

BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Pius I

Life, prayer and novena

Feast day: July 11

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IN BRIEF

Saint Pius I

Bishop of Rome around 140-154, at the time of the Marcionite crisis.

Feast day	July 11
Born	late 1st century, perhaps Aquileia, Italy
Died	c. 154, Rome
Era	2nd century
Patron saint of	Roccaspinalveti, the archdiocese of Udine

In this booklet

Life

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Novena to Saint Pius I

Credits and sources

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LIFE

Saint Pius I

Saint Pius I was bishop of Rome in the middle of the 2nd century, around 140-154, during the reign of Emperor Antoninus Pius. The ninth successor of Peter according to the oldest list of popes, he led a Roman Church that was still small and faced its first great doctrinal crises, those of Gnosticism and of Marcion. The ancient sources say little about him, but they preserve one rare detail: he was the brother of the author of the *Shepherd of Hermas*. His feast day is July 11.

Who was Saint Pius I?

What we know of Pius fits in a few lines. The *Liber Pontificalis*, the book of the lives of the popes written much later, says he was born in Aquileia, in northern Italy, the son of a man named Rufinus. But this detail may be a guess by the author, who knew the 4th-century writer Rufinus of Aquileia. Other sources say he came from Illyria, on the eastern shore of the Adriatic.

An older testimony is more valuable. According to the *Muratorian Fragment*, a Roman document from the end of the 2nd century and one of the oldest lists of the books of the New Testament, Pius was the brother of Hermas, author of the *Shepherd*. This collection of visions on repentance was widely read in the early Church; some Christians even counted it among the Scriptures. The fragment says that Hermas wrote it "quite recently, in our time, in the city of Rome, while bishop Pius, his brother, was occupying the chair of the church of the city of Rome."

Key dates

- **Late 1st century**: Born, perhaps in Aquileia.
- **c. 140**: Succeeds Hyginus as bishop of Rome.

- **c. 144**: Marcion is excluded from the Church of Rome.
- **c. 150**: Saint Justin teaches in Rome.
- **c. 154**: Dies in Rome; Anicetus succeeds him.
- **9th century**: His name enters a martyrology, that of Ado of Vienne.
- **1969**: The calendar reform no longer considers him a martyr.

A Church facing Marcion

In the middle of the 2nd century, Rome attracted many Christian teachers, orthodox or not. Among them came Marcion, from Pontus on the Black Sea. He set the God of the Old Testament against the Father of Jesus Christ, rejected the Jewish Scriptures and kept only one Gospel and some letters of Paul, which he edited. Around 144, he was excluded from the Roman community, probably at an assembly presided over by Pius.

This break pushed the Church to clarify which books it received as Scripture. Against Marcion, the Church of Rome kept the Old and the New Testament together, as the one word of the one God.

Pius may not have been a great theologian himself. But he found strong support in the philosopher Justin, a convert to Christianity, who was teaching in Rome at the time and wrote against Marcion.

What tradition added

Later centuries credited Pius with various decisions: fixing the celebration of Easter on a Sunday, rules for welcoming converts from Judaism, the founding of the churches of Saint Pudentiana and Saint Praxedes in Rome, and two letters now judged inauthentic. In reality, these churches date from the 4th century.

In the same way, the old Breviary presented him as a martyr. But no persecution is recorded under Antoninus Pius, and the reform of the calendar in 1969 concluded that there was no reason to consider him one. The current Roman Martyrology no longer gives him this title. According to tradition, he was buried on the Vatican hill, near the Apostle Peter.



The Basilica of Santa Pudenziana in Rome, which tradition links to Saint Pius I.

What does his holiness teach us?

Pius I had no cult in antiquity: his name entered a martyrology only in the 9th century, with Ado of Vienne. His figure therefore remains discreet. Yet it recalls a decisive moment, when the Church of Rome, still small, had to discern what belonged to the faith received from the apostles, and did so by keeping the Old and the New Testament together.

