BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Quiricus of Tarsus

Life, prayer and novena

Feast day: June 16

IN BRIEF

Saint Quiricus of Tarsus

Child of three or four martyred at Tarsus around 304 with his mother Saint Julitta, one of the youngest Christian martyrs.

Feast day	June 16
Born	c. 300, Iconium (today Konya, Turkey)
Died	c. 304, on a June 16 according to tradition, at the age of three or four, Tarsus (Cilicia, today in Turkey)
Canonized	immemorial cult
Era	4th century
Patron saint of	children, cathedral and diocese of Nevers (with Saint Julitta), nursing mothers (at Canohès)

In this booklet

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Novena to Saint Quiricus and Saint Julitta

Credits and sources

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LIFE

Saint Quiricus of Tarsus

Saint Quiricus of Tarsus (also called Cyricus, Cyr in French, or Cirgues and Cirq in parts of France) was a child martyr of Asia Minor, put to death at Tarsus, in Cilicia, around 304, at the age of three or four, just before his mother, Saint Julitta. He is one of the youngest martyrs in Christian history. Very popular in France, where dozens of towns and churches bear his name, he is celebrated with his mother on June 16.

Who was Saint Quiricus of Tarsus?

The name Cyr comes from the Greek *kurios*, "lord, master". In Latin he is called *Cyricus* or *Quiricus*, which explains the great variety of his names: Cyr, Cirgues, Cirq or Cergues in France, Quirc in Catalonia, Quirico in Italy and Spain, Chirgu in Corsica. His story cannot be separated from that of his mother, Saint Julitta, a widow of Iconium (present-day Konya, in Turkey), who fled with him during the persecution of Emperor Diocletian.

The account of their martyrdom has come down to us through an ancient passion, which the Church has always read with caution: as early as the end of the 5th century, the decree attributed to Pope Gelasius listed it among the texts not to be read publicly, because of the wonders piled up in it. Historians see in it a mixture of memory and legend. But the cult of the mother and child, attested very early throughout the Christian world, preserves the memory of a little boy who died because he said he was a Christian.

Key dates in the life of Quiricus

- **c. 300**: Born at Iconium, in Lycaonia (today Konya, Turkey), into a noble Christian family; his father dies soon after.
- **303**: Emperor Diocletian launches the last great persecution of Christians.

- **c. 304**: His mother Julitta flees with him and two servants, first to Seleucia, then to Tarsus, in Cilicia.
- **c. 304**: Julitta is arrested and brought before the governor Alexander, her son in her arms.
- **June 16, c. 304**: According to tradition, Quiricus is killed at the tribunal, then his mother is put to death in turn.
- **Late 5th century**: The decree attributed to Pope Gelasius warns against the wonder-filled account of their passion.
- **9th century**: The cathedral of Nevers is placed under their patronage.
- **12th century**: An altar frontal from the hermitage of Sant Quirc de Durro, in Catalonia, depicts their martyrdom.

"I too am a Christian!"

According to the passion, Julitta was a noblewoman of Iconium, widowed very young, whose first concern was to raise her son in the faith. When the persecution broke out, she fled with Quiricus, then three years old, and two servants. She first took refuge in Seleucia, then in Tarsus, the hometown of Saint Paul. The governor Alexander had her arrested. She came calmly before the tribunal, the child in her arms, declared that she was a Christian and refused to sacrifice to the idols. She was handed over to torture.

Separated from his mother, the child kept his eyes on her and cried: "I am a Christian too, I am a Christian!" The governor tried to win him over: he took him on his knees and caressed him. But the child struggled with his little fists and called for his mother. Exasperated, the governor seized him by the foot and threw him from his seat down the steps of the tribunal (another version says against a wall). The child's head was broken and he died instantly.

His mother's martyrdom

Seeing her son dead, Julitta, far from rebelling, thanked God for having crowned the child before her. After further suffering, she was led to the place of execution. Kneeling, she offered her life to God, then she was beheaded (some versions say burned), on a June 16, around the year 304. Later accounts added many wonders: at Saint-Cirgues, in Haute-Loire, an inscription tells that the tortures aimed at the child turned against the executioners, before the judge broke his head on the steps.

