

BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Amand

Life, prayer and novena

Feast day: February 6

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IN BRIEF

Saint Amand

Seventh-century monk and missionary bishop, evangelizer of Flanders and founder of the abbey of Elnone, patron saint of brewers.

Feast day	February 6, February 7 (in some dioceses)
Born	c. 584, Lower Poitou, France
Died	c. 679, Elnone (Saint-Amand-les-Eaux), France
Canonized	pre-congregation (immemorial cult)
Era	7th century
Patron saint of	brewers, winemakers and wine merchants, innkeepers

In this booklet

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Credits and sources

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LIFE

Saint Amand

Saint Amand (in Latin, Amandus) was a seventh-century monk and missionary bishop, often called "the apostle of Belgium." Born in western France around 584, he spent decades traveling the lands of the Scheldt and the Scarpe rivers, then barely Christian, founded many monasteries, including Elnone, today Saint-Amand-les-Eaux, and was for a time bishop of Maastricht. Patron saint of brewers, winemakers and innkeepers, he is celebrated on February 6.

Who was Saint Amand?

Amand was born around 584 in western Gaul, in the district of Herbauges, which corresponds roughly to the Vendée region of France. He came from a well-off family. His life is known mainly through an early biography, written shortly after his death, according to tradition, by one of his disciples, Baudemund, and through his own last will. Later accounts, such as those of the *Golden Legend*, add marvelous episodes.

He lived in the time of the Merovingian kings Clotaire II, Dagobert I and Sigebert III. Northern Gaul, today's Flanders and Brabant, was still largely pagan, despite the conversion of King Clovis a century earlier. With other great bishops such as Saint Eligius, Amand would plant Christianity firmly in these lands.

Key dates

- **c. 584**: Born in Lower Poitou, in western France.
- **c. 604**: Withdraws to a monastery on the island of Yeu, against his father's wishes.

- **Later**: Stays in Tours, near the tomb of Saint Martin, then lives for many years as a recluse near the cathedral of Bourges.
- **c. 628**: Ordained a missionary bishop with no fixed see; pilgrimage to Rome.
- **630s**: Missions in the region of Ghent; founding of monasteries.
- **c. 639**: Founds the abbey of Elnone, on land given by King Dagobert.
- **c. 647-649**: Bishop of Maastricht, at the request of King Sigebert III.
- **Afterward**: Leaves this see and returns to mission work.
- **c. 679**: Dies at Elnone, where he is buried.

Monk of Yeu and recluse of Bourges

At the age of twenty, Amand withdrew to a monastery on the island of Yeu, off the coast of the Vendée. His father came to bring him back to a life suited to his rank, but the young man refused. Tradition says he drove away a serpent there by prayer, which explains the emblem often given to him in art.

He then went to Tours, where he received the tonsure near the tomb of Saint Martin, and then to Bourges. There he lived for many years as a recluse in a cell near the cathedral, in prayer and penance.

The missionary bishop

Around 628, he was ordained a bishop, but without a diocese: his mission was to proclaim the Gospel where it was not yet known. After a pilgrimage to Rome, he went to the region of Ghent, whose people were hostile. He was mistreated there, sometimes thrown into the river, but he persevered.

He bought back captives, baptized them and trained them. His method was that of a pioneer: he founded a small community of monks, which became a center of prayer, teaching and land clearing, and then he moved on farther.

His relations with royal power were by turns difficult and fruitful. He dared to reproach King Dagobert for his disorderly life and was exiled for it. Once reconciled, he baptized the king's son, the future Sigebert III. Dagobert gave him land on the banks of the Scarpe, where he founded the abbey of Elnone.

Foundations in Ghent are also attributed to him, around which the abbeys of Saint Peter and Saint Bavo would grow. He inspired several great figures, such as Saint Bavo, Saint Gertrude of Nivelles and Saint Aldegund.

Bishop of Maastricht, then missionary again

Around 647, King Sigebert III entrusted him with the see of Maastricht, heir to the ancient bishopric of Tongeren, that of Saint Servatius. But Amand did not feel at home there: the clergy resisted him and, according to his biographers, his preaching was scorned.