For Catholics today, this is no small thing. Every time the Church reads a passage from the Old Testament at Mass alongside the Gospel, it continues the choice made in the time of Pius: the God of Abraham, of Moses and of the prophets is the Father of Jesus Christ.

Why is Saint Pius I the patron saint of Roccaspinalveti?

Saint Pius I is the patron of Roccaspinalveti, a village in the Abruzzo region of Italy, which keeps a reliquary statue of him and honors him with a feast. He is also one of the patrons of the archdiocese of Udine, in Friuli, the region of Aquileia, where the *Liber Pontificalis* places his birth. More broadly, Catholics can pray to him for the pope, for the unity of the Church and for fidelity to the whole of Scripture.

Symbols and how to recognize Saint Pius I in art

Like the other early popes, Saint Pius I is shown in later images as a pope in pontifical vestments, often with a halo. His best-known portrait is a medallion in the series of papal portraits, made long after his time; it is not a true likeness. In Roccaspinalveti, his statue shows him as a pope and is carried in procession on his feast.

Where to pray to Saint Pius I

- **Roccaspinalveti** (Abruzzo, Italy): the village of which he is patron, which keeps a reliquary statue.
- **Rome**: Saint Peter's Basilica, near which tradition says he was buried, and the Basilica of Santa Pudenziana.
- **Udine** (Friuli, Italy): the archdiocese, of which he is one of the patrons.

You can pray with him using the prayer to Saint Pius I or the novena to Saint Pius I.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Pius I for Faithfulness to the Faith

Saint Pius I left no writings that have come down to us, and no traditional prayer in his name is widely used. His memory is linked to a decisive moment for the early Church: the time when the Church of Rome, facing Marcion, chose to keep the Old and the New Testament together. Below is an original prayer inspired by his life, followed by a short invocation.

A pope of the early Church

Bishop of Rome around 140-154, brother of Hermas, author of the *Shepherd*, Pius guided a small community in a city full of competing teachers. He was supported by Saint Justin, the philosopher who taught in Rome. To pray with him is to ask for faithfulness to the faith of the apostles, love for the whole of Scripture and unity in the Church.

Prayer to Saint Pius I for faithfulness to the faith

Saint Pius, shepherd of the Church of Rome in the days of the first Christians, you who guarded the faith received from the apostles, pray for the Holy Father and for all the bishops of the Church.

You who, in a time of confusion, helped the Church to keep the Old and the New Testament together, give me a love for the whole Word of God. May I recognize in the God of Abraham, Moses and the prophets the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

You who welcomed the help of Saint Justin and lived alongside your brother Hermas, the writer of repentance, teach me to receive the gifts of others and to turn back to God each day with a contrite heart.

Watch over the people of Roccaspinalveti and Udine, and all who call on you. I entrust to you my intention: (name it in silence).

Through your intercession, may the Lord keep us united in the one faith, the one baptism and the one Church. Amen.

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

When to pray this prayer

- On his feast day, **July 11**, the day the Roman Martyrology remembers him.
- For the pope and for the unity of the Church.
- When you begin reading the Bible, especially the Old Testament.
- When you feel confused by contradictory teachings and want to stay faithful to the faith of the Church.
- For catechists, teachers of the faith and students of theology.

A short invocation

> *Saint Pius, faithful bishop of Rome, pray for the Church and keep us in the faith of the apostles. Amen.*

To go further, read the life of Saint Pius I or pray the novena to Saint Pius I, which ends on July 11.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Pius I

This novena to Saint Pius I is an original composition by Saintspedia. Over nine days, it follows the bishop of Rome of the middle of the 2nd century, brother of Hermas, who guided the Church at the time of the crisis caused by Marcion. To end on his feast day, July 11, begin it on July 3. You can also pray it at any time of the year, for the pope, for the unity of the Church or for a deeper love of Scripture.

