BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Pudens

Life, prayer and novena

Feast day: May 19

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IN BRIEF

Saint Pudens

Christian of ancient Rome, founder of the title of Pudens, father of Pudentiana and Praxedes according to legend.

Feast day	May 19
Born	Rome, probably
Died	Rome
Canonized	immemorial cult (honored as a saint in Rome by 595)
Era	2nd century

In this booklet

Life

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Novena to Saint Pudens

Credits and sources

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LIFE

Saint Pudens

Saint Pudens was a Christian of ancient Rome, honored as the founder of one of the oldest churches in the city, the "title of Pudens", which became the basilica of Santa Pudenziana. Tradition confuses him with the Pudens greeted by Saint Paul and makes him the father of Saints Pudentiana and Praxedes. His story is very uncertain, but his cult is ancient. His feast day is May 19.

Who was Saint Pudens?

Behind the name Pudens, historians actually distinguish three figures, whom tradition eventually merged. The first is a Christian of Rome named in the Second Letter to Timothy, in the 1st century. The second is the founder of a neighborhood church in Rome, a "title" bearing his name, about whom almost nothing is known, not even whether he lived in the 2nd or 3rd century. The third is the hero of an account written in the early 6th century, which makes him a senator and the father of two holy virgins. Saint Pudens, celebrated on May 19, is first of all the founder of this Roman title, who very probably existed; the other features of his story belong to legend.

Key dates in the life of Pudens

- **1st century**: Saint Paul passes on to Timothy the greetings of a Christian of Rome named Pudens (2 Timothy 4:21).
- **2nd or 3rd century**: A Christian named Pudens founds in Rome, on the Esquiline, a neighborhood church that bears his name.
- **March 1, 499**: The Roman synod of Pope Symmachus mentions the "title of Pudens".
- **Early 6th century**: The Acts of Pudentiana and Praxedes are written, making Pudens their father.

- **595**: A new Roman synod speaks of the "title of Saint Pudens": he is now honored as a saint.
- **1969**: During the reform of the calendar, his memorial on May 19 is kept.
- **2023**: The relic of his head, kept in Limoges, is once again carried during the Limousin ostensions.

The Pudens of Saint Paul

At the end of the Second Letter to Timothy, Saint Paul writes: "Eubulus sends greetings to you, as do Pudens and Linus and Claudia and all the brothers." Of this Pudens we know nothing but his name and his presence in Rome. Much later, some authors imagined that he was a senator, that he had given hospitality to Saint Peter or married a certain Claudia. These hypotheses rest on no ancient document, and historians have abandoned them.

The founder of a Roman church

In the first centuries, the Christians of Rome met in private houses, which were gradually turned into places of worship. These neighborhood churches were called "titles". One of them, on the Esquiline Hill, bore the name of Pudens: no doubt that of the owner who had placed his house at the community's disposal. The Roman synod of 499 mentions it as the "title of Pudens"; that of 595 calls it the "title of Saint Pudens". Its founder was therefore honored as a saint in Rome by the end of the 6th century. This church became the present basilica of Santa Pudenziana.

The legend of Pudens and his daughters

In the early 6th century, an account presented as a letter from a priest named Pastor told the story of Pudens. Son of Punicus and Priscilla, a friend of the apostles, he readily welcomed strangers passing through. After the death of his wife Savinilla, he is said to have made his house a church and lived there with

his two daughters, Pudentiana and Praxedes, devoted to prayer, fasting and works of charity. At his death, he was supposedly buried in the cemetery of Priscilla, on the Via Salaria, where his daughter Pudentiana later joined him.

Historians have shown that this text, late and without historical value, served mainly to explain the origin of two neighboring churches in Rome, Santa Prassede and Santa Pudenziana, in the context of a conflict that was then dividing the Church of Rome. Its chronology is in fact impossible: it would make Pudens a father at over a hundred years old. Yet the story keeps a true insight: the faith of the first Christians of Rome was handed on in open houses, where people prayed and welcomed others.

Devotion and relics

Unlike his "daughters", whose feasts were removed from the universal calendar in the 1969 reform, Saint Pudens kept his memorial on May 19, which appears notably in the Dominican martyrology. The Orthodox Churches commemorate him on April 14. No ancient document makes him a martyr.

Part of the head of Saint Pudens is kept in Limoges, in the basilica of Saint-Michel-des-Lions. Coming from the convent of the Petits Carmes, the relic is among those carried in procession during the Limousin ostensions, great religious festivals held every seven years. In 2021, scientific studies showed that the bone fragments had been set, probably at the end of the 18th or the beginning of the 19th century, into a papier-mâché skull stained brown, in imitation of the head of Saint Martial. After a long absence, the relic was carried again during the ostensions of 2023.

What can we learn from Saint Pudens?

Saint Pudens is known to us above all through a house: the one a Christian of Rome opened to the community so that it could pray and celebrate. His story, mixed with legend, recalls the role of families and homes in handing on the

faith. You can pray to him for Christian families, for those who welcome others into their homes, and for parishes.

