BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Nilammon

Life, prayer and novena

Feast day: June 6

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IN BRIEF

Saint Nilammon

Egyptian hermit near Pelusium, died around 404 after refusing the office of bishop.

Feast day	June 6
Born	4th century, Egypt (place unknown)
Died	c. 404, near Pelusium (Egypt)
Canonized	immemorial cult
Era	5th century

In this booklet

Life

Prayer to Saint Nilammon for Humility

Novena to Saint Nilammon

Credits and sources

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LIFE

Saint Nilammon

Saint Nilammon was an Egyptian hermit of the late 4th and early 5th centuries who lived near Pelusium, at the eastern edge of the Nile Delta. Chosen to become bishop of Gerae, he refused out of humility and died in prayer around 404, according to the account of ancient historians. His feast day is June 6, and his statue stands on the colonnade of Saint Peter's Square in Rome.

Who was Saint Nilammon?

Nilammon belongs to the great generation of Egyptian monks who, following Saint Anthony and Saint Pachomius, filled the deserts in the 4th and 5th centuries. We know very little about his life. His memory rests mainly on a single episode, reported by the Greek historian Sozomen, who wrote around the middle of the 5th century: the way he refused to become a bishop. This short and striking account was enough to make him a model of humility for the whole Church. He is venerated as a saint by the Catholic Church and by the Orthodox Churches.

Key dates in the life of Nilammon

- **Second half of the 4th century**: He lives as a hermit near Pelusium, in Lower Egypt.
- **Late 4th century**: His reputation for holiness spreads to the neighboring towns.
- **c. 404**: According to Sozomen, he is designated bishop of Gerae by the bishop of Alexandria.
- **Shortly after**: He refuses, shuts himself in his cell and asks for time to pray.
- **c. 404**: He dies in prayer, before being ordained.
- **Mid-5th century**: Sozomen records his story in his *Ecclesiastical History*.

- **Second half of the 17th century**: His statue is placed on Bernini's colonnade, Saint Peter's Square.

A hermit near Pelusium

Pelusium was an important city at the eastern end of the Nile Delta, on the road that led from Egypt toward Palestine. Its surroundings had many monks and hermits. Nilammon lived there in a cell, withdrawn from the world, in prayer and fasting. The sources say neither where he was born nor when he began this life. They only suggest that his holiness was known to the people of the region, so much so that they thought of him to lead a Church.

Refusing the office of bishop

According to Sozomen, the bishop of Alexandria wanted to make Nilammon bishop of Gerae, a small neighboring town. The monk refused, for he did not consider himself worthy of this office and feared losing the peace of his hidden life. They insisted. Nilammon shut himself in his cell and asked to be given time to pray. While the faithful waited outside and begged him to accept, he prayed, and he died in his prayer. Those who opened the cell found him lifeless.

This account should not be read as contempt for the office of bishop. In the early Church, many saints fled the episcopate, fearing they were unworthy of it: some eventually accepted, others did not. For the Christians of his time, Nilammon's death was understood as God's answer to the prayer of a humble man.

Devotion and art

Saint Nilammon is celebrated on June 6. His name has come down through the centuries thanks to the church historians, and then to collections of saints' lives. In Rome, he is among the roughly one hundred and forty statues of

saints that crown Bernini's colonnade in Saint Peter's Square: a humble hermit of Egypt thus keeps watch over one of the most visited squares in the world. No relics or shrine particularly dedicated to him are known.

What can we learn from Saint Nilammon?

Nilammon reminds us that greatness, in God's eyes, is not measured by titles. He did not seek honors, and he preferred to place his life in God's hands rather than accept an office he dreaded. You can pray to him to learn humility, for those who must take on a responsibility, and for bishops, so that they may exercise their office as a service.

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

Where to pray to Saint Nilammon

- **Saint Peter's Square** (Rome, Vatican): his statue on Bernini's colonnade.
- **Any church or chapel**: no shrine is specially dedicated to him; you can pray to him anywhere, in silence.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Nilammon for Humility

Saint Nilammon, a hermit of Egypt near Pelusium, refused out of humility to become a bishop and died in prayer around 404. Prayer composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. It asks him for humility and peace of heart, and entrusts to him those who receive a responsibility.

Prayer to Saint Nilammon

Saint Nilammon,
humble hermit of the Egyptian desert,
you did not seek honors
and you placed your life in God's hands.
Teach me humility of heart
and trust in prayer.

When I must make a difficult decision,
help me to turn first to the Lord.
Watch over bishops and pastors,
that they may serve without seeking their own glory,
and over all who receive an office.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

When to pray to Saint Nilammon

- On his feast day, June 6.
- When you are tempted by pride or the pursuit of honors.
- Before accepting an important responsibility.

- For bishops, and when a diocese is awaiting a new bishop.
- For hermits and contemplatives.

To prepare for his feast, you can pray the novena to Saint Nilammon from May 29 to June 6, and read the life of Saint Nilammon.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Nilammon

This novena is inspired by the life of Saint Nilammon, an Egyptian hermit who refused the office of bishop and died in prayer around 404. Novena composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. To finish it on his feast day, June 6, begin on May 29. Since his life is very little known, the meditations focus on the heart of his witness.

How to pray this novena

Each day, make 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 Nilammon, pray for us."

Day 1: In the desert

Nilammon chose to live withdrawn, near Pelusium. The desert is the place where we learn to listen to God.

Prayer: Lord, awaken in me a desire for silence so that I may hear you.

Act of the day: Turn off screens for a quarter of an hour to pray.

Day 2: Constant prayer

In his cell, the hermit prayed day and night. His whole life was turned toward God.

Prayer: Lord, teach me to pray without losing heart.

Act of the day: Say a short prayer every hour of the day.

Day 3: A reputation not sought

Without wanting it, Nilammon became known for his holiness. Goodness shows, even when it hides.

Prayer: Lord, may I do good for you alone, and not to be seen.

Act of the day: Do someone a service in secret.

Day 4: Called to an office

People wanted to make him a bishop. Responsibilities sometimes come without our asking for them.

Prayer: Lord, enlighten those who must accept a responsibility.

Act of the day: Pray for someone who has just received a new responsibility.

Day 5: Knowing oneself small

Nilammon refused, for he did not consider himself worthy. Humility is the truth about oneself before God.

Prayer: Lord, let me see myself as you see me.

Act of the day: Simply admit a mistake to someone.

Day 6: Asking for time to pray

Pressed on all sides, he asked for time to pray. Great decisions are made before God.

Prayer: Lord, teach me to decide nothing without consulting you.

Act of the day: Entrust to God, in writing, a decision you have to make.

Day 7: For bishops

Nilammon's refusal recalls the greatness and the weight of a bishop's office. The Church needs humble shepherds.

Prayer: Lord, give your Church bishops after your own heart, and support them in their mission.

Act of the day: Pray for the pope and for your bishop.

Day 8: Surrender

In his cell, Nilammon placed everything in God's hands. He did not try to impose his own will.

Prayer: Lord, I place my life and my plans in your hands.

Act of the day: Slowly say: "Your will be done."

Day 9: Dying in prayer

According to the ancient account, he died while praying. His last word was a prayer.

Prayer: Lord, grant me a peaceful death in your grace. Through the intercession of Saint Nilammon, grant me the grace I ask in this novena, if it is your will.

Act of the day: Pray for those who will die today.

Closing prayer

Saint Nilammon,
humble hermit who fled honors,
present to the Lord the intention I have entrusted to you,
and obtain for me a gentle and humble heart.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

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

Credits and sources

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