

BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Austremonius of Clermont

Life, prayer, novena and pilgrimage

Feast day: November 1

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IN BRIEF

Saint Austremonius of Clermont

Evangelizer of Auvergne and first bishop of Clermont in the third century according to tradition.

Feast day	November 1, November 8 (diocese of Saint-Flour)
Died	late 3rd or early 4th century, Auvergne, France
Era	3rd century
Patron saint of	Auvergne, diocese of Clermont, Issoire

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Credits and sources

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LIFE

Saint Austremonius of Clermont

Saint Austremonius, called Stremonius by Gregory of Tours and known in French as Saint Austremoine, is regarded as the apostle of Auvergne and the first bishop of Clermont, in central France. According to tradition, he was one of the seven bishops sent from Rome to evangelize Gaul in the third century, together with Denis of Paris and Saturninus of Toulouse. His tomb at Issoire was honored from ancient times, and his relics are now shared between Issoire and Mozac. His feast day is November 1.

Who was Saint Austremonius?

The oldest testimony about Austremonius comes from Gregory of Tours, in the sixth century, who was himself from Auvergne. In his *History of the Franks*, he reports that under Emperor Decius seven men ordained as bishops were sent to preach in Gaul: Gatian to Tours, Trophimus to Arles, Paul to Narbonne, Saturninus to Toulouse, Denis to Paris, Stremonius, that is Austremonius, to Auvergne, and Martial to Limoges. He adds that, unlike Saturninus and Denis, Austremonius died in peace, after winning the peoples to the faith.

Historians know that this account brings together traditions of different origins and periods, and that the exact date of the mission remains uncertain: the second half of the third century, or the beginning of the fourth.

Later *Lives* of Austremonius, about ten in number, add unreliable details, such as a Jewish birth at Emmaus or a martyrdom. His Latin name, *Stremonius*, rather suggests a Gallo-Roman origin.

Key dates

- **3rd century**: According to tradition, sent from Rome to evangelize Auvergne, perhaps under Emperor Decius (249-251).
- **Afterward**: Preaches in Auvergne and becomes the first bishop of the city of the Arverni, today Clermont.
- **Late 3rd or early 4th century**: Dies; buried at Issoire.
- **6th century**: The deacon Cautinus, future bishop of Clermont, notes the miracles occurring at his tomb in Issoire.
- **764 or 848**: Translation of his relics to the abbey of Mozac, under Pepin the Short or Pepin II of Aquitaine.
- **c. 900**: His head returns to Issoire.

The apostle of Auvergne

According to tradition, Austremonius arrived in Auvergne with several disciples, among them the deacons Marius, Mametus and Nectarius. Nectarius gave his name to the village of Saint-Nectaire, famous for its Romanesque church and for the cheese that bears its name. Saint Privatus, the evangelizer of the Gévaudan, is also said to have been one of his disciples.

Tradition reports that he converted a pagan priest, Victorinus, and organized the first Christian community in the city of the Arverni, of which he became bishop. The Church of Clermont is thus one of the oldest in Gaul.

Peaceful confessor or martyr?

The stained-glass windows and sculptures that portray him show him preaching, surrounded by wild animals made gentle, or suffering martyrdom by beheading, following the later accounts. Gregory of Tours, closer to the events, counts him instead among those who died "peacefully confessing the Lord."

The tomb at Issoire

Austremonius was buried at Issoire, in the town Gregory of Tours calls *Iciodorus*. In the sixth century, the deacon Cautinus, in charge of the local church and later bishop of Clermont, noticed that miracles were taking place at his tomb, which revived his cult.

A monastery grew up around the tomb. It became the Benedictine abbey whose twelfth-century Romanesque church, today the church of Saint-Austremoine, is one of the masterpieces of Romanesque art in Auvergne.

The relics of Mozac

In Carolingian times, his relics were moved to the abbey of Mozac, near Riom, on the initiative of Pepin the Short in 764 or of Pepin II of Aquitaine in 848, despite the protests of Issoire and of the bishop of Clermont. They still rest there, in a sixteenth-century painted wooden reliquary shrine in the south aisle of the abbey church.

The ninth-century Byzantine silk shroud that once wrapped them is now kept at the Musée des Tissus in Lyon. His head, first placed at Saint-Yvoine, returned to Issoire around the year 900.

Why is Saint Austremonius the patron saint of Auvergne?

As the first bishop of Clermont and the founder of its Church, Austremonius is the father in faith of Auvergne. He is the patron of the region, of the diocese of Clermont and of the town of Issoire, where his tomb has been honored since antiquity. Even though much of his life escapes us, the memory of the Church of Auvergne was built around his tomb and his relics.

He can be prayed to for Auvergne and the diocese of Clermont, for the sick, recalling the healings at his tomb, and for all who proclaim the Gospel where it is little known.

