

BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Peter Faber

Life, prayer and novena

Feast day: August 2

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IN BRIEF

Saint Peter Faber

Priest from Savoy, companion of Saint Ignatius of Loyola and the first priest of the Society of Jesus.

Feast day	August 2
Born	April 13, 1506, Saint-Jean-de-Sixt, Savoy (France)
Died	August 1, 1546, Rome, Italy
Canonized	December 17, 2013, by Pope Francis
Era	16th century

In this booklet

Life

Prayer to Saint Peter Faber for Gentleness and Dialogue

Novena to Saint Peter Faber

Credits and sources

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LIFE

Saint Peter Faber

Saint Peter Faber (Pierre Favre) was a sixteenth-century priest from Savoy, one of the first companions of Saint Ignatius of Loyola and the first priest of the Society of Jesus. The son of farmers from the Aravis mountains, he studied in Paris, shared a room with Ignatius and Francis Xavier, and then traveled across Europe giving the Spiritual Exercises. A man of conversation and friendship, he died in Rome in 1546, at the age of forty. Canonized by Pope Francis in 2013, he is celebrated on August 2.

Who was Saint Peter Faber?

Peter Faber was born on April 13, 1506, at Le Villaret, a mountain hamlet of Saint-Jean-de-Sixt in the Aravis range, which then belonged to the Duchy of Savoy and the diocese of Geneva. His parents were farmers whom he later described as very devout. As a boy he tended the flocks and dreamed of studying.

He attended school at Thônes, then the college of La Roche-sur-Foron, where his teacher Pierre Veillard left a deep mark on him. His uncle Mamert Favre, prior of the Carthusian monastery of Le Reposoir, helped him continue his studies. Peter kept a bond of friendship with the Carthusians all his life.

In 1525 he left for Paris. At the Collège Sainte-Barbe he shared a room with a young Navarrese, Francis Xavier. Soon after, an older student from the Basque Country joined them: Ignatius of Loyola. Peter became his tutor in his studies; Ignatius, in turn, helped him out of the scruples and temptations that tormented him.



Le Villaret, in Saint-Jean-de-Sixt, Peter Faber's birthplace.

Key dates in the life of Saint Peter Faber

- **April 13, 1506**: Born at Le Villaret, Saint-Jean-de-Sixt.
- **1525**: Leaves for Paris; shares a room with Francis Xavier, then with Ignatius of Loyola.
- **1534**: Makes the Spiritual Exercises under Ignatius; ordained a priest on May 30.
- **August 15, 1534**: At Montmartre, he celebrates the Mass during which the first companions take their vows.
- **1537**: The companions gather in Venice.
- **1538**: In Rome, he teaches theology at the Sapienza.
- **September 27, 1540**: Pope Paul III approves the Society of Jesus.
- **1539-1546**: Missions in Parma, Germany, Spain, the Low Countries and Portugal.

- **1543**: In Mainz, he gives the Spiritual Exercises to Peter Canisius.
- **August 1, 1546**: Dies in Rome, as he was about to leave for the Council of Trent.
- **September 5, 1872**: Beatified by Pope Pius IX.
- **December 17, 2013**: Canonized by Pope Francis.

The first priest of the Society of Jesus

In 1534, Ignatius led Peter through the Spiritual Exercises. The experience was decisive: Ignatius later said that of all the companions, Faber was the one who gave the Exercises best. Ordained a priest on May 30, 1534, Peter celebrated Mass on the following August 15 in the chapel at Montmartre, where seven "friends in the Lord" consecrated themselves to God.

When Ignatius had to return to Spain to recover his health, he entrusted the group to Peter, who welcomed three new companions. After Venice and Rome, the companions decided to found a religious order. The Society of Jesus was approved in 1540. When the first superior general was elected, Faber appeared to be the obvious choice should Ignatius keep refusing the office.

A missionary in a divided Europe

From 1539, Faber became a tireless traveler. In Parma he gave the Exercises and helped reform convents. The pope then sent him to the colloquies of Worms and Regensburg, where Catholics and Protestants were still seeking agreement. The failure of these meetings opened his eyes: in his view, the religious ignorance of the faithful and the laxity of the clergy explained the breakdown of unity far more than debates over ideas. His letters to Ignatius would weigh on the choices of the young Society.

