

BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Peregrine Laziosi

Life, prayer, novena and pilgrimage

Feast day: May 1

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IN BRIEF

Saint Peregrine Laziosi

Servite friar of Forlì, converted by Saint Philip Benizi, healed of a cancerous wound according to tradition, patron saint of cancer patients.

Feast day	May 1, May 4
Born	c. 1260, Forlì, Italy
Died	May 1, 1345, Forlì, Italy
Canonized	December 27, 1726, by Pope Benedict XIII
Era	14th century
Patron saint of	cancer patients, the seriously ill, people with leg and foot ailments

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Credits and sources

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LIFE

Saint Peregrine Laziosi

Saint Peregrine Laziosi was an Italian friar of the Order of Servants of Mary (the Servites), born in Forlì around 1260 and died in the same city on May 1, 1345. A violent young man who became a friar of great gentleness, he lived a life of prayer, penance and service to the poor. According to tradition, he was healed of a cancerous wound on his leg the night before it was to be amputated. Canonized in 1726, he is invoked throughout the world as the patron saint of cancer patients. His feast day is May 1, and May 4 in the Servite Order.

Who was Saint Peregrine?

Peregrine, in Italian Pellegrino, was born around 1260 in Forlì, in the Romagna region of Italy, into a well-to-do family. At that time Forlì was in conflict with the pope, who ruled the region, and the city was under interdict. The young Peregrine sided passionately with the anti-papal party. Nothing suggested that he would one day become a saint.

What we know of his life comes mainly from accounts written by friars of his order more than a century after his death, and from Servite tradition. The broad outlines are accepted: his conversion, his entry into the Servites, his long religious life in Forlì and the veneration that surrounded him from the moment of his death.

Key dates

- **c. 1260**: Born in Forlì, in Romagna.
- **c. 1283**: He strikes Saint Philip Benizi, who has come to preach peace in Forlì, then is converted.
- **c. 1290**: He joins the Servants of Mary in Siena.

- **Following years**: He returns to Forlì, where he spends the rest of his life as a friar.
- **c. 1325**: According to tradition, he is healed of a cancerous wound on his leg the night before an amputation.
- **May 1, 1345**: Dies in Forlì, at about eighty years of age.
- **1609**: Pope Paul V approves his cult.
- **December 27, 1726**: Canonized by Pope Benedict XIII.

The slap and the conversion

Around 1283, the pope sent the prior general of the Servites, Saint Philip Benizi, to Forlì to reconcile the city with the Church. Philip preached peace, but part of the population met him with hostility. According to tradition, the young Peregrine, in the middle of a group of partisans, insulted him and struck him in the face. Philip did not respond and, according to the story, turned the other cheek and prayed for him.

This gentleness overwhelmed Peregrine. Filled with remorse, he went to Philip to ask his forgiveness, and the friar welcomed him kindly. It was the beginning of a deep conversion. Peregrine began to pray in the Servite church of Forlì, before an image of the Virgin Mary, and decided to give his life to God.

A Servant of Mary

At about thirty years of age, he entered the Order of the Servants of Mary in Siena. Founded in the 13th century in Florence by seven merchants who became hermits, this order is devoted to the Virgin Mary, especially as Our Lady of Sorrows. Peregrine was ordained a priest and then sent back to Forlì, his hometown.

He lived there for decades in prayer, penance and service. He counseled those who came to see him, reconciled enemies, and cared for the sick and the poor. Tradition says that out of a spirit of penance he remained standing as much as possible and kept silence as much as he could. These austerities probably contributed to the illness of his legs.

The miraculous healing

At about sixty years of age, Peregrine suffered from varicose veins, then from a wound that became infected and turned into an ulcer, described as cancerous. The pain was intense and the wound gave off a repulsive smell. The physician decided to amputate the leg.

On the eve of the operation, according to tradition, Peregrine dragged himself to the chapter room of the friary and prayed for a long time before the crucifix. He fell asleep and saw in a dream Christ coming down from the cross and touching his leg. The next morning, the physician who had come to amputate found the wound healed. Peregrine lived about twenty more years and died on May 1, 1345, at around eighty, with a great reputation for holiness.



The Basilica of Saint Peregrine Laziosi in Forlì, where the saint rests.

Why is Saint Peregrine the patron saint of cancer patients?

Because tradition says he was healed of a cancerous wound on his leg, Saint Peregrine has been invoked for centuries by people with cancer and by their loved ones. He is also the patron of people suffering from diseases of the legs and feet, and of all who are seriously ill. In many Servite churches, a perpetual novena to Saint Peregrine is prayed for the sick, and he is often called "the cancer saint."

