BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Augustin Schoeffler

Life, prayer and novena

Feast day: May 1

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IN BRIEF

Saint Augustin Schoeffler

Priest from Lorraine of the Paris Foreign Missions, martyred in Tonkin in 1851, one of the 117 Martyrs of Vietnam.

Feast day	May 1
Born	November 22, 1822, Mittelbronn (Moselle, then in Meurthe), France
Died	May 1, 1851, Sontay (Tonkin, Vietnam)
Canonized	June 19, 1988, by John Paul II (beatified May 7, 1900, by Leo XIII)
Era	19th century

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Credits and sources

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LIFE

Saint Augustin Schoeffler

Saint Augustin Schoeffler was a priest from Lorraine and a member of the Paris Foreign Missions Society, born in 1822 at Mittelbronn, in Moselle. A missionary in Tonkin, in the north of present-day Vietnam, he was arrested and beheaded at Sontay on May 1, 1851, at the age of twenty-eight. Beatified in 1900, he was canonized in 1988 by Saint John Paul II among the Martyrs of Vietnam. His feast day is May 1.

Who was Saint Augustin Schoeffler?

Augustin Schoeffler (also spelled Schœffler) belongs to that generation of young French priests of the 19th century who left for Asia knowing they might lose their lives. In Vietnam, Emperor Tự Đức, who came to the throne in 1847, had renewed the edicts of persecution against Christians and foreign missionaries. Schoeffler exercised his ministry there for barely three years. His life is well known thanks to the archives of the Foreign Missions and the testimonies gathered for his beatification. He is one of the one hundred and seventeen Martyrs of Vietnam canonized together on June 19, 1988.

Key dates in the life of Augustin Schoeffler

- **November 22, 1822**: Born at Mittelbronn, a village in Lorraine then in the department of Meurthe; he is baptized the next day.
- **1834-1842**: Studies at the minor seminary of Pont-à-Mousson and at the college of Phalsbourg.
- **1842-1846**: He studies at the major seminary of Nancy.
- **October 5, 1846**: He enters the seminary of the Paris Foreign Missions.
- **May 29, 1847**: Ordained a priest in Paris, at the age of twenty-four.

- **November 18, 1847**: He sails from Antwerp for Asia; he arrives in Tonkin on July 6, 1848.
- **Spring 1850**: His bishop sends him to evangelize the region of Sontay.
- **March 1, 1851**: He is arrested; on March 5, he is condemned for having preached the Christian religion.
- **May 1, 1851**: He is beheaded at Sontay.
- **May 7, 1900 and June 19, 1988**: Beatified by Leo XIII, then canonized by John Paul II.

A young man from Lorraine called to mission

Augustin Schoeffler grew up in Mittelbronn, a village near Phalsbourg where people spoke the Lorraine Franconian dialect. He studied at the minor seminary of Pont-à-Mousson and at the college of Phalsbourg, then at the major seminary of Nancy, where one of his classmates was Nicolas Krick, a future missionary and martyr in Tibet. It was there that the desire to proclaim the Gospel in Asia was born in him. In October 1846, he entered the seminary of the Paris Foreign Missions, on the rue du Bac. He was ordained a priest on May 29, 1847.

Missionary in Tonkin

On November 18, 1847, he sailed from Antwerp. After long months of travel, he arrived in Tonkin on July 6, 1848. He began by learning the Vietnamese language, while already ministering to the Christians. The situation was dangerous: missionaries had to hide, travel by night and celebrate in secret, protected by faithful who themselves risked their lives. In the spring of 1850, his bishop entrusted him with the region of Sontay, west of Hanoi, to proclaim the Gospel there.

Arrest and martyrdom

On March 1, 1851, Augustin Schoeffler was arrested. On March 5, he was found guilty of having preached the Christian religion. He spent two months in captivity. On May 1, 1851, he was led to the place of execution near Sontay. A placard carried before him stated his sentence: he had preached the religion of Jesus, his crime was evident, he must be beheaded. He was put to death at the age of twenty-eight.

His head was thrown into the river and was never found. His body was first buried at the place of execution. The crowd rushed to gather mementos of him: some even pulled up the grass stained with his blood. Two days later, Christians exhumed his body and buried it in a nearby Christian village. He was one of two French missionaries put to death in Tonkin during those years; the following year, another priest of the Foreign Missions, Jean-Louis Bonnard, met the same fate.

Beatification, canonization and cult

As early as 1857, Pope Pius IX declared him Venerable. He was beatified by Leo XIII on May 7, 1900, then canonized in Rome by John Paul II on June 19, 1988, with the Martyrs of Vietnam, who are celebrated together on November 24. His own feast is set on May 1; it is sometimes celebrated locally on May 2 in France.

In Mittelbronn, a statue stands in front of the house where he was born. In the church of Notre-Dame-de-l'Assomption in Phalsbourg, a statue by the sculptor Louis Stienne depicts him. His memory is kept in Paris, in the Hall of Martyrs of the Foreign Missions, on the rue du Bac. In 2009, a relic was installed in the church of the Assumption Grotto in Detroit, in the United States, in the presence of descendants of his family.

What can we learn from Saint Augustin Schoeffler?

Augustin Schoeffler spent only three years on mission. He barely had time to learn the language and begin his ministry. But he had given everything before leaving: when he left Lorraine, he knew he would probably never return. His life reminds us that fruitfulness is not measured by length of time. He is also a witness for a whole Vietnamese Church, priests, catechists and lay people, who paid for their faith with their blood. You can pray to him for missionaries, for young people who hesitate to answer a call, and for the Christians of Asia.

