

BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Titus, Bishop of Crete

Life, prayer, novena and pilgrimage

Feast day: January 26

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IN BRIEF

Saint Titus, Bishop of Crete

Disciple and co-worker of Saint Paul, first bishop of Crete, recipient of the Letter to Titus.

Feast day	January 26, August 25 (Eastern Churches)
Born	1st century
Died	Late 1st century, according to tradition, Gortyna, Crete, according to tradition
Canonized	Pre-Congregation (venerated since antiquity)
Era	2nd century
Patron saint of	Crete

In this booklet

Life

Prayer to Saint Titus for Reconciliation

Novena to Saint Titus

Church of Saint Titus in Heraklion, Relic of Saint Titus in Crete

Credits and sources

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LIFE

Saint Titus, Bishop of Crete

Saint Titus was one of Saint Paul's closest co-workers. A Greek convert from paganism, he went with the Apostle to the Council of Jerusalem, served as his trusted envoy to the troubled Church of Corinth, and was then charged with organizing the Church on the island of Crete, of which he is honored as the first bishop. One of the letters of the New Testament, the Letter to Titus, is addressed to him. The Catholic Church celebrates him on January 26, together with Saint Timothy.

Who was Saint Titus?

Titus never appears in the Acts of the Apostles, but Saint Paul's letters mention him about a dozen times, always with affection and trust. Paul calls him "my true child in our common faith" (Titus 1:4). He was a Greek of pagan background, and that is exactly why his presence at Paul's side in Jerusalem carried such weight.

Eastern tradition later added many details to his story, making him a native of Crete born into a noble family, or counting him among the seventy-two disciples of Jesus. These late accounts cannot be verified. What we know for certain comes from Paul's letters.

Key dates in the life of Saint Titus

- **AD 40s**: He converts from paganism, most likely through Saint Paul.
- **Around 49**: He goes up to Jerusalem with Paul and Saint Barnabas and is not compelled to be circumcised (Galatians 2:1-3).
- **Around 55-57**: He is sent to Corinth to restore peace, then to organize the collection for the Church of Jerusalem.
- **Around 57**: He rejoins Paul in Macedonia with good news from Corinth.

- **AD 60s**: Paul leaves him in Crete to organize the communities; he receives the Letter to Titus.
- **Shortly afterward**: According to the Second Letter to Timothy, he leaves for Dalmatia.
- **Late 1st century**: According to tradition, he dies at an advanced age in Gortyna, the Roman capital of Crete.

A witness at the Council of Jerusalem

Around the year 49, the young Church faced a decisive question: did pagans who became Christians first have to be circumcised and keep the whole Law of Moses? Paul went up to Jerusalem to discuss it with the apostles, and he brought Titus with him. In the Letter to the Galatians he recounts that Titus, a Greek, was not forced to be circumcised.

The young convert thus became a living witness to a Church open to all nations, in which people are saved through faith in Christ. Every Christian who does not come from the Jewish people can see in Titus one of the first of a long line.

Paul's envoy to Corinth

The community of Corinth, founded by Paul, was lively but divided. After a painful visit and a severe letter, Paul sent Titus to restore trust. He waited for him anxiously, did not find him at Troas, and finally met him in Macedonia. The news was good: the Corinthians had repented. Paul then wrote that God, who comforts the downcast, "comforted us by the coming of Titus" (2 Corinthians 7:6).

Paul also entrusted Titus with organizing the great collection for the poor Christians of Jerusalem. He introduced him to the Corinthians as "my partner and fellow worker" among them. Titus appears as a man of trust, skillful and tactful, able to reconcile people and to handle common goods with honesty.

Shepherd of Crete

After his first captivity in Rome, Paul preached in Crete with Titus and left him there: "This is why I left you in Crete, that you might set right what remained to be done, and appoint elders in every town" (Titus 1:5). The Letter to Titus, one of the three so-called "pastoral letters," gives him advice on choosing the leaders of the communities, teaching sound doctrine, and encouraging everyone, young and old, men and women, to live in a way worthy of the Gospel.

