BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Prochorus the Deacon

Life, prayer and novena

Feast day: July 28

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IN BRIEF

Saint Prochorus the Deacon

One of the first seven deacons of the Church of Jerusalem, a companion of Saint John according to tradition.

Feast day	July 28
Born	early 1st century (unknown)
Died	1st century, according to tradition, Antioch, according to tradition
Canonized	immemorial cult
Era	1st century

In this booklet

Life

Prayer to Saint Prochorus, Servant of the Poor and of the Word

Novena to Saint Prochorus the Deacon

Credits and sources

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LIFE

Saint Prochorus the Deacon

Saint Prochorus was one of the first seven deacons of the Church of Jerusalem, chosen by the community and ordained by the apostles, as the Acts of the Apostles relate. He lived in the 1st century. Tradition makes him a companion of Saint John the Evangelist, who is said to have made him bishop of Nicomedia, and says he died a martyr at Antioch. His feast day is July 28.

Who was Saint Prochorus?

In the New Testament, Prochorus appears only once: his name is the third in the list of the Seven, after Stephen and Philip, in chapter 6 of the Acts of the Apostles. Like his companions, he bears a Greek name, which suggests he belonged to the Greek-speaking Jews who had become disciples of Jesus in Jerusalem. Scripture says no more.

Ancient traditions embroidered a great deal around this name. They count him among the seventy-two disciples sent out by Christ, make him a nephew of Saint Stephen and, above all, a companion of the apostle John. According to these accounts, John ordained him bishop of Nicomedia, in Bithynia, and Prochorus died a martyr at Antioch. This information cannot be verified and is largely legendary; it does show, however, the importance Eastern Christians gave to this deacon of the beginnings.

Key dates in the life of Prochorus

- **Early 1st century**: Born, probably into a Greek-speaking Jewish family; tradition makes him a nephew of Saint Stephen.
- **According to tradition**: He is one of the seventy-two disciples sent out by Christ.

- **The 30s of the 1st century**: In Jerusalem, he is chosen among the seven men in charge of serving widows and the poor; the apostles lay hands on him.
- **According to tradition**: He becomes the companion and disciple of the apostle John.
- **According to tradition**: John makes him bishop of Nicomedia, in Bithynia.
- **1st century**: He dies a martyr at Antioch, according to tradition.
- **5th century**: An account of the travels of Saint John circulates under his name.
- **July 28**: Common memorial of Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas and Nicolas.

One of the Seven

The Acts of the Apostles tell that in the early days of the Church of Jerusalem, the Greek-speaking disciples complained that their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution. The Twelve asked the assembly to choose seven men "of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom" for this task, so that they themselves could remain devoted to prayer and the ministry of the Word. Prochorus was chosen with Stephen, Philip, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas and Nicolas. The apostles prayed and laid their hands on them (Acts 6:1-6).

The Church has seen in this account the birth of the diaconate. Prochorus appears in it as a trusted man, to whom the community entrusts the care of the most vulnerable. Acts notes at once that, thanks to this service, the word of God spread and the number of disciples increased.

The companion of Saint John

The richest tradition about Prochorus links him to the apostle John. It shows him accompanying John on his travels and serving as his secretary. In Byzantine art, one scene became classic: on the island of Patmos, John, his eyes raised to heaven, dictates his Gospel or the Book of Revelation to Prochorus, who sits at his feet and writes. In the 5th century, a long account of the travels and miracles of Saint John, now considered apocryphal, was in fact attributed to Prochorus.

According to the same tradition, John ordained him bishop of Nicomedia, a great city of Bithynia, in northwestern Asia Minor. Prochorus is then said to have suffered martyrdom at Antioch. The sources give neither a precise date nor a reliable account of his death.

Devotion and art

Prochorus is honored in the Catholic Church and in the Orthodox Churches. On July 28, a common memorial brings together five of the Seven: Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas and Nicolas. In the Eastern Churches he is also celebrated on that same day. His most widespread image is that of Saint John's scribe: he is shown young, seated, a book or scroll on his knees, writing at the apostle's dictation. He also appears in depictions of the ordination of the Seven, as in Fra Angelico's fresco in the Niccoline Chapel of the Vatican.

What can we learn from Saint Prochorus?

Prochorus first served at table and then, according to tradition, served the Word by putting his pen at the service of the apostle John. The two images belong together: the deacon is the one who serves, both the poor and the Gospel. He teaches us not to seek the first place, to help others hand on the

faith, and to remain faithful to the end. You can pray to him for deacons, for catechists, for those who write or translate in the service of the Church, and for the Christians of the East.

To pray with him, see the prayer to Saint Prochorus and the novena to Saint Prochorus.

