


BOOKLET TO PRINT

# Saint Benildus

*Life, prayer and novena*

Feast day: August 13

IN BRIEF

## Saint Benildus

*Brother of the Christian Schools, schoolteacher in Saugues in the Haute-Loire, patron saint of accordion players.*

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| **Feast day** | August 13 |
| **Born** | June 14, 1805, Thuret, Puy-de-Dôme, France |
| **Died** | August 13, 1862, Saugues, Haute-Loire, France |
| **Canonized** | October 29, 1967, by Pope Paul VI |
| **Era** | 19th century |
| **Patron saint of** | accordion players, teachers and educators |

## In this booklet


Life

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Novena to Saint Benildus

Credits and sources



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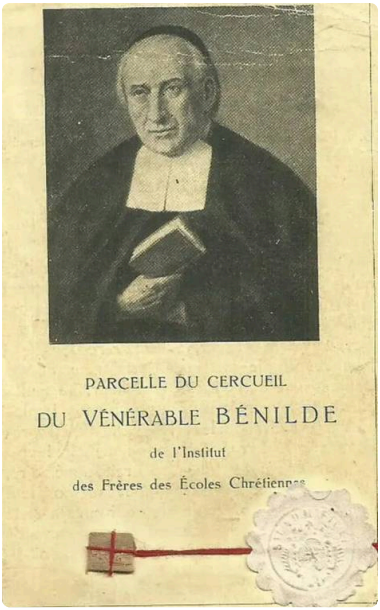
LIFE

# Saint Benildus

Saint Benildus (Brother Bénilde), born Pierre Romançon, was a nineteenth-century Brother of the Christian Schools from the Auvergne region of France. A schoolteacher for more than forty years, he directed the school of Saugues, in the Haute-Loire, for twenty-one years and died there on August 13, 1862. Pope Pius XII said of him that he "did ordinary things in an extraordinary way." Canonized by Pope Paul VI in 1967 and patron saint of accordion players, he is celebrated on August 13.

## Who was Saint Benildus?

Brother Benildus is a saint of everyday life. He founded no order, wrote no books and performed no great public deeds. He taught class every day to the children of farmers, taught the catechism, visited the sick and prayed. But he did it with such a living faith that the little town of Saugues was transformed, and hundreds of vocations were born around him. He is one of the saints of the institute founded by Saint John Baptist de La Salle, and Lasallian schools around the world, including the De La Salle-College of Saint Benilde in Manila, carry his name.




*Saint Benildus, Brother of the Christian Schools.*

## Key dates

- **June 14, 1805**: Pierre Romançon is born at Thuret, in the Puy-de-Dôme, into a farming family.
- **c. 1819**: A pupil of the Brothers of the Christian Schools in Riom, he is employed as an assistant teacher; his request to join the institute is turned down because of his age.
- **February 1820**: He enters the novitiate in Clermont-Ferrand, against his father's wishes, and takes the name Brother Bénilde.
- **1820-1841**: He teaches in several schools: Riom, Moulins, Limoges, Aurillac, Clermont-Ferrand, Billom.
- **September 21, 1841**: He is sent to Saugues, in the Haute-Loire, to found and direct the Brothers' school.

- **August 13, 1862**: Dies in Saugues; a healing is reported on the day of his funeral.
- **January 6, 1928**: Pope Pius XI declares him Venerable.
- **April 4, 1948**: Beatified by Pope Pius XII.
- **October 29, 1967**: Canonized by Pope Paul VI.
- **1990**: Chosen as patron saint of accordion players.

## A child of the Limagne

Pierre Romançon was born in a village of the Limagne plain, north of Clermont-Ferrand. His parents were farmers. His childhood was marked by grief: he lost his mother, two sisters and a brother. A bright pupil of the Brothers of the Christian Schools in Riom, he was drawn to their life. At fourteen he was already working as an assistant teacher, but his request to join the Brothers was turned down: he was too young. He persisted, and the following year, in 1820, he entered the novitiate in Clermont-Ferrand, despite his father's opposition. He received the name Brother Bénilde, after a ninth-century martyr of Córdoba.

## Twenty years of teaching on the move

For about twenty years, Brother Benildus taught in various elementary schools of the institute, in central France: Riom, Moulins, Limoges, Aurillac, Clermont-Ferrand, Billom. For a time he was also in charge of the community's kitchen and vegetable garden. Everywhere, people noticed his seriousness, his regularity and his piety. Without knowing it, he was preparing for the work of his life.

