

BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Philip Evans

Life, prayer and novena

Feast day: October 25

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IN BRIEF

Saint Philip Evans

Welsh Jesuit priest, executed at Cardiff in 1679 for exercising his priesthood, one of the Forty Martyrs of England and Wales.

Feast day	October 25, July 22
Born	1645, Monmouth (Wales)
Died	July 22, 1679, Cardiff (Wales)
Canonized	canonized on October 25, 1970 by Paul VI
Era	17th century

In this booklet

Life

Prayer to Saint Philip Evans for Priests and Joy in Trial

Novena to Saint Philip Evans

Credits and sources

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LIFE

Saint Philip Evans

Saint Philip Evans was a Welsh Jesuit priest, born at Monmouth in 1645. Trained on the continent, he came back to serve the Catholics of South Wales at a time when exercising the Catholic priesthood there was punishable by death. Arrested in 1678, at the time of the so-called "Popish Plot," he was hanged, drawn and quartered at Cardiff on July 22, 1679, together with the priest John Lloyd. Canonized in 1970 among the Forty Martyrs of England and Wales, he is celebrated on October 25 with them, and on July 22, the day of his death.

Who was Saint Philip Evans?

In the 17th century, England and Wales were officially Protestant. Since a law of 1585, any Catholic priest ordained abroad who returned to exercise his ministry in the kingdom was considered a traitor. Catholics lived their faith in secret, sheltered by a few families. Philip Evans was one of these hidden priests. He was not condemned for a crime, but for having celebrated Mass and given the sacraments. His death, marked by singing and serenity, left a deep impression on his contemporaries.

Key dates

- **1645**: Born at Monmouth, in Wales.
- **1660s**: Studies at the English Jesuit college of Saint-Omer, in France.
- **1667**: Enters the novitiate of the Society of Jesus, then at Watten, in Flanders.
- **1675**: After studying theology at Liège, he is ordained a priest and returns to Wales.

- **1678**: The "Popish Plot," an invented conspiracy, sets off a hunt for Catholic priests.
- **December 4, 1678**: Arrested at Sker, in the house of Christopher Turberville, and imprisoned at Cardiff.
- **May 1679**: Tried for treason with John Lloyd and sentenced to death.
- **July 22, 1679**: Executed at Cardiff.
- **1929**: Beatified by Pius XI.
- **October 25, 1970**: Canonized by Paul VI with the Forty Martyrs of England and Wales.

A priest trained in exile

Like many young Catholics of his time, Philip Evans had to leave his country to study. He attended the college of Saint-Omer, founded by the English Jesuits to educate the sons of Catholic families. In 1667 he entered the novitiate of the Society of Jesus at Watten, then studied theology at the English Jesuit college in Liège. Ordained a priest in 1675, he knew what awaited him: by returning to Wales, he risked his life.

A hidden missionary in Wales

Back in South Wales, Father Evans taught for a time in a Jesuit college of the region and ministered to Catholics, often going from house to house. In 1678, Titus Oates invented a supposed Catholic plot to assassinate King Charles II. The panic that followed revived the persecution: rewards were promised to those who informed on priests. His friends urged him to hide, but Philip Evans refused to abandon his flock and continued his ministry.

Prison, trial and martyrdom

On December 4, 1678, he was denounced and arrested at Sker, on the property of Christopher Turberville. Imprisoned at Cardiff, he found there another priest, John Lloyd. Their trial took place in May 1679: they were accused of treason simply for being priests ordained abroad. Witnesses against them were hard to find, but they were sentenced to be hanged, drawn and quartered.

In prison, Philip Evans obtained a harp and sang hymns and carols for the guards and the other prisoners. Rumors of a pardon circulated, but the order of execution came. According to accounts gathered later, he was playing tennis when they came to tell him, and he asked to finish his game. On July 22, 1679, he was executed at Cardiff, on the same day as John Lloyd. Tradition reports that at the foot of the scaffold he said it was the best pulpit a man could have.

Devotion and iconography

Philip Evans was beatified by Pius XI in 1929, then canonized by Paul VI on October 25, 1970, with thirty-nine other martyrs of England and Wales, including John Lloyd. Their common feast is celebrated on October 25 in the dioceses of those two countries. Philip Evans and John Lloyd are also honored together, especially in Cardiff, around July 22, the anniversary of their martyrdom. He is shown as a Jesuit priest, with the martyr's palm.

What can we learn from Saint Philip Evans?

Philip Evans chose to stay with the Catholics of his country when he could have fled. He faced prison and death with a joy that surprised his jailers: he sang, he played, he kept his peace. His holiness is not made of sadness, but of trust. We can pray to him for priests, for persecuted Christians, and to keep peace and even joy in the midst of trials.

Where to pray to Saint Philip Evans

- **Cardiff** (Wales): Saint David's Cathedral, the Catholic cathedral of the city where he was imprisoned and executed.
- **Monmouth**: his hometown.
- **Anywhere**: on October 25, with the Forty Martyrs, or on July 22.

To pray with him at home, you can use the prayer to Saint Philip Evans or the novena to Saint Philip Evans.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Philip Evans for Priests and Joy in Trial

Saint Philip Evans, a Welsh Jesuit priest, secretly served the Catholics of South Wales. Arrested in 1678, he sang hymns in prison, accompanying himself on the harp, and he was executed at Cardiff on July 22, 1679, for the sole fact of being a priest. This prayer is an original composition inspired by his life, not an official liturgical text. It entrusts to him priests, persecuted Christians and all who seek peace in the midst of trial.

