

BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Paula Frassinetti

Life, prayer and novena

Feast day: June 11

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IN BRIEF

Saint Paula Frassinetti

Italian religious from Genoa, foundress of the Sisters of Saint Dorothy for the service of poor children.

Feast day	June 11
Born	March 3, 1809, Genoa, Italy
Died	June 11, 1882, Rome, Italy
Canonized	March 11, 1984, by Pope John Paul II
Era	19th century

In this booklet

Life

Prayer to Saint Paula Frassinetti for Children and Patience

Novena to Saint Paula Frassinetti

Credits and sources

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LIFE

Saint Paula Frassinetti

Saint Paula Frassinetti (Paola Frassinetti in Italian) was an Italian religious sister of the nineteenth century, born in Genoa in 1809 and died in Rome in 1882. Kept at home for years to run her father's household, she discovered her gift as an educator while helping her brother, a parish priest, and founded the Sisters of Saint Dorothy to serve poor children. Canonized by Pope John Paul II in 1984, she is honored on June 11.

Who was Saint Paula Frassinetti?

Paola Angela Maria Frassinetti was born on March 3, 1809, in Genoa, which at that time belonged to the French Empire of Napoleon. She lost her mother when she was nine. At twelve, as the only daughter in the family, she had to take charge of the house for her father and her brothers. She wished to become a nun, but her father refused: he needed her. Paula accepted, and lived this long wait in prayer and self-denial.

At nineteen, worn out by her work and suffering from bronchial trouble, she went to rest at the home of her eldest brother, Giuseppe (Joseph) Frassinetti, parish priest of Quinto al Mare, a seaside village near Genoa. That stay changed her life. She helped her brother teach catechism and discovered that she knew how to speak to children. The idea came to her to found a work for poor and abandoned children.

Key dates

- **March 3, 1809**: Birth in Genoa.
- **Around 1828**: Stay at Quinto al Mare with her brother Giuseppe, the village priest.

- **August 12, 1834**: With six young women, she founds the Daughters of the Cross.
- **1835**: The community becomes the Sisters of Saint Dorothy.
- **1844**: Pope Gregory XVI entrusts her with the house of Santa Maria del Rifugio in Rome, the future motherhouse.
- **1863**: Pope Pius IX approves the congregation.
- **June 11, 1882**: Death in Rome, from pneumonia.
- **June 8, 1930**: Beatification by Pope Pius XI.
- **March 11, 1984**: Canonization by Pope John Paul II.

From the Daughters of the Cross to the Sisters of Saint Dorothy

On August 12, 1834, Paula and six young women consecrated themselves to God under the name of Daughters of the Cross. They opened a school. To support their small community they worked at night, but their enthusiasm was real and the school was a true success.

A friend of her brother, the priest Luca Passi, had for his part started a work for poor young people placed under the patronage of Saint Dorothy, a martyr of the early centuries. He asked Paula to take it on. She agreed without hesitation, and in 1835 the Daughters of the Cross became the Sisters of Saint Dorothy, often called the Dorotheans.

Rome, the motherhouse of the congregation

Paula then moved to Rome, where she would spend most of her life. Pope Gregory XVI encouraged her and in 1844 entrusted to her the house of Santa Maria del Rifugio, near the church of Sant'Onofrio on the Janiculum Hill, known as the Torlonia Conservatory. She made it the motherhouse of the

congregation. His successor, Pius IX, supported her in turn and approved the institute in 1863. In her own lifetime Paula saw her sisters settle in Portugal and Brazil.

She died in Rome on June 11, 1882, of pneumonia, at the age of seventy-three. Portugal holds her memory especially dear: in Vila do Conde, for example, a panel of painted tiles (azulejos) depicts her.

A spirituality of the Cross and the Sacred Heart

All her life Paula Frassinetti loved the Cross of Christ, to the point of saying, according to her biographers: "Any punishment, but do not take away my cross!" She drew this inner strength from her devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. At her canonization, John Paul II stressed that it was from this Heart, where love and sorrow meet, that she found the strength to live the "folly" of the Cross. He also saw in her an example of the feminine gifts that benefit society, and praised her role in the advancement of women through education.

