungarian College (Collegium Germanicum et Hungaricum), which trained priests for the countries of Central Europe.

His teachers there noted his attentiveness and his intelligence. He himself recorded his Croatian nationality in a document still kept in the college archives. He was ordained a priest at the end of his Roman studies.



Saint Marko Krizin (Marko Križevčanin).

Key dates

- **c. 1589**: Born in Križevci, Croatia.
- **1600s**: Studies in Vienna and Graz, where he teaches philosophy.
- **1611-1615**: Studies at the German-Hungarian College in Rome, then ordination.
- **After 1615**: Rector of the seminary and canon of Esztergom, called by Cardinal Péter Pázmány.
- **Early 1619**: Put in charge of the estates of the former abbey of Széplak, near Košice.
- **September 5, 1619**: Gabriel Bethlen's troops take Košice; arrest of the three priests.
- **September 7, 1619**: Tortured, then beheaded with Melchior Grodziecki.
- **January 15, 1905**: Beatified in Rome by Pope Pius X.

- **July 2, 1995**: Canonized in Košice by Pope John Paul II.

A priest serving a Church under strain

At the beginning of the seventeenth century, the Kingdom of Hungary was split in three. A large part was occupied by the Ottoman Empire, the west remained under the Habsburgs, and the Principality of Transylvania, to the east, was ruled by Calvinist princes. In this setting Cardinal Péter Pázmány, archbishop of Esztergom and a great figure of Catholic renewal in Hungary, was looking for well-trained priests. He called Marko Krizin, made him rector of his seminary and a canon of his cathedral chapter.

In early 1619, the cardinal also entrusted him with managing the lands of the former Benedictine abbey of Széplak, near Košice. The city, then called Kassa, was a Calvinist stronghold with a small Catholic minority. To support those Catholics, the imperial governor had brought in two Jesuits, Stephen Pongrácz and Melchior Grodziecki. Marko shared their house, next to the chapel where they celebrated Mass for the Catholics of the city.

The martyrdom of Košice

In the summer of 1619, Gabriel Bethlen, Prince of Transylvania, rose up against the Habsburgs. On September 5 his general, George Rákóczi, entered Košice. The governor was handed over and the city passed to the insurgents. The three priests were arrested at once and left for three days without food or water.

A Calvinist pastor and the head of the town council demanded the death of the city's Catholics. Most of the inhabitants opposed a massacre, but the sentence against the priests was upheld. Marko was then offered a Church property if he would become a Calvinist. He refused.

The three men were tortured at length. On September 7, 1619, Marko Krizin and Melchior Grodziecki were beheaded. Stephen Pongrácz survived his wounds for about twenty more hours and died the next day. Their death caused horror throughout Hungary, among Protestants as well as Catholics. Bethlen at first refused to let them be buried. Only six months later did a Catholic noblewoman, Countess Katalin Pálffy, obtain permission to give them a proper burial.



Saint Elizabeth Cathedral in Košice, which keeps relics of the martyrs.

Three priests, three nations

The Martyrs of Košice were a Croat, Marko Krizin; a Hungarian, Stephen Pongrácz; and a Pole, Melchior Grodziecki. The group thus brings together peoples of Central Europe who each honor them. They were beatified in

Rome by Pope Pius X on January 15, 1905. Pope John Paul II canonized them in Košice itself on July 2, 1995, during his visit to Slovakia. Their relics are now shared among several churches in Slovakia and Hungary.

What can we ask Saint Marko Krizin for?

Saint Marko Krizin has no official patronage, but his life points to clear intentions. As a former seminary rector and teacher, he is a natural intercessor for priests and seminarians. As a son of Križevci, he is dear to the Croatian people. And because he died amid the wars of religion, killed by fellow Christians, he can be asked to pray for reconciliation between Catholics and Protestants.

Symbols and how to recognize Saint Marko Krizin in art

Marko is usually shown as a priest of the early seventeenth century, holding the palm of martyrdom, the traditional sign of those who died for Christ. He frequently appears together with his two Jesuit companions, the three standing or kneeling side by side. In Croatia, statues and paintings show him alone, as in the cathedral of Varaždin and in his hometown of Križevci.



Statue of Saint Marko Krizin in Varaždin Cathedral.

What his holiness teaches

Marko Krizin was a scholar and an administrator, not an adventurer. His faithfulness came down to a simple and radical choice: refusing a material advantage at the price of his faith. His death, in the middle of the wars of religion, also reminds us how deeply violence among Christians wounded Europe. Today, when Catholics and Protestants pray together, his witness takes on a new meaning: fidelity to one's conscience and respect for the conscience of others.

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

Where to pray to Saint Marko Krizin

- **Košice** (Slovakia): Saint Elizabeth Cathedral and the Church of the Holy Trinity keep relics of the martyrs.
- **Esztergom** (Hungary): the basilica, seat of the archdiocese he served.
- **Trnava** (Slovakia): the Church of Saint Anne, which also keeps relics.
- **Križevci** (Croatia): his hometown, where a week of celebrations honors him each year around September 7.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Marko Krizin, Martyr of Košice

Saint Marko Krizin left no spiritual writings known to the wider public, and there is no widely used traditional prayer in his honor outside the liturgy of his feast. Saintspedia therefore offers an original prayer, inspired by his life as a priest and teacher and by his martyrdom in Košice in 1619.



The holy Martyrs of Košice.

Prayer to Saint Marko Krizin for faithfulness

Saint Marko Krizin, you studied and taught in order to serve the Church better. Help me to place my mind and my work at the service of God and of others.