He went on to travel through the Rhineland, Spain, Portugal and the Low Countries. In Mainz, in 1543, he gave the Exercises to a young man who would become Saint Peter Canisius. In Cologne he founded the city's first Jesuit house in 1544 with the help of the Carthusians, and then opened communities in Valladolid and Alcalá.

Worn out by his journeys, he was called back to Rome to take part in the Council of Trent, but he died there on August 1, 1546. His remains, laid in the church that preceded the Gesù, were lost during a flood at the end of the sixteenth century.

The man of conversation

His companions remembered him for his great gentleness. Simón Rodrigues, a very different man, wrote that Faber won hearts through his kind way of conversing, even among Lutherans. Faber preferred personal conversation to sermons before crowds.

He left no treatise or theological work, only letters and a spiritual journal, the *Memoriale*, written between 1542 and 1545. In it he noted the movements of his soul, his prayers for the towns he passed through, and even his prayers to the guardian angels of his neighbors.

Why is Saint Peter Faber a model for dialogue?

Saint Peter Faber has no traditional patronage, but he is a saint of relationship: he believed that hearts are reached better through friendship and listening than through polemics. In a Europe torn apart, he prayed for those with whom he disagreed. In canonizing him, Pope Francis, himself a Jesuit, highlighted this face of a humble, open and deeply prayerful priest. He can be invoked for dialogue, for spiritual directors and retreat guides, and for people who travel a great deal.

Symbols and how to recognize Saint Peter Faber in art

Saint Peter Faber is usually portrayed as a Jesuit priest in a black cassock, with a gentle bearded face. He is often shown in prayer, with his hands joined, or alongside his companions Ignatius of Loyola and Francis Xavier.

Where to pray to Saint Peter Faber

- **Saint-Jean-de-Sixt** (Haute-Savoie, France): the hamlet of Le Villaret, his birthplace.
- **Paris**: the hill of Montmartre, where he celebrated the Mass of the vows on August 15, 1534.
- **Rome**: the Church of the Gesù, on the site of the church where he was first buried.

To pray with him, use the prayer to Saint Peter Faber or the novena to Saint Peter Faber.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Peter Faber for Gentleness and Dialogue

In his spiritual journal, the *Memoriale*, Saint Peter Faber left many prayers written along his journeys. Below you will find one he used to say when entering a new house, followed by an original prayer by Saintspedia to Saint Peter Faber.

Peter Faber's prayer for a new home

> *"Visit, we beseech thee, O Lord, this dwelling, and drive far from it all snares of the enemy; let thy holy angels dwell herein to preserve us in peace, and may thy blessing be upon us always; through Christ our Lord."*

Source: Peter Faber, *Memoriale* (spiritual journal written between 1542 and 1545). Faber recounts that he said this prayer on his knees in each room of the house where he was staying. It is the ancient collect of Night Prayer (Compline), quoted here in its traditional English translation.

Prayer to Saint Peter Faber for gentleness and dialogue

Saint Peter Faber, you left your mountains of Savoy to seek God, and you found him in the friendship of Ignatius and Francis Xavier: teach me to recognize the friends God places on my path.

You won hearts by the gentleness of your conversation: help me to speak with kindness, especially to those who do not think as I do. Keep me from arguments that wound and from harshness that drives people away.

You noted in your journal the movements of your heart: help me to look back over my day in the light of God, to see his gifts and my refusals.

You prayed for the towns you passed through and for the angels of your neighbors: teach me to bless the places where I live and the people who live there. I entrust to you my intention: (name it in silence).

Obtain for me a humble and available heart, ready to go wherever the Lord sends me. Amen.

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

When to pray this prayer

Saint Peter Faber is celebrated on August 2, the day after the anniversary of his death in Rome on August 1, 1546. His prayers are especially fitting:

- when moving into a new home or room, using his prayer for a new dwelling;
- before a difficult conversation or a meeting with someone you disagree with;
- in the evening, when reviewing your day before God;
- for spiritual directors, retreat guides and those who travel often.