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

Where to pray to Saint Augustin Schoeffler

- **Mittelbronn** (Moselle): his home village, where a statue stands in front of his house.
- **Church of Notre-Dame-de-l'Assomption**, in Phalsbourg (Moselle): a statue by Louis Stienne depicts him.
- **Paris Foreign Missions**, rue du Bac in Paris: the Hall of Martyrs keeps the memory of the missionary martyrs.
- **Sontay** (Vietnam): the region where he ministered and gave his life.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Augustin Schoeffler for Missionaries

Saint Augustin Schoeffler, a priest from Lorraine and member of the Paris Foreign Missions, left for Tonkin at twenty-five and was beheaded there for his faith on May 1, 1851, at twenty-eight. He was canonized in 1988 among the Martyrs of Vietnam. Prayer composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. It entrusts to him missionaries, young people called by God and the Christians of Asia.

Prayer to Saint Augustin Schoeffler

Saint Augustin Schoeffler,
child of Lorraine and missionary of Christ,
you left your family and your country
to carry the Gospel beyond the seas.
Give me a willing heart
to answer God's call without delay.

In Tonkin, you learned a new language,
you served a persecuted people in secret,
and you accepted to give your life at twenty-eight.
Support the missionaries of today,
the priests, sisters and lay people
who proclaim Christ far from home.

You who walked toward death
beneath a placard that proclaimed your faith,
give us the courage not to be ashamed of the Gospel.
Watch over the Church in Vietnam and in the lands of Asia,
and bless the land of Lorraine where you were born.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

When to pray to Saint Augustin Schoeffler

- On his feast day, May 1, or on November 24 with the Martyrs of Vietnam.
- For missionaries and missionary vocations.
- When a young person hesitates to answer a call from God.
- For persecuted Christians in Asia.
- When courage is needed to bear witness to one's faith.

A short invocation

> *Saint Augustin Schoeffler, martyr of Tonkin,*
> *give me your missionary courage and pray for us. Amen.*

To prepare for his feast, you can pray the novena to Saint Augustin Schoeffler from April 23 to May 1, and read the life of Saint Augustin Schoeffler.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Augustin Schoeffler

Novena composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. It is inspired by the life of Saint Augustin Schoeffler, a priest from Lorraine of the Paris Foreign Missions, martyred in Tonkin in 1851. It is not an official liturgical text. To finish it on his feast day, May 1, begin on April 23. You can also pray it at any other time of the year, for example ending on November 24, the feast of the Martyrs of Vietnam.

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 Augustin Schoeffler and holy Martyrs of Vietnam, pray for us." The act of the day helps you live the novena concretely.

Day 1: A child of Lorraine

Augustin was born in 1822 at Mittelbronn and baptized the very next day. Everything begins with baptism, received in a Christian family and village.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for my baptism and for those who handed on the faith to me.

Act of the day: Find the date of your baptism and thank God for that day.

Day 2: The years of formation

At Pont-à-Mousson, Phalsbourg and then Nancy, he prepared for the priesthood. The hidden years of study and prayer prepare great faithfulness.

Prayer: Lord, bless seminarians and those who form them.

Act of the day: Pray for the seminarians of your diocese.

Day 3: The call of far-off lands

At the seminary, the desire to go to Asia was born in him. He entered the Paris Foreign Missions. God sometimes calls us far from home.

Prayer: Lord, make me attentive to your calls, even when they unsettle me.

Act of the day: Pray for a young person discerning their vocation.

Day 4: A priest forever

On May 29, 1847, he was ordained a priest. He already knew he would leave for a country where priests were hunted.

Prayer: Lord, I entrust priests to you. Keep them faithful and give them joy in their ministry.

Act of the day: Thank a priest who has helped you.

Day 5: The great departure

On November 18, 1847, he sailed from Antwerp. He left family, country and language. Departure is already a gift of self.

Prayer: Lord, bless the families of missionaries, who offer this sacrifice with them.

Act of the day: Support a missionary work with a gift or a prayer.

Day 6: Learning a new language

Once in Tonkin, he learned Vietnamese so that he could proclaim the Gospel. Loving a people begins with learning to speak to them.

Prayer: Lord, teach me to listen to and understand those who are different from me.

Act of the day: Take time to truly listen to someone from another culture.

Day 7: Serving in secret

At Sontay, he ministered in secret, protected by Christians who risked their lives. Mission is the work of a whole Church.

Prayer: Lord, I entrust to you the catechists and lay people who sustain the Church in countries where it is persecuted.

Act of the day: Pray for a persecuted Church in Asia.

Day 8: The arrest

On March 1, 1851, he was arrested, then condemned for having preached the religion of Jesus. He spent two months in captivity in prayer.

Prayer: Lord, support those imprisoned because of their faith, and give them your peace.

Act of the day: Write a prayer for prisoners of conscience.

Day 9: May 1, 1851

He walked toward death beneath a placard proclaiming his "crime": having preached Jesus. He was beheaded at twenty-eight. His death became his finest witness.

Prayer: Lord, help me never to be ashamed of you. Through the intercession of Saint Augustin Schoeffler, grant me the grace I ask in this novena, if it is your will.

Act of the day: Attend Mass if possible, and pray for missionaries.

Living the novena with Saint Augustin Schoeffler

Augustin Schoeffler's missionary life was short, but entirely given. During these nine days, you can entrust to him missionaries, vocations, the Christians of Asia and all who need courage to remain faithful. If you can, visit Mittelbronn, Phalsbourg or the rue du Bac in Paris.

Closing prayer

> *Saint Augustin Schoeffler,*
> *priest of Lorraine and martyr of Tonkin,*
> *you left everything to proclaim Christ*
> *and gave your life for him.*
> *Present to the Lord the intention I have entrusted to you.*
> *Give me your courage and your readiness,*
> *and watch over the Church in Vietnam.*
> *Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

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

Credits and sources

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