Why is Saint Paula Frassinetti a patron of poor children and educators?

She has no official patronage, but her whole work was born at a village catechism class and grew into schools for children who had nothing. Catholics therefore pray to her for poor and abandoned children, for teachers and catechists, and for the Sisters of Saint Dorothy who carry on her mission. Because she waited years before she could follow her vocation, she is also a friend for those whose plans seem blocked.

Symbols and how to recognize Saint Paula Frassinetti in art

- **A nineteenth-century religious habit**: a dark bonnet or veil and a white collar, as in her portraits.

- **The crucifix**: she is often shown in prayer before the cross she loved.
- **Children around her**: a reminder of her schools and catechism classes.
- **Portuguese azulejos**: in Portugal she appears on blue and white tile panels.

What can we learn from her holiness?

Paula Frassinetti first learned obedience and patience, giving up her vocation for a time. Then she recognized her mission in a very simple service: catechism in a village. She shows that God can bring a great work to life from a long hidden existence. Catholics pray to her for poor children, for educators and for those whose plans seem stuck.

To pray with her, read the prayer to Saint Paula Frassinetti or pray the novena to Saint Paula Frassinetti before her feast on June 11.

Where to pray to Saint Paula Frassinetti

- **Rome**: the motherhouse of the Sisters of Saint Dorothy, near Sant'Onofrio al Gianicolo, where she lived and died.
- **Genoa and Quinto al Mare**: the places of her youth and of the founding of the Daughters of the Cross.
- **Portugal and Brazil**: countries where her sisters settled during her lifetime and where her memory is still cherished.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Paula Frassinetti for Children and Patience

Saint Paula Frassinetti did not leave a prayer that became traditional outside her congregation, but one of her sayings, reported by her biographers, sums up her spirituality. You will find it below, with the thought of Pope John Paul II at her canonization, followed by an original prayer by Saintspedia.

A word to meditate

> *"Any punishment, but do not take away my cross!"*

Source: a saying of Paula Frassinetti reported by her biographers.

In his homily for her canonization in Rome on March 11, 1984, Pope John Paul II explained that the inner strength that led her to live the "folly" of the Cross so fully came from her tender devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

Prayer to Saint Paula Frassinetti for Children and Patience

Saint Paula Frassinetti, you waited a long time before you could answer your vocation: teach me patience when my plans seem to stand still, and trust that God does not forget those who wait for him.

You found your mission teaching catechism to the children of a village: make me attentive to the little ones and the poor I meet.

You never wanted your cross to be taken away: help me to carry mine with love, united to the Heart of Jesus.

I entrust to you abandoned children, educators, the Sisters of Saint Dorothy, and the intention I carry today: (name it in silence).

Obtain for me the grace to serve with joy wherever the Lord places me. Amen.

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

When to pray this prayer

Saint Paula Frassinetti is honored on June 11, the day of her death in Rome in 1882. You can also pray to her throughout June, the month traditionally devoted to the Sacred Heart, which she loved so much. This prayer is especially fitting:

- for children who are poor, neglected or without a family;
- for catechists and teachers at the start of a school year;
- when you must wait, and a door you hoped would open stays closed;
- when a cross seems too heavy to carry.

A short invocation

> *Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, through the intercession of Saint Paula Frassinetti, give me a patient heart and a generous love for the little ones. Amen.*

To know her better, read the life of Saint Paula Frassinetti.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Paula Frassinetti

This novena to Saint Paula Frassinetti is an original composition by Saintspedia. It walks with her through the stages of her life: a girl of Genoa who lost her mother early, a young woman who waited years to follow her vocation, a catechist in a seaside village, and the foundress of the Sisters of Saint Dorothy in Rome. To end on her feast day, June 11, begin on June 3. Since June is the month of the Sacred Heart, which she loved, this novena fits naturally into that season.

