BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Tryphon

Life, prayer, novena and pilgrimage

Feast day: February 1

IN BRIEF

Saint Tryphon

Young martyr of Asia Minor who died at Nicaea around 251, unmercenary saint, patron of Kotor.

Feast day	February 1
Born	c. 232 (or 222), Campsade, in Asia Minor (Phrygia or Bithynia)
Died	c. 251, Nicaea (today İznik, Turkey)
Canonized	immemorial cult
Era	3rd century
Patron saint of	Kotor, Cerignola, vine-growers, gardeners, farmers, sailors

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Credits and sources

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LIFE

Saint Tryphon

Saint Tryphon was a young martyr of Asia Minor, put to death at Nicaea around 251, during the persecution of Emperor Decius, and buried at Lampsacus, on the Dardanelles. A goose-herd according to tradition, known for healing free of charge, he is very popular in East and West alike. His relics are venerated notably at Kotor, in Montenegro, and at Cerignola, in Italy. His feast day is February 1.

Who was Saint Tryphon?

Tryphon is one of the "unmercenary" saints (anargyroi), those who healed without asking for money, like Cosmas and Damian. His existence and martyrdom are attested from early times by the cult paid to him, but the account of his life, the Acts of Saint Tryphon, was greatly enriched by legend. It should therefore be read as a witness of faith rather than as a precise biography. This account presents a poor and generous young Christian peasant, whose kindness draws crowds and whose firmness before the judge impresses even his executioners.

Key dates in the life of Tryphon

- **c. 232 (or 222)**: Born at Campsade, a village of Phrygia or Bithynia, according to the Acts.
- **Childhood**: Having lost his father, he tends geese to support his mother, near Apamea.
- **Youth**: He heals sick people and animals free of charge, and drives out evil spirits.
- **According to legend**: He is called to Rome to free the daughter of Emperor Gordian, then gives the reward he receives to the poor.

- **c. 250**: Under the persecution of Decius, he is arrested and taken to Nicaea before the governor Aquilinus.
- **c. 251**: After long tortures, he is beheaded at Nicaea; his body is buried at Lampsacus.
- **c. 809**: According to tradition, Venetian sailors carry off his relics; a storm brings them to Kotor.
- **1166**: Consecration of the Romanesque cathedral of Saint Tryphon in Kotor.
- **1918**: The relics kept in Rome are moved to the cathedral of Cerignola, in Apulia.

The shepherd who healed

According to the Acts, Tryphon was born into a Christian family. After his father's death, he earned his living tending geese. He loved prayer and Scripture and went to church faithfully. Early on, he was credited with the gift of healing people and animals and freeing the possessed, without ever accepting anything in return. The account even tells that he was called to Rome to free the daughter of Emperor Gordian from a demon, and that on the way back he gave to the poor everything he had been given. It was also said that his prayer turned away a swarm of locusts that threatened the crops of his village.

Martyrdom at Nicaea

Around 250, Emperor Decius ordered all the inhabitants of the Empire to sacrifice to the gods. Tryphon, now well known, was arrested and taken to Nicaea before the governor Aquilinus. He refused to deny his faith. The Acts report that he was tortured on the rack, dragged barefoot through the streets, whipped, and then beheaded. According to the same account, a tribune named Respicius, witnessing his courage, was converted and shared his martyrdom.

To those who advised him to wait until he was older before deciding, Tryphon is said to have replied that he wanted to reach true wisdom by following Jesus Christ.

The journey of the relics

Tryphon's body was taken back to Lampsacus, where he was venerated. According to tradition, Venetians carried off his relics at the beginning of the 9th century, and a storm drove their ship into the Bay of Kotor, on the Adriatic coast. The inhabitants kept the saint, who became the patron of the city and of sailors. His head is still kept in the cathedral that bears his name. Other relics were taken to Rome, to Santo Spirito in Sassia, together with those of Saint Respicius and Saint Nympha. In 1656, part of them was given to Onano to obtain the end of a plague epidemic, and in 1918, by decision of Pope Benedict XV, those of Santo Spirito were moved to Cerignola, where the saint had been invoked since the late 16th century against caterpillars ravaging the fields.