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

Where to pray to Saint Pudens

- **Rome**: the basilica of Santa Pudenziana, on the Esquiline, heir to the "title of Pudens".
- **Limoges** (Haute-Vienne): the basilica of Saint-Michel-des-Lions, which keeps a relic of his head.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Pudens for Families and Those Who Welcome

Saint Pudens is honored in Rome as the Christian who opened his house to the community and founded one of the oldest churches in the city, which became the basilica of Santa Pudenziana. Prayer composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. It is not an official liturgical text. It entrusts to him families, those who welcome others and parish communities.

Prayer to Saint Pudens

Saint Pudens,
Christian of Rome in the first days of the Church,
you opened your house to your brothers and sisters
so that they could pray and break bread.
Teach me to make my home
a place of prayer and welcome.

Watch over Christian families,
over parents who hand on the faith,
and over children who receive it.
May our homes be open
to the stranger, the poor and the lonely.

Bless our parishes,
born like yours from the generosity of a few,
and make them fraternal communities.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

When to pray to Saint Pudens

- On his feast day, May 19.
- For families and the handing on of the faith.
- When you welcome someone into your home.
- For your parish and those who keep it alive.
- During the Limousin ostensions, in Limoges.

A prayer for families

> *Lord, bless our homes and those who live in them.*
> *Saint Pudens, pray for our families. Amen.*

To prepare for his feast, you can pray the novena to Saint Pudens from May 11 to 19, and discover the life of Saint Pudens.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Pudens

This novena is inspired by the figure of Saint Pudens, a Christian of ancient Rome who, according to tradition, founded a church in his own house. Novena composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. It is not an official liturgical text. To finish it on his feast day, May 19, begin on May 11. 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 meditation, say the prayer of the day, then an Our Father, a Hail Mary and a Glory Be. End with: "Saint Pudens, pray for us." The act suggested each day helps you live the novena concretely. Some episodes come from a 6th-century legendary account, which we read as a parable.

Day 1: A name among the brothers

Saint Paul passes on to Timothy the greetings of Pudens and the other brothers in Rome. A simple name, but a real presence in the community.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for the brothers and sisters with whom I share the faith. Keep us united.

Act of the day: Greet a member of your parish and ask how they are.

Day 2: An open house

Pudens placed his house at the community's disposal. The first Christians prayed in houses, around a table.

Prayer: Lord, make my home a place where you are welcome.

Act of the day: Pray for a while at home, with your family or someone close to you.

Day 3: Welcoming the stranger

The account says that Pudens readily welcomed strangers passing through. To welcome the stranger is to welcome Christ.

Prayer: Lord, open my heart to those who come from elsewhere, and teach me hospitality.

Act of the day: Kindly welcome a newcomer in your surroundings.

Day 4: Grief lived in faith

After the death of his wife, according to the account, Pudens made his house a church. Grief became the occasion of a greater gift.

Prayer: Lord, comfort those who have lost their spouse, and help them find a path of life.

Act of the day: Pray for a widowed person, or pay them a visit.

Day 5: Parents who hand on the faith

Tradition makes Pudens the father of two saints. Whether history or legend, it recalls the role of parents in their children's faith.

Prayer: Lord, bless parents, and help them to hand on the faith by their lives.

Act of the day: Pray for your parents or your children, naming them.

Day 6: Prayer, fasting and charity

The account shows the house of Pudens as a place of prayer, fasting and works of charity. These are the three pillars of Christian life.

Prayer: Lord, teach me to pray, to go without a little and to give much.

Act of the day: Give up a small pleasure and give the equivalent to a charity.

Day 7: Building the Church

The house of Pudens became, over the centuries, the basilica of Santa Pudenziana. One act of generosity can bear fruit for generations.

Prayer: Lord, bless all who give to build and maintain your churches.

Act of the day: Support your parish with a gift or a service.

Day 8: A humble and hidden faith

We know very little about Pudens. His holiness was lived in the simplicity of a Christian home.

Prayer: Lord, teach me to serve you in the ordinary actions of each day.

Act of the day: Lovingly do a household chore you dislike.

Day 9: The Father's house

Pudens opened his house on earth; now he is welcomed into the Father's house, where there are many dwelling places.

Prayer: Lord, welcome me one day into your house. Through the intercession of Saint Pudens, grant me the grace I ask in this novena, if it is your will.

Act of the day: Attend Mass if possible, and pray for the departed members of your family.

Living the novena with Saint Pudens

Saint Pudens is the saint of open houses. During these nine days, you can carry your family, those who live alone, the people you welcome at home and your parish. If you pass through Limoges, you can pray before his relic at the basilica of Saint-Michel-des-Lions.

Closing prayer

> *Saint Pudens,*
> *you who opened your house to the Church,*
> *keep our homes in faith and love.*
> *Present to the Lord the intention I have entrusted to you.*
> *Make us welcoming hearts*
> *and families where Christ dwells.*
> *Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

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

Credits and sources

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