To pray with him over nine days, follow the novena to Saint Peter Faber. To know him better, read the life of Saint Peter Faber.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Peter Faber

This novena is an original composition by Saintspedia, inspired by the life and spiritual journal of Saint Peter Faber, the first companion of Saint Ignatius of Loyola. It is not an official liturgical text. To finish it on the eve of his feast on August 2, begin on July 24; it ends on August 1, the anniversary of his death. It can also be prayed at any time, especially before a retreat, a move or an important conversation.

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 suggested act helps you live the prayer during the day. In the spirit of Peter Faber, you may end each evening with a short review of the day: where did I meet God, and where did I turn away? If you miss a day, simply continue where you left off.

Day 1: A mountain childhood

Peter grew up in the Aravis mountains, tending his parents' flocks and dreaming of study. His parents were devout farmers. God prepared his great mission in a simple family and an ordinary life.

Prayer: Saint Peter Faber, help me to recognize God's work in the simple circumstances of my life. Amen.

Today: Thank God for your family and for the place where you grew up.

Day 2: Teachers and guides

His teacher Pierre Veillard and his uncle Mamert, a Carthusian prior, helped him on his way. Faber never forgot those who had guided him and kept his friendship with the Carthusians all his life.

Prayer: Saint Peter Faber, bless all teachers and those who guide young people. Help me to be grateful to those who formed me. Amen.

Today: Pray for a teacher who marked your life.

Day 3: Friendship in the Lord

In Paris, Peter shared a room with Francis Xavier and then with Ignatius of Loyola. From this student friendship grew the Society of Jesus. God often works through the friends he gives us.

Prayer: Saint Peter Faber, teach me to live my friendships in God and to help my friends grow closer to him. Amen.

Today: Contact a friend you have neglected and give them news.

Day 4: Freed from scruples

As a student, Peter was tormented by scruples and temptations. Ignatius helped him find peace, above all through the Spiritual Exercises. God does not want us to live in fear, but in trust.

Prayer: Saint Peter Faber, pray for all who are anxious or troubled in conscience. Help me to trust in the mercy of God. Amen.

Today: If you can, go to confession, or make a sincere act of trust in God's mercy.

Day 5: Montmartre

On August 15, 1534, the newly ordained Peter celebrated the Mass at Montmartre during which seven friends consecrated themselves to God. He was the first priest of the group. A whole life can be given in a single "yes."

Prayer: Saint Peter Faber, pray for priests and for young people discerning their vocation. Help me to renew the gift of my life to God. Amen.

Today: Attend Mass if you can, or pray for a priest you know.

Day 6: The gentle word

Faber won hearts by his kind conversation, even among those who disagreed with him. He believed that friendship and listening do more than polemics.

Prayer: Saint Peter Faber, give me a gentle tongue and a listening heart, especially toward those who think differently. Amen.

Today: Listen fully to someone without interrupting or arguing.

Day 7: Praying for those we disagree with

After the colloquies of Worms and Regensburg, Faber prayed for those whose ideas he opposed. He saw that ignorance of the faith and the laxity of the clergy had done more harm than debates.

Prayer: Saint Peter Faber, pray for the unity of Christians. Help me to pray sincerely for those with whom I disagree. Amen.

Today: Pray by name for someone you are in conflict with.

Day 8: Blessing places and people

In his *Memoriale*, Faber noted his prayers for the towns he passed through and for the guardian angels of his neighbors. He saw every place as a place God loves.

Prayer: Saint Peter Faber, teach me to bless my home, my street and my city, and those who live there. Amen.

Today: Say a silent prayer for your neighbors as you pass their homes.

Day 9: Ready to go

Exhausted by his travels, Faber obeyed when he was called to Rome for the Council of Trent. He died there on August 1, 1546, at forty, a man always ready to leave for wherever he was sent.

Prayer: Saint Peter Faber, obtain for me a humble and available heart, ready to go where the Lord sends me, and the grace of a holy death. Amen.

Today: Ask God in prayer: "Lord, where do you want to send me?"

Closing prayer

> *Lord God, you gave Saint Peter Faber a gentle heart and a burning zeal to bring souls to you through friendship and conversation. Through his intercession, grant us the gift of listening, a love for those who think differently, and the courage to go wherever you send us. Bless our homes, our friends and our cities, and hear the intention I have entrusted to you during this novena. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

To continue praying with him, use the prayer to Saint Peter Faber, or read the life of Saint Peter Faber.

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