

BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Pantaenus

Life, prayer and novena

Feast day: July 7

IN BRIEF

Saint Pantaenus

Converted philosopher, first known teacher of the Christian school of Alexandria and missionary to the East at the end of the second century.

Feast day	July 7
Died	Alexandria, Egypt
Era	3rd century

In this booklet

Life

Prayer to Saint Pantaenus for Teachers and Seekers of Truth

Novena to Saint Pantaenus

Credits and sources

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LIFE

Saint Pantaenus

Saint Pantaenus was a Christian theologian of the late second century. A Stoic philosopher who converted to Christianity, he is the first known teacher of the Christian school of Alexandria, the Catechetical School (Didascaleion), where his pupils included Clement of Alexandria. According to an early tradition, he also went to preach the Gospel as far as India. He died at the beginning of the third century, and his feast day is July 7.

Who was Saint Pantaenus?

We know little about Pantaenus, but what we know is very old. Our information comes mainly from the historian Eusebius of Caesarea, writing at the beginning of the fourth century, and from a few allusions by his students. Tradition says he came from Sicily.

Clement of Alexandria, recalling the last and greatest of his teachers, compares him to a "Sicilian bee" gathering nectar from the flowers of the prophets and the apostles. Scholars generally see in this image an allusion to Pantaenus. Clement had traveled widely in search of a master, and he says that once he found this one, he stopped searching.

Before becoming a Christian, Pantaenus was a philosopher trained in the Stoic school. His conversion did not lead him to reject philosophy. Instead, he made it a tool for understanding and handing on the faith. This trait would mark the whole tradition of Alexandria for centuries.

Key dates

- **Second century**: Born, perhaps in Sicily; trained as a Stoic philosopher.
- **Date unknown**: Converts to Christianity.

- **Date unknown**: According to Eusebius, a missionary journey to the East and to India, before he leads the school.
- **c. 180-190**: Heads the Christian school of Alexandria, under the emperor Commodus.
- **Early third century**: Dies in Alexandria; his trace is lost after this time.

The teacher of the Catechetical School

Alexandria was then the great intellectual capital of the Greek world, with its famous library and its schools of philosophy. Christians there founded a school that taught the faith to catechumens, but also the Scriptures and philosophical reflection. According to Eusebius, Pantaenus led it, "expounding orally and in writing the treasures of divine doctrine." None of his writings has come down to us.

He taught under the emperor Commodus, around 180-190. At that time the Church of Alexandria was growing in a city where Greek philosophers, Jewish scholars and many religious movements lived side by side. A Christian teacher had to be able to answer educated pagans in their own language.



Saint Pantaenus, engraving by Michael Burghers.

His influence passed through his disciples. Clement of Alexandria succeeded him at the head of the school, and Bishop Alexander of Jerusalem names him as one of his teachers. Through them, Pantaenus stands at the origin of a tradition that in the following century produced the great Origen: a theology that dared to enter into dialogue with Greek culture.

A missionary as far as India?

Eusebius reports, taking care to say "it is said," that Pantaenus went to preach the Gospel in the East, as far as "India." There he is said to have found Christians who already possessed the Gospel of Saint Matthew in Hebrew letters, left to them by the apostle Saint Bartholomew.

Saint Jerome, writing at the end of the fourth century in his book *On Illustrious Men*, repeats the story and adds that Pantaenus brought this Gospel back with him to Alexandria. The detail is not confirmed by other sources, but

it shows how much the memory of this teacher-missionary still mattered two centuries after his death.

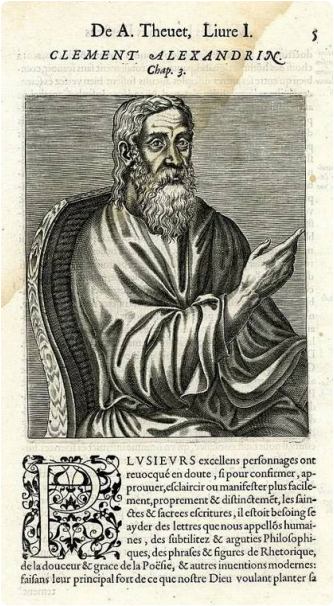
The testimony is precious but hard to interpret. Among ancient writers, the word "India" could also refer to southern Arabia or Ethiopia. It at least shows the early conviction that the Gospel had reached distant peoples very early. Christians in India, who honor Saint Thomas the Apostle as the founder of their Church, sometimes point to this account as one of the oldest references to Christianity in their region.

