BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Nicarete

Life, prayer and novena

Feast day: December 27

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IN BRIEF

Saint Nicarete

Virgin of Nicomedia, spiritual daughter of Saint John Chrysostom, who cared for the sick poor in Constantinople.

Feast day	December 27
Born	second half of the 4th century, Nicomedia (Bithynia, today İzmit in Turkey)
Died	5th century (around 440 according to some sources), Constantinople
Canonized	immemorial cult, listed in the Roman Martyrology
Era	5th century
Patron saint of	people suffering from stomach ailments

In this booklet

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Credits and sources

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LIFE

Saint Nicarete

Saint Nicarete was a Christian virgin of the late 4th and early 5th centuries. Born at Nicomedia, in Asia Minor, into a rich and noble family, she lived in Constantinople, where she was one of the faithful close to Saint John Chrysostom. She devoted her life to prayer and to caring for the sick poor. Her feast day is December 27.

Who was Saint Nicarete?

Nicarete (the form Niceras is also found) belongs to the circle of Christian women who surrounded John Chrysostom when he was bishop of Constantinople, like Saint Olympias. What we know of her comes mainly from the historian Sozomen, who wrote in the 5th century, and from the hagiographical dictionaries that take up his testimony. The information is therefore scanty. Yet it draws a clear portrait: that of a humble, discreet and active woman who placed her knowledge and her goods at the service of the poorest. Her Greek name means "victorious virtue".

Key dates in the life of Nicarete

- **Second half of the 4th century**: Born at Nicomedia, in Bithynia, into a rich and distinguished family.
- **Youth**: She makes a vow of virginity and chooses a life consecrated to God.
- **Late 4th century**: Settled in Constantinople, she becomes a spiritual daughter of Saint John Chrysostom, bishop of the city from 398.
- **398 to 404**: According to Sozomen, John Chrysostom wishes to ordain her a deaconess; she refuses out of humility.
- **404**: The exile of John Chrysostom opens a period of persecution for his supporters in Constantinople.

- **5th century**: Dies in Constantinople; the exact date is unknown, some sources place it around 440.

A virgin in the service of the poor

Nicarete could have led the comfortable life of a woman of high society. Instead she chose to consecrate herself to God in virginity. According to Sozomen, she bore without complaint the loss of a large part of her property, of which she had been unjustly stripped, and wisely managed what remained to support her household and help others.

Her charity took a very concrete form. She learned medicine and the preparation of herbal remedies, in order to treat the sick poor of the city free of charge. Tradition reports that she healed John Chrysostom himself of a stomach ailment: this is why she is invoked against such pains. She thus joins the long line of healing saints, like the "unmercenary" physicians who treated the sick without payment.

The humility of Nicarete

The most striking feature of her life, reported by Sozomen, is her refusal of honors. John Chrysostom, who held her in high esteem, wished to entrust her with the office of deaconess and the leadership of the consecrated virgins of Constantinople. Nicarete declined: she preferred to remain hidden, in a life of prayer and service. This refusal was not a lack of zeal, but a way of serving where she knew she was called.

After the exile of John Chrysostom in 404, his faithful suffered persecution in Constantinople. The sources suggest that Nicarete was among those who remained attached to their bishop. The circumstances of her death are unknown.

Devotion

Saint Nicarete is honored by the Catholic Church and by the Orthodox Churches. The Roman Martyrology commemorates her on December 27. Her cult has remained discreet, like her life. Hagiographical dictionaries present her as a figure of charity and humility, invoked against stomach ailments.

What can we learn from Saint Nicarete?

Nicarete shows that one can serve the Church without title or office. She put her intelligence at the service of the sick and preferred the last place to honors. She can be invoked by caregivers, pharmacists, the sick, and all who seek to do good quietly.

Where to pray to Saint Nicarete

- **In your parish**: no known shrine keeps her relics today; you can pray to her anywhere, especially at the bedside of someone who is ill.
- **Istanbul** (Turkey): the former Constantinople, where she lived and served the poor.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Nicarete for the Sick and Caregivers

Saint Nicarete, a virgin of Nicomedia and spiritual daughter of Saint John Chrysostom in Constantinople, treated the sick poor free of charge and refused honors out of humility. Prayer composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. It entrusts to her the sick, caregivers, and those who wish to serve quietly.

