

²⁴ **Abbé Vignali (1791–1828).** Paul Ange Vignali was a Corsican priest who was sent to Saint Helena at Napoleon's request in 1821, only a few months before the emperor's death.

He served as Napoleon's confessor during the final weeks of his life. Vignali administered the last rites at Napoleon's deathbed and conducted the funeral service following his death on 5 May 1821.



Death of Napoleon, 1821 (anonymous)

²⁵ **In manus tuas, Domine, commendo spiritum meum.** Here the priest quotes Luke 23:46: "Into your hands, Lord, I commend my spirit."

²⁶ **Joséphine de Beauharnais (1763-1814).** Born Marie Joséphe Rose Tascher de La Pagerie into a noble family from Martinique, Joséphine survived the French Revolution, although her first husband, Alexandre de Beauharnais, was executed during the Reign of Terror in 1794. In 1796, she married Napoleon Bonaparte, who was deeply devoted to her.



Joséphine de Beauharnais, 1801

François Gérard (1770-1837)

It was Napoleon who gave her the name by which she would become known to history: Joséphine.

Their marriage remained childless, eventually leading to their divorce in 1809 because Napoleon wished to secure an heir. Despite the separation, he remained attached to her, and the two continued to correspond.

Joséphine retired to the Château de Malmaison (see note 30), where she maintained an elegant household and cultivated a celebrated botanical garden. She died there in 1814, shortly before Napoleon's return from Elba.

²⁷ **Napoleon's Last Words.** According to several accounts, Napoleon's final words were: "*France, armée, tête d'armée, Joséphine.*"

In this story, they are paraphrased as "my country, my armies, my Joséphine." The remainder of the deathbed scene is obviously entirely fictional.

²⁸ **Francesco Antommarchi (1780-1838).** This was the Corsican physician who served as Napoleon's personal doctor on Saint Helena from 1819 until the emperor's death in 1821. He replaced the British doctors whom Napoleon had come to distrust.



François Carlo Antommarchi, ca. 1836 (anonymous)

Despite his training in anatomy and surgery in Italy, Antommarchi's medical abilities were frequently questioned. Napoleon even dismissed him briefly before later reinstating him.

Following Napoleon's death on 5 May 1821, Antommarchi performed the autopsy and concluded that stomach cancer was the cause of death, although debate continues to this day over the possibility of arsenic poisoning.

²⁹ **Laudanum.** Laudanum was a tincture of opium dissolved in alcohol and was one of the most widely used medicines of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.



100ml bottle of Laudanum (© Cydone)

Physicians prescribed it for pain, insomnia, coughing, diarrhea, and a variety of other ailments. Because its effects were not fully understood, it was often administered in quantities that would be considered dangerous today.