

7. Liquefaction does not always occur.

When the blood doesn't liquefy, the Neapolitans take it as an omen of misfortune. The blood did not liquefy in September 1939, 1940, 1943, 1973, 1980, nor in December 2016 and 2020. The relic also remained solid the year Naples elected a communist mayor, but it spontaneously liquefied when the late Archbishop of New York, Cardinal Terence Cooke, visited the St. Januarius shrine in 1978.

8. The blood has liquefied in the presence of some popes.

In 2015, while Pope Francis was giving some advice to the religious, priests, and seminarians of Naples, the blood liquefied again. The last time liquefaction occurred before a pontiff was in 1848 with Pius IX. It did not happen when John Paul II visited the city in October 1979 or in the presence of Benedict XVI in October 2007.

QUOTES on Martyrdom:

The Blood of the Martyrs is the seed of the Church.
Tertullian

For Jesus Christ I am prepared to suffer still more.
St. Maximilian Kolbe

The Martyrs gave their blood for the truth, and you are not able to come to church? They gave their lives for Christ, and you cannot make a small journey to him?
St. John Chrysostom

Mary was a martyr not by the sword of the executioner, but by bitter sorrow of heart.
St. Bernard

Sources Include: catholic.org, catholicnewsagency.com, churchpop.com, Franciscanmedia.org, Britannica.com

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St. Januarius Bishop & Martyr

Feast Day: September 19

Born: 3rd Century

Died: 305

Patronage: Blood Donors, Blood Banks, Naples, Volcano eruptions

Little is known about the life of Januarius. Januarius came from a rich aristocratic family. He became a priest and later the Bishop of Benevento.

When Emperor Diocletian started the Christian persecutions

unfortunately, Bishop Januarius was arrested. Later, Bishop Januarius, and several other Christians were sentenced to be thrown to wild bears in the Flavian Amphitheater at Pozzuoli, a small city outside of Naples, but the bears failed to devour them. So, they changed his sentence to beheading. After St. Januarius' public execution, a faithful woman named Eusebia collected his blood in two vials to keep as a relic.

The practice of gathering blood for relics was a common practice beginning in the days of persecution when the early Christians-soaked cloths in the blood shed by martyrs or, if possible, actually collected the liquid in flasks to keep as devotional items. In the catacombs these flasks were buried with the dead. Their discovery indicated that the person had died a martyr.

Saint Januarius' body remains are preserved in the crypt beneath the cathedral of the Archdiocese of Naples. His blood is also preserved there in two glass vials and placed in a round flask. The dry blood of St. Januarius Extraordinarily liquifies and then becomes solid again, a phenomenon first recorded in 1389. The "liquefaction" typically occurs on his feast day and has occurred at other times in the presence of holy people, such as visiting popes.

In fact, the mysterious liquefying of the blood relic has rarely occurred. The dried blood of St. Januarius, which is preserved in two glass vials or flasks in the Naples Cathedral; it traditionally liquefies three times a year: on the saint's September 19 feast, which commemorates his martyrdom in the Catholic liturgical calendar; December 16, the date of the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius in 1631, which was believed to have been halted through the saint's intervention; and the Saturday before the first Sunday in May.



On March 15, 2015, when Pope Francis was addresses the diocesan priests and religious in the city's Cathedral, the blood half-liquefied. The Archbishop of Naples was present when this occurred and said: "It's a sign that St. Gennaro loves the Pope, who is Neapolitan like us." Pope Francis immediately and lightheartedly replied: "The archbishop said the blood is half-liquefied. It means the saint loves us halfway. We all have to convert a little more so that he loves us more."

It was the first time St. Janarius' blood relic has liquefied in the presence of a pontiff since the miracle occurred in the presence of Pope Pius IX in 1848.

Pius IX was the longest-reigning elected pope in the history of the Catholic Church (31 years).

A little bit information about Pope Pius IX:

He convened the First Vatican Council, which decreed papal infallibility; defined the dogma of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, meaning that Mary was conceived without original sin; and he was the last Pope to rule as the sovereign of the papal states which fell to the Italian army in 1870. The Pope expressed his desire to go to the Cathedral of Naples. There the miracle of St. Gennaro occurred in his presence in 1848.

Here are the key facts:

1. The blood is kept in two glass vials or flasks

The dried blood of St. Januarius, who died around 305 A.D., is preserved in two glass ampoules, one larger than the other, in the Chapel of the Treasury of the Naples Cathedral.

2. The liquefaction is a miracle

The Church believes that the miracle takes place in response to the dedication and prayers of the faithful. When the miracle occurs, the mass of reddish dried blood, adhering to one side of the ampoule, turns into completely liquid blood, covering the glass from side to side.

4. The liquefaction can take days.

The liquefaction process sometimes takes hours or even days, but sometimes it doesn't happen at all. Normally, after a period that can range from two minutes to an hour, the solid mass turns red and begins to bubble.

The two glass ampoules which contain a dark solid mass, are enclosed in a reliquary that is held up and rotated sideways by a priest to show the blood has liquified. This is usually done by the Archbishop of Naples while the people pray. (An ampoule is a small sealed vial which is used to contain and preserve a sample, usually a solid or liquid) .

According to the Italian Catholic magazine Famiglia Cristiana, the reliquary with the ampoules remains on view for the faithful for eight days, during which they can kiss it while a priest turns it to show that the blood is still liquid. Then it is returned to the safety vault and locked away inside the Chapel of the Treasury of the Cathedral.

5. The faithful venerate the relic every year.

With the exclamation: "The miracle has happened!" the people approach the priest holding the reliquary to kiss the relic and sing the "Te Deum" in thanksgiving.

6. There is no scientific explanation.

Several investigations have already been conducted in the past to find a scientific explanation that answers the question of how something solid can suddenly liquefy, but none has been satisfactory so far.