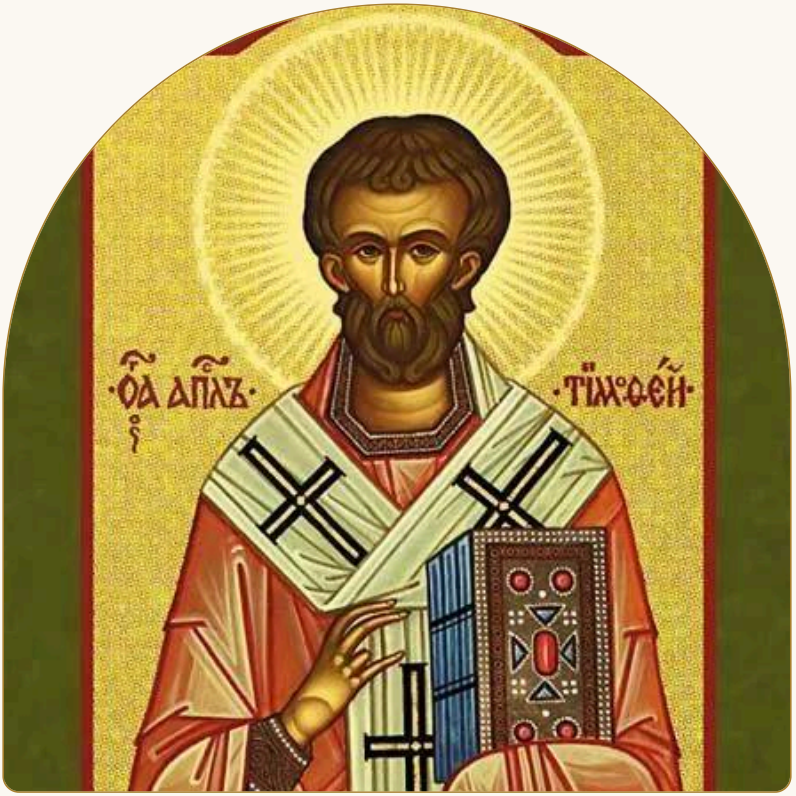


BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Timothy, Bishop of Ephesus

Life, prayer, novena and pilgrimage

Feast day: January 26

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IN BRIEF

Saint Timothy, Bishop of Ephesus

Disciple and co-worker of Saint Paul, first bishop of Ephesus according to tradition.

Feast day	January 26
Born	1st century, Lystra (Lycaonia, now in Turkey)
Died	Late 1st century, according to tradition, Ephesus
Canonized	Pre-Congregation (venerated since antiquity)
Era	1st century
Patron saint of	stomach ailments

In this booklet

Life

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Cathedral of Termoli and the Relics of Saint Timothy

Credits and sources

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LIFE

Saint Timothy, Bishop of Ephesus

Saint Timothy was the closest disciple of Saint Paul. Born at Lystra, in Asia Minor, to a Jewish mother who had become a Christian and a Greek father, he accompanied the apostle for some fifteen years, carried his messages to the communities and co-signed several of his letters. Two letters of the New Testament are addressed to him. Tradition holds that he was the first bishop of Ephesus. He is celebrated on January 26 together with Saint Titus, the day after the feast of the Conversion of Saint Paul.

Who was Saint Timothy?

Timothy, whose Greek name means "one who honors God," grew up in Lystra, a small town in Lycaonia, in what is now central Turkey. The Book of Acts specifies that he was the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer and of a Greek father (Acts 16:1). The Second Letter to Timothy names his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice, and praises the sincere faith they passed on to him, as well as his knowledge of the Scriptures from childhood (2 Timothy 1:5; 3:15).

He probably became a Christian during the first visit of Paul and Barnabas to Lystra, around 46-48. When Paul came back to the region a few years later, the brothers of Lystra and Iconium spoke well of the young man, and the apostle decided to take him along.

Key dates in the life of Saint Timothy

- **Around 46-48**: Probable conversion during Paul's first journey to Lystra.
- **Around 49-50**: He joins Paul on his second missionary journey, through Macedonia and Greece.

