

BOOKLET TO PRINT

# Saint Potitus

*Life, prayer and novena*

Feast day: January 14

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IN BRIEF

## Saint Potitus

*Teenage martyr of the 2nd century under Antoninus Pius, patron of Tricarico and Ascoli Satriano.*

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| **Feast day** | January 14, January 13 |
| **Born** | Sardica (present-day Sofia, Bulgaria), according to tradition |
| **Died** | c. 160 |
| **Canonized** | immemorial cult |
| **Era** | 2nd century |
| **Patron saint of** | Tricarico, Ascoli Satriano, San Potito Sannitico, San Potito Ultra |

## In this booklet


Life

Prayer to Saint Potitus for Young People and Their Faith

Novena to Saint Potitus

Credits and sources



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LIFE

# Saint Potitus

Saint Potitus (in Italian *San Potito*) was a young martyr of the second century. According to his Passion, he came from Sardica, present-day Sofia in Bulgaria, and died as a teenager around 160, under Emperor Antoninus Pius, for refusing to deny Christ. The patron of Tricarico and Ascoli Satriano in southern Italy, he is celebrated on January 14, sometimes on January 13.

## Who was Saint Potitus?

We know Potitus from a *Passion of Saint Potitus* written in Latin, probably in southern Italy, in the eighth or ninth century at the latest, several centuries after the events. The account is full of wonders and follows a pattern common in the Passions of young martyrs. It is impossible to verify its details. What is certain is the antiquity and strength of the devotion to Potitus in southern Italy, from Naples to Apulia and Basilicata.

## Key dates

- **Mid 2nd century**: Born at Sardica, in Thrace, into a wealthy pagan family, according to tradition.
- **Adolescence**: He becomes a Christian in spite of the opposition of his father, Hylas, who wants him to sacrifice to the gods.
- **c. 160**: According to the Passion, he frees Agnes, daughter of Emperor Antoninus Pius, from madness, then refuses to sacrifice to idols.
- **c. 160**: He is thrown to the lions and plunged into boiling oil, unharmed according to the account, then beheaded. He is said to have been about thirteen.
- **8th-9th century**: The *Passion of Saint Potitus* is written, at the latest in this period.

- **Middle Ages**: His veneration spreads to Naples, Capua and the region of Benevento.

## A teenager who chose Christ

According to the Passion, Potitus grew up in a well-off pagan family. While still a child, he discovered Christ and decided to follow him. His father Hylas tried to bring him back to the gods of his ancestors, first by persuasion, then by threats. Potitus held firm. The account shows him calm and sure of himself, speaking of God with a freedom that astonishes the adults.

This is the heart of his story: a very young man who discovers faith for himself and stays faithful to it when everything urges him to give it up. He thus joins the long list of young martyrs of the early centuries, like Saint Agnes or Saint Pancras in Rome.

## An account of wonders

The Passion multiplies miracles. Potitus is said to have healed Agnes, the daughter of Emperor Antoninus Pius, of madness. But he then refuses to offer incense to the idols. He is thrown to the lions, which lie down at his feet. He is plunged into boiling oil and comes out unharmed. He is finally beheaded, out of hatred for the faith.

These episodes resemble those of many other Passions and should not be read as a chronicle. They express a conviction: God's strength shows itself in the weakness of a child, and human violence does not have the last word.

## Veneration and iconography

Potitus is venerated as a saint and martyr by the Catholic Church. His memorial is fixed on January 14; the old Roman Martyrology listed him on January 13. He is the principal patron of Tricarico, in Basilicata, and of the

diocese of Tricarico: his relics are kept in the Cathedral of Santa Maria Assunta. He is also patron of Ascoli Satriano, in Apulia, and of the diocese of Cerignola-Ascoli Satriano. The former cathedral of Ascoli keeps a silver reliquary bust containing a fragment of his forearm. This bust is carried in procession on his feast day and at the summer festivals, between August 18 and 20.

In Naples, the church of San Potito is dedicated to him. The Benedictines who served it obtained from Pope Clement XII a proper office in his honor. Two towns in Campania bear his name: San Potito Sannitico and San Potito Ultra. He is shown as a young boy, the palm of martyrdom in his hand, sometimes with lions at his feet.

## What to remember about Saint Potitus

Potitus is a saint for young people. He reminds us that at thirteen one can make a real choice of faith, personal and free, even when family or friends do not share it. He is also a saint for parents whose children take a path they do not understand. You can pray to him for teenagers, for those who discover faith on their own, and for those who suffer in mind.

## Where to pray to Saint Potitus

- **Tricarico** (Basilicata, Italy): the Cathedral of Santa Maria Assunta, which keeps his relics.
- **Ascoli Satriano** (Apulia, Italy): the church dedicated to him and the former cathedral, where his reliquary bust is found.
- **Naples**: the church of San Potito.

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

PRAYER

# Prayer to Saint Potitus for Young People and Their Faith

According to his Passion, Saint Potitus was a teenager from a pagan family of Thrace. Having become a Christian in spite of his father's opposition, he refused to deny Christ and died a martyr around 160, under Emperor Antoninus Pius. This prayer is an original composition inspired by his life, not an official liturgical text. It entrusts to him young people, their faith and courage, and those who suffer in mind.

