BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Thérèse Couderc

Life, prayer and novena

Feast day: September 26

IN BRIEF

Saint Thérèse Couderc

Religious from the Ardèche, co-founder of the Congregation of Our Lady of the Cenacle at Lalouvesc.

Feast day	September 26
Born	February 1, 1805, Sablières (Ardèche, France)
Died	September 26, 1885, Lyon (France)
Canonized	May 10, 1970 by Paul VI
Era	19th century

In this booklet

Life

Prayer to Saint Thérèse Couderc to Learn Self-Surrender to God

Novena to Saint Thérèse Couderc

Credits and sources

Booklet offered by Saintspedia, the directory of Catholic saints: lives of the saints, prayers, novenas and places of pilgrimage, at saintspedia.com. Texts written by Saintspedia, except traditional prayers marked as such. Original prayers and novenas are not official liturgical texts. Free booklet, to print and share for personal, family or parish use; please do not sell it.

LIFE

Saint Thérèse Couderc

Saint Thérèse Couderc, born Marie-Victoire Couderc on February 1, 1805, at Sablières, in the Ardèche, and died in Lyon on September 26, 1885, is the co-founder, with Father Étienne Terme, of the Congregation of Our Lady of the Cenacle, born at Lalouvesc to welcome women pilgrims and offer them spiritual retreats. Removed from her post as superior at the age of thirty, she lived fifty years in self-effacement. Canonized by Paul VI in 1970, she is celebrated on September 26.

Who was Saint Thérèse Couderc?

Thérèse Couderc was a peasant girl from the Vivarais who became a foundress almost in spite of herself. As a young religious, she was entrusted at twenty-three with a house for women who came on pilgrimage to the tomb of Saint John Francis Regis at Lalouvesc. She understood that material hospitality was not enough and steered the work toward prayer and spiritual formation, following the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius. So the Cenacle was born, a congregation devoted to retreats. But her life was marked above all by trial: removed from office after intrigues, she spent the rest of her life in the shadows, without bitterness. Her text "Self-surrender" sums up a spirituality of abandonment to God that still touches many Christians.

Key dates in the life of Thérèse Couderc

- **February 1, 1805**: Marie-Victoire Couderc is born in the hamlet of Le Mas, at Sablières (Ardèche), into a family of farmers.
- **c. 1822**: She enters the boarding school of the Sisters of Saint Joseph at Les Vans.

- **1826**: She enters the novitiate of the congregation founded by Father Étienne Terme, at Aps (today Alba-la-Romaine), and takes the name Sister Thérèse.
- **1827**: Father Terme sends her to Lalouvesc to run the house for women pilgrims; she becomes its superior at twenty-three.
- **December 1834**: Father Terme dies; she keeps the work going with the help of the Jesuits.
- **1838**: Exhausted, then pushed aside after intrigues, she is replaced at the head of the institute.
- **June 26, 1864**: She writes the text "Self-surrender."
- **1867**: She settles in Lyon, on the hill of Fourvière, where she will live until her death.
- **September 26, 1885**: Dies in Lyon; her body is brought back to Lalouvesc on September 29.
- **November 4, 1951 and May 10, 1970**: Beatified by Pius XII, then canonized by Paul VI.

A young woman of the Vivarais

Marie-Victoire was born into a large farming family at Le Mas, a hamlet of Sablières, in the south of the Ardèche. She grew up in the simple faith of the Vivarais countryside. At seventeen she was sent to board with the Sisters of Saint Joseph at Les Vans. There her desire for religious life matured. In 1826 she joined the novitiate of a young congregation founded by a priest of the Ardèche, Father Étienne Terme, for the education of poor children. There she received the name Thérèse.