- **Around 50-51**: Paul sends him to Thessalonica to support the young community; he then rejoins Paul in Corinth.
- **AD 50s**: Missions to Corinth and Macedonia; his name appears with Paul's at the head of several letters.
- **AD 60s**: According to the First Letter to Timothy, he stays in Ephesus to lead the Church there.
- **Late 1st century**: According to tradition, he dies a martyr in Ephesus.
- **356**: His relics are transferred to Constantinople, to the Church of the Holy Apostles.
- **1945**: Relics attributed to Saint Timothy are found in the cathedral of Termoli, Italy.

The companion of Saint Paul

Before taking him along, Paul had Timothy circumcised, because of the Jews of the region who knew his father was Greek (Acts 16:3). The young man then shared the apostle's long journeys on foot, his dangers and his foundations: Macedonia, Philippi, Thessalonica, Beroea, then Athens and Corinth. Later we find him with Paul in Ephesus, and then on the journey that took the apostle toward Jerusalem.

Paul entrusted him with delicate missions. He sent him to Thessalonica to strengthen persecuted Christians (1 Thessalonians 3:2), to Corinth to remind a divided community of the apostle's way of life (1 Corinthians 4:17), and to Philippi for news. To the Philippians, Paul wrote that he had no one else who shared his concerns so sincerely, and that Timothy had served with him "as a child serves his father" (Philippians 2:20-22). His name appears beside Paul's at the head of the Second Letter to the Corinthians, the letters to the Philippians, the Colossians and Philemon, and both letters to the Thessalonians.

The letters to Timothy

Two letters of the New Testament are addressed to Timothy. Together with the Letter to Titus, they form the "Pastoral Letters," devoted to the leadership of Christian communities. Many scholars think they were written after Paul's death by one of his disciples, faithful to his teaching; others hold them to be the work of the apostle himself. In any case, they paint an endearing portrait of Timothy: a leader who was still young, perhaps shy and in fragile health, whom Paul encouraged with affection.

They contain famous words of advice: "Let no one despise your youth" (1 Timothy 4:12), and the call to "rekindle the gift of God" received through the laying on of hands, for God did not give "a spirit of fear, but of power, of love and of self-control" (2 Timothy 1:6-7). The second letter, presented as Paul's testament from captivity, ends with an urgent appeal to come and join him.

Bishop of Ephesus and martyr

The first letter states that Paul left Timothy in Ephesus to combat false teachings and organize the community (1 Timothy 1:3). The historian Eusebius of Caesarea, in the 4th century, reports that he was the first bishop of that great city. A later account, the *Acts of Timothy*, tells that he was killed by pagans for protesting against the excesses of a religious festival; this is a tradition, not an established fact. In 356, his relics were carried to Constantinople, to the Church of the Holy Apostles, alongside those of Saint Andrew and Saint Luke.

Why is Saint Timothy a patron for young people and families?

The Church has not attached any official patronage to Saint Timothy, but his life speaks clearly. He is the saint of quiet faithfulness: he founded no great Churches under his own name, but he served, handed on and accompanied.

His faith came first from his mother and grandmother, which makes him a natural intercessor for families who pass on the faith. A young leader supported by an elder, he is a model for young people who take on commitments, for priests and bishops, and for all who receive a task that seems too great for them. Popular devotion also invokes him for stomach ailments, because of Paul's advice about his frequent illnesses (1 Timothy 5:23). His feast, joined to that of Saint Titus, honors the co-workers without whom Paul's work would not have lasted.

To pray with him, read the prayer to Saint Timothy, or follow the novena to Saint Timothy, from January 17 to 25: it ends on the feast of the Conversion of Saint Paul, the eve of his feast.

Symbols and how to recognize Saint Timothy in art

Timothy is usually shown as a young man or as a bishop, sometimes holding a book or a scroll, a reminder of the letters addressed to him and of the Scriptures he knew from childhood. He often appears at the side of Saint Paul, who is recognizable by his sword and his beard. In Eastern icons, he wears the vestments of a bishop.



The cathedral of Termoli, where the relics of Saint Timothy are venerated.

Where to pray to Saint Timothy

- **Termoli** (Italy): the cathedral, whose crypt holds relics attributed to Saint Timothy.
- **Ephesus** (Turkey): the ancient site, near Selçuk, where he led the Church according to tradition.
- **Lystra** (Turkey): the site of his hometown, near Konya, of which only a mound remains.
- **Churches dedicated to him**, often together with Saint Titus, in many countries.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Timothy: "A Spirit of Power and Love"

No prayer composed by Saint Timothy has come down to us. The New Testament, however, contains two letters addressed to him, and some of their passages lend themselves beautifully to prayer. This page offers two of them, followed by an original prayer by Saintspedia to Saint Timothy for families, young people and all who feel afraid of the task before them.