A feast on All Saints' Day

His feast falls on November 1, the solemnity of All Saints, which means his memory is often overshadowed by the great feast of the universal Church. The diocese of Saint-Flour, also in Auvergne, celebrates him on November 8. A pilgrimage to Issoire or Mozac is a fitting way to honor him in the first days of November.

Symbols and how to recognize Saint Austremonius in art

Saint Austremonius is shown as a bishop, with miter and crosier. Some windows depict him preaching among wild animals that have become peaceful. Other works, following the later legends, show him being beheaded. In Issoire, a seventeenth-century painted wooden statue presents him in his episcopal vestments.

Where to pray to Saint Austremonius

- **Issoire** (Puy-de-Dôme): the church of Saint-Austremoine, built on the site of his tomb.
- **Mozac** (Puy-de-Dôme): the abbey church of Saint-Pierre, which keeps the shrine of his relics.
- **Clermont-Ferrand**: the cathedral of Notre-Dame-de-l'Assomption, seat of the diocese he founded.
- **Diocese of Saint-Flour**: where he is celebrated on November 8.

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

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Austremonius, Apostle of Auvergne

To our knowledge, there is no traditional prayer to Saint Austremonius whose text can be guaranteed. Saintspedia offers you an original prayer, inspired by what tradition remembers of him: the missionary sent from Rome, the first bishop of Clermont, the father in faith of Auvergne.

The father in faith of Auvergne

According to Gregory of Tours, Austremonius was one of the seven bishops sent to proclaim the Gospel in Gaul. With his companions, he sowed the faith in the mountains and plains of Auvergne, and his tomb at Issoire became, from ancient times, a place of prayer and healing.

Prayer to Saint Austremonius

Saint Austremonius, you left Rome to bring the Gospel to the people of the Arverni: give us the courage to proclaim Christ where we live.

You founded the Church of Clermont with your companions: watch over your diocese, its priests, its deacons and all the baptized of Auvergne.

At your tomb, so many of the sick were healed: I entrust to you those who suffer in body and in heart. I also entrust to you my intention: (name it in silence).

Keep us faithful to the faith we received from those who came before us, and make us, in our turn, bearers of the Gospel for those who will come after us. Amen.

This prayer is an original text by Saintspedia, free to use for personal and community prayer.

When to pray this prayer

Saint Austremonius is celebrated on November 1, All Saints' Day, and on November 8 in the diocese of Saint-Flour. You can also pray to him:

- during a pilgrimage to Issoire or Mozac;
- for the Church in Auvergne and the diocese of Clermont;
- for missions and for those who proclaim the Gospel where it is little known;
- for a sick person who needs healing and comfort;
- when you want to give thanks for those who handed on the faith to you.

A short invocation

> *Saint Austremonius, apostle of Auvergne, you died in peace confessing the Lord: pray for us, that we may live and die in his friendship. Amen.*

You may end with an Our Father, a Hail Mary and a Glory Be. To go further, pray the novena to Saint Austremonius or read the life of Saint Austremonius.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Austremonius

This novena is an original composition by Saintspedia, inspired by the tradition of Saint Austremonius, apostle of Auvergne and first bishop of Clermont. It is not an official liturgical text. To end on his feast day, begin on October 24: the ninth day then falls on November 1, All Saints' Day. In the diocese of Saint-Flour, where he is celebrated on November 8, begin on October 31. You may also pray it at any time of the year, for the Church in Auvergne, for a sick person or for the missions.

How to pray this novena

Each day, place your intention before God in a moment of silence. Read the short meditation, say the prayer of the day, then pray an Our Father, a Hail Mary and a Glory Be. The small act suggested for each day helps turn prayer into a concrete step.

You may begin each day with this opening prayer: *Lord, you sent Saint Austremonius to bring the light of the Gospel to Auvergne. Through his intercession, renew my faith and hear the prayer I bring you today. Amen.*

If you miss a day, simply pick up where you left off. Faithfulness matters more than perfection. If you can, pray one of the days at Issoire, at Mozac or in the cathedral of Clermont, places where Christians have honored Austremonius for centuries.

Day 1: Sent from Rome

According to Gregory of Tours, Austremonius was one of seven bishops sent to preach the Gospel in Gaul. He did not choose his mission: he received it from the Church.

Prayer: Lord, I too am sent by my baptism. Through the intercession of Saint Austremonius, help me accept the mission you give me. Amen.

Today: Ask yourself where God is sending you today: home, work, school, parish.

Day 2: Companions on the road

Austremonius did not come alone. Tradition names his companions: the deacons Marius, Mametus and Nectarius, and perhaps Privatus. The Gospel is proclaimed together.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for those who walk with me in faith. Through the intercession of Saint Austremonius, make me a faithful companion for others. Amen.

Today: Thank someone who supports you in your life of faith.

Day 3: Among the Arverni

In a land shaped by ancient pagan cults, Austremonius proclaimed Christ to the Arverni. He went to people where they were.

Prayer: Lord, give me the courage to speak of you in my everyday surroundings. Through the intercession of Saint Austremonius, bless all who evangelize. Amen.