Prayer to Saint Nicarete

Saint Nicarete,
you who gave your life to God
and your knowledge to the sick poor,
teach me to serve with a simple heart
those who suffer near me.

You refused honors
to remain hidden in prayer and service.
Free me from pride and the desire to be seen,
and give me the joy of the last place.

Watch over the sick and those who care for them,
over doctors, nurses and pharmacists.
Obtain for us patience in trial
and faithfulness to the Church.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

When to pray to Saint Nicarete

- On her feast day, December 27.
- For someone who is ill, especially with stomach ailments.
- For caregivers and those who prepare medicines.
- When you are tempted to seek honors.
- After an unjust loss, to keep peace of heart.

A prayer for the sick

> *Lord, physician of bodies and souls,*
> *relieve those who suffer and bless those who care for them.*
> *Saint Nicarete, pray for us. Amen.*

To prepare for her feast, you can pray the novena to Saint Nicarete from December 19 to 27, and read the life of Saint Nicarete.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Nicarete

This novena walks with Saint Nicarete, a virgin of Nicomedia, spiritual daughter of Saint John Chrysostom and servant of the sick poor in Constantinople. Novena composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. To finish it on her feast day, December 27, begin on December 19: it thus passes through the feast of Christmas. You can also pray it at any other time.

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 Nicarete, pray for us." The features recalled come mainly from the historian Sozomen.

Day 1: A victorious virtue

The name Nicarete means "victorious virtue". Her true victory was that of humble love over pride.

Prayer: Lord, grant me to overcome evil with good, by your grace.

Act of the day: Answer a hurtful word with gentleness.

Day 2: Giving everything to God

Born into a rich family, Nicarete chose consecrated virginity. She gave God her youth and her life.

Prayer: Lord, bless consecrated persons, and raise up vocations in your Church.

Act of the day: Pray for a religious sister or consecrated person you know.

Day 3: Bearing injustice

According to Sozomen, she unjustly lost a large part of her property, and bore it without bitterness.

Prayer: Lord, when I suffer injustice, keep my heart from resentment and give me your peace.

Act of the day: Forgive in your heart someone who has wronged you.

Day 4: Learning in order to serve

Nicarete learned medicine and the art of remedies to care for the poor. Her intelligence became a service.

Prayer: Lord, may my talents serve others, and not my own glory.

Act of the day: Put one of your skills at someone's service, free of charge.

Day 5: At the bedside of the sick

She treated the sick poor of Constantinople free of charge. In each of them, she served Christ.

Prayer: Jesus, you who healed the sick, relieve those who suffer and bless those who care for them.

Act of the day: Visit or call someone who is ill.

Day 6: A spiritual daughter

Nicarete let herself be guided by John Chrysostom. She listened to his preaching and put it into practice.

Prayer: Lord, bless our bishops and priests, and give us hearts open to your word.

Act of the day: Read again the Sunday homily or a passage of the Gospel.

Day 7: Refusing honors

John Chrysostom wanted to make her a deaconess. She refused out of humility, preferring to remain hidden.

Prayer: Lord, gentle and humble of heart, make my heart like yours.

Act of the day: Do a good deed without anyone knowing.

Day 8: Faithful in the storm

After John Chrysostom's exile, his faithful were persecuted. Nicarete remained attached to her bishop.

Prayer: Lord, keep your Church in unity and help me to remain faithful to it in trials.

Act of the day: Pray for Christians who are persecuted today.

Day 9: The joy of Christmas

Her feast follows closely on Christmas. The God who made himself small at Bethlehem lights up the life of the one who chose littleness.

Prayer: Child Jesus, teach me humility. Through the intercession of Saint Nicarete, grant me the grace I ask in this novena, if it is your will.

Act of the day: Pray before the crib and attend Mass.

Closing prayer

Saint Nicarete,
humble servant of the sick poor,
you preferred the last place to honors.
Present to the Lord the intention I have entrusted to you.
Watch over the sick and those who care for them,
and keep me in the peace of Christ.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

You can also pray the prayer to Saint Nicarete and read the life of Saint Nicarete.

Credits and sources

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