## The school of Saugues

In 1841, the town council of Saugues, a small town in the Margeride highlands, asked for Brothers to open a school, paid for by public subscription. Brother Benildus was sent to found and direct it. He stayed there until his death. The beginnings were hard: three Brothers for about three hundred pupils, a harsh climate, misunderstandings and criticism. He held firm.

He was known as demanding but fair. He supported the weakest pupils, organized evening classes for adults, and his school became a center of the town's life. He taught music to the children by playing the diatonic accordion, the instrument he also used to accompany singing in church and the community's recreation. This is why accordion players chose him as their patron.



*The Church of Saint Médard in Saugues, where the relics of Saint Benildus rest.*

## Catechist and sower of vocations

For Brother Benildus, the school was above all a place to learn to know and love God. He prepared children for First Communion with special care, visited the sick and prayed with them. He used to say: "Without faith, ours would be a hard job. But with faith, everything changes." His example shone so brightly that at his death some two hundred Brothers and about fifteen priests had come from the canton of Saugues alone.

## Death and canonization

Worn out by work, Brother Benildus died on August 13, 1862. On the very day of his funeral, a paralyzed person regained the use of their legs as the procession passed. His tomb became a place of pilgrimage. Declared Venerable in 1928, he was beatified in 1948 and canonized by Pope Paul VI on October 29, 1967. His relics are kept in a reliquary shrine in the Church of Saint Médard in Saugues.

## Why is Saint Benildus the patron saint of accordion players?

Benildus used the diatonic accordion to teach music to his pupils and to accompany hymns in church and the recreation of his community. In 1990 he was chosen as the patron of accordion players. He is also invoked by teachers, educators and catechists, and as an intercessor for vocations, because he reminds us that holiness lies in faithfulness to small things: preparing a lesson, correcting notebooks, encouraging a struggling pupil, praying for those we teach.

## Symbols and how to recognize Saint Benildus in art

He is shown in the black habit of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, with the white bands (the *rabat*) at the collar. Statues often show him surrounded by children he is teaching.

To pray with him, see the prayer to Saint Benildus or the novena to Saint Benildus, prayed from August 5 to his feast on August 13.

## Where to pray to Saint Benildus

- **Saugues** (Haute-Loire, France): the Church of Saint Médard, which keeps the shrine of his relics.
- **Thuret** (Puy-de-Dôme): the church where he was baptized, now dedicated to Saint Bénilde, and his birthplace, with a pilgrimage every summer.
- **Riom** (Puy-de-Dôme): the town where he was a pupil of the Brothers.
- The Lasallian schools that bear his name, in France and around the world.

PRAYER

# Prayer to Saint Benildus, Faithful Teacher

Saint Benildus, a Brother of the Christian Schools, was a schoolteacher all his life, above all in Saugues, in the Haute-Loire region of France. Teachers, students, parents and accordion players, whose patron he is, pray to him. This page offers an original prayer inspired by his life, followed by a prayer for students before an exam and an invocation for musicians.

## Prayer to Saint Benildus

*Saint Benildus, you did ordinary things in an extraordinary way: teach me to live each ordinary day with love and with faith.*

*For more than forty years you taught the children of farmers: watch over teachers, educators and catechists. Give them patience, fairness and the joy of passing on what they know.*

*You supported the weakest pupils: look upon those who struggle at school, those who are discouraged, those who are forgotten. Help them discover their gifts and regain confidence.*

*You said that with faith everything changes: keep me faithful in the repetitive tasks and the fatigue of my work. I entrust to you: (name your intention).*

*So many vocations were born around you: raise up again men and women ready to give their lives to Christ and to young people. Amen.*

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

## Prayer for students before an exam

> *Saint Benildus, patient teacher, be with me in my studies and in this exam. Give me a clear mind, a good memory and peace of heart. Help me to work seriously and to receive the result with trust. Amen.*

## Invocation for accordion players

> *Saint Benildus, you played the accordion to teach music to children and to accompany the hymns of the church: bless musicians and their instruments. May our music gladden hearts and give glory to God. Amen.*

These prayers are original texts by Saintspedia.

## When to pray this prayer

Saint Benildus is celebrated on August 13, the day of his death in Saugues in 1862; the town of Saugues celebrates him on the Sunday before August 15. You can pray to him at the start of the school year, before an exam or a job evaluation, or whenever teaching feels heavy. For a longer time of prayer, follow the novena to Saint Benildus, and discover the life of Saint Benildus.

