

BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Salome

Life, prayer and novena

Feast day: October 22

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IN BRIEF

Saint Salome

Disciple of Jesus present at the cross and the tomb, mother of the apostles James and John according to tradition.

Feast day	October 22
Era	1st century

In this booklet

Life

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Credits and sources

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LIFE

Saint Salome

Saint Salome, often called Mary Salome, was one of the women who followed Jesus from Galilee. The Gospels show her at the foot of the cross and then on Easter morning, coming to the tomb with spices to anoint the body of the Lord. Tradition identifies her as the mother of the apostles James and John. She should not be confused with the daughter of Herodias who obtained the head of John the Baptist. In the West, her feast day is October 22.

Who was Saint Salome?

The name Salome comes from the Hebrew *Shlomit*, built on *shalom*, "peace." It was fairly common in the time of Jesus, which is why the Gospels and later tradition had to make clear which Salome was meant. The one the Church honors is a disciple of Jesus.

The Gospel of Mark names her twice; the Gospel of Matthew, at the same moments of the story, speaks of "the mother of the sons of Zebedee." Since ancient times, Christian tradition has connected these two mentions and seen Salome as the wife of Zebedee, the fisherman of the Sea of Galilee, and the mother of James the Greater and John the Evangelist, two of the Twelve.

The Eastern Churches honor her as one of the "Myrrhbearers," the women who came to the tomb with spices and perfumed oil. The word comes from the Greek *myron*, "perfume," and *phoreo*, "to carry."

Key dates and feast days of Saint Salome

- **1st century**: Follows Jesus in Galilee, stands near the cross and comes to the tomb on Easter morning.

- **13th century**: *The Golden Legend* spreads the tradition of the Holy Kinship.
- **April 24**: Commemorated with Mary, wife of Clopas.
- **May 25**: Celebrated with Mary Jacobe at Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer.
- **August 3**: Feast in the Eastern Churches.
- **October 22**: Feast in the West.

What the Gospels say about Salome

- **Matthew 20:20-23**: the mother of the sons of Zebedee kneels before Jesus and asks that her two sons sit one at his right and the other at his left in his Kingdom.
- **Mark 15:40-41**: at Calvary, among the women looking on from a distance, are Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the Less and of Joses, and Salome; they had followed Jesus and ministered to him in Galilee.
- **Matthew 27:56**: "the mother of the sons of Zebedee" is also standing near the cross.
- **Mark 16:1-8**: when the Sabbath is over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome buy spices to anoint Jesus; at the tomb they find the stone rolled back and hear the announcement of the Resurrection.



The holy women at the tomb on Easter morning.

A mother who learned to serve

The scene in Matthew is the most human. A mother comes to ask the first places for her sons. Jesus does not push her away, but he answers with a question: "Can you drink the cup that I am going to drink?" Then he explains to his disciples that, among them, whoever wants to be great must become a servant. A clumsy request becomes the occasion for an essential teaching.

The rest of the Gospel shows that Salome understood. We find her at Calvary, at the hour when many disciples had fled, and then at the tomb in the early morning, to render one last service to the body of Christ. The woman who wanted glory for her children stands where there is nothing left but the cross. She is rewarded with the news of the Resurrection, of which she is one of the very first witnesses.

What tradition adds

Beyond the Gospels, what is told about Salome belongs to tradition and legend. According to *The Golden Legend*, a collection compiled in the thirteenth century, she was the daughter of Saint Anne by a third husband, also named Salome, and therefore the half-sister of the Virgin Mary. This genealogy, known as the "Holy Kinship," inspired many painters at the end of the Middle Ages, but it has no historical basis. Salome also appears in apocryphal gospels, in a more developed way than in the canonical texts.

In Provence, a medieval tradition holds that Mary Salome and Mary Jacobe, another woman present at the tomb, landed in the Camargue after the Resurrection. This is the origin of the name of the town of Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer, where their memory is celebrated with a large pilgrimage around May 25.



The church of Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer, in the Camargue.

Why do Catholics pray to Saint Salome?

Salome has no official patronage, but she is a saint of quiet faithfulness. She left no famous words, only a mother's prayer that Jesus corrected. Yet she followed Christ to the end, from daily service in Galilee to the foot of the cross, and she was among the first to receive the news of Easter. Catholics pray to her for mothers, for parents who carry ambitions for their children, for those who accompany the dying, and to learn to serve without seeking the first place.

Symbols and how to recognize Saint Salome in art

Like the other Myrrhbearers, Salome is usually shown carrying a jar of perfume or spices, often beside the empty tomb and the angel. In the late medieval paintings of the Holy Kinship, Mary Salome sits with Zebedee and their two small sons, James and John, among the relatives of Jesus gathered around Saint Anne and the Virgin Mary.



Mary Salome with her sons, detail of a Holy Kinship painting.

Where to pray to Saint Salome

- **Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer** (Camargue, France): the fortified church where, according to tradition, the relics of Mary Salome and Mary Jacobe are venerated.
- **Jerusalem**: the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, on the site of Calvary and of the tomb she visited on Easter morning.

To pray with her, use the prayer to Saint Salome and the novena to Saint Salome.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Salome for Mothers and Families

Saint Salome left no writings, and the Gospel keeps only one prayer of hers: a mother's request to Jesus for her two sons. Below is that passage with its reference, followed by an original prayer to Saint Salome for mothers and families.