Lalouvesc and the birth of the Cenacle

Appointed parish priest of Lalouvesc, the village where people came to pray to Saint John Francis Regis, Father Terme saw that nothing had been planned to house women on pilgrimage. He opened a house for them and, in 1827, called the young Sister Thérèse and two companions to it. Despite her age, Thérèse had to take charge. She soon saw that the pilgrims needed more than a roof: they were looking for God. With Father Terme, who had discovered the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius of Loyola, she turned the house into a place of retreats, where people learned to pray and deepen their faith. The work of retreats gradually separated from that of the schools. The sisters devoted to it later took the name Religious of Our Lady of the Cenacle, after the upper room where the apostles prayed with Mary while awaiting the Holy Spirit.

Trial and hidden life

Father Terme died in December 1834. Thérèse, supported by the Jesuits, held on, but she wore herself out and had to rest at the shrine of Our Lady of Ay, near Lalouvesc. Shortly afterwards, following intrigues and financial difficulties, she was removed and replaced. She was only about thirty. Then began a long life in the shadows, among her sisters, with no important post. She was sometimes given delicate missions, to Lyon to buy land at Fourvière, or to Paris to calm a divided community. Otherwise she prayed, gave service, nursed sick sisters and taught catechism to adults. Only in 1877 did the congregation officially recognize her as co-founder.

From this path of humility came her best-known text, written in 1864: "Self-surrender." In it she explains that to surrender oneself to God is to care for oneself only to keep turned toward him, to cling to nothing, to accept everything. She also liked to repeat that God is more than good: he is Goodness itself.

Death, canonization and devotion

Thérèse Couderc died at the Cenacle in Lyon, on the hill of Fourvière, on September 26, 1885. Her body was brought back to Lalouvesc. By then the congregation had many houses in France and abroad; today it is present in some fifteen countries. Pius XII beatified her in 1951 and Paul VI canonized her on May 10, 1970. The Roman Martyrology commemorates her on September 26. In 2018 her remains were placed in the Basilica of Saint Regis at Lalouvesc, uniting in one place of pilgrimage the saint who drew the crowds and the religious who had wanted to welcome women pilgrims. She is shown in the black habit of a religious, often at prayer.

What can we learn from Saint Thérèse Couderc?

Thérèse Couderc founded a work, was then pushed out of it, and accepted this injustice in peace. Her example speaks to those who feel sidelined, misunderstood or stripped of what they built. She also shows that welcoming pilgrims can become a path to God, and that the spiritual retreat is a real service to the Church. You can pray to her to learn trusting abandonment, for those who suffer humiliation, and for retreat houses.

Where to pray to Saint Thérèse Couderc

- **Lalouvesc** (Ardèche): the Basilica of Saint Regis, where her remains have rested since 2018, and the Cenacle house where the work was born.
- **Sablières** (Ardèche): her home village, in the hamlet of Le Mas.
- **Lyon**: the hill of Fourvière, where she spent her last years at the Cenacle.
- **Saint-Romain-d'Ay** (Ardèche): the shrine of Our Lady of Ay, where she withdrew during her trial.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Thérèse Couderc to Learn Self-Surrender to God

Saint Thérèse Couderc, co-founder of the Cenacle at Lalouvesc, welcomed women pilgrims and taught them to pray. Removed from her post, she lived fifty years in humility and left us a fine meditation on abandonment to God, "Self-surrender." Prayer composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. It is not an official liturgical text.

Prayer to Saint Thérèse Couderc

Saint Thérèse Couderc,
daughter of the Vivarais and mother of the Cenacle,
you opened your house to pilgrims
and led them into prayer.
Teach me to welcome those who seek God
and to make room for them in my heart.

You who were set aside and forgotten,
and answered only with peace,
keep me from bitterness in the face of injustice,
and teach me to surrender myself to God
without reserve, without turning back to myself.

You who said that God is Goodness,
help me to believe in his goodness in dark days.
Bless retreat houses and those who lead them,
and present to the Lord what I entrust to you.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

When to pray to Saint Thérèse Couderc

- On her feast day, September 26, or during a pilgrimage to Lalouvesc.
- Before or during a spiritual retreat.
- When you are sidelined, humiliated or stripped of what you have built.
- To learn trusting abandonment to the will of God.
- For those who welcome pilgrims and people who are searching.