Symbols and how to recognize Saint Peregrine in art

Saint Peregrine is shown as a Servite friar in a black habit, often leaning on a staff. His leg is bandaged or uncovered to show the wound. He is frequently depicted before a crucifix from which Christ leans down to heal him.

Where to pray to Saint Peregrine

His body rests in Forlì, Italy, in the Basilica of Saint Peregrine Laziosi, the church of the Servants of Mary. Many Servite churches around the world, in Italy, the Americas, Australia and elsewhere, have an altar or shrine dedicated to Saint Peregrine, where the sick come to pray. In the United States, devotion to him is especially strong in Servite parishes.

Praying to Saint Peregrine

Catholics pray to Saint Peregrine for people with cancer or another serious illness, for their families, for caregivers and for researchers. Read the prayer to Saint Peregrine and pray the novena to Saint Peregrine, beginning on April 22. Prayer accompanies medical treatment; it does not replace it.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Peregrine for Cancer Patients

Saint Peregrine is prayed to all over the world by people with cancer, and many prayers in his honor circulate, especially in the churches of the Servants of Mary. The prayer below is an original text by Saintspedia, inspired by his life: his conversion, his illness and the healing that tradition attributes to him. This prayer accompanies medical treatment; it does not replace it.

Prayer to Saint Peregrine for cancer patients

Saint Peregrine, you who knew the suffering of illness,
the fear of surgery and the long night of pain,
I come to you with confidence.

I entrust to you (name), who is living with cancer,
and all who are fighting a serious illness.
You who prayed before the crucifix on the eve of your operation,
obtain for them the strength to go through tests and treatments,
and, if it is God's will, healing.

Give them peace of heart while they wait for results,
courage in their fatigue, hope on the bad days.
Support their families and friends,
their doctors, nurses and researchers.

You who were changed by the gentleness of a man of God,
help us to live this trial without losing tenderness.
May Christ, who reached out his hand to you, keep us in his love.
Saint Peregrine, pray for us. Amen.

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

A short prayer before a test or surgery

> *Lord Jesus, through the intercession of Saint Peregrine, I place this test (or: this surgery) in your hands. Guide the hands of the doctors and keep me in your peace. Amen.*

This prayer is an original text by Saintspedia.

When to pray this prayer

You can pray to Saint Peregrine at any time, and especially on May 1, his feast day, or May 4, his feast in the Servite Order. Many people turn to him when they receive a diagnosis, before surgery, during chemotherapy or radiation, or while waiting for scan results. Families often pray it together at the bedside of a loved one.

For a longer time of prayer, follow the novena to Saint Peregrine, from April 22 to 30 or at any time during an illness, and read the life of Saint Peregrine.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Peregrine

This novena is an original composition by Saintspedia, inspired by the life of Saint Peregrine Laziosi, Servite friar and patron saint of cancer patients. It is not an official liturgical text. To finish it on the eve of his feast, begin on April 22; it ends on April 30, the day before the feast of May 1. You can pray it at any time for a person living with cancer or another serious illness, or for yourself.

How to pray this novena

Each day, 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. The small act suggested for each day helps carry the prayer into daily life; if you are too tired, simply offer the prayer. If you miss a day, pick up where you left off. This novena accompanies medical care; it does not replace it. A novena is not a formula that obliges God to answer; it is nine days of trust, in the company of a saint who knew the fear and pain of serious illness.

Opening prayer for each day

Lord Jesus, divine physician, you healed the sick who came to you and you reached out your hand to your servant Peregrine on the night of his greatest fear. As I begin this day of my novena, I place before you my intention (name it in silence), and all who are living with cancer or another serious illness. Give them strength in body and peace in spirit, and guide all who care for them. Saint Peregrine, pray for us. Amen.

Day 1: Placing the illness in God's hands

The news of a serious illness turns a life upside down. Before anything else, we can simply say to God: this is what I am living.

Prayer: Lord, I entrust my intention to you for these nine days. I place in your hands this illness and everything it overturns.

Today: Write down your intention and place it near a crucifix or an image of Saint Peregrine.

Day 2: A life changed by gentleness

Peregrine struck a man of God, who answered him with gentleness. That gentleness changed his life. God can touch the hardest hearts.

Prayer: Lord, soften my heart when illness or worry makes me harsh or impatient.

Today: Answer a hurtful word with gentleness.