The request of the mother of the sons of Zebedee

> *"Then came to him the mother of the sons of Zebedee with her sons, adoring and asking something of him. Who said to her: What wilt thou? She saith to him: Say that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left, in thy kingdom."*

Source: Gospel of Matthew 20:20-21, Douay-Rheims translation. Tradition identifies this woman with Salome, whom the Gospel of Mark names at Calvary and at the tomb (Mark 15:40; 16:1).



The mother of the sons of Zebedee makes her request to Jesus.

Prayer to Saint Salome for mothers and families

Saint Salome, you brought your sons to the Lord with a mother's love: teach me to entrust to God those I love, without trying to decide their path in his place.

You heard Jesus teach that the greatest is the one who serves: heal in me the desire for the first places, and give me the joy of serving.

You stayed near the cross when so many others had fled: support those who keep watch beside the sick and the dying, and those who comfort grieving families.

You came to the tomb at dawn with spices and received the first news of Easter: rekindle in me the hope of the Resurrection. I also entrust to you my intention: (name it in silence).

Pray for mothers and for all parents, that they may lead their children to Christ. Amen.

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

When to pray this prayer

Pray it when you worry about the future of your children, when a son or daughter makes choices you did not expect, or when you are caring for a sick or dying loved one. It is also a good prayer for mothers' groups and for anyone who wants to learn to serve quietly, without looking for recognition.

Saint Salome is celebrated on October 22 in the West. She is also remembered on April 24 with Mary, wife of Clopas, and on May 25 with Mary Jacobe at Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer. The Eastern Churches keep her feast on August 3.

For a longer time of prayer, follow the novena to Saint Salome, and read the life of Saint Salome.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Salome

This novena to Saint Salome is an original composition by Saintspedia, inspired by what the Gospels tell of her. It is not an official liturgical text. Begin it on October 13 so that it ends on October 21, the eve of her feast on October 22. You can also pray it at any time of year, especially for a mother, for your children or for someone who is sick or dying.

How to pray this novena

Each day, 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. The small act suggested for the day helps you carry the prayer into daily life. If you miss a day, simply continue the next day.

The nine days follow Salome through the Gospel: in Galilee with her family, on the roads behind Jesus, at the cross and at the empty tomb.

Day 1: A family by the lake

Tradition sees Salome as the wife of Zebedee, a fisherman of the Sea of Galilee, and the mother of James and John. She knew the ordinary work of a household, the worries of a family, the long nights when the boats were out. God calls people in the middle of everyday life.

Prayer: Lord, bless my home and the daily work that keeps it going.

Today: Pray by name for each member of your family.

Day 2: Letting her sons go

When Jesus called James and John, they left their father in the boat and followed him. For a mother, this meant letting her sons take a road she had not chosen. Salome did more than accept it: she followed too.

Prayer: Lord, help me to entrust to you the future of those I love.

Today: Pray for a young person who is discerning his or her vocation.

Day 3: Following and serving

Mark tells us that Salome and the other women followed Jesus in Galilee and ministered to him. Their service was discreet and practical, and it made the mission possible.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, teach me to serve you in the practical needs of others.

Today: Do a hidden service for someone, without saying a word about it.

Day 4: A mother's request

Salome asked Jesus to give her sons the places of honor in his Kingdom. Her request was clumsy, but it came from love, and Jesus did not reject her. We may bring our desires to God just as they are, and let him purify them.

Prayer: Lord, I bring you my desires as they are; correct what needs correcting.

Today: Tell God honestly something you want, then add: "Your will be done."

Day 5: The greatest is the one who serves

Jesus answered her with a question about the cup he would drink, and then taught that whoever wants to be first must be the servant of all. Salome had to learn a new kind of greatness, as we all do.

Prayer: Lord, free me from the need to be first and give me the joy of serving.

Today: Let someone else go first, in conversation, in line or in a decision.

Day 6: Near the cross

When many disciples had fled, Salome stayed at Calvary with the other women. She could do nothing to stop the suffering, but she did not leave. Sometimes faithful presence is the only gift we can offer.

Prayer: Lord, give strength to all who keep watch beside the sick and the dying.

Today: Visit, call or write to someone who is ill or alone.

Day 7: Spices at dawn

After the Sabbath, Salome bought spices and went to the tomb very early in the morning. She wanted to render one last service to the body of Jesus. Love finds ways to care, even when everything seems lost.

Prayer: Lord, let my love remain active even in times of sorrow.

Today: Pray for someone who has died, and for the family that mourns him or her.

Day 8: The stone rolled away

On the way, the women wondered who would roll away the stone. When they arrived, it had already been moved. Many of our worries are like that stone: God is ahead of us.

Prayer: Lord, I give you the worry that weighs on me most; roll away the stone.

Today: Name a fear before God and leave it with him.

Day 9: Witness of the Resurrection

At the tomb, Salome heard the announcement that Jesus was risen. The woman who had wanted glory for her sons received a far greater gift: the first news of Easter. Christ's victory over death is the hope of every family.

Prayer: Lord, I place in your hands the intention of this novena. Through the intercession of Saint Salome, fill my home with the joy of the Resurrection. Amen.

Today: Share a word of hope with someone who needs it.

Closing prayer

Saint Salome, faithful disciple and mother of apostles, at the end of these nine days I entrust to you the intention I have carried in my heart. Pray for mothers and fathers, for our children, for the sick and the dying, and for all who serve without being seen. Obtain for us the grace to follow Christ to the cross and to the joy of Easter. Amen.

To go further, read the life of Saint Salome and pray the prayer to Saint Salome.

Credits and sources

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