BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Tertius of Iconium

Life, prayer and novena

Feast day: October 30

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IN BRIEF

Saint Tertius of Iconium

Companion of Saint Paul, writer of the Letter to the Romans, bishop of Iconium according to tradition.

Feast day	October 30
Born	1st century
Died	1st century (martyr according to tradition), Iconium (Konya, Turkey), according to tradition
Canonized	immemorial cult
Era	1st century

In this booklet

Life

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Novena to Saint Tertius of Iconium

Credits and sources

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LIFE

Saint Tertius of Iconium

Saint Tertius was a Christian of the 1st century, a companion of the apostle Paul, who wrote down the Letter to the Romans at his dictation. He is the only one of Paul's secretaries to have named himself in a letter: "I, Tertius, the writer of this letter, greet you in the Lord" (Rom 16:22). Eastern tradition counts him among the seventy disciples of Jesus and makes him the second bishop of Iconium, who died a martyr. His feast day is October 30.

Who was Saint Tertius?

What we know for certain about Tertius comes down to one sentence of the New Testament. At the end of the Letter to the Romans, after Paul's greetings, another voice speaks: that of the man holding the pen. Paul often dictated his letters, as was the custom, and sometimes added a few words in his own hand. Tertius is the only one of these secretaries whose name we know. Since the Letter to the Romans was probably written in Corinth, around 57 - 58, it is thought that he belonged to the Christian community of that city, or that he was then traveling with the apostle. His Latin name, which means "third," was common in the Roman world.

The rest comes from tradition, mainly Greek. Ancient lists of the seventy disciples sent out by Jesus (Lk 10:1) mention Tertius. They make him the successor of Sosipater, another companion of Paul named in the same letter, at the head of the Church of Iconium, in Asia Minor. This tradition adds that he died a martyr. These accounts, written long after the events, cannot be verified.

Key dates in the life of Tertius

- **1st century**: According to tradition, he is one of the seventy disciples sent out by Jesus.

- **c. 57 - 58**: In Corinth, he writes the Letter to the Romans at Saint Paul's dictation and adds his own greeting.
- **According to tradition**: He succeeds Sosipater as bishop of Iconium, today's Konya, in Turkey.
- **According to tradition**: He continues the evangelization of the city, founded as a Christian community by Paul and Barnabas.
- **Date unknown**: He dies a martyr, according to tradition.
- **Cult**: He is celebrated on October 30, with other disciples of Paul, in the Byzantine calendar.

The secretary of the Letter to the Romans

The Letter to the Romans is the longest and densest of Paul's letters. In it the apostle sets out the heart of the Gospel: salvation offered to all, Jews and Gentiles, through faith in Christ. Writing such a text at dictation required time, attention and real skill. Tertius put his know-how at the service of the Word. His small greeting, slipped in among those of Gaius, Erastus and Quartus, shows that he was not a mere copyist: he was part of the community, and he himself greeted his brothers and sisters in Rome "in the Lord."

This detail has touched readers for centuries. It reminds us that the Bible did not fall ready-made from heaven: it passed through human hands, those of men and women serving the faith.

The bishop of Iconium

Iconium, today's Konya, in central Turkey, was evangelized by Paul and Barnabas during the apostle's first missionary journey, as the Acts of the Apostles relate. According to tradition, Tertius was its second bishop, after Sosipater, and ended his life by martyrdom. The Churches of Byzantine

tradition, Catholic and Orthodox, celebrate him on October 30 with other disciples of Paul, and also on January 4, in memory of the seventy disciples. No known shrine keeps his relics.

What can we learn from Saint Tertius?

Tertius is the saint of the discreet servants of the Word: secretaries, copyists, translators, editors, all who work in the background so that the Gospel may be handed on. He teaches us that humble service, done with care, can bear fruit for centuries. We can pray to him for those who write, translate or distribute the Bible, and for all whose work helps others to know Christ.

Where to pray to Saint Tertius

- **Anywhere, while reading the Letter to the Romans**: no place of pilgrimage is dedicated to him, but his name remains in the text he wrote.
- **Konya** (Turkey): ancient Iconium, the city of which he is said to have been bishop.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Tertius for the Servants of the Word

Saint Tertius wrote the Letter to the Romans at Saint Paul's dictation and left his name in it: "I, Tertius, the writer of this letter, greet you in the Lord" (Rom 16:22). Tradition makes him one of the seventy disciples and a bishop of Iconium. Prayer composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. It entrusts to him all who serve the Word of God through writing.