This letter contains two passages the Church reads every year at Christmas: "The grace of God has appeared for the salvation of all men" (Titus 2:11), and the proclamation of the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior, who saved us "not because of deeds done by us in righteousness, but in virtue of his own mercy" (Titus 3:5).

The historian Eusebius of Caesarea, writing in the 4th century, reports that Titus was the first bishop of Crete. According to tradition, he died at an advanced age in Gortyna, the Roman capital of the island, where a basilica was dedicated to him in the 6th century.

His relics

In the 9th century, during the Arab invasion of Crete, the head of Saint Titus is said to have been taken to safety in Heraklion. During the Venetian rule of the island, the relic was venerated in the cathedral of Heraklion. When the Ottomans conquered the city in 1669, the Venetians carried it off to Venice. In 1966 it was returned to the Church of Crete, and it is now displayed in the Church of Saint Titus in Heraklion.

Why is Saint Titus the patron saint of Crete?

Titus is the patron of Crete because he was the apostle and first shepherd of the island. Paul left him there to finish the work of evangelization and to set up local leaders in every town, and tradition holds that he lived and died among the Cretans. For centuries the people of the island have kept his memory alive, first at Gortyna, then in Heraklion, where his relic came home in 1966.

Beyond Crete, Titus is a natural intercessor for bishops and priests, for all who carry responsibilities in the Church, and for anyone called to reconcile people who have fallen out.

Symbols and how to recognize Saint Titus in art

In icons and frescoes, Titus is usually shown as a bishop in liturgical vestments, often bearded, holding a book of the Gospels or a scroll and sometimes raising his hand in blessing. The book recalls both his preaching and the letter Paul addressed to him. In Western art he is often painted beside Saint Timothy, since the two disciples share the same feast day.

What can we learn from Saint Titus?

Titus was the man for delicate missions. Paul gave him the hardest tasks: reconciling a wounded community, managing money meant for the poor, organizing a newborn Church. He carried them out with such humility that the Apostle said he was comforted by his mere presence.

We can pray to him for bishops and priests, for those who hold responsibility in the Church, for those who must bring about reconciliation, and for the Christians of Crete. To pray with him, see the prayer to Saint Titus or the novena to Saint Titus.

Where to pray to Saint Titus

- **Heraklion, Crete**: the Church of Saint Titus (Agios Titos), which keeps his head.
- **Gortyna, Crete**: the ruins of the Basilica of Saint Titus, on the site of the ancient capital.
- In any Catholic church on January 26, the day after the feast of the Conversion of Saint Paul.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Titus for Reconciliation

The most beautiful prayers connected with Saint Titus are the words of the letter Saint Paul wrote to him, which the Church proclaims every year at Christmas. You will find them below with their references, followed by the collect for the feast of Saints Timothy and Titus and an original prayer by Saintspedia.

Two passages from the Letter to Titus to meditate on

> *"The grace of God has appeared for the salvation of all men."*

Source: Saint Paul's Letter to Titus, chapter 2, verse 11, read at the Mass during the Night of Christmas.

> *"When the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of deeds done by us in righteousness, but in virtue of his own mercy."*

Source: Saint Paul's Letter to Titus, chapter 3, verses 4-5, read at the Mass at Dawn on Christmas Day.

Collect for the feast of Saints Timothy and Titus

On January 26, the Roman liturgy prays in these words (translation by Saintspedia):

> *O God, who adorned Saints Timothy and Titus with apostolic virtues, grant, through their intercession, that we may live justly and devoutly in this present age and so merit to reach our heavenly homeland. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Source: Roman Missal, memorial of Saints Timothy and Titus, Bishops (January 26), collect; translation by Saintspedia.

Prayer to Saint Titus for reconciliation

Saint Titus, child of Saint Paul in the faith, you were welcomed into the Church with no other condition than faith in Christ: teach me to welcome others as Christ welcomes me.

You were sent to Corinth to reconcile a wounded community: give me the patience and gentleness that calm conflicts. Make me a peacemaker in my family, my parish and my work.