NOVENA

# Novena to Saint Benildus

This novena is an original composition by Saintspedia, inspired by the life of Saint Benildus, Brother of the Christian Schools and schoolteacher in Saugues, France. It is not an official liturgical text. To finish it on his feast day, August 13, begin it on August 5. It can also be prayed before the start of the school year or before an exam.

## How to pray this novena

Each day, entrust your intention to God, read the meditation, then say the prayer of the day followed by an Our Father and a Hail Mary. The small act suggested for each day helps carry the prayer into daily life. This novena is well suited to teachers, parents, students and Lasallian school communities.

Brother Benildus lived a hidden life, without great events. That is precisely what makes him close to us: his holiness was made of lessons prepared, pupils encouraged, hymns sung and prayers said day after day. These nine days follow the stages of that simple life, from a childhood marked by grief to a death that left behind hundreds of vocations.

## Day 1: A childhood marked by grief

Pierre Romançon lost his mother, two sisters and a brother at a young age. The suffering of his childhood did not close his heart: it made him attentive to others. Later, as a teacher, he would recognize sadness in the eyes of a pupil and know how to welcome it.

**Prayer:** Lord, comfort children who have lost a parent, a brother or a sister, and surround them with caring people.

**Today:** Pray for a grieving child or young person you know.

## Day 2: Persevering without discouragement

Turned down by the Brothers the first time because he was too young, he asked again. A true vocation knows how to wait and persevere. He also entered the novitiate against his father's wishes, which cannot have been easy for a young man who had already lost so much of his family.

**Prayer:** Lord, give me perseverance in what you ask of me, even when doors seem closed.

**Today:** Take up again something you gave up after a first refusal.

## Day 3: A new name

When he entered the novitiate, Pierre became Brother Bénilde, named after a martyr of Córdoba. Giving oneself to God means accepting to be transformed by him.

**Prayer:** Lord, thank you for my baptism; make me the person you want me to be.

**Today:** Look up the date of your baptism, or pray to your patron saint.

## Day 4: Faithfulness in small things

For twenty years he taught in various schools, and for a time he even took care of the kitchen and the garden. God lets himself be found in the simplest tasks.

**Prayer:** Lord, teach me to do ordinary things in an extraordinary way.

**Today:** Do a household or repetitive task with special care.

## Day 5: Sent to Saugues

In 1841, he was sent to found a school in a small mountain town, with few resources and many pupils. He did not choose the place of his mission, but he gave himself to it completely. The beginnings were hard, with criticism and

misunderstanding, and he stayed for twenty-one years, until his death.

**Prayer:** Lord, help me to love the place where I am and to bear fruit there.

**Today:** Give thanks for where you live and work, and pray for your colleagues.



*The Church of Saint Médard in Saugues.*

## Day 6: The weakest pupils

Brother Benildus supported those who found learning hard. He opened evening classes for adults. No one was unwanted in his classroom.

**Prayer:** Lord, bless students who struggle, and give their teachers a patient and trusting outlook.

**Today:** Help someone learn something: homework, reading, filling in a form.

## Day 7: The joy of music

He played the accordion to teach music to the children and to accompany singing. Joy is part of education and of praise. A teacher who sings with his pupils shows them that faith is not only a duty but also a celebration.

**Prayer:** Lord, put a song of praise in my heart, and may my joy be contagious.

**Today:** Sing a hymn or listen to music that lifts the soul.

## Day 8: With faith, everything changes

"Without faith, ours would be a hard job." Benildus knew his work was hard. Faith did not take away his fatigue, but it gave it meaning. "But with faith," he added, "everything changes."

**Prayer:** Lord, increase my faith, so that my weariness may become an offering.

**Today:** In the morning, offer God the work of your day.

## Day 9: Sower of vocations

Hundreds of vocations were born around Brother Benildus. His example spoke louder than his words. A life joyfully given makes others want to give their lives too.

**Prayer:** Lord, at the end of this novena, I place my intention in your hands. Through the intercession of Saint Benildus, raise up teachers, educators, religious and priests after your own heart, and keep me faithful where you have placed me. Amen.

**Today:** Pray for vocations and encourage a young person in their commitment.

## Closing prayer

> *Saint Benildus, humble Brother and faithful teacher, I entrust to you the intention of these nine days. Watch over children and young people, teachers and parents, musicians and all who serve without being noticed. Obtain for us a faith that transforms everyday life. Amen.*

To go further, read the life of Saint Benildus and pray the prayer to Saint Benildus.

CREDITS

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