BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Babolein

Life, prayer, novena and pilgrimage

Feast day: June 26

IN BRIEF

Saint Babolein

Monk of Luxeuil, first abbot of the monastery of Les Fossés (Saint-Maur-des-Fossés) in the 7th century.

Feast day	June 26
Born	late 6th or early 7th century (date unknown)
Died	c. 660 - 670 (June 26, 670 according to tradition), monastery of Les Fossés (Saint-Maur-des-Fossés, Val-de-Marne)
Canonized	immemorial cult
Era	7th century

In this booklet

Life

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Novena to Saint Babolein

Abbey Park, Saint-Maur-des-Fossés

Credits and sources

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LIFE

Saint Babolein

Saint Babolein (also Babolin, Babolenus in Latin) was a 7th-century monk, trained at the abbey of Luxeuil in the spirit of Saint Columban, who became the first abbot of the monastery of Les Fossés, near Paris, the future abbey of Saint-Maur-des-Fossés. He governed this young community for some twenty years and died there around 660 or 670. His feast day is June 26.

Who was Saint Babolein?

Babolein belongs to the great monastic movement which, in the 7th century, covered Frankish Gaul with monasteries starting from Luxeuil, founded by the Irish monk Saint Columban. A few ancient charters allow us to place him precisely: he is recorded as first abbot of Les Fossés as early as 641. For the rest, we depend mainly on a Life of Saint Babolein written around 1058-1067 by an anonymous monk of the abbey, more than four centuries after his death. This text, known only through copies from the 12th and 13th centuries, mixes historical memories with local legends, such as the romanticized story of a siege of the Bagaudae on the hill of Saint-Maur. It must therefore be read with caution.

Key dates in the life of Babolein

- **Early 7th century**: A monk at the abbey of Luxeuil, he is trained in the tradition of Saint Columban.
- **May 20, 624**: With Rauracus, bishop of Nevers, he is present at the last moments of Saint Austregisilus, archbishop of Bourges.
- **639**: The Parisian deacon Blidegisilus obtains from Queen Nanthild a bend of the Marne to found a monastery there.

- **May 9, 641**: Babolein is mentioned as the first abbot of the monastery of Les Fossés.
- **May 15, 643**: Audobert, bishop of Paris, grants the community the right to elect its abbot.
- **April 27, 658**: King Chlothar III places the monastery under his protection.
- **c. 660 - 670**: Death of Babolein, on June 26, 670 according to tradition, after naming his successor, Ambrose.
- **c. 1058 - 1067**: An anonymous monk of the abbey writes the Life of Saint Babolein.

A disciple of Luxeuil

Babolein was first a monk at Luxeuil, in the Vosges, the great monastery founded around 590 by Saint Columban. There the monks and abbots who would found many monasteries in Gaul were being trained. Columban's rule was demanding: long prayer, work, penance, obedience. Babolein bore its mark. In 624 we find him beside Saint Austregisilus, archbishop of Bourges, whose last breath he witnessed with the bishop of Nevers, Rauracus: a sign that he was already a monk esteemed by the bishops of his time.

The first abbot of Les Fossés

In 639, a deacon of Paris named Blidegisilus obtained from Queen Nanthild, widow of King Dagobert I and regent for her son Clovis II, the gift of a bend of the Marne, southeast of Paris, to build a monastery there. The site, occupied by an old ruined fortified camp, was bordered by slopes and ditches: the monastery took the name *Fossatus*, "the Ditches", or Saint-Pierre-des-Fossés. Its church was dedicated to the Virgin Mary and the apostles Peter and Paul.

From 641, Babolein is mentioned as its first abbot. He established a mixed rule, combining the customs of Saint Columban and the Rule of Saint Benedict, as was then done in many Frankish monasteries. Under his leadership, the young community obtained in 643 from the bishop of Paris, Audobert, the right to elect its abbot freely, and then, in 658, the protection of King Chlothar III. These acts show an abbot attentive to the freedom and stability of his house.

Death, tomb and memory

Babolein died around 660 or 670, on June 26 according to tradition, after naming his successor, Ambrose. He was buried in the first church of the monastery. According to tradition, the chapel of Notre-Dame-des-Miracles, whose ruins can still be seen in the Abbey Park at Saint-Maur-des-Fossés, marks the site of this first church and of his grave.