Today: Share a word of faith or hope with someone who needs it.

Day 4: The conversion of Victorinus

Tradition says Austremonius converted a pagan priest named Victorinus. No one is too far from God to be reached by his grace.

Prayer: Lord, I entrust to you those who seem far from you. Through the intercession of Saint Austremonius, touch their hearts. Amen.

Today: Pray by name for someone whose conversion you hope for.

Day 5: Founding a Church

Austremonius gathered the first Christian community of the city that would become Clermont, and became its bishop. The Church of Clermont is one of the oldest in Gaul.

Prayer: Lord, bless my diocese and my bishop. Through the intercession of Saint Austremonius, make our communities living and welcoming. Amen.

Today: Pray for your bishop and learn something about the history of your diocese.

Day 6: Dying in peace

Gregory of Tours says that Austremonius died "peacefully confessing the Lord." Not every saint is a martyr; many simply remain faithful to the end.

Prayer: Lord, grant me a peaceful heart and a holy death. Through the intercession of Saint Austremonius, keep me in your friendship. Amen.

Today: Pray for the dying, and for those who accompany them.

Day 7: Healing at the tomb

In the sixth century, the deacon Cautinus saw miracles at the tomb in Issoire. The saints remain close to those who suffer.

Prayer: Lord, I entrust to you the sick, especially those I love. Through the intercession of Saint Austremonius, give them healing, strength and peace. Amen.

Today: Visit, call or write to someone who is ill.

Day 8: Relics and memory

His relics were moved to Mozac, his head returned to Issoire. Over the centuries, Christians have cherished the memory of those who brought them the faith.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for those who handed on the faith to me. Through the intercession of Saint Austremonius, help me treasure this inheritance. Amen.

Today: Pray for the deceased members of your family who taught you to believe.

Day 9: With all the saints

The feast of Austremonius falls on All Saints' Day. He joins the great crowd of witnesses who surround us and invite us to holiness.

Prayer: Lord, you call me to holiness. Through the intercession of Saint Austremonius and all the saints, help me answer your call each day. Amen.

Today: Go to Mass, and choose one saint to get to know better.

Closing prayer

Saint Austremonius, apostle of Auvergne and first bishop of Clermont, you brought the light of Christ to the Arverni and died in peace confessing the Lord. Obtain for me the grace I have asked during these nine days, if it is God's will. Bless the Church of Auvergne, comfort the sick and make me, in my turn, a witness of the Gospel for those who will come after me. Amen.

To continue, you can pray the prayer to Saint Austremonius or read his life.

PILGRIMAGE

Church of Saint-Austremoine in Issoire

The Church of Saint-Austremoine in Issoire, in the Puy-de-Dôme, is the former Benedictine abbey church built on the spot where, according to Gregory of Tours, the apostle of Auvergne was buried. Built in the 12th century, it ranks among the great Romanesque churches of Auvergne and keeps alive the memory of its patron saint.

From tomb to abbey

In the 6th century, Gregory of Tours reports that the tomb of Saint Austremonius, in the town of Issoire, was made holy by miracles, as the deacon Cautinus, future bishop of Clermont, witnessed. A monastery grew up around the burial place. Although the relics were taken to Mozac in the Carolingian period, the saint's head returned to Issoire around the year 900. The present abbey church was built in the 12th century by the Benedictines.

What to see

The church follows the typical plan of the great Romanesque churches of Auvergne: a tiered apse with radiating chapels, decorated with mosaics of colored stone and signs of the zodiac, a rectangular massif and an octagonal bell tower. Inside, the historiated capitals, some of which tell the story of Christ's Passion and Resurrection, are among the most famous in the region. In the 19th century the interior received a painted polychrome decoration that gives it a very distinctive look. A crypt extends beneath the choir, and several works, statues and stained-glass windows recall the life of Saint Austremonius.

Praying near Saint Austremonius

Before your visit, you can read the life of Saint Austremonius. In the church, take a moment of silence before his images or in the crypt, entrust to him the Church in Auvergne and your intentions, then recite the prayer to Saint Austremonius. These suggestions are offered by Saintspedia.

Other places connected with Saint Austremonius

- **Mozac**, near Riom: the abbey church of Saint-Pierre, which keeps the shrine of his relics (16th century).
- **Clermont-Ferrand**: the cathedral, seat of the diocese of which he was the first bishop.
- **Saint-Nectaire**: the Romanesque church dedicated to his companion Nectarius.
- **Lyon**: the Museum of Textiles, which holds the Byzantine shroud that wrapped his relics.

Practical information

Issoire lies south of Clermont-Ferrand, reachable by the A75 motorway or by train. The Church of Saint-Austremoine is in the center of the old town. It is an active parish church: modest dress and silence are asked during services. Opening hours, Mass times and visiting hours may vary; check with the parish or the Issoire tourist office before you come.

Credits and sources

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