BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Paul Duong

Life, prayer and novena

Feast day: June 3

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IN BRIEF

Saint Paul Duong

Vietnamese layman and father of a family, martyred in Tonkin in 1862, one of the 117 Martyrs of Vietnam.

Feast day	June 3, November 24
Born	1792, Vuc Duong, Hung Yen province (Vietnam)
Died	June 3, 1862, An Thi, Tonkin (Vietnam)
Canonized	June 19, 1988, by John Paul II (beatified April 29, 1951, by Pius XII)
Era	19th century

In this booklet

Life

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Novena to Saint Paul Duong

Credits and sources

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LIFE

Saint Paul Duong

Saint Paul Duong, also called Paul Dong, was a Vietnamese layman and father of a family, martyred in Tonkin on June 3, 1862, under Emperor Tu Duc. Rather than trample on the cross, he accepted death. He is one of the 117 Martyrs of Vietnam canonized by John Paul II in 1988. He is celebrated on June 3, and with his companions on November 24.

Who was Saint Paul Duong?

Paul Duong was born in 1792 in the village of Vuc Duong, in the province of Hung Yen, in the north of present-day Vietnam. He was a simple believer, married and a father, with no particular office in the Church. We know little about his life before his arrest: what the Church has remembered is the firmness of his faith at the hour of trial. He belongs to the long line of Vietnamese Christians, priests, catechists, religious and above all lay people, who gave their lives for Christ between the 18th and 19th centuries.

Key dates in the life of Paul Duong

- **1792**: Born at Vuc Duong, in the province of Hung Yen, in Tonkin.
- **1833**: First major persecution edict of Emperor Minh Mang; Christians are ordered to trample on the cross.
- **1851**: Emperor Tu Duc issues a very harsh persecution decree, applied to Vietnamese Christians as well.
- **1862**: Arrested for his faith, Paul, already about seventy years old, refuses to trample on the crucifix.
- **June 3, 1862**: He is beheaded at An Thi, in Tonkin.
- **April 29, 1951**: Beatified by Pope Pius XII.

- **June 19, 1988**: Canonized in Rome by John Paul II, with the 117 Martyrs of Vietnam.

The Christians of Vietnam facing persecution

In the 19th century, the Church in Vietnam was already old and numerous. But the emperors of the Nguyen dynasty saw Christianity as a foreign religion, and soon as a threat linked to the European powers. Edicts followed one another. Under Minh Mang, then under Tu Duc, thousands of Christians were arrested, tortured, exiled or killed. They were asked to make a simple and terrible gesture: to walk on the cross to show that they renounced their faith. Yet almost all the martyrs affirmed as they died a double faithfulness: to Christ, but also to their country and their sovereign.

The year 1862 was one of the bloodiest. Fighting with France fed suspicion of Christians, and many lay people in Tonkin were executed during the first months of the year. The list of canonized martyrs includes, for that year alone, many fathers of families and peasants. A partial amnesty treaty was signed a few weeks later, in July.

"True religion"

Once arrested, Paul Duong was ordered to trample on the crucifix. He refused. Condemned Christians were often branded on the face with the words "false religion", to expose them to public shame. According to the account kept by the Church, Paul asked instead that the words "true religion" be cut into his forehead. This gesture sums up his life: he did not want to be ashamed of Christ, even before his judges. He was beheaded on June 3, 1862, at An Thi, during the reign of Tu Duc.

He should not be confused with two other martyrs of the same group: Peter Truong Van Duong, a catechist who died in 1838, and Vincent Duong, a layman executed on June 6, 1862, three days after him.

Beatification, canonization and devotion

Paul Duong was beatified on April 29, 1951, by Pius XII. On June 19, 1988, in Saint Peter's Square, John Paul II canonized together 117 Martyrs of Vietnam: 96 Vietnamese, 11 Spaniards and 10 French. Their common feast, under the patronage of Saint Andrew Dung-Lac, is celebrated on November 24 throughout the Church. The Roman Martyrology commemorates Paul Duong on June 3, the day of his death. Like his companions, he is shown in traditional Vietnamese dress, holding the palm of martyrdom.

What can we learn from Saint Paul Duong?

Paul Duong was neither a priest nor a catechist: he was an ordinary father. In the evening of his life, he gave a witness of great clarity. Where his persecutors wanted to write "false religion", he wanted "true religion" to be written. He teaches us not to be ashamed of our faith, even when it costs us. You can pray to him for fathers, for elderly people who stay faithful, for the Church in Vietnam and for all persecuted Christians.

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

Where to pray to Saint Paul Duong

- **Hung Yen province** (Vietnam): his native region and the place of his martyrdom, An Thi.
- In Vietnamese parishes throughout the world, especially on November 24, feast of the Martyrs of Vietnam.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Paul Duong, Martyr of Vietnam

Saint Paul Duong, a Vietnamese father of a family, refused to trample on the cross and was beheaded in Tonkin on June 3, 1862, at about seventy years of age. Prayer composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. It is not an official liturgical text. It entrusts to him families, elderly people and persecuted Christians.