An invocation of self-surrender

> *Lord, I surrender myself to you, entirely, keeping nothing back.*
> *Saint Thérèse Couderc, pray for us. Amen.*

To prepare for her feast, you can pray the novena to Saint Thérèse Couderc from September 18 to 26, and read the life of Saint Thérèse Couderc.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Thérèse Couderc

This novena offers nine days of prayer with Saint Thérèse Couderc, co-founder of the Congregation of Our Lady of the Cenacle. Novena composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. It is not an official liturgical text. To finish it on her feast day, September 26, begin on September 18. You can also pray it at any other time, for example before a retreat.

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 Thérèse Couderc, pray for us." The act of the day helps you live the novena concretely.

Day 1: A childhood in the countryside

Marie-Victoire grew up in a farming family of the Ardèche. Faith was lived simply there, to the rhythm of the seasons and of work.

Prayer: Lord, bless country families and all who work the land. Keep alive the simple faith of our homes.

Act of the day: Thank God for a gift you received in your childhood.

Day 2: Choosing religious life

At twenty-one she entered the novitiate and became Sister Thérèse. She gave herself to God without yet knowing where he would lead her.

Prayer: Lord, let me follow you even without seeing the whole road.

Act of the day: Pray for young people discerning a vocation.

Day 3: Welcoming pilgrims

At Lalouvesc she was entrusted with the house where women who came to pray to Saint Regis stayed. She received them with kindness.

Prayer: Lord, make me welcoming toward those you place on my path.

Act of the day: Welcome someone with special attention: a visit, a call, a meal.

Day 4: Leading to prayer

Thérèse understood that the pilgrims thirsted for God. With Father Terme, she offered them retreats following the Exercises of Saint Ignatius.

Prayer: Holy Spirit, come to me in silence, as in the Cenacle, and teach me to pray.

Act of the day: Take a quarter of an hour of silence and prayer with your Bible open.

Day 5: Grief and responsibility

When Father Terme died in 1834, she carried the young work alone, supported by the Jesuits, to the point of exhaustion.

Prayer: Lord, support those who carry heavy responsibilities, and give them faithful helpers.

Act of the day: Offer your help to someone who is overwhelmed.

Day 6: Set aside without bitterness

After intrigues, she was removed and replaced. She accepted going to the last place, without complaining or justifying herself.

Prayer: Lord, when I am hurt by injustice, keep my heart at peace and free of resentment.

Act of the day: Inwardly forgive someone who has hurt you, and pray for them.

Day 7: Serving in the shadows

For decades she nursed sick sisters, taught catechism, gave small services. She stayed faithful without being seen.

Prayer: Lord, teach me to serve without looking for recognition.

Act of the day: Do a discreet service without speaking of it.

Day 8: Self-surrender

In 1864 she wrote that to surrender oneself is to cling to nothing, accept everything, and stay always turned toward God. This is the heart of her spiritual life.

Prayer: Lord, I place in your hands what I would like to hold on to. Teach me to surrender myself to you.

Act of the day: Slowly read a Gospel passage on trust, such as Matthew 6:25-34.

Day 9: God is Goodness

She died in Lyon in 1885, after a life of prayer. She loved to say that God is more than good: he is Goodness.

Prayer: God of goodness, I believe in your love. Through the intercession of Saint Thérèse Couderc, grant me the grace I ask in this novena, if it is your will.

Act of the day: Attend Mass if you can, and thank God for three signs of his goodness.

Closing prayer

Saint Thérèse Couderc,
you who knew how to surrender yourself to God
in joy as in trial,
present to the Lord the intention I have entrusted to you.
Keep me in peace and humility,
and teach me to believe in his goodness.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

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

Credits and sources

Texts: Saintspedia (saintspedia.com). The sources cited in each part are those of the corresponding page of the website. Biographical data partly from Wikidata (CC0). Font: EB Garamond (SIL Open Font License).



More free booklets

Lives of the saints, prayers, novenas and places of pilgrimage: find all the booklets to print at

saintspedia.com