"A spirit of power, of love and of self-control" (2 Timothy 1:6-7)

At the beginning of the Second Letter to Timothy, Paul reminds his disciple of the day he received, through the laying on of hands, the gift of God for his ministry. Translation from the Greek by Saintspedia; the original text is in the public domain.

> *"I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God did not give us a spirit of fear, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-control."*

Source: Second Letter to Timothy, chapter 1, verses 6-7.



Saint Paul and Saint Timothy.

Another word to meditate on

> *"Let no one despise your youth; but be an example to believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity."*

Source: First Letter to Timothy, chapter 4, verse 12. Translation from the Greek by Saintspedia.

Prayer to Saint Timothy for a spirit of power and love

Saint Timothy, you received the faith from your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice: I entrust to you the families who pass on the faith to their children. May parents and grandparents never lose heart, and may children welcome this treasure.

You were young when Paul entrusted you with heavy missions: pray for the young people who commit themselves in the Church and in the world. May no one despise their youth, and may fear never hold them back.

You served the apostle as a son serves his father: teach me faithfulness in small things and the joy of working with others for the Gospel. When I feel weak or overwhelmed, remind me that God does not give a spirit of fear, but of power, of love and of self-control.

I entrust to you the priests and bishops, your successors, and my intention: (name it in silence). Amen.

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

When to pray this prayer

Saint Timothy is celebrated on January 26 with Saint Titus, the day after the feast of the Conversion of Saint Paul. You can pray to him for a young person taking on a responsibility, for passing on the faith in the family, for grandparents, or for priests. For a longer time of prayer, follow the novena to Saint Timothy, and discover the life of Saint Timothy.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Timothy

This novena is an original composition by Saintspedia, drawn from the letters of Saint Paul and the Acts of the Apostles. It is not an official liturgical text. To finish it on the eve of his feast, begin on January 17; it ends on January 25, the feast of the Conversion of Saint Paul, the day before the feast of Saints Timothy and Titus on January 26. It can also be prayed at any time of year, for a young person, a family or a priest.

How to pray this novena

Each day, entrust your intention to God, read the meditation and the verse indicated, say the prayer of the day, then an Our Father. The suggested act helps you live the prayer during the day. Since much of what we know about Timothy comes from Scripture, keeping a Bible open beside you is a good way to pray these nine days.

Day 1: A faith received in the family

Paul remembers the sincere faith of Lois and Eunice, Timothy's grandmother and mother (2 Timothy 1:5). Faith is handed on first in the home, by example and by word.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for those who passed on the faith to me. Make me, in turn, a witness for those around me.

Today: Thank, or pray for, the person who first made God known to you.

Day 2: The Scriptures from childhood

From childhood, Timothy had known the sacred Scriptures, which give the wisdom that leads to salvation (2 Timothy 3:15). The Word of God makes those who spend time with it grow.

Prayer: Lord, give me a love for your Word and the faithfulness to read it every day.

Today: Read a chapter from one of Saint Paul's letters.

Day 3: Answering the call

Paul passed through Lystra and asked Timothy to follow him (Acts 16:1-3). The young man left his town and his family for a life of mission. He did not know where the road would lead, but he trusted the one who called him.

Prayer: Lord, make me attentive to your calls, and give me the generosity to answer them.

Today: Pray for young people who are discerning their vocation.

Day 4: Strengthening others

Paul sent Timothy to Thessalonica to strengthen and encourage Christians under persecution (1 Thessalonians 3:2). He was a man of support and consolation. Paul trusted him to go where the apostle himself could not.

Prayer: Lord, make me a support for those whose faith is being tested.

Today: Visit or write to someone going through a trial.

Day 5: Serving like a son

Paul wrote to the Philippians that Timothy had served with him "as a child serves his father" (Philippians 2:22). His greatness lay in humble and faithful service. He did not seek his own glory, but the good of the communities.

Prayer: Lord, keep me from seeking my own interests. Teach me to serve with the heart of a son or a daughter.

Today: Do a favor for an elderly person.

Day 6: Not being afraid of your youth

"Let no one despise your youth" (1 Timothy 4:12). Paul encouraged a leader who was still young to be an example rather than to apologize for existing.