You were offered property in exchange for your faith, and you refused. Grant that I may never sell my faithfulness to Christ for an advantage, a comfort or the approval of others.

You shared prison and death with two brothers who came from other nations. Teach me to recognize brothers and sisters in Christians of every people and language.

You died in the midst of wars between Christians. Pray for reconciliation between Catholics and Protestants, and that faith may never again be used as an excuse for violence.

I entrust to you priests and seminarians, your homeland of Croatia, 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 Marko Krizin is celebrated on September 7, the day of his martyrdom in 1619, together with his companions Saint Stephen Pongrácz and Saint Melchior Grodziecki. In Križevci, his hometown, a week of celebrations honors him every year around that date.

This prayer is also fitting:

- for a priest or a seminarian, especially at an ordination or the start of a school year;

- when you are tempted to compromise your faith for convenience or career;
- during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (January 18-25);
- for Croatia, Slovakia and Hungary, and for Christians of Central Europe.

A short invocation

> *Holy Martyrs of Košice, Marko, Stephen and Melchior, faithful unto death, pray for us and for the unity of Christians.*

To learn more about him, read the life of Saint Marko Krizin, or pray the novena to Saint Marko Krizin.

Novena to Saint Marko Krizin

This novena is an original composition by Saintspedia, inspired by the life and martyrdom of Saint Marko Krizin. It is not an official liturgical text. To end it on his feast day, September 7, begin on August 30. It can also be prayed at any time of year, for a priest or a seminarian, for someone facing pressure to give up their convictions, or for unity among Christians.

Marko Krizin was a Croatian priest, a teacher and a canon of Esztergom. In September 1619, in the city of Košice, he was arrested with two Jesuits, starved, tortured and offered a Church estate if he would change his faith. He refused and was beheaded on September 7. These nine days follow the path of his life, from his studies to his death.

His story is not only a memory of old conflicts. Many people today face quieter pressures to set their faith aside: at work, at school, in public life or within their own families. Marko reminds us that faithfulness is decided in concrete choices, and that it can go hand in hand with respect for those who believe differently. You may wish to pray this novena with a particular person in mind who needs that courage.

How to pray this novena

Each day, place your intention before God, read the meditation, say the prayer of the day, then an Our Father, a Hail Mary and a Glory Be. The suggested act helps you carry the prayer into your day. If you miss a day, simply continue: a novena is a path of trust, not a performance.

Day 1: A child of Križevci

Marko was born around 1589 in a small town in northern Croatia, and he carried its name all his life. Faith is received in a family, a parish and a people.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for the place where I was born and for those who first taught me your name.

Today: Pray for your hometown and for its parish.

Day 2: The love of learning

Marko studied in Vienna, in Graz and in Rome, and taught philosophy. His intelligence was a gift he placed at the service of God.

Prayer: Lord, give me a mind that seeks the truth and a heart that loves it.

Today: Spend fifteen minutes reading something that helps you understand your faith better.

Day 3: A priest for others

After his ordination, Marko trained future priests as rector of the seminary of Esztergom. He gave his time to forming others.

Prayer: Lord, bless the priests of my parish and those preparing for the priesthood. Keep them faithful and joyful.

Today: Thank a priest for his ministry, in person or with a short note.

Day 4: Serving in ordinary tasks

In 1619 Marko was sent to manage the lands of an old abbey. It was administrative work, far from any glory. Holiness grows in the tasks we are given.

Prayer: Lord, help me to do my daily work well, as an offering to you.

Today: Do one task you have been putting off, carefully and without complaint.

Day 5: Living with brothers

In Košice, Marko shared a house with two Jesuits, a Hungarian and a Pole. Three men from three nations lived as brothers in Christ.

Prayer: Lord, make me a brother or sister to those who are different from me.

Today: Reach out to someone from another country or culture in your community.

Day 6: In the hour of fear

When the city fell, the three priests were arrested and left for three days without food or water. They faced hunger and fear together, in prayer.

Prayer: Lord, when I am afraid, stay with me and give me your strength.

Today: Pray for prisoners and for those who suffer for their faith.

Day 7: Refusing the bargain

Marko was offered a Church property if he became a Calvinist. He said no. Some offers are tempting because they look reasonable.

Prayer: Lord, give me the courage never to trade my faithfulness for comfort or approval.

Today: Identify one small compromise in your life and make one step to correct it.

Day 8: Faithful unto death

On September 7, 1619, after torture, Marko and Melchior were beheaded. Stephen died the next day. They gave their lives with Christ, who gave his life for all.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, you were faithful to the end. Unite my sufferings to yours.

Today: Offer a difficulty of this day for persecuted Christians.

Day 9: Seeds of reconciliation

The death of the three priests horrified both Catholics and Protestants. Today Christians of different traditions pray together and seek unity. The blood of the martyrs calls us to peace.

Prayer: Lord, heal the wounds that divide your disciples, and make us one in you.

Today: Pray the Our Father for Christian unity, or speak kindly with a Christian of another tradition.

Closing prayer

Saint Marko Krizin, priest, teacher and martyr, you chose Christ over every advantage this world could offer. With Saint Stephen Pongrácz and Saint Melchior Grodziecki, pray for us. Obtain for priests and seminarians a faithful heart, for Croatia and all of Central Europe a living faith, and for all Christians the grace of reconciliation. Present to the Lord the intention of this novena, and help us to accept his will with trust. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

To learn more, read the life of Saint Marko Krizin and the prayer to Saint Marko Krizin.

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