How to pray this novena

Each day, make the Sign of the Cross and place yourself before a crucifix if you can. Read the meditation, say the prayer of the day, then pray one Our Father, one Hail Mary and one Glory Be. End with the small act suggested. You may add the invocation "Sacred Heart of Jesus, I trust in you."

Day 1: A Motherless Child

Paula lost her mother when she was only nine. Grief came early into her life, yet it did not close her heart. Later she would become a mother to countless children who had no one.

Prayer: Saint Paula, comfort children who have lost a parent, and help me to be a presence of tenderness for those who are alone. Amen.

Today: Pray for a child you know who is going through a loss.

Day 2: Serving at Home

At twelve, Paula took charge of her father's house and her brothers. Cooking, cleaning and caring for others were her first school of holiness. God sees the hidden work done out of love.

Prayer: Saint Paula, teach me to do my daily chores with love, without complaining and without seeking praise. Amen.

Today: Do one household task for someone else without being asked.

Day 3: The Long Wait

Paula wanted to become a nun, but her father said no. She accepted and waited, praying and giving up her own wishes. Her patience was not resignation; it was trust that God's time would come.

Prayer: Saint Paula, when I must wait for what I long for, give me patience and peace, and keep my hope alive. Amen.

Today: Entrust to God one situation in your life that seems stuck.

Day 4: Rest by the Sea

Exhausted and ill, Paula went to rest with her brother Giuseppe at Quinto al Mare. What looked like a pause became the turning point of her life. God sometimes speaks to us when we are forced to stop.

Prayer: Saint Paula, help me to welcome times of illness or weariness as moments when God can speak to me. Amen.

Today: Take ten minutes of silence, away from screens, simply to listen.

Day 5: Teaching the Little Ones

In her brother's parish, Paula helped with catechism and discovered she knew how to talk to children. A simple service in a village opened the way to her life's mission.

Prayer: Saint Paula, bless catechists, parents and teachers who pass on the faith to children. Give them joy and wisdom. Amen.

Today: Share a Bible story or a prayer with a child.

Day 6: Daughters of the Cross

On August 12, 1834, Paula and six companions gave themselves to God. They worked at night to support their small school. Their poverty did not stop their enthusiasm.

Prayer: Saint Paula, give me a generous heart that is not discouraged by small beginnings or limited means. Amen.

Today: Give a small amount of money or time to a school or charity that helps poor children.

Day 7: Saying Yes Without Hesitation

When Father Luca Passi asked her to take on his work under the patronage of Saint Dorothy, Paula agreed at once. Her community became the Sisters of Saint Dorothy. She was ready to let her own project grow into something larger.

Prayer: Saint Paula, help me to say yes quickly when God asks something of me through others. Amen.

Today: Say yes to a request for help that you might normally put off.

Day 8: Loving the Cross

"Any punishment, but do not take away my cross!" Paula did not love suffering for its own sake; she loved Christ crucified, and she found in his Heart the strength to carry her own trials.

Prayer: Saint Paula, when my cross feels heavy, unite me to the Heart of Jesus, where love is stronger than pain. Amen.

Today: Spend a few minutes before a crucifix and offer your current difficulty to Jesus.

Day 9: A Life Given in Rome

Paula spent most of her life in Rome, guiding her sisters and seeing them settle in Portugal and Brazil. She died on June 11, 1882, at seventy-three, having given everything. Pope John Paul II saw in her a woman who served society through education.

Prayer: Saint Paula, watch over the Sisters of Saint Dorothy and all who educate the young. May my life, too, be given fully for others. Amen.

Today: Pray for the vocation of a young person you know.

Closing prayer

Lord Jesus, from your Sacred Heart Saint Paula Frassinetti drew the strength to love the Cross and to serve poor children with joy. Through her intercession, give me patience in waiting, generosity in serving and courage in trials. I place before you my intention for this novena (name it in silence). May I, like her, find my mission in the simple place where you have put me. You who live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

Saint Paula Frassinetti, pray for us.

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