Is Saint Pantaenus a patron saint?

Pantaenus has no official patronage. Yet his life speaks naturally to certain vocations. As the first known head of a Christian school, he can be invoked by teachers, catechists and theologians. As a philosopher who found Christ without giving up the love of wisdom, he is a companion for students and for all who seek God through reflection. And as a traveler who carried the Gospel toward the East, he can be prayed to for missionaries.

Symbols and how to recognize Saint Pantaenus in art

There is no fixed iconography for Saint Pantaenus, and images of him are rare. Old engravings show him as an ancient philosopher, bearded and wearing a draped cloak, with a book in his hand. The book recalls his role as a teacher of the Scriptures, and the philosopher's dress recalls his Stoic training.



Clement of Alexandria, the most famous disciple of Pantaenus.

What his holiness teaches

Pantaenus was one of the first to show that intelligence and faith are not opposed. A philosopher who became a disciple of Christ, he put his learning at the service of the Gospel and trained men capable of proclaiming it to the most demanding minds of their time. He can be prayed to for teachers, theologians, catechists and all who seek God by the path of thought.

Where to pray to Saint Pantaenus

No major shrine is dedicated to Saint Pantaenus, and no relics of him are widely known. His memory is tied to Alexandria, in Egypt, where he taught and died. You can honor him on July 7 wherever you study, teach or pass on the faith, for example by reading a page of Scripture and asking for the grace to understand it.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Pantaenus for Teachers and Seekers of Truth

Saint Pantaenus left no writings that have come down to us, and no traditional prayer to him is known. His life as a philosopher who found Christ, a teacher of the Scriptures and a missionary toward the East inspires the original prayer offered here by Saintspedia. It is a prayer for all who teach, study and seek the truth.

Prayer to Saint Pantaenus for teachers and seekers of truth

Saint Pantaenus, you sought wisdom among the philosophers and found it fully in Jesus Christ. Pray for all who are searching for the meaning of their lives. May they not be afraid to ask questions, and may they find the One who is the Truth.

Like a bee gathering nectar from the flowers of the prophets and the apostles, you drew from the Scriptures and shared their sweetness with your students. Give me a love for the Word of God, and the patience to read it, ponder it and live it.

First teacher of the school of Alexandria, watch over teachers, catechists, theologians and parents. Help them to hand on the faith with intelligence and warmth, so that young people may see that faith and reason walk together.

You carried the Gospel toward distant peoples. Bless missionaries and all who bear witness to Christ in places where he is not yet known.

I also entrust to you my own intention (name it in silence). Through your intercession, may my mind and my heart be turned toward God. Amen.

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

When to pray this prayer

- On his feast day, July 7.
- At the start of a school year or a course of study, for students and teachers.
- Before teaching a catechism class, a Bible study or an RCIA session.
- When you are struggling with questions of faith and need light.
- For missionaries, especially those working in Asia and Africa.

A word from Scripture

The life of Pantaenus echoes the words of the First Letter of Peter: "Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope, but do it with gentleness and reverence" (1 Peter 3:15-16, NABRE). You can read this passage slowly before or after the prayer, asking the Lord for the grace to speak of your faith with both conviction and respect.

For a longer time of prayer, follow the novena to Saint Pantaenus, and read the life of Saint Pantaenus.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Pantaenus

This novena is an original composition by Saintspedia, inspired by the life of Saint Pantaenus, the first known teacher of the Christian school of Alexandria. It is not an official liturgical text. To finish it on his feast day, begin on June 29: it ends on July 7, the day the Church commemorates him. You can also pray it at any time, for example before exams, at the start of a school year or when faith and doubt seem to pull you in different directions.