Devotion and art

Long commemorated in the Roman Martyrology on November 10, with Saints Respicius and Nympha, Tryphon is now celebrated on February 1, as among the Orthodox. He is the patron of Kotor, Cerignola, Onano and Adelfia, and he is invoked by vine-growers, gardeners and farmers, against harmful insects and evil spirits. In Bulgaria and Serbia, vine-growers celebrate him by pruning the first vines. Icons show him young, with a cross, often a pruning knife or a vine branch, and sometimes a falcon, in memory of a Moscow legend in which he helped a falconer of Ivan the Terrible find the tsar's lost bird.

What can we learn from Saint Tryphon?

Tryphon unites two traits that go well together: generosity and courage. He healed without asking anything, and he gave his life without denying anything. His youth reminds us that holiness does not wait for age. You can pray to him for young people who must bear witness to their faith, for those who care for the sick, for farmers and vine-growers, and for sailors.

To pray with him, see the prayer to Saint Tryphon and the novena to Saint Tryphon.

Where to pray to Saint Tryphon

- **Cathedral of Saint Tryphon, Kotor** (Montenegro): it keeps his head and celebrates its patron every year.
- **Cerignola Cathedral** (Apulia, Italy): it has kept the relics from Rome since 1918.
- **Onano** (Lazio, Italy): relics rest under the high altar of the church of Santa Maria della Consolazione.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Tryphon for Young People, the Sick and the Harvest

Saint Tryphon, a young goose-herd of Asia Minor, healed the sick free of charge before being martyred at Nicaea around 251; his relics are venerated at Kotor and Cerignola. Prayer composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. It entrusts to him young people, those who care for the sick and those who work the land.

Prayer to Saint Tryphon

Saint Tryphon,
young shepherd with a generous heart,
you cared for the sick and for animals
without ever asking anything in return.
Teach me to give freely
what I have freely received.

Before the judge you did not deny Christ,
and you preferred true wisdom
to safety and honors.
Give young Christians your courage,
and keep them faithful when their faith is mocked.

Protector of vineyards and fields,
bless the work of farmers and vine-growers,
watch over the sailors of Kotor and of every coast,
and keep far from us all that destroys and frightens.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

When to pray to Saint Tryphon

- On his feast day, February 1, or on November 10, the former date of his memorial.
- For young people who must bear witness to their faith at school or at work.
- For caregivers, veterinarians and all who heal.
- For vineyards, gardens and crops threatened by insects.
- For sailors and those who travel by sea.

A short invocation

> *Saint Tryphon, martyr of Christ,*
> *protect our fields, our sick and our young people. Amen.*

To prepare for his feast, you can pray the novena to Saint Tryphon from January 24 to February 1, and read the life of Saint Tryphon.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Tryphon

This novena offers nine days of prayer with Saint Tryphon, a young martyr of Asia Minor in the 3rd century. Novena composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. It is not an official liturgical text. To finish it on his feast day, February 1, begin on January 24. You can also pray it at any other time.

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 Tryphon, pray for us." The episodes recalled come from the Acts of Saint Tryphon, which mix history and legend.

Day 1: A poor child

Having lost his father, Tryphon tended geese to support his mother. God loves the humble and the little ones.

Prayer: Lord, bless children who work too early, and families who lack everything.

Act of the day: Give to a charity that helps poor children.

Day 2: Prayer and Scripture

The young Tryphon loved to pray and read Scripture. His strength came from there.

Prayer: Lord, give me a taste for your word and for prayer.

Act of the day: Read a psalm in the morning and in the evening.

Day 3: Healing freely

Tryphon healed people and animals without asking anything. He gave freely what he had received.

Prayer: Lord, bless caregivers. Give them generous hearts and skilled hands.

Act of the day: Do a favor without expecting anything in return.

Day 4: Sharing the reward

According to legend, Tryphon received a great reward in Rome, and he gave it to the poor on his way home.

