BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Amadour

Life, prayer, novena and pilgrimage

Feast day: August 20

IN BRIEF

Saint Amadour

Hermit honored at the origin of the shrine of Rocamadour, identified by legend with Zacchaeus.

Feast day	August 20
Died	Rocamadour (Lot, France), according to tradition
Canonized	immemorial cult
Era	1st century
Patron saint of	Rocamadour

In this booklet

Life

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Novena to Saint Amadour of Rocamadour

Shrine of Rocamadour

Credits and sources

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LIFE

Saint Amadour

Saint Amadour (Amator in Latin, Amador in Occitan) is the hermit honored at the origin of the shrine of Rocamadour, in the Lot department of France. According to tradition, he lived in a cave in the cliff and built there a small oratory to the Virgin Mary. Almost nothing is known about him with certainty: a late legend even identified him with Zacchaeus, the tax collector of the Gospel. His body, discovered in 1166, was venerated for four centuries. His feast day is August 20.

Who was Saint Amadour?

Amadour is one of the most mysterious saints of France. No ancient text tells of his life before the 12th century, and historians do not even know in what period he lived. What we do know is that a hermit of this name was honored at Rocamadour, so much so that the place took his name: the "rock of Amadour." Around his memory and the Black Madonna grew one of the great pilgrimages of medieval Christendom. The stories about him belong essentially to legend; they should be received as expressions of the pilgrims' faith, not as a biography.

Key dates in the life of Amadour

- **Unknown period**: According to tradition, a hermit named Amadour settles in the cliff of the Alzou and builds an oratory dedicated to the Virgin Mary.
- **At his death**: He is buried at the entrance of the oratory, and the people of the area come to pray there.
- **1105**: Pope Paschal II mentions the pilgrimage to Our Lady of Rocamadour.

- **1166**: While a grave is being dug, an incorrupt body is found and attributed to Saint Amadour; it is placed in the chapel that will become the crypt of Saint-Amadour.
- **1172**: A collection already records more than a hundred miracles obtained at Rocamadour.
- **September 3, 1562**: During the Wars of Religion, Protestant troops sack the shrine and desecrate his body; a few bones are saved by the local people.
- **From 1842**: The bishops of Cahors have the shrine restored, and it regains its influence.
- **2016**: A new reliquary of Saint Amadour, the work of the sculptor David Pons, is installed in the basilica of Saint-Sauveur.

The hermit of the cliff

According to the account spread by the Benedictine monks who had charge of the place, Amadour was a hermit of Quercy. He settled in the cliff overlooking the Alzou canyon, probably in a cave, and set up a small oratory on a rock, in honor of the Virgin Mary. The people of the region came to pray near him, drawn by his life of penance and prayer. At his death, he was buried at the entrance of the oratory. His name, Amator, means "the one who loves": it suited a man who had left everything for God.

Zacchaeus, Veronica and the legend

From the Middle Ages on, a tradition identified Amadour with Zacchaeus, the tax collector of Jericho who climbed a sycamore to see Jesus and welcomed him into his house (Gospel of Luke, chapter 19). According to this story, Zacchaeus married Saint Veronica, the woman who wiped the face of Christ on the way to Calvary. Driven out of Palestine, the couple came to Gaul; Veronica is said to have died at Soulac, near Bordeaux, and Zacchaeus to have withdrawn to Rocamadour. The legend also credits him with bringing the

statue of the Black Madonna. These stories, which rest on no ancient document, are regarded by historians as legendary. A similar tradition exists for Saint Silvanus of Levroux. Nor should Amadour be confused with Saint Amator, bishop of Auxerre.

The discovery of the body and the great pilgrimage

In 1166, while a grave was being dug for a wealthy local man who wished to be buried near the Virgin, an incorrupt body was found. It was attributed to Saint Amadour and placed in the chapel built on the site, the present crypt of Saint-Amadour. Miracles multiplied and pilgrims flocked from all over Europe. Rocamadour became one of the great holy places of Christendom: King Henry II of England came, and in 1244 Saint Louis prayed there with his mother, Blanche of Castile.

The body remained on display for nearly four hundred years. On September 3, 1562, during the Wars of Religion, Protestant troops sacked the shrine. The saint's remains were desecrated and hacked to pieces. The local people managed to save a few bones, which they hid in a reliquary for several years. The relics suffered again during the Revolution.