How to pray this novena

Each day, find a quiet moment. Begin with the Sign of the Cross, read the short meditation, then say the prayer of the day followed by an Our Father, a Hail Mary and a Glory Be. Finish with the small act proposed for the day. If you miss a day, simply continue: a novena is a path of trust, not a test.

Day 1: A hidden saint

We know very little about Saint Pius I: a few lines in ancient documents, a name in the list of popes. Holiness does not need fame. Most saints are known only to God.

Prayer: Saint Pius, teach me to serve God faithfully, without seeking to be seen or praised. Amen.

Today: Do a good deed in secret, without telling anyone.

Day 2: A brother

According to the *Muratorian Fragment*, Pius was the brother of Hermas, who wrote the *Shepherd*. Two brothers, one a bishop, the other a writer, both serving the same Church. Our families can be schools of faith.

Prayer: Saint Pius, bless my brothers and sisters, and all those who share my faith. Amen.

Today: Pray for a brother, a sister or a close friend, and tell them you are thinking of them.

Day 3: The call to repentance

The *Shepherd of Hermas* is a book about repentance: God offers a new chance to those who turn back to him. In Pius's time, Christians reflected deeply on forgiveness after baptism.

Prayer: Lord, give me a humble and contrite heart, and the joy of your forgiveness. Saint Pius, pray for me. Amen.

Today: Make an examination of conscience, and if you can, plan to go to confession.

Day 4: A small Church in a great city

The Church of Rome in the 2nd century was a small community in an immense pagan city. Christians were few, but they held firm. Being a minority does not mean being without hope.

Prayer: Saint Pius, give courage to Christians who live their faith as a small minority, and to all who feel alone in believing. Amen.

Today: Pray for Christians in a country where they are few or persecuted.

Day 5: Discernment

Many teachers came to Rome, and not all taught the faith of the apostles. Pius and his community had to discern. Discernment is a gift of the Holy Spirit that we need in every age.

Prayer: Holy Spirit, give me the light to recognize the truth and the courage to follow it. Saint Pius, pray for me. Amen.

Today: Read a passage of the Catechism or a page of a solid book on the faith.

Day 6: The whole of Scripture

Marcion rejected the Old Testament and kept only part of the New. Around 144, he was excluded from the Church of Rome. The Church chose to keep all of Scripture, for the same God speaks in both Testaments.

Prayer: Lord, give me a love for your whole Word, the Law, the Prophets, the Psalms and the Gospel. Saint Pius, pray for me. Amen.

Today: Read and pray one Psalm.

Day 7: Accepting help

Pius was not alone. Saint Justin, the philosopher who became a Christian, taught in Rome and wrote against Marcion. A good shepherd welcomes the gifts of others.

Prayer: Saint Pius, help me to recognize and welcome the gifts of others, and to work together for the good of the Church. Amen.

Today: Thank someone whose talents help your parish or community.

Day 8: Truth and humility

Later centuries attributed to Pius decisions he never made and a martyrdom that is not documented. The Church corrected these claims. Faith does not need legends: it rests on the truth.

Prayer: Lord, make me love the truth, even when it is humble and simple. Saint Pius, pray for me. Amen.

Today: Be honest in a situation where you would be tempted to exaggerate or embellish.

Day 9: Near the Apostle Peter

Tradition says that Pius was buried on the Vatican hill, near Saint Peter. He belongs to the long line of bishops of Rome who have served the unity of the Church through the centuries.

Prayer: Saint Pius, present my intention to the Lord, and pray for the pope and for the unity of all Christians. Amen.

Today: If you can, take part in Mass and pray for the Holy Father.

Closing prayer

> *Lord God, you gave Saint Pius I the grace to guide your Church in its early days and to keep faithfully the faith received from the apostles. Through his intercession, give us a love for the whole of your Word, a humble heart ready to repent and a deep attachment to the unity of the Church. Bless the pope and all who serve your people, and hear the intention I place before you. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

To learn more, read the life of Saint Pius I or pray the prayer to Saint Pius I.

CREDITS

Credits and sources

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