In the 9th century, the abbey received the relics of Saint Maurus, a disciple of Saint Benedict, and gradually took the name of Saint-Maur-des-Fossés. It became one of the great pilgrimage sites of the Île-de-France, before being suppressed in the 18th century and demolished. The memory of its first abbot has remained alive in the town: the local history society devoted a special issue of its journal to him. Saint Babolein is celebrated on June 26; he is also honored by the Orthodox Churches. No ancient iconography of his own is known; he is shown as an abbot, with a crozier.

What can we learn from Saint Babolein?

Saint Babolein is a quiet builder. Trained in the demanding school of Luxeuil, he received a bare piece of land on the bank of the Marne and made it a house of prayer that lasted more than a thousand years. He knew how to surround himself with others, to organize, to protect his community, and then to hand on his charge to a successor. He reminds us that God's great works often begin

with the faithfulness of one man. You can pray to him for religious communities, for those who found or begin a work, and for the people of Saint-Maur and the Val-de-Marne.

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

Where to pray to Saint Babolein

- **Abbey Park**, Saint-Maur-des-Fossés (Val-de-Marne): the remains of the abbey and the ruins of the chapel of Notre-Dame-des-Miracles, on the site of the church where he was buried.
- **Church of Saint-Nicolas**, Saint-Maur-des-Fossés: it keeps the statue of Our Lady of Miracles, which came from the old abbey.
- **Luxeuil-les-Bains** (Haute-Saône): the town of the abbey where he was trained.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Babolein for Communities and Those Who Begin a Work

Saint Babolein, a monk trained at Luxeuil in the spirit of Saint Columban, was in the 7th century the first abbot of the monastery of Les Fossés, the future abbey of Saint-Maur-des-Fossés. Prayer composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. It is not an official liturgical text. It entrusts to him religious communities, those who begin a work and those who are responsible for others.

Prayer to Saint Babolein

Saint Babolein,
disciple of Luxeuil and father of Les Fossés,
you received a bare land on the bank of the Marne
and made it a house of prayer.
Teach me to build with patience
what God entrusts to me.

You guided your brothers in the rule,
in prayer and in work,
and you knew how to hand on your charge.
Give those who lead others
wisdom, gentleness and humility,
and the courage to pass on the torch.

Watch over monks and nuns,
over those who found and those who begin,
over the town of Saint-Maur and its people.
Let our communities
remain places where God is sought.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

When to pray to Saint Babolein

- On his feast day, June 26.
- When founding or beginning a work, an association or a community.
- For abbots, superiors and all who are responsible for a community.
- When you must hand on a responsibility to a successor.
- For monks, nuns and religious vocations.

A short invocation

> *Saint Babolein, builder of the house of God, pray for us. Amen.*

To prepare for his feast, you can pray the novena to Saint Babolein from June 18 to June 26, and read the life of Saint Babolein.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Babolein

This novena is an original composition inspired by the life of Saint Babolein, first abbot of the monastery of Les Fossés, the future abbey of Saint-Maur. Novena composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. It is not an official liturgical text. To finish it on his feast day, June 26, begin on June 18. You can also pray it at any other time of the year.

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 Babolein, pray for us." The act of the day helps you live the novena concretely. The facts recounted come from the abbey's ancient charters and from a Life written in the 11th century.

Day 1: At the school of Luxeuil

Babolein was trained at Luxeuil, the monastery founded by Saint Columban. No one learns to follow Christ alone: we let ourselves be formed by a community.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for those who formed me in the faith. Give me a teachable heart.

Act of the day: Read a few lines of the Gospel and meditate on them in silence.

Day 2: Prayer above all

Columban's rule placed prayer at the center of the day. Babolein bore its mark all his life.

Prayer: Lord, teach me to pray. Let nothing come before your love.

Act of the day: Pray one psalm in the morning and one in the evening.

Day 3: At the bedside of a saint

In 624, Babolein assisted Saint Austregisilus, archbishop of Bourges, at the moment of his death. Accompanying the dying is a work of mercy.

Prayer: Lord, bless those who accompany the sick and the dying. Give them your peace.

Act of the day: Pray for caregivers and hospital chaplains.

Day 4: A land received

In 639, Queen Nanthild gave a bend of the Marne to found a monastery there. A bare land would become a house of God.

Prayer: Lord, make fruitful what you have given me. Let none of your gifts remain barren.

Act of the day: Put a neglected talent at the service of others.

Day 5: The first abbot

Babolein became the first abbot of Les Fossés. He received the charge of guiding his brothers toward God, like a father.

Prayer: Lord, bless those who are responsible for others: parents, teachers, leaders, religious superiors.

Act of the day: Pray for someone who has authority over you.