His cult today

Saint Amadour is celebrated on August 20. At Rocamadour, the crypt that bears his name lies beneath the basilica of Saint-Sauveur; an icon of the saint is venerated there. Since 2016, a new reliquary made by the sculptor David Pons has stood in the right-hand apse of the basilica. The shrine, restored from 1842 on, is a UNESCO World Heritage site and welcomes many pilgrims every year.

What can we learn from Saint Amadour?

Of Saint Amadour we know almost nothing certain, except what matters most: a man prayed in solitude and entrusted this place to the Virgin Mary, and great crowds came after him. His figure reminds us that God uses hidden lives to give birth to places of grace. By linking him to Zacchaeus, tradition added a fine lesson: the conversion of the one who welcomes Jesus into his home. You can pray to him for pilgrims, for those who seek God in silence and for all who need to change their lives.

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

Where to pray to Saint Amadour

- **Rocamadour** (Lot): the crypt of Saint-Amadour, beneath the basilica of Saint-Sauveur, and his reliquary in the basilica.
- **The chapel of Notre-Dame** at Rocamadour, where the Black Madonna is venerated, at the heart of the shrine he is said to have founded.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Amadour, Hermit of Rocamadour

Saint Amadour is the hermit honored at the origin of the shrine of Rocamadour, in the Lot department of France. Tradition shows him praying in the cliff beside an oratory dedicated to the Virgin Mary; a legend identified him with Zacchaeus, the tax collector who welcomed Jesus into his home. Prayer composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. It entrusts to him pilgrims, those who seek God and those who long to be converted.

Prayer to Saint Amadour

Saint Amadour,
hermit of the rock,
you sought God in the silence of the cliff
and entrusted this place to the Virgin Mary.
Teach me to pray in secret
and to love the Mother of the Lord.

Tradition saw in you Zacchaeus,
who climbed the tree to see Jesus
and joyfully welcomed him into his house.
Give me the desire to see Christ,
the joy of welcoming him into my home
and the courage to change my life.

Watch over the pilgrims of Rocamadour
and over all who walk toward God.
Support the sick, sinners and the discouraged,
and lead us to Jesus through Mary.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

When to pray to Saint Amadour

- On his feast day, August 20.
- Before or during a pilgrimage, especially to Rocamadour.
- When you want to be converted or to make amends, like Zacchaeus.
- To recover a taste for silence and prayer.
- To entrust an intention to the Virgin Mary together with him.

A short invocation

> *Saint Amadour, friend of silence,*
> *lead me to Jesus through Mary,*
> *and keep my heart open to his visit. Amen.*

To prepare for his feast, you can pray the novena to Saint Amadour from August 12 to August 20, and read the life of Saint Amadour.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Amadour of Rocamadour

This novena follows the figure of Saint Amadour, the hermit honored at the origin of the shrine of Rocamadour. Novena composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. To finish it on his feast day, August 20, begin on August 12. You can also pray it at any other time of the year.

How to pray this novena

Each day, make 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 Amadour, pray for us." The act suggested each day helps you live the novena concretely. Several meditations draw on the tradition that identifies Amadour with Zacchaeus: it is a legend, but the Gospel of Zacchaeus is truly given to us for our conversion.

Day 1: The desire to see Jesus

Zacchaeus wanted to see who Jesus was. Being short, he climbed a sycamore. The desire for God often begins with simple curiosity.

Prayer: Lord, make the desire to see you and know you grow in me.

Act of the day: Slowly read the story of Zacchaeus, in the Gospel of Luke (chapter 19).

Day 2: Called by name

Jesus stopped under the tree and said: "Zacchaeus, come down quickly." He knew his name before Zacchaeus said a word.

Prayer: Lord, you know me and call me by name. Help me to answer without delay.

Act of the day: Kindly call by name someone who is often overlooked.

Day 3: Welcoming Christ at home

Zacchaeus welcomed Jesus into his house with joy. Faith is not only an idea: it is a presence we welcome.

Prayer: Lord, come into my home and my family. May your presence bring joy there.

Act of the day: Bless your home with a prayer, or place a cross or holy image in it.

Day 4: Changing one's life

Zacchaeus promised to give half his goods to the poor and to repay four times what he had taken unjustly. Meeting Christ transforms a life.

Prayer: Lord, show me what I must change, and give me the strength to make amends.

Act of the day: Make concrete amends for a wrong done to someone, or receive the sacrament of reconciliation.

Day 5: The silence of the rock

Tradition says that Amadour lived as a hermit in the cliff of the Alzou. There he sought God far from noise.