Paul entrusted you with the collection for the poor: help me to share generously and to manage honestly what has been entrusted to me.

Shepherd of Crete, pray for our bishops, our priests and all who serve the Church. I entrust to you my intention: (name it in silence).

May the grace of God, which has appeared for all people, transform my life. Amen.

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

When to pray this prayer

Saint Titus is celebrated on January 26 with Saint Timothy, the day after the Conversion of Saint Paul. The Eastern Churches celebrate him on August 25. You can pray to him for the shepherds of the Church, before taking on a new responsibility, and during a difficult reconciliation. Learn more about the life of Saint Titus, or pray the novena to Saint Titus.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Titus

This novena to Saint Titus is an original composition by Saintspedia. For nine days, it follows the disciple of Saint Paul through what the letters of the New Testament tell us about him: his conversion, his welcome into the Church, his missions to Corinth and his work as shepherd of Crete. To end it on the eve of his feast, begin on January 17 and finish on January 25, the feast of the Conversion of Saint Paul. You can also pray it at any time of year, especially for the shepherds of the Church or for a reconciliation.

How to pray this novena

Set aside ten minutes each day. Begin with the Sign of the Cross, read the meditation of the day slowly, then say the prayer of the day. You may add an Our Father, a Hail Mary and a Glory Be. Each day ends with a small concrete act, so that the novena shapes your life as well as your prayer. If you miss a day, simply pick up where you left off.

Day 1: A child in the faith

Paul calls Titus "my true child in our common faith." Titus was not born into the faith; he received it as a gift, probably through Paul's preaching. Every Christian owes the faith to someone: a parent, a priest, a friend, a teacher. Today we give thanks for those who passed it on to us.

Prayer: Saint Titus, you received the faith from Saint Paul and lived it as a true son. Help me to remember with gratitude those who led me to Christ, and make me in my turn a witness for others. Amen.

Today: Thank, by a message or a prayer, someone who helped you come to the faith.

Day 2: Welcomed without conditions

At Jerusalem, around the year 49, the apostles did not require Titus, a Greek, to be circumcised. His presence showed that the Church is open to all nations and that we are saved by faith in Christ. God welcomes us as we are, and calls us to grow from there.

Prayer: Saint Titus, living sign of a Church open to all peoples, teach me to welcome others without setting conditions that God does not set. Free me from the spirit that excludes. Amen.

Today: Greet warmly someone at church or work whom you usually overlook.

Day 3: A man of trust

Paul trusted Titus with his most delicate tasks. Trust is built slowly, through faithfulness in small things. Titus did not seek the first place; he went where he was sent and did what was asked of him, well.

Prayer: Saint Titus, faithful companion of the Apostle, help me to be reliable in my commitments, to keep my word and to do my work carefully, even when no one is watching. Amen.

Today: Finish a task you have been putting off.

Day 4: The peacemaker of Corinth

The Church of Corinth was divided and hurt. Paul sent Titus to restore trust, and Titus succeeded: the Corinthians repented and peace returned. Reconciliation takes patience, listening and tact. It is rarely spectacular, but it heals.

Prayer: Saint Titus, you brought peace back to a wounded community. I entrust to you the conflicts in my family, my parish and my workplace. Give me the gentleness and courage to take the first step. Amen.

Today: Take one concrete step toward someone with whom things are strained.

Day 5: Bringer of comfort

Paul writes that God, who comforts the downcast, "comforted us by the coming of Titus." Sometimes the mere presence of a friend is enough to lift a heavy heart. God often comforts us through other people, and he can use us to comfort others.

Prayer: Saint Titus, you were a consolation for Paul in his anxiety. Make me attentive to those around me who are discouraged, and let my presence bring them a little of God's comfort. Amen.

Today: Visit or call someone who is going through a hard time.

Day 6: Sharing with the poor

Paul entrusted Titus with the collection for the poor Christians of Jerusalem. Handling money for others requires honesty and transparency. Titus shows that charity also needs good organization and clean hands.

Prayer: Saint Titus, faithful steward of the gifts of the faithful, help me to share generously what I have received and to manage honestly the goods entrusted to me. Amen.