Day 3: Under Mary's gaze

Peregrine was converted while praying before an image of the Virgin Mary, and he gave his life to the Order of the Servants of Mary. Mary stays close to those who suffer, as she stood at the foot of the cross.

Prayer: Virgin Mary, Our Lady of Sorrows, stay close to the sick and to those who care for them.

Today: Pray a decade of the Rosary for someone who is ill.

Day 4: Serving the sick

Before he fell ill himself, Peregrine cared for and comforted the sick and the poor of Forlì. Those who care for the sick are also the hands of Christ.

Prayer: Saint Peregrine, support doctors, nurses, caregivers and researchers.

Today: Thank someone who works in health care, or pray for the medical team of a loved one.

Day 5: Pain

Peregrine's wound caused him great suffering. Pain can wear down strength and patience. Christ too knew suffering in his body.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, you who suffered in your body, relieve those who are in pain and give them patience.

Today: Offer a small hardship of the day for someone who is suffering.

Day 6: Fear of surgery

On the eve of his amputation, Peregrine prayed for a long time before the crucifix. He did not hide his fear: he entrusted it to God.

Prayer: Lord, I entrust my fears to you: the tests, the results, the operations, the future. Keep me in your peace.

Today: Pray for someone who is waiting for results or for surgery.

Day 7: The outstretched hand of Christ

According to tradition, Christ came down from the cross to touch Peregrine's leg. God is not far from our suffering: he draws near to it.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, reach out your hand to (name) and touch him (her) with your grace.

Today: Visit someone who is ill, or send them a message.

Day 8: For families

Cancer affects a whole family. Loved ones carry worry, fatigue and sometimes a feeling of helplessness.

Prayer: Saint Peregrine, support the families of the sick. Give them strength, unity and hope.

Today: Offer concrete help to the family of someone who is ill: a meal, a ride, an hour of company.

Day 9: Hope

Peregrine lived another twenty years after his healing, in the service of others. Whatever the outcome of an illness, God promises us the life that has no end.

Prayer: Saint Peregrine, present to God the intention I have entrusted to you. Obtain healing, if it is his will, and always peace and hope.

Today: Give thanks for the signs of support received during these nine days.

Closing prayer

Lord God, you healed your servant Peregrine and made him a sign of hope for the sick. Through his prayers, grant what I have asked in these nine days, if it is your will. Give strength to the sick, wisdom to those who care for them, and to all of us the peace that comes from you. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Read also the prayer to Saint Peregrine and the life of Saint Peregrine.

PILGRIMAGE

Basilica of Saint Peregrine Laziosi in Forlì, Tomb of the Saint

The Basilica of Saint Peregrine Laziosi in Forlì, in Emilia-Romagna, is the church of the Servants of Mary where the body of Saint Peregrine rests. Also called Santa Maria dei Servi, it is at the heart of the devotion to the patron saint of cancer patients. The sick and their families come to pray here from all over Italy and abroad.



The Basilica of Saint Peregrine Laziosi in Forlì.

The Servite Church of Forlì

The Servants of Mary settled in Forlì in the 13th century. It was in their church that the young Peregrine, converted by the gentleness of Saint Philip Benizi, came to pray before an image of the Virgin. After entering the order in Siena, he returned to live at the Forlì convent, where he spent most of his life and where he died on May 1, 1345.

His tomb at once became a place of prayer. The church, transformed several times over the centuries, took his name.

The Saint's Tomb

The body of Saint Peregrine is kept in a chapel dedicated to him, where the faithful come in large numbers to entrust the sick. Many ex-votos and prayer intentions left by pilgrims can be seen there. The devotion here unites prayer for the sick with trust in Our Lady of Sorrows, dear to the Servites.

The Feasts of Saint Peregrine

Saint Peregrine is listed in the Roman Martyrology on May 1, and the Servite order celebrates him on May 4. In Forlì, his feast is a great moment of prayer for the sick and for the whole city. Masses are celebrated for the sick, with the blessing of the sick and their families.

Tips for the Pilgrimage

Forlì is in Romagna, on the railway line linking Bologna to the Adriatic coast, about forty-five minutes by train from Bologna. The basilica is in the historic center, within walking distance of the main squares. It is best to check opening and Mass times with the shrine before your visit, especially around May 1.

Other Places Associated with Saint Peregrine

Devotion to Saint Peregrine spread with the Order of the Servants of Mary. Many Servite churches, in Europe, North and South America and Australia, have an altar or chapel of Saint Peregrine, where people often pray each week for those with cancer. In Siena, the Servite convent recalls the place where he entered the order.

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