Despite the encouragement of Pope Saint Martin I, he resigned after a few years to take up again the life of a traveling missionary. His biographers even report missions as far as the Slavs of the Danube and Gascony.

In his old age, he withdrew to Elnone, where he wrote his will and died around 679. The abbey soon took his name, and the town around it became Saint-Amand-les-Eaux. In the Carolingian era, it was one of the great centers of learning in northern Gaul.

Why is Saint Amand the patron saint of brewers?

According to a popular tradition, Saint Amand is the patron of brewers, winemakers, wine merchants and innkeepers. These trades were widespread in the lands he evangelized, from northern France to Flanders, where the monastic communities he founded were also centers of land clearing and farming.

Beyond these trades, Amand was a man of prayer before he was a man of action: years of solitude prepared his decades of mission. He did not seek honors, and he left a bishop's see to go back on the road. He is invoked for missionaries and for all who feel rejected in their mission.

Symbols and how to recognize Saint Amand in art

Saint Amand is shown as a bishop, with miter and crozier. His most frequent attribute is a serpent at his feet, recalling the tradition of the serpent he drove away on the island of Yeu. Medieval manuscripts also show him before King Dagobert.

Where to pray to Saint Amand

- **Saint-Amand-les-Eaux** (Nord, France): the abbey tower, the last great remnant of the abbey of Elnone, where he was buried.
- **Ghent** (Belgium): the sites of the abbeys of Saint Peter and Saint Bavo, linked to his foundations.
- **Île d'Yeu** and **Saint-Amand-sur-Sèvre** (Vendée, France): the places of his youth according to tradition.
- **Maastricht** (Netherlands): the former episcopal see he held for a few years.

To pray with him, use the prayer to Saint Amand or the novena to Saint Amand.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Amand, Apostle of Belgium

Saint Amand has been honored for thirteen centuries in northern France, Belgium and the Netherlands, but no traditional prayer to him has come into wide use in English. Saintspedia offers here an original prayer inspired by his life: the recluse of Bourges, the missionary bishop of the Scheldt lands, the founder of monasteries who never gave up. This prayer is an original text by Saintspedia.

A missionary who persevered

Amand was rejected, mistreated and sometimes thrown into the river by the people he came to evangelize. As bishop of Maastricht, he felt scorned and chose to go back on the road. He never stopped proclaiming the Gospel, buying back captives and founding communities. Popular tradition made him the patron of brewers, winemakers and innkeepers, numerous in the regions he evangelized.

Prayer to Saint Amand, Apostle of Belgium

Saint Amand, you sought God in solitude
before setting out on the roads:
teach me to pray before I act.

You proclaimed Christ to peoples who did not want to hear him:
support missionaries, catechists
and all who bear witness to their faith amid indifference or hostility.
When I feel rejected, keep me from discouragement.

You bought back captives to give them their freedom:
I entrust to you prisoners, victims of slavery and trafficking,
and all who are not free.

You are invoked for the fruits of the vine and of the hop:
bless the work of winemakers, brewers
and those who welcome travelers,
and teach us moderation in all things.
I entrust to you my intention: (name it in silence).

Watch over Flanders, northern France and all the lands you traveled,
so that the faith you sowed there may keep bearing fruit. Amen.

This original text by Saintspedia may be freely used for personal and community prayer.

When to pray this prayer

- On February 6, his feast day; some dioceses celebrate him on February 7.
- Before a mission, a new job or a fresh start.
- In a moment of discouragement, when your efforts seem to bear no fruit.
- At the blessing of a brewery, a vineyard or an inn, or at harvest time.

- For prisoners and victims of human trafficking.

To know him better, read the life of Saint Amand or pray the novena to Saint Amand, from January 29 to February 6.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Amand

This novena to Saint Amand is an original composition by Saintspedia. Over nine days, it follows the monk who left his family for God, lived as a recluse, became a missionary bishop in the lands of present-day Belgium and northern France, founded monasteries and never gave up despite rejection. To end on February 6, his feast day, begin it on January 29. You can also pray it at any time, especially before a new mission, a new job or a move, or in a time of discouragement.