Prayer to Saint Tertius

Saint Tertius,
humble servant of the apostle Paul,
your hand wrote the Letter to the Romans,
and your brotherly greeting crosses the centuries.
Teach me to serve the Word of God
with care, patience and discretion.

Bless those who write, translate and print the Bible,
those who teach and those who study the Scriptures.
May their work help the world
to discover the love of God revealed in Jesus Christ.

You who greeted your brothers and sisters in Rome "in the Lord,"
make brotherly communion grow among Christians,
and help me to welcome each day
the Word that saves.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

When to pray to Saint Tertius

- On his feast day, October 30.
- Before reading or studying the Letter to the Romans.
- For Bible translators and Christian publishers.
- For secretaries, writers and all who work behind the scenes.
- Before an important piece of writing.

A short invocation

> *Saint Tertius, servant of the Word,*
> *help me to welcome it and to hand it on. Amen.*

To prepare for his feast, you can pray the novena to Saint Tertius from October 22 to 30, and discover the life of Saint Tertius.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Tertius of Iconium

Novena composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. It draws on the only biblical mention of Saint Tertius, the secretary of the Letter to the Romans, and on the tradition that makes him a disciple and a bishop of Iconium. To finish it on his feast day, October 30, begin on October 22. You can also pray it at any other time of the year, for example while reading the Letter to the Romans.

How to pray this novena

Each day, make 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 Tertius, pray for us." The act of the day helps you live the novena concretely.

Day 1: Sent by the Lord

Tradition counts Tertius among the seventy disciples whom Jesus sent out two by two ahead of him. Every disciple is one who is sent.

Prayer: Lord, send laborers into your harvest, and make me a messenger of your peace.

Act of the day: Read the sending of the seventy-two disciples (Lk 10:1-12).

Day 2: In the service of an apostle

Tertius put his talents at Paul's service. He did not seek to shine, but to help the mission.

Prayer: Lord, teach me to serve others with my talents, without seeking the first place.

Act of the day: Offer your help to someone with a task they carry alone.

Day 3: Writing at dictation

Writing the Letter to the Romans demanded hours of attention from Tertius. He faithfully received the apostle's words.

Prayer: Lord, give me an attentive heart to listen to your Word and receive it faithfully.

Act of the day: Copy out by hand a verse of the Letter to the Romans.

Day 4: Salvation offered to all

The letter Tertius wrote proclaims that God offers salvation to all through faith in Christ. He was the first to set these words on papyrus.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for your salvation offered to all. Grant me to believe and to live by your grace.

Act of the day: Meditate on Romans 5:1-5, on peace and hope.

Day 5: "I, Tertius"

In the middle of the letter, Tertius slipped in his own greeting. The discreet servant is also a brother who loves those to whom he writes.

Prayer: Lord, make me a brother or sister to those I serve, and not a mere functionary.

Act of the day: Write a friendly note to someone you work with.

Day 6: A brotherly community

The greeting of Tertius mingles with those of Gaius, Erastus and Quartus. The Church is a family whose members greet one another and pray for one another.

Prayer: Lord, bless my parish and my community. Make charity grow among us.

Act of the day: Greet someone you do not know at Mass.

Day 7: Shepherd of a Church

According to tradition, Tertius became bishop of Iconium, a city evangelized by Paul and Barnabas. The servant of the Word became a shepherd.

Prayer: Lord, give your Church pastors rooted in your Word.

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

Day 8: The witness of blood

Tradition adds that he died a martyr. The one who had written "Nothing can separate us from the love of God" lived it to the end.

Prayer: Lord, strengthen persecuted Christians. May nothing separate them from your love.

Act of the day: Read Romans 8:31-39 and pray for a country where Christians suffer.

Day 9: The servants of the Word

Since Tertius, countless copyists, translators and editors have handed on the Bible. Their hidden work has carried the Gospel all the way to us.

Prayer: Lord, through the intercession of Saint Tertius, grant me the grace I ask of you in this novena, if it is your will.

Act of the day: Attend Mass if you can, and thank God for the gift of the Scriptures.

Closing prayer

Saint Tertius,
you who wrote the Letter to the Romans,
present to the Lord the intention I have entrusted to you.
Bless all who serve the Word of God,
and help me to receive it each day
as a letter addressed to me.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

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

Credits and sources

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