Prayer to Saint Paul Duong

Saint Paul Duong,
father of a family and witness of Christ,
you refused to trample on the cross
and wished to bear on your forehead
the words "true religion".
Grant that I may never be ashamed of my faith.

In the evening of your life,
you remained faithful without wavering.
Watch over the elderly,
over grandparents who pray for their children,
and over fathers who want to pass on the Gospel.

With the holy Martyrs of Vietnam,
support the Christians who suffer for Christ.
Obtain for the Church of your country
peace, freedom and the joy of believing.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

When to pray to Saint Paul Duong

- On his feast day, June 3, and on November 24 with the Martyrs of Vietnam.
- For fathers and grandparents.
- When it is hard to affirm your faith before others.
- For the Church in Vietnam and Vietnamese communities throughout the world.
- For persecuted Christians.

A short invocation

> *Lord Jesus, I do not want to be ashamed of you.*
> *Saint Paul Duong and holy Martyrs of Vietnam, pray for us. Amen.*

To prepare for his feast, you can pray the novena to Saint Paul Duong from May 26 to June 3, and read the life of Saint Paul Duong.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Paul Duong

This novena is inspired by the life of Saint Paul Duong, a Vietnamese layman martyred on June 3, 1862. Novena composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. It is not an official liturgical text. To finish it on his feast day, June 3, begin on May 26. You can also pray it before November 24, feast of the Martyrs of Vietnam, beginning on November 16.

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

Day 1: A child of Tonkin

Paul Duong was born in 1792 in a village of the province of Hung Yen. He received the faith in a Vietnamese Church that was already old and often tested.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for the baptism I received. Make the faith of my childhood grow in me.

Act of the day: Give thanks for your baptism, noting its date if you can.

Day 2: A father of a family

Paul was married and a father. His holiness was lived first at home, in work and daily prayer.

Prayer: Lord, bless families. Make our homes places of faith, work and peace.

Act of the day: Pray as a family, even for a few moments, or call a loved one.

Day 3: A persecuted Church

Throughout Paul's life, the Christians of Vietnam lived under the threat of imperial edicts. They held firm in the faith.

Prayer: Lord, support the Christians who live under threat today. Give them perseverance.

Act of the day: Learn about the situation of a persecuted Church and pray for it.

Day 4: Faithful to Christ and to his country

The Martyrs of Vietnam affirmed their faithfulness to Christ, but also to their country. Being a Christian did not mean betraying one's homeland.

Prayer: Lord, teach me to serve my country honestly, without ever denying you.

Act of the day: Pray for those who govern your country.

Day 5: Refusing to trample on the cross

Paul was asked to walk on the crucifix. He refused: for him, the cross of Christ was the sign of the love that saves.

Prayer: Crucified Jesus, I adore you. Grant that I may honor your cross with my whole life.

Act of the day: Kiss a cross or spend a time of prayer before a crucifix.

Day 6: "True religion"

Where Christians were branded with the words "false religion", Paul wished to bear on his forehead the words "true religion". He was not ashamed of his faith.

Prayer: Lord, give me the courage to speak of my faith simply, with gentleness and respect.

Act of the day: Make the Sign of the Cross before a meal taken in public.

Day 7: Faithful into old age

Paul was about seventy years old when he was arrested. Age did not weaken his faith: it made it even clearer.

Prayer: Lord, bless the elderly. May they know that their prayer and witness are precious.

Act of the day: Visit or call an elderly person.

Day 8: With his companions

In 1862, many lay people of Tonkin were executed like Paul. Together with him they form one community of witnesses.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for the communion of saints. Help me to feel that I am never alone in the faith.

Act of the day: Pray for the members of your parish.

Day 9: June 3, 1862

Paul Duong was beheaded at An Thi on June 3, 1862. The Church has counted him among the saints since 1988.

Prayer: Lord, grant that I may remain faithful to you until the last day. Through the intercession of Saint Paul Duong, grant me the grace I ask in this novena, if it is your will.

Act of the day: Attend Mass if possible, and pray for the Church in Vietnam.

Living the novena with Saint Paul Duong

Saint Paul Duong shows that an ordinary believer can become a shining witness. During these nine days, you can carry families, the elderly, the Church in Vietnam and persecuted Christians. Ask also for yourself the grace not to be ashamed of Christ in your daily life.

Closing prayer

> *Saint Paul Duong,*
> *father of a family and martyr of Christ,*
> *you preferred death to denying the cross.*
> *Present to the Lord the intention I have entrusted to you.*
> *Keep me faithful and courageous,*
> *and watch over the Church in Vietnam.*
> *Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

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

Credits and sources

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