Prayer: Lord, I entrust to you the young people of our time. Give them confidence, and help their elders to welcome them.

Today: Encourage a young person in a project or a commitment.

Day 7: Rekindling the gift received

Paul urged Timothy to rekindle the gift of God received through the laying on of hands (2 Timothy 1:6). The graces received at baptism, confirmation or ordination can fall asleep; they need to be fanned into flame.

Prayer: Holy Spirit, rekindle in me the fire of my baptism and the gifts you have entrusted to me.

Today: Look up the date of your baptism and give thanks.

Day 8: Taking care of yourself

Paul advised Timothy not to drink only water but to take a little wine, for the sake of his stomach and his frequent illnesses (1 Timothy 5:23). The apostle also cared about his disciple's body. Holiness does not mean ignoring our limits: God works through our fragile health as well.

Prayer: Lord, I entrust to you the sick and those who wear themselves out serving others. Give them the rest they need.

Today: Take some real rest, or pray for someone who is sick.

Day 9: Guarding what was entrusted

"Guard what has been entrusted to you," Paul wrote to his disciple (1 Timothy 6:20). Timothy received the task of faithfully handing on what he had received. On January 25, the Church celebrates the Conversion of Paul: teacher and disciple are united in the same mission.

Prayer: Lord, at the end of this novena, I place my intention in your hands. Through the intercession of Saint Timothy, help me to guard the faith faithfully and to hand it on. Amen.

Today: Pray for the bishop and priests of your diocese.

Closing prayer

Saint Timothy, faithful companion of the apostle Paul, I entrust to you the intention of these nine days. Pray for families who pass on the faith, for young people who commit themselves and for the pastors of the Church. Obtain for us a spirit of power, of love and of self-control. Amen.

As you finish this novena, remember that every Christian is, in some way, a Timothy: someone who has received the faith from others and is called to pass it on in turn. May his example give you courage.

To go further: the life of Saint Timothy and the prayer to Saint Timothy.

PILGRIMAGE

Cathedral of Termoli and the Relics of Saint Timothy

The Cathedral of Termoli, on the Adriatic coast of Molise in Italy, keeps relics venerated as those of Saint Timothy, the disciple of Saint Paul. Rediscovered in 1945, they make this Romanesque cathedral the main pilgrimage site dedicated to Saint Timothy in the West.

Relics from the East

According to tradition, Timothy died at Ephesus, of which he was the first bishop. In 356, his remains were transferred to Constantinople, to the Church of the Holy Apostles. Termoli's local tradition holds that part of these relics was brought to the town in the Middle Ages, then hidden to protect them. They fell into oblivion until 1945: during work in the cathedral, bones were discovered that the local Church has identified as those of Saint Timothy.



The Cathedral of Termoli, on the Adriatic coast.

The Cathedral of Termoli

Dedicated to Santa Maria della Purificazione, the cathedral stands in the heart of the old town, perched on a promontory above the sea. Its Romanesque architecture, with a pale stone facade decorated with blind arcades and sculpture, dates mostly from the 12th and 13th centuries. The relics of Saint Timothy are kept in the crypt. The town also honors its own patron, Saint Basso.

Praying near the relics of Saint Timothy

Before your visit, you can reread the life of Saint Timothy or one of the two letters addressed to him. In the crypt, a time of silence lets you entrust an intention, for example for a young person making a commitment, for the

passing on of the faith in your family or for priests. The prayer to Saint Timothy can accompany this moment. These suggestions are offered by Saintspedia.

Other places connected with Saint Timothy

- **Ephesus** (Turkey): the ancient site, near Selçuk, where Timothy led the Church according to tradition; you can also visit the Basilica of Saint John and the House of the Virgin there.
- **Lystra** (Turkey): the site of his hometown, near Konya.
- **Istanbul**: the site of the former Church of the Holy Apostles, which received his relics in 356, now occupied by the Fatih Mosque.
- **Philippi and Thessalonica** (Greece): two of the communities he visited on Paul's behalf.

Practical information

Termoli is served by train along the Adriatic line and by the A14 motorway. The cathedral is in the historic center, reachable on foot from the station. Special celebrations mark the feast of Saint Timothy, on January 26, as well as the anniversary of the discovery of the relics. Check with the Diocese of Termoli-Larino for Mass and visiting times.

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