A cult spread throughout Europe

The cult of Saint Quiricus and Saint Julitta became immensely popular throughout the Mediterranean world and beyond. The Catholic Church celebrates them on June 16, the Orthodox Churches on July 15. In France, more than forty towns bear the name of Saint Cyr in one of its forms: Saint-Cyr-sur-Loire, Saint-Cyr-sur-Mer, Saint-Cyr-l'École, Saint-Cirq-Lapopie, Saint-Cirgues and many others. The cathedral of Nevers is dedicated to them, as are a great many churches, as at Villejuif, Jarzé, Ambon, Crouy-sur-Ourcq, Les Mathes or Saint-Cyr-la-Roche. A chapel is partly dedicated to them in the basilica of Saint-Sernin in Toulouse.

Outside France, the collegiate church of San Quirico d'Orcia, in Tuscany, and the hermitages of Sant Quirc de Durro and Taüll, in the Catalan Pyrenees, bear witness to the same devotion. In Corsica, the name San Chirgu is common, and a confraternity devoted to the saint was founded in 2025 at Cozzano. At Canohès, in the Pyrénées-Orientales, nursing mothers pray to Saint Quirc. Quiricus is often shown as a small child in his mother's arms or at her side, sometimes holding a palm. In Paris, the church of Saint-Nicolas-du-Chardonnet keeps a painting by Louis Jean-Jacques Durameau, The Martyrdom of Saint Cyr and Saint Julitta.

What can we learn from Saint Quiricus of Tarsus?

Saint Quiricus is a child. He did not preach, write or accomplish great works. But his cry, "I too am a Christian!", has echoed down the centuries. It reminds us that faith is not a matter of age, and that the little ones have their full place in the Church. His story is also that of a mother who handed on the faith to her son and went before him in self-offering. You can pray to him for children, especially children who are sick, abused or victims of war, for mothers, and for parents who have lost a child.

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

Where to pray to Saint Quiricus of Tarsus

- **Nevers** (Nièvre): the cathedral of Saint-Cyr-et-Sainte-Julitte, dedicated to them since the 9th century.
- **Villejuif** (Val-de-Marne): the church of Saint-Cyr-Sainte-Julitte and its painting of the martyrdom of Saint Julitta.
- **Saint-Cirgues** (Haute-Loire): the church and its frescoes devoted to the saint.
- **Toulouse** (Haute-Garonne): the chapel partly dedicated to them in the basilica of Saint-Sernin.
- **San Quirico d'Orcia** (Tuscany, Italy): the collegiate church dedicated to Saints Quiricus and Julitta.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Quiricus for Children and Families

Saint Quiricus, a small child martyred at Tarsus around 304 with his mother Saint Julitta, is one of the youngest witnesses to Christ. According to the passion, he cried out before the judge: "I too am a Christian!" Prayer composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. It is not an official liturgical text. It entrusts to him children, especially the most vulnerable, and their parents.

Prayer to Saint Quiricus

Saint Quiricus,
little child with a heart full of courage,
you were not afraid to say before the judge:
"I too am a Christian!"
Give me a simple and true faith,
that is not ashamed of the name of Jesus.

You received the faith from your mother
and went before her into glory:
watch over the children of the whole world,
sick children, abused children,
children who are victims of war and exile.
Keep them under your protection.

Comfort parents who have lost a child,
support mothers who hand on the faith,
and teach us to welcome the little ones
as Jesus welcomed them.
With Saint Julitta, your mother,
pray for us to the Lord.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

When to pray to Saint Quiricus

- On his feast day, June 16, with Saint Julitta.
- For a child who is sick, in danger or a victim of violence.
- For refugee families fleeing persecution or war.
- For parents grieving the loss of a child.
- At a child's baptism, first communion or catechism.