## Prayer to Saint Potitus

*Saint Potitus,*
*you came to know Christ while still a child*
*and chose him with all your heart.*
*You stayed faithful in spite of threats*
*and gave your life for him.*

*Pray for young people today:*
*for those who seek God without daring to say so,*
*for those who believe alone in their family or school,*
*for those who are mocked for their faith.*

*Pray for anxious parents*
*and for those whose minds are troubled or ill:*
*may the peace of Christ come down upon them.*

*Give us a young and courageous heart,*
*one that is not overcome by fear*
*and stays attached to the Lord.*
*Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

## When to pray to Saint Potitus

- On his feast day, January 14 (or January 13 according to some calendars).
- For a teenager preparing for confirmation or a profession of faith.
- For a young person discovering faith without the support of their family.
- For a person who suffers from a mental illness.
- When courage is needed to stay faithful to your convictions.

## A short prayer for young people

You can entrust a young person to Saint Potitus with this short prayer:

> *Saint Potitus, keep in the faith the one I entrust to you.*
> *Give him or her your courage and your joy,*
> *and lead them to Christ. Amen.*

To prepare for his feast, you can pray the novena to Saint Potitus from January 6 to 14, and discover the life of Saint Potitus.

NOVENA

# Novena to Saint Potitus

This novena is an original composition by Saintspedia, inspired by the life of Saint Potitus as his Passion reports it. It is not an official liturgical text. To end it on his feast day, January 14, begin on January 6, the feast of the Epiphany. It is especially suited to entrusting young people, their faith and their future. You can 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 Potitus, pray for us." The small act proposed each day helps you live the novena concretely.

## Day 1: Discovering Christ

According to his Passion, Potitus discovered Christ as a child, in a family that did not know him. God knows how to make himself known to each person, by unexpected paths.

**Prayer:** Lord, thank you for making yourself known to me. Make yourself known to those who do not know you yet.

**Today:** Think back on how you met God, and give thanks for it.

## Day 2: A personal faith

Potitus did not inherit his faith: he chose it. Each of us is called one day to say our own yes to Christ, freely.

**Prayer:** Lord, today I say my yes to you again. May my faith not be a habit, but a living love.

**Today:** Slowly reread the Creed, weighing each sentence.

## Day 3: Alone in your family

Potitus's father wanted to bring him back to the pagan gods. It is painful to believe alone among your own people. Many live this today.

**Prayer:** Lord, support those who believe alone in their family. Keep love and respect between them and their loved ones.

**Today:** Pray for a family member far from the faith, without judging them.

## Day 4: The courage of youth

Potitus was only about thirteen, according to the account. His youth did not keep him from standing firm. God gives his strength to the little ones.

**Prayer:** Lord, bless the young people of our families and parishes. Give them the courage of their convictions.

**Today:** Encourage a young person in your life with a word or a message.

## Day 5: Healing a troubled mind

The Passion tells that Potitus freed the emperor's daughter from madness. The sufferings of the mind are heavy to bear, for the sick and for those close to them.

**Prayer:** Lord, I entrust to you those who suffer from mental illness, depression or anxiety. Give them peace, and support those who care for them.

**Today:** Check in on a person who is going through a dark time.

## Day 6: Refusing idols

Potitus refused to offer incense to the idols. Our idols today have other names: money, image, power, the opinion of others.

**Prayer:** Lord, show me the idols in my life, and give me the freedom to worship you alone.

**Today:** Give up today one thing that takes up too much room in your life.

## Day 7: Stronger than fear

The account shows the lions calmed before Potitus and the boiling oil without effect. Beyond these wonders, it tells a truth: whoever relies on God is not alone before fear.

**Prayer:** Lord, when I am afraid, be my rock. Teach me to trust you.

**Today:** Name a fear and entrust it to God in prayer.

## Day 8: Giving your life

Potitus was beheaded out of hatred for the faith. He preferred faithfulness to saving his life. Still today, Christians, sometimes very young ones, die for their faith.

**Prayer:** Lord, support persecuted Christians around the world. Give them your strength and your peace.

**Today:** Learn about the situation of Christians in a country where they are persecuted, and pray for them.

## Day 9: A living memory

Eighteen centuries after his death, towns in Italy still carry Potitus in procession and invoke him as their patron. The faithfulness of a teenager continues to light the way for whole communities.

**Prayer:** Lord, may my life, however small, be a witness to others. Through the intercession of Saint Potitus, grant me the grace I ask in this novena, if it is your will.

**Today:** Entrust by name to Saint Potitus the young people dear to you.

## Living the novena with Saint Potitus

Few things are known for certain about Saint Potitus, but his story, as the Church has handed it down, speaks strongly to young people and to those who love them. During these nine days, you can carry a teenager who is searching, a young person preparing for a sacrament, or someone who suffers in mind. If you are young yourself, ask Potitus for the courage to live your faith without shame and without fear.

## Closing prayer

> *Saint Potitus,*
> *young witness of Christ,*
> *you chose the Lord in spite of the opposition of your own*
> *and stayed faithful to him to martyrdom.*
> *Present to God the intention I have carried during these nine days.*
> *Keep young people in the faith,*
> *bring peace to those whose minds are troubled,*
> *and give us your quiet courage.*
> *Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

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

CREDITS

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