Prayer to Saint Philip Evans

Saint Philip Evans,
son of Wales and of the Society of Jesus,
you left your land to prepare for the priesthood
and you came back to it knowing what it might cost you.

You brought the sacraments in secret
to those who thirsted for God,
and when you were urged to flee,
you stayed with them.

In prison you sang the praises of God,
and before death you kept your peace.
Pray for priests, especially those who serve in danger,
for Christians who cannot live their faith freely,
and for those who go through a trial with no way out in sight.

Obtain for us a faithful and joyful heart,
that still sings when all seems lost.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

When to pray to Saint Philip Evans

- On October 25, the feast of the Forty Martyrs of England and Wales, and on July 22, the anniversary of his death.
- For a priest, a seminarian or a vocation.
- For Christians persecuted or imprisoned for their faith.
- When a trial makes you lose your peace and joy.
- For the Church in Wales and in Great Britain.

An invocation for peace of heart

> *Saint Philip Evans, you who sang in prison,*
> *teach me to praise God in trial*
> *and to keep the peace of Christ. Amen.*

To prepare for his feast, you can pray the novena to Saint Philip Evans from October 17 to 25, or from July 14 to 22, and discover the life of Saint Philip Evans.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Philip Evans

This novena is an original composition by Saintspedia, inspired by the life of Saint Philip Evans, a Welsh Jesuit priest who died a martyr at Cardiff on July 22, 1679. It is not an official liturgical text. To end it on October 25, the feast of the Forty Martyrs of England and Wales, begin on October 17; to end it on July 22, the anniversary of his death, begin on July 14. You can also pray it at any time of the year.

How to pray this novena

Each day, begin with the Sign of the Cross and present 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 Philip Evans, pray for us." The small act proposed each day helps you live the novena concretely.

Day 1: A faith received in secret

Philip Evans was born at Monmouth in 1645, in a country where the Catholic faith was forbidden. He received it nonetheless, and kept it. A faith handed on quietly can be very strong.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for those who handed on the faith to me, sometimes at the cost of sacrifices. Make me worthy of this inheritance.

Today: Pray for your parents and grandparents in the faith.

Day 2: Studying far from home

To be trained, Philip had to go to Saint-Omer, in France. He accepted distance in order to prepare to serve. Every vocation asks for sacrifices.

Prayer: Lord, bless students far from home, and those who are preparing to serve you.

Today: Pray for the seminarians of your diocese.

Day 3: Entering the Jesuits

In 1667, Philip entered the Society of Jesus. With Saint Ignatius he learned to offer everything to God: his freedom, his memory, his understanding and his will.

Prayer: Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty. Give me only your love and your grace.

Today: Offer your whole day to God in the morning.

Day 4: Returning despite danger

Ordained a priest in 1675, Philip returned to Wales knowing he risked death. He came back because Catholics were waiting for the sacraments.

Prayer: Lord, bless the priests who serve in countries where Christians are threatened. Give them courage and prudence.

Today: Write to a priest or tell him thank you.

Day 5: Refusing to flee

When the persecution grew worse in 1678, his friends urged him to hide. He refused and continued his ministry. The good shepherd does not leave his flock.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, Good Shepherd, let me be faithful to those who count on me, even when it costs.

Today: Keep a commitment today that you would be tempted to abandon.

Day 6: Denounced and arrested

On December 4, 1678, Philip was denounced and arrested. Betrayal and injustice were part of his path, as they were of Christ's.

Prayer: Lord, I entrust to you those who are falsely accused. Give me the strength to forgive those who have wronged me.

Today: Pray for a person who has hurt you.

Day 7: Singing in prison

In prison, Philip obtained a harp and sang hymns for the guards and the prisoners. Even locked up, he praised God and comforted others.

Prayer: Lord, put a song of praise in my heart, even in dark days.

Today: Sing or listen to a hymn, and pray for prisoners.

Day 8: A brother in the struggle

In prison, Philip shared the lot of John Lloyd, another priest. They were tried together and would die on the same day. In trial, God often gives a companion.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for the friends who support me. Make me a support for those who suffer.

Today: Check in on a friend who is going through a trial.

Day 9: The best pulpit

On July 22, 1679, Philip was executed at Cardiff. Tradition reports that from the scaffold he said it was the best pulpit a man could have. His death was his last sermon.

Prayer: Lord, let my whole life proclaim your love. Through the intercession of Saint Philip Evans, grant me the grace I ask in this novena, if it is your will.

Today: Pray for persecuted Christians today and for their persecutors.

Living the novena with Saint Philip Evans

What stands out about Saint Philip Evans is his peace and even his joy in the face of death. He did not seek martyrdom, but he did not run from it. During these nine days, ask for the grace of this inner peace. Pray also for priests, for vocations and for all those who, even today, risk their freedom or their lives to celebrate Mass and give the sacraments.

Closing prayer

Saint Philip Evans,
faithful priest and joyful martyr,
you who stayed with the Catholics of Wales
and who still sang in prison,
present to God the intention I have carried during these nine days.
Bless our priests,
strengthen persecuted Christians
and give me the peace of Christ in all my trials.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

You can also pray the prayer to Saint Philip Evans at any time, and discover the life of Saint Philip Evans.

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