BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Paul Denn

Life, prayer and novena

Feast day: July 9

IN BRIEF

Saint Paul Denn

French Jesuit priest born in Lille, missionary in China, martyred during the Boxer Rebellion in 1900.

Feast day	July 9
Born	April 1, 1847, Lille (Nord, France)
Died	July 20, 1900, Zhujiahe (Hebei, China)
Canonized	October 1, 2000 by John Paul II (beatified on April 17, 1955 by Pius XII)
Era	19th century

In this booklet

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Novena to Saint Paul Denn

Credits and sources

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LIFE

Saint Paul Denn

Saint Paul Denn was a French Jesuit priest, born in Lille on April 1, 1847, and a missionary in northern China. During the Boxer Rebellion, he was killed on July 20, 1900 in the church of the village of Zhujiahe, in present-day Hebei province, together with Father Léon-Ignace Mangin and many Chinese Christians who had taken refuge there. Beatified in 1955 and canonized in 2000 among the 120 Martyrs of China, his feast day is July 9.

Who was Saint Paul Denn?

Paul Denn belongs to the generation of French Jesuit missionaries sent in the 19th century to Zhili (Tcheli), southeast of Beijing, where the Society of Jesus was responsible for a vast rural mission. His Chinese name is written 湯愛玲. The easily accessible sources say little about his youth in Lille and his years of formation: his memory is above all linked to the last days of his life, when he chose to stay with the threatened Christians rather than flee. His martyrdom is part of a wider tragedy: in 1900, thousands of Chinese Catholics were killed in northern China, and many of them refused to deny their faith to save their lives.

Key dates in the life of Paul Denn

- **April 1, 1847**: Born in Lille, in the Nord department of France.
- **Later**: He enters the Society of Jesus and leaves on mission for China, in Zhili.
- **June 1900**: A month before his death, the village of Ou-y is attacked by the Boxers.
- **July 1900**: The Boxer Rebellion spreads; thousands of Christians take refuge in the village of Zhujiahe.

- **July 20, 1900**: He is killed in the church of Zhujiahe with Father Mangin and many faithful aged from 9 to 79.
- **1928-1933**: Bishop Henri Lécroart conducts in China the process for their beatification.
- **April 17, 1955**: Beatified by Pius XII, with three other French Jesuits.
- **October 1, 2000**: Canonized by John Paul II, among the 120 Martyrs of China.

Missionary in Zhili

After entering the Jesuits, Paul Denn was sent to the mission the Society ran in southeastern Zhili, present-day Hebei. Like his confreres, he learned the language and lived among Christian communities that were often poor, scattered across the villages of the great plain of northern China. There the missionary celebrated the sacraments, visited families, trained catechists and accompanied faithful who lived their faith in a society that was sometimes hostile.

The Boxer Rebellion and the siege of Zhujiahe

In 1900, the Boxer movement, hostile to foreigners and to Chinese Christians seen as their allies, spread through the north of the country. Churches were burned and Christian villages attacked. Fleeing the violence, thousands of faithful took refuge in Zhujiahe, a village entrusted to Father Léon-Ignace Mangin. He called for help from Father Paul Denn, who was in charge of a neighboring village. The two priests together organized the defense of the village and sustained everyone's faith. The first attacks were repelled.

On July 20, 1900, the attackers broke into the village. The priests had gathered the women and children in the church and were celebrating Mass. Those who denied their faith were offered their lives; most refused. Father Denn was killed

with Father Mangin and a great number of Christians, whose ages ranged from 9 to 79. He was fifty-three years old.

Devotion and art

The process for beatification was opened in China from 1928 to 1933 by Bishop Henri Lécroart. On April 17, 1955, Pius XII beatified Paul Denn with three other French Jesuits killed in 1900, Léon-Ignace Mangin, Modeste Andlauer and Rémy Isoré, as well as many Chinese Christians. On October 1, 2000, John Paul II canonized together 120 Martyrs of China, among them Paul Denn. Their common memorial is celebrated on July 9. He is shown as a Jesuit priest, sometimes in liturgical vestments, with the martyr's palm.

What can we learn from Saint Paul Denn?

Saint Paul Denn made the choice of faithful shepherds: to stay with those entrusted to him in the hour of danger. He answered a confrere's call, shared the fate of hundreds of Chinese Christians and celebrated the Eucharist to the end. You can pray to him for the Church in China, for missionaries, for priests who stay with their people in conflict zones, and for the Christians of Lille and northern France, who can see in him one of their own.

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

Where to pray to Saint Paul Denn

- **Lille** (Nord, France): his native city.
- **Zhujiahe** (Hebei, China): the village where he died with the Christians who had taken refuge there.
- Everywhere, on July 9, the feast of the Holy Martyrs of China, or on July 20, the day of his death.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Paul Denn for the Church in China and for Missionaries

Saint Paul Denn, a Jesuit born in Lille in 1847 and a missionary in northern China, was killed on July 20, 1900 in the church of Zhujiahe, with Father Léon-Ignace Mangin and hundreds of Chinese Christians. Prayer composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. It entrusts to him the Church in China, missionaries and shepherds who stay with their people in danger.