Prayer: Lord, teach me to keep silence so that I may listen to you.

Act of the day: Take fifteen minutes of silence, without phone or screen.

Day 6: An oratory for Mary

Amadour is said to have built a small oratory in honor of the Virgin. From this modest place was born one of the great Marian shrines of Europe.

Prayer: Virgin Mary, Our Lady of Rocamadour, take me under your protection and lead me to your Son.

Act of the day: Pray a decade of the Rosary, or the whole Rosary.

Day 7: The crowds of pilgrims

After the discovery of his body in 1166, pilgrims came from all over Europe to Rocamadour. Pilgrimage is an image of our life: a journey toward God.

Prayer: Lord, support all who are on the road. Keep me walking toward you.

Act of the day: Take a short prayer walk to a nearby church or chapel.

Day 8: Despite the desecration

In 1562, the saint's body was desecrated and destroyed. Local people saved a few bones. Faith survives the violence that seeks to erase it.

Prayer: Lord, forgive those who destroy what is sacred, and keep peace among Christians.

Act of the day: Pray for Christian unity.

Day 9: Salvation has come to this house

Jesus said to Zacchaeus: "Today salvation has come to this house." It is the promise made to every heart that welcomes him.

Prayer: Lord, may salvation enter my life today. Through the intercession of Saint Amadour, grant me the grace I ask in this novena, if it is your will.

Act of the day: Attend Mass and thank God for a sign of his presence in your life.

Closing prayer

> *Saint Amadour,*
> *hermit of Rocamadour and friend of Mary,*
> *you sought God in the silence of the rock.*
> *Present to the Lord the intention I have entrusted to you.*
> *Give me a heart that welcomes Christ*
> *and a life that lets itself be transformed.*
> *Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

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

PILGRIMAGE

Shrine of Rocamadour

The shrine of Rocamadour, in the Lot department of France, clings to the cliff overlooking the Alzou canyon. Its very name, the "rock of Amadour," recalls the hermit who, according to tradition, prayed here and built an oratory to the Virgin Mary. A great place of pilgrimage since the Middle Ages, it gathers around a forecourt a basilica, a crypt and several chapels, including that of the Black Madonna.

One of the great pilgrimages of Christendom

As early as 1105, Pope Paschal II mentions the pilgrimage to Our Lady of Rocamadour. In the middle of the 12th century, Géraud d'Escorailles, abbot of Tulle, had a shrine built on the cliffside to welcome the crowds. In 1166, the discovery of an incorrupt body, attributed to Saint Amadour, gave new momentum to the pilgrimage: miracles were recorded in writing from 1172. Rocamadour became one of the great holy places of Europe. King Henry II of England came, and in 1244 Saint Louis prayed here with his mother, Blanche of Castile.

In 1562, Protestant troops sacked the shrine and desecrated the saint's body; a few bones were saved. The pilgrimage then declined, and the buildings fell into ruin. From 1842, the bishops of Cahors had them restored. The site is now a UNESCO World Heritage site, and the shrine celebrated its millennium in 2013.

What to see

Pilgrims climb to the shrine by a great staircase of 216 steps, once climbed on one's knees, and enter the forecourt through the Holy Door. The crypt of Saint-Amadour, a simple Romanesque nave of the 12th century, is where the

saint's body was placed after its discovery; an icon of the saint is venerated there. Above it rises the basilica of Saint-Sauveur, where a contemporary reliquary of Saint Amadour was installed in 2016. The chapel of Notre-Dame houses the 12th-century Black Madonna, the heart of the pilgrims' devotion. The chapels of Saint Michael, Saint John the Baptist, Saint Blaise, Saint Anne and Saint Louis complete the whole; the chapel of Saint Michael keeps medieval frescoes of the Annunciation and the Visitation.

Praying on site

Before you come, you can read the life of Saint Amadour. In the crypt, entrust to him your desire for God and your need for conversion, then say the prayer to Saint Amadour. Then go up to the chapel of Notre-Dame to entrust your intention to the Black Madonna. These suggestions are offered by Saintspedia.

Practical information

Rocamadour lies in the north of the Lot, between Gramat and Souillac. You can reach the shrine on foot by the great staircase from the medieval town, or by the Holy Way, the old pilgrims' path that starts from the hamlet of L'Hospitalet. The shrine is a place of prayer: modest dress and silence are requested. Times of Masses, confessions and visits vary with the seasons: check with the shrine before you come.

Credits and sources

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