How to pray this novena

Each day, entrust your intention to God, read the short meditation, then say the prayer of the day followed by an Our Father and a Glory Be. The small act suggested for each day helps you carry the prayer into your daily life. Because Pantaenus was a teacher of the Scriptures, it is good to keep a Bible nearby and read a few verses each day.

We know only a few facts about his life. This novena does not add to them: it takes each of them as a door into prayer, from his years as a philosopher to his teaching in Alexandria and his journey toward the East.

Day 1: Seeking wisdom

Before he knew Christ, Pantaenus was a Stoic philosopher. He was already searching for wisdom and for a right way to live. Every honest search for truth can become a road toward God.

Prayer: Lord, you placed in my heart the desire for truth. Do not let me settle for less than you.

Today: Write down one question about life or faith that matters to you, and offer it to God.

Day 2: Meeting Christ

At some point we do not know, Pantaenus became a Christian. The philosopher discovered that wisdom is not only an idea but a Person: Jesus Christ. Conversion is first of all an encounter.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, let me meet you again today, not only in my thoughts but in my heart.

Today: Spend ten minutes in silence before a crucifix or in a church.

Day 3: Keeping what is good

Pantaenus did not throw away his philosophy after his conversion. He used it to understand and explain the faith. Grace does not destroy what is good in us but purifies it and puts it to work.

Prayer: Lord, take all my gifts and talents, purify them and use them for your glory.

Today: Use one of your skills to help someone at home, at work or in your parish.

Day 4: The Sicilian bee

Clement of Alexandria compared his teacher to a bee gathering nectar from the flowers of the prophets and the apostles. Pantaenus drew from the whole of Scripture to nourish his students.

Prayer: Holy Spirit, give me a taste for the Word of God, and help me draw from it the strength I need.

Today: Read one chapter of a Gospel slowly and keep one verse with you through the day.



Saint Pantaenus, engraving by Michael Burghers.

Day 5: Teaching the faith

In Alexandria, Pantaenus led the school where catechumens learned the faith and where the Scriptures were studied. Handing on the faith is a service of love, done with patience and clarity.

Prayer: Lord, bless teachers, catechists and parents who pass on the faith. Give them wisdom and joy.

Today: Thank a teacher or catechist who helped you, or pray for them by name.

Day 6: Forming disciples

His greatest work was his students, Clement of Alexandria and Alexander of Jerusalem among them. A good teacher does not seek his own glory but helps others to grow and even to surpass him.

Prayer: Lord, help me to encourage others and to rejoice in their growth.

Today: Encourage a young person in their studies, their work or their faith.

Day 7: Speaking to the culture

Alexandria was a city of philosophers and scholars. Pantaenus learned to speak of Christ in a language educated people could understand. The Gospel can enter into dialogue with every culture.

Prayer: Lord, give me the right words to speak of you to those around me, with respect and conviction.

Today: If the occasion arises, share simply with someone why your faith matters to you.

Day 8: Toward the East

According to Eusebius, Pantaenus traveled to preach the Gospel as far as India, where he found Christians who already knew the Gospel of Matthew. The faith had gone ahead of him. God is already at work wherever we are sent.

Prayer: Lord of the harvest, bless missionaries and the Christians of Asia and Africa. Keep them strong in faith.

Today: Pray for a persecuted Christian community, or support a missionary work.

Day 9: Faithful to the end

Pantaenus died in Alexandria at the beginning of the third century. His writings are lost, but his work lives on in those he taught. What we give in love is never lost.

Prayer: Lord, I place in your hands the intention of this novena. Through the intercession of Saint Pantaenus, may my life bear lasting fruit for your Kingdom. Amen.

Today: Give thanks for the people who taught you the faith, living and dead.

Closing prayer

Saint Pantaenus, philosopher who found Christ and teacher of the Scriptures, at the end of these nine days I entrust to you the intention I have placed before you. Pray for students and teachers, for catechists and missionaries, and for all who are seeking the truth. Obtain for us a faith that loves to understand and an understanding that leads to love. Amen.

To go further, read the life of Saint Pantaenus and pray the prayer to Saint Pantaenus.

CREDITS

Credits and sources

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