Prayer to Saint Paul Denn

Saint Paul Denn,
child of Lille who became a missionary in China,
you left your homeland
to serve Christ in distant villages.
Give me an open and generous heart.

When a brother called you for help,
you came, without counting the danger.
Teach me to answer those who need me,
and to stay faithful when it would be easier to flee.

You celebrated the Eucharist to the end
among Christians ready to die for their faith:
watch over the Church in China,
support persecuted Christians,
and keep me united to Christ to the end.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

When to pray to Saint Paul Denn

- On July 9, the feast of the Holy Martyrs of China, or on July 20, the day of his death.
- For the Church in China and for religious freedom.
- For missionaries and priests sent far from home.
- For Christians who live in areas of war or violence.
- For vocations in the diocese of Lille.

A prayer for China

> *Lord, bless the Chinese people and keep your Church in peace.*
> *Saint Paul Denn and holy Martyrs of China, pray for us. Amen.*

To prepare for his feast, you can pray the novena to Saint Paul Denn from July 1 to July 9, and read the life of Saint Paul Denn.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Paul Denn

This novena is an original composition inspired by the life of Saint Paul Denn, a Jesuit from Lille martyred in China in 1900. Novena composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. It is not an official liturgical text. To finish it on his feast day, July 9, the memorial of the Martyrs of China, begin on July 1. You can also pray it from July 12 to July 20, the day of his death, or at any other time of the year.

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 Paul Denn, pray for us." The small act suggested each day helps you live the novena concretely.

Day 1: A child of Lille

Paul Denn was born in Lille in 1847. It was in this city of northern France that he grew up and received the faith. Great callings are often born in an ordinary life.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for the place where I received the faith. Bless my city and its inhabitants.

Act of the day: Pray for the parish of your origins or of your baptism.

Day 2: The call of the Society of Jesus

Paul Denn joined the Jesuits, who sent him on mission. He placed his life in the hands of his superiors, to go wherever the Church needed him.

Prayer: Lord, make me available to go wherever you send me.

Act of the day: Pray for young people discerning a religious vocation.

Day 3: Leaving for a distant land

The missionary left France for northern China. He had to learn a difficult language and a new culture in order to proclaim Christ.

Prayer: Lord, bless missionaries who live far from their country, and support them in their loneliness.

Act of the day: Write to a missionary or give to a missionary charity.

Day 4: Serving the villages

In Zhili, Paul Denn served poor and scattered Christian communities. He visited families, celebrated the sacraments and trained catechists.

Prayer: Lord, help me humbly serve those who are close to me.

Act of the day: Visit someone who is isolated.

Day 5: A time of threat

In 1900, the Boxer Rebellion spread. Chinese Christians were threatened with death. Fear spread through the villages.

Prayer: Lord, be the strength of those who are afraid because of their faith.

Act of the day: Pray for Christians persecuted in the world today.

Day 6: Answering a brother's call

Father Mangin called Paul Denn for help at Zhujiahe, where thousands of Christians had taken refuge. Paul came to join him.

Prayer: Lord, teach me to answer when a brother needs me, even when it costs me.

Act of the day: Offer your help to someone going through a trial.

Day 7: Staying with the flock

Paul Denn could have tried to flee. He stayed with the faithful, sharing their fate. The good shepherd does not abandon his sheep.

Prayer: Lord, bless priests who stay with their people in war and danger.

Act of the day: Pray for a priest you know.

Day 8: Mass to the end

On July 20, 1900, the priests had gathered the women and children in the church and were celebrating Mass. The Eucharist was their strength at the hour of death.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, present in the Eucharist, be my strength in difficult hours.

Act of the day: Spend a moment in adoration before the Blessed Sacrament.

Day 9: With the Martyrs of China

Paul Denn died with hundreds of Chinese Christians who refused to deny their faith. He is celebrated with them, among the 120 Martyrs of China.

Prayer: Lord, bless the Church in China and make the blood of the martyrs bear fruit. Through the intercession of Saint Paul Denn, grant me the grace I ask in this novena, if it is your will.

Act of the day: Attend Mass and pray for the Catholics of China.

Living the novena with Saint Paul Denn

Saint Paul Denn left no great writings. His holiness comes down to one choice: to stay with those entrusted to him, to the point of giving his life. During these nine days, you can carry the Church in China, missionaries, persecuted

Christians and priests who serve in dangerous places.

Closing prayer

> *Saint Paul Denn,*
> *faithful missionary and martyr of Zhujiahe,*
> *present to the Lord the intention I have entrusted to you.*
> *Give me a shepherd's heart,*
> *and watch over all who suffer for the name of Christ.*
> *Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

You can also pray the prayer to Saint Paul Denn at any time, and read the life of Saint Paul Denn.

Credits and sources

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