How to pray this novena

Each day, find a quiet moment. Begin with the Sign of the Cross, read the short meditation, then say the prayer of the day, followed by an Our Father, a Hail Mary and a Glory Be. End with the small act proposed for the day. If you miss a day, simply continue: a novena is a path of trust, not a test.

Day 1: Leaving everything

At twenty, Amand left his well-off family to enter a monastery on the island of Yeu. When his father came to take him home, he refused. Following Christ sometimes means disappointing those we love, while continuing to love them and pray for them.

Prayer: Saint Amand, give me the courage to follow God's call, even when others do not understand. Amen.

Today: Pray for young people discerning their vocation.

Day 2: At the tomb of Saint Martin

Amand went to Tours and received the tonsure near the tomb of Saint Martin, the great missionary bishop of Gaul. He placed his own path under the protection of one who had gone before him. Martin, too, had left a comfortable life to serve Christ and the poor.

Prayer: Saint Amand, teach me to learn from the saints and to walk in their footsteps. Amen.

Today: Read the story of a saint who inspires you.

Day 3: The recluse of Bourges

For many years, Amand lived in a cell near the cathedral of Bourges, in prayer and penance. His decades of mission were born from these years of silence. What he later gave to others, he first received from God in prayer.

Prayer: Saint Amand, help me to make room for silence and prayer before I act. Amen.

Today: Spend fifteen minutes in silent prayer.

Day 4: Sent without a diocese

Around 628, Amand was ordained a bishop with no fixed see. His mission was to go where Christ was not yet known. He went to Rome as a pilgrim, then set out for the north, toward lands where few had heard of Christ.

Prayer: Saint Amand, pray for missionaries, and make me ready to go wherever God sends me. Amen.

Today: Support a mission with a prayer or a gift.

Day 5: Thrown into the river

Around Ghent, the people were hostile. Amand was mistreated and sometimes thrown into the water. He did not give up, but kept proclaiming the Gospel with patience. He knew that the seed often grows slowly and out of sight.

Prayer: Saint Amand, when I feel rejected or my efforts seem useless, keep me from discouragement. Amen.

Today: Persevere in a task that discourages you.

Day 6: Freeing captives

Amand bought back captives, baptized them and trained them. Some became his companions in mission. He saw in each person a child of God called to freedom, whatever their past or their origin.

Prayer: Saint Amand, I entrust to you prisoners and victims of slavery and human trafficking. Amen.

Today: Learn about an organization that fights human trafficking, or pray for its work.

Day 7: Speaking truth to power

Amand dared to reproach King Dagobert for his disordered life and was exiled. Later reconciled, he baptized the king's son. Truth spoken with love can open the way to peace.

Prayer: Saint Amand, give me the courage to speak the truth with charity, and the humility to be reconciled. Amen.

Today: Take a step toward reconciliation with someone.

Day 8: Leaving honors behind

As bishop of Maastricht, Amand felt scorned and out of place. Despite the encouragement of the pope, he resigned to return to the life of a traveling missionary. He sought God's will, not prestige, and was not afraid to start over at an age when others rest.

Prayer: Saint Amand, free me from the desire for honors, and help me to find the place where I can serve best. Amen.

Today: Do a service for someone without seeking thanks.

Day 9: Fruit that lasts

In his old age, Amand withdrew to Elnone, wrote his will and died around 679. The monasteries he founded shaped Flanders and northern France for centuries. Popular tradition made him patron of brewers, winemakers and innkeepers, the people of the good things of the earth shared at table.

Prayer: Saint Amand, bless all who work the land and welcome guests, and make my life bear fruit that lasts. Amen.

Today: Share a meal or a drink with someone, with gratitude and moderation.

Closing prayer

> *Lord God, you gave Saint Amand the strength to proclaim your Gospel tirelessly, despite rejection and hardship. Through his prayers, support missionaries, free captives, bless the work of our hands, and keep us faithful to our mission. Grant us the grace we ask in this novena, if it is according to your will. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Read the life of Saint Amand or pray the prayer to Saint Amand.

CREDITS

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