Prayer: Lord, free me from attachment to money. Teach me to share.

Act of the day: Give a sum, even a small one, to someone in need.

Day 5: Protecting creation

It is said that his prayer turned the locusts away from his village's fields. He is invoked for vineyards and harvests.

Prayer: God the Creator, bless the earth and the work of farmers.

Act of the day: Pray for farmers and respect the food you receive.

Day 6: Witnessing before the judge

Arrested under Decius, Tryphon refused to sacrifice to idols. He stood firm despite his youth.

Prayer: Lord, give young people the courage to bear witness to their faith.

Act of the day: Dare to say simply that you are a Christian if the occasion arises.

Day 7: A converted executioner

According to the Acts, the tribune Respicius, witnessing Tryphon's courage, was converted. Witness touches hearts.

Prayer: Lord, may my life make others want to know you.

Act of the day: Pray for someone far from the faith.

Day 8: Martyrdom

Tortured, whipped, then beheaded at Nicaea around 251, Tryphon gave his life for Christ.

Prayer: Lord, support the Christians persecuted today, and welcome the martyrs into your peace.

Act of the day: Pray for persecuted Christians around the world.

Day 9: Patron of sailors

A storm brought his relics to Kotor, which made him its patron. The saint protects those who welcome him.

Prayer: Lord, protect sailors and all who travel. Through the intercession of Saint Tryphon, grant me the grace I ask in this novena, if it is your will.

Act of the day: Pray for sailors, fishermen and their families.

Closing prayer

Saint Tryphon,
young martyr with a generous heart,
present to the Lord the intention I have entrusted to you.
Give me your generosity and your courage,
and keep me faithful to Christ
to the end.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

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

PILGRIMAGE

Cathedral of Saint Tryphon, Kotor

The cathedral of Saint Tryphon stands in the heart of the old town of Kotor, in Montenegro, at the head of the Bay of Kotor on the Adriatic coast. Cathedral of the Catholic diocese of Kotor, it has kept for more than a thousand years the relics of Saint Tryphon, a young martyr of Asia Minor, whose head is still venerated there. The saint is the patron of the city and its sailors.

A history bound to the sea

According to tradition, at the beginning of the 9th century, Venetian sailors were carrying the relics of Saint Tryphon from the East when a storm drove them into the Bay of Kotor. The inhabitants welcomed the saint and built him a church. The present cathedral, in Romanesque style, was consecrated in 1166. It has suffered several earthquakes, notably in 1667 and 1979, and was restored each time, which explains the mixture of styles in its facade and its two bell towers.

What you can see

Inside, the Romanesque nave keeps fragments of old frescoes and a stone ciborium above the high altar. A relic chapel houses the head of Saint Tryphon and many reliquaries of goldsmith's work, witnesses to the devotion of the inhabitants and sailors of the Bay of Kotor. The old town around the cathedral is a UNESCO World Heritage site, with its walls clinging to the mountain.

Praying on site

Before you come, you can read the life of Saint Tryphon. Before his relics, entrust to him young people who must bear witness to their faith, those who care for the sick, sailors and those who work the land, then say the prayer to Saint Tryphon. If you can, come at the beginning of February, when the city solemnly celebrates its patron. These suggestions are offered by Saintspedia.

Other places of Saint Tryphon

- **Cerignola Cathedral** (Apulia, Italy): it has kept since 1918 the relics once venerated in Rome.
- **Onano** (Lazio, Italy): relics have rested since 1656 in the church of Santa Maria della Consolazione.
- **Rome**: the church of Santo Spirito in Sassia, where his relics were long honored with those of Saint Respicius and Saint Nympha.

Practical information

Kotor can be reached by road from Podgorica, Tivat or Dubrovnik; Tivat airport is the nearest. The cathedral stands on Saint Tryphon's Square, in the pedestrian old town. Visits are generally possible outside services, sometimes with an entrance fee for the museum and the relic chapel. Mass and visiting times vary by season: check locally or with the diocese of Kotor before you come.

Credits and sources

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