Day 6: Prayer and work

Babolein combined the customs of Columban and the Rule of Saint Benedict. Monastic life holds prayer and work together.

Prayer: Lord, sanctify my work. Let it be an offering and a service.

Act of the day: Begin your work with a short prayer.

Day 7: Protecting the community

Under Babolein, the monastery obtained the right to elect its abbot and the king's protection. A good shepherd watches over the peace and freedom of his own.

Prayer: Lord, protect our communities, our parishes and our families from division and threats.

Act of the day: Make a concrete gesture for peace in your community or family.

Day 8: Passing on the torch

Before he died, Babolein named his successor, Ambrose. God's work does not rest on one man alone.

Prayer: Lord, give me the humility to hand on what I have received and to make room for others.

Act of the day: Encourage a younger person in a responsibility.

Day 9: A work that lasts

The monastery founded under Babolein lived for more than a thousand years and became the abbey of Saint-Maur. What is built on God bears fruit for a long time.

Prayer: Lord, build the house of my life yourself. Through the intercession of Saint Babolein, grant me the grace I ask in this novena, if it is your will.

Act of the day: Attend Mass and pray for monks and nuns.

Living the novena with Saint Babolein

Saint Babolein left neither writings nor famous miracles. He left a work: a community of prayer, well ordered, free and lasting. During these nine days, you can carry religious communities, those who begin a work, those who exercise authority and those who must hand it on. If you can, visit the Abbey Park at Saint-Maur-des-Fossés.

Closing prayer

> *Saint Babolein,*
> *monk of Luxeuil and first abbot of Les Fossés,*
> *you built for God a house of prayer*
> *that has come down through the centuries.*
> *Present to the Lord the intention I have entrusted to you.*
> *Keep our communities in peace*
> *and our hearts in faithfulness.*
> *Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

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

PILGRIMAGE

Abbey Park, Saint-Maur-des-Fossés

The Abbey Park (Parc de l'Abbaye) at Saint-Maur-des-Fossés, in the Val-de-Marne, occupies the site of the old abbey of Les Fossés, founded in 639 in a bend of the Marne. Saint Babolein was its first abbot, and he was buried there. The abbey has disappeared, but its remains, listed as historic monuments, still allow visitors to trace more than a thousand years of monastic history and to pray where the saint lived.

An abbey more than a thousand years old

In 639, Queen Nanthild, regent for her son Clovis II, gave the Parisian deacon Blidegisilus a site on an old ruined fortified camp above the Marne, to build a monastery there. Babolein, who came from Luxeuil, became its first abbot. The monastery took the name of Saint-Pierre-des-Fossés, because of the very steep slope that runs down to the river.

In 868, the abbey received the relics of Saint Maurus, brought from Anjou to protect them from the Vikings. It became a great pilgrimage site of the Île-de-France, where people came to pray against gout and epilepsy, and took the name of Saint-Maur-des-Fossés. In the 18th century, the archbishop of Paris suppressed the chapter, and the buildings were sold in 1751 to the Prince of Condé, then demolished. After many owners, the site was bought by the town in 1962. The remains of the abbey have been listed as historic monuments since 1988.

What you can see

The park keeps several witnesses of the old abbey: the so-called Rabelais tower, remains of fortifications, and a 19th-century neo-Renaissance villa built in the former stables of the canons. The place most closely linked to Saint Babolein is

the chapel of Notre-Dame-des-Miracles, whose ruins can still be seen: according to tradition, it marks the site of the first church where he was buried. Excavations carried out between 1967 and 1982 uncovered the original apse, then the paving and column bases of a 12th-century Romanesque building.

The statue of Our Lady of Miracles, a polychrome wooden Virgin of the Annunciation that made this chapel famous in the Middle Ages, is now in a chapel of the parish church of Saint-Nicolas in Saint-Maur.

Praying on site

Before you come, you can read the life of Saint Babolein. Before the ruins of the chapel of Notre-Dame-des-Miracles, entrust to him religious communities and those who begin a work, then say the prayer to Saint Babolein. You can continue your visit at the church of Saint-Nicolas, before the statue of Our Lady of Miracles. These suggestions are offered by Saintspedia.

Practical information

The Abbey Park is in Saint-Maur-des-Fossés, southeast of Paris, at the corner of avenue de Condé and rue de l'Abbaye; the town is served by the RER. It is a public garden, also used for festivals and during the European Heritage Days: respect for the place and quiet are expected. Park opening hours and access to the remains may vary: check with the town hall of Saint-Maur-des-Fossés before you come.

Credits and sources

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