Today: Make a gift, even a small one, to a charity or to someone in need.

Day 7: Shepherd of Crete

Paul left Titus in Crete to finish organizing the Church and to appoint elders in every town. Titus became a shepherd, responsible for a whole people. The Church still needs shepherds who serve with humility and wisdom.

Prayer: Saint Titus, first bishop of Crete, I pray to you for our Pope, our bishop and our priests. Give them strength, wisdom and holiness, and raise up new vocations for the Church. Amen.

Today: Pray by name for your bishop and the priests of your parish.

Day 8: Sound teaching and a worthy life

The Letter to Titus asks him to teach sound doctrine and to encourage everyone, young and old, men and women, to live in a way worthy of the Gospel. Faith is not only something we believe; it takes shape in the way we speak, work and love.

Prayer: Saint Titus, help me to know my faith better and to live it consistently. Let my words and actions agree, so that others may see in my life something of the goodness of God. Amen.

Today: Read the Letter to Titus; it takes only a few minutes.

Day 9: The grace of God has appeared

At Christmas the Church reads Paul's words to Titus: "The grace of God has appeared for the salvation of all men." God saved us not because of our own merits, but because of his mercy. This is the heart of the message Titus received and passed on.

Prayer: Saint Titus, you announced the mercy of God to the people of Crete. Obtain for me the grace to trust in that mercy, to receive it in the sacrament of Reconciliation, and to show it to others. Amen.

Today: Plan to go to confession in the coming days.

Closing prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, you called Saint Titus to follow your Apostle Paul and to serve your Church as a shepherd and a peacemaker. Through his intercession, grant me the grace I ask of you in this novena (name your intention), if it is according to your will. Make me, like him, a faithful servant, a builder of peace and a witness to your mercy. Who live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

Saint Titus, pray for us. Saint Timothy, pray for us. Saint Paul, pray for us.

PILGRIMAGE

Church of Saint Titus in Heraklion, Relic of Saint Titus in Crete

The Church of Saint Titus (Agios Titos) stands in the heart of Heraklion, the main city of Crete. It preserves the head of Saint Titus, disciple of Saint Paul and first bishop of the island, returned to Crete by Venice in 1966. Its eventful history, among Byzantines, Venetians, and Ottomans, sums up that of the island.

A church through successive rulers

A church dedicated to Saint Titus existed in Heraklion in the Byzantine period. Under Venetian rule, from the 13th century, it became the city's Latin cathedral and housed the relic of the saint's head. When the Ottomans took Heraklion in 1669, the Venetians carried the relic off to Venice, and the church was turned into a mosque. Damaged by an earthquake in the 19th century, it was rebuilt, which explains its present appearance. In the 20th century, after the departure of the Muslim population, it was returned to Christian worship and dedicated once again to Saint Titus. It now belongs to the Orthodox Church of Crete.

The return of the relic

In 1966, the relic of the head of Saint Titus, kept for three centuries in Venice, was solemnly returned to the Church of Crete, in a gesture of fraternity between Catholics and Orthodox, shortly after the Second Vatican Council. It is displayed in a reliquary in a chapel of the church, where the faithful come to venerate it.

Praying at the Church of Saint Titus

Before your visit, you may wish to reread the life of Saint Titus. Before the relic, a time of silence lets you pray for the pastors of the Church, for the reconciliation of Christians of East and West, or for a person in conflict. The prayer to Saint Titus fits this moment well. These suggestions are offered by Saintspedia.

Other places connected with Saint Titus

- **Gortyn**: about twenty-five miles south of Heraklion, the archaeological site of the ancient Roman capital of Crete preserves the ruins of the 6th-century Basilica of Saint Titus.
- **Venice**: the city that kept his relic from 1669 to 1966.

Practical information

The church is in the historic center of Heraklion, steps from the Venetian Loggia and the main pedestrian street. It is open for Orthodox worship; modest dress is requested. The great feast of Saint Titus is celebrated there on August 25, according to the Orthodox calendar, with large crowds. Check on site for service and visiting hours.

CREDITS

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