A short invocation

> *Saint Quiricus and Saint Julitta, pray for our children and our families. Amen.*

To prepare for his feast, you can pray the novena to Saint Quiricus from June 8 to June 16, and read the life of Saint Quiricus of Tarsus.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Quiricus and Saint Julitta

This novena is an original composition inspired by the passion of Saint Quiricus, a child martyr at Tarsus with his mother Saint Julitta. Novena composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. It is not an official liturgical text. To finish it on his feast day, June 16, begin on June 8. You can also pray it at any other time of the year, for example for a sick child.

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 Quiricus and Saint Julitta, pray for us." The act of the day helps you live the novena concretely. The episodes come from an ancient passion, mixed with legend, which the Church reads with caution.

Day 1: A child of faith

Quiricus was born at Iconium into a Christian family. His father died early, and his mother Julitta's first concern was to raise him in the faith.

Prayer: Lord, bless the children growing up in our families. Let them know and love you from their youth.

Act of the day: Pray with a child, or for a child you know.

Day 2: A mother alone

Widowed very young, Julitta bore the care of her son alone. She found her strength in God.

Prayer: Lord, support mothers and fathers raising their children alone. Be their help in weariness.

Act of the day: Offer practical help to a single parent you know.

Day 3: Fleeing persecution

When the persecution broke out, Julitta fled with her son to Seleucia, then to Tarsus. Like the Holy Family in Egypt, they were refugees.

Prayer: Lord, protect refugee families and children on the roads of exile. Open our hearts to welcome them.

Act of the day: Support an organization that welcomes refugee families.

Day 4: Before the judge

Arrested at Tarsus, Julitta came calmly before the tribunal, her child in her arms. She declared without fear that she was a Christian.

Prayer: Lord, give me inner peace in trial and the courage to speak of my faith.

Act of the day: Do not hide that you are a Christian today, if the occasion arises.

Day 5: "I too am a Christian!"

Separated from his mother, little Quiricus cried: "I am a Christian too!" Children have a true faith, which deserves to be heard.

Prayer: Jesus, you who said, "Let the little children come to me," give me a child's heart before you.

Act of the day: Listen carefully to a child talking about God.

Day 6: Resisting flattery

The governor tried to win the child over by taking him on his knees. But Quiricus struggled and called for his mother. He would not be seduced.

Prayer: Lord, keep me from the flattery that leads me away from you. Make me faithful to what I have received.

Act of the day: Refuse an easy way out that would go against your conscience.

Day 7: Children as victims

The governor threw the child down the steps of the tribunal. Quiricus thus joins the Holy Innocents and all children who are victims of adult violence.

Prayer: Lord, protect children who are abused, exploited or victims of war. Convert the hearts of those who harm them.

Act of the day: Support a work that protects children.

Day 8: A mother who gives thanks

Seeing her son dead, Julitta thanked God for having crowned him before her. Her faith was stronger than her grief.

Prayer: Lord, comfort parents who have lost a child. Give them the hope of finding them again with you.

Act of the day: Pray for a grieving family, or reach out to them.

Day 9: Reunited in glory

Julitta was put to death in turn, on a June 16, around 304. Mother and child are honored together throughout the Church.

Prayer: Lord, one day reunite our families in your joy. Through the intercession of Saint Quiricus and Saint Julitta, grant me the grace I ask in this novena, if it is your will.

Act of the day: Attend Mass and entrust all the children of your family to God.

Living the novena with Saint Quiricus

Saint Quiricus reminds us that children are not only the future of the Church: they are already full members of it, capable of true faith. During these nine days, you can carry sick children, children who are abused or in exile, mothers, and grieving families. If you can, visit a church dedicated to Saint Cyr and Saint Julitta, such as the cathedral of Nevers.

Closing prayer

> *Saint Quiricus,*
> *little witness of Christ,*
> *and you, Saint Julitta, his mother,*
> *you gave your lives for Jesus.*
> *Present to the Lord the intention I have entrusted to you.*
> *Protect our children*
> *and keep our families in the faith.*
> *Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

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

Credits and sources

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