Where to pray to Saint Prochorus

- **Jerusalem**: the city where he was chosen and ordained deacon.
- **Patmos** (Greece): the island where tradition shows him writing at the dictation of Saint John.
- **In any church**: on July 28, during the common memorial of the deacons who were companions of Saint Stephen.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Prochorus, Servant of the Poor and of the Word

Saint Prochorus was one of the first seven deacons of the Church of Jerusalem. Tradition makes him the companion and secretary of the apostle John, then a bishop who died a martyr. Prayer composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. It is not an official liturgical text. It entrusts to him deacons, those who hand on the Word of God, and all who serve unseen.

Prayer to Saint Prochorus

Saint Prochorus,
chosen by the Church of Jerusalem
to serve widows and the poor,
teach me the joy of service
and attention to the most vulnerable.

You whom tradition shows at the side of Saint John,
writing the Word of life at his dictation,
help me to listen to the Gospel with an attentive heart
and to hand it on faithfully.

Pray for deacons and catechists,
for those who write and translate in the service of the Church,
and for the Christians of the East.
Keep me faithful to the end,
as you were.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

When to pray to Saint Prochorus

- On his feast day, July 28.
- For deacons and those preparing for the diaconate.
- For catechists, translators and all who serve the Word of God.
- Before reading or studying the Gospel according to Saint John.
- For the Christians of the East, especially those of Turkey and Syria.

A short invocation

> *Saint Prochorus, servant of the poor and of the Word,*
> *pray for us. Amen.*

To prepare for his feast, you can pray the novena to Saint Prochorus from July 20 to July 28, and read the life of Saint Prochorus.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Prochorus the Deacon

This novena is an original composition inspired by Saint Prochorus, one of the first seven deacons of the Church of Jerusalem and, according to tradition, a companion of Saint John. Novena composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. It is not an official liturgical text. To finish it on his feast day, July 28, begin on July 20. You can also pray it at any other time of the year.

How to pray this novena

Each day, begin with the Sign of the Cross and entrust your intention to God. Read the short meditation, say the prayer of the day, then an Our Father, a Hail Mary and a Glory Be. End with: "Saint Prochorus, pray for us." The act suggested each day helps you live the novena concretely. The meditations draw on the Acts of the Apostles and on tradition, many of whose details are legendary.

Day 1: A family of witnesses

Tradition makes Prochorus a nephew of Saint Stephen. Whether or not this link is historical, it says something true: faith is often handed on in families.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for those in my family who handed on the faith to me. Keep our families united in you.

Act of the day: Pray for a family member who has drifted away from the faith.

Day 2: A disciple above all

Tradition counts him among the seventy-two disciples sent out by Jesus. All service begins with following Christ.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, teach me to follow you before wanting to act for you.

Act of the day: Spend ten minutes in silence before God.

Day 3: Chosen to serve

The Church of Jerusalem chose Prochorus among the Seven, to serve widows and the poor. He received this service through the laying on of the apostles' hands.

Prayer: Lord, bless the deacons of your Church and make them signs of Christ the servant.

Act of the day: Pray for the deacons of your diocese.

Day 4: The table of the poor

The Seven were to make sure no one was forgotten at the common meal. Concrete charity is the first language of the Gospel.

Prayer: Lord, may no one around me be forgotten. Make me attentive to the most vulnerable.

Act of the day: Share a meal or offer food to someone in need.

Day 5: At the side of Saint John

According to tradition, Prochorus accompanied the apostle John on his travels. He learned from the disciple whom Jesus loved.

Prayer: Lord, let me remain in your love, as Saint John taught.

Act of the day: Read a chapter of the First Letter of Saint John.

Day 6: Writing at dictation

Icons show Prochorus writing on Patmos at the dictation of Saint John. To serve the Word is first to listen to it and receive it as it is given.

Prayer: Lord, open my ears to your Word, and make me a faithful messenger.

Act of the day: Copy out by hand a verse of the Gospel according to Saint John and keep it with you.

Day 7: Pastor of a Church

Tradition says that John made him bishop of Nicomedia. The deacon of the poor became the pastor of a community.

Prayer: Lord, bless our bishops and priests, and give them the heart of a servant.

Act of the day: Pray for the bishop of your diocese.

Day 8: The Christians of the East

Nicomedia, Antioch: the places of Prochorus's life lie in present-day Turkey and close to Syria, lands where Christians are few today and often tested.

Prayer: Lord, support the Christians of the East. Keep them in faith and in hope.

Act of the day: Support, by prayer or a gift, a work that helps the Christians of the East.

Day 9: Martyrdom at Antioch

Tradition says that Prochorus died a martyr at Antioch. The servant followed his Master to the gift of his life.

Prayer: Lord, keep me faithful to the end. Through the intercession of Saint Prochorus, grant me the grace I ask in this novena, if it is your will.

Act of the day: If you can, attend Mass and pray there for persecuted Christians.

Closing prayer

Saint Prochorus,
deacon of the newborn Church and companion of Saint John,
you served the poor and the Word of God.
Present to the Lord the intention I have entrusted to you.
Teach me to listen to the Gospel
and to live it in service.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

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

Credits and sources

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