BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Berthevin

Life, prayer and novena

Feast day: July 11

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IN BRIEF

Saint Berthevin

Deacon and hermit born at Parigny (Manche), martyred near Laval around the early 10th century.

Feast day	July 11
Born	9th century, Parigny (Manche)
Died	around the early 10th century, banks of the Vicoin, near Laval (Mayenne)
Canonized	immemorial cult
Era	9th century
Patron saint of	Parigny, Saint-Berthevin, Saint-Berthevin-la-Tannière

In this booklet

Life

Prayer to Saint Berthevin for Educators and the Slandered

Novena to Saint Berthevin

Credits and sources

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LIFE

Saint Berthevin

Saint Berthevin (or Brévin) was a deacon and martyr of the late 9th or early 10th century, born at Parigny, near Saint-Hilaire-du-Harcouët, in the Manche, Normandy. A hermit on the banks of the Vicoin, near Laval, then in the service of the local lord, he was murdered out of jealousy while he was praying. His reliquary is kept in the church of Parigny, and two parishes in the Mayenne bear his name. His feast day is July 11.

Who was Saint Berthevin?

The name Berthevin probably comes from the Germanic *Bertwin*. His story is said to have been written down in the 12th or 13th century by a monk of the abbey of Mont-Saint-Michel, then handed down and enriched by the local traditions of the Manche and the Mayenne, gathered notably by Abbé Angot at the beginning of the 20th century. The dates are uncertain and the accounts have kept a large share of wonders. His life must therefore be read as a pious tradition. Yet it preserves the memory of a young cleric, a deacon, who died for the purity of his life, and whose cult has left lasting traces in the landscape and in churches.

Key dates in the life of Berthevin

- **9th century**: Born at Parigny (Manche), into the noble family of Argence; he is said to be the son of Pierre d'Argence.
- **c. 900**: Now a cleric and deacon, he lives as a hermit in a small cave on the banks of the Vicoin, near present-day Saint-Berthevin, next to Laval.
- **Shortly after**: The lord of Laval, named Belaillé, entrusts him with the education of his children, then with the management of his household.

- **Early 10th century**: Falsely accused by jealous rivals, he is surprised at prayer in his oratory and stabbed to death; his body is thrown into the Vicoin.
- **Afterward**: According to tradition, his body is brought back to Parigny on a cart drawn by heifers.
- **12th or 13th century**: A monk of Mont-Saint-Michel writes his story.
- **Until the early 20th century**: People come on pilgrimage to his fountain at Parigny to ask for healing.
- **June 1997**: The heifer's horn kept at Parigny is examined by a specialist from Caen.

The hermit of the Vicoin

According to tradition, Berthevin belonged to the noble family of Argence; a village of Parigny, Pied-d'Argent, is said to preserve its memory. Having become a cleric, he was ordained a deacon. Around the year 900, he withdrew to a tiny cave at the foot of a rock, the Rocher de la Chaire, on the banks of the Vicoin, a small river near Laval. There he lived in prayer and taught the children of the area.

The lord of Laval, Belaillé, noticed his virtues. He entrusted him with the education of his children, then made him his counselor and the steward of his household. Berthevin accepted with zeal, but castle life, among men of war, weighed on him: whenever he could, he went back to his cave to pray.

A martyr for purity

The young deacon's integrity contrasted with the ways of the lord's entourage. It aroused jealousy. He was falsely accused of having tried to violate the honor of Belaillé's wife. Watched day and night, he was surprised while praying in his

small oratory, stabbed to death, and his body was thrown into the Vicoin. Another, less widespread tradition makes him a victim of the Vikings. Either way, he is honored as a martyr.

The return to Parigny and the springs

Tradition tells that his godmother learned in a vision where his body lay and was told to bring it back to Parigny. She harnessed two heifers, whose horns, it is said, grew during the night, and the team overcame every obstacle on its own. On the way, a doe chased by a lord took refuge under the cart; the lord spared it, and a spring gushed out where it had lain down. A church was built there: this is said to be the origin of Saint-Berthevin-la-Tannière, in the Mayenne, whose fountain bears his name. At Parigny, another spring is said to have sprung from the blow of one of the heifers' horns; it still supplies the village with water. A legend adds that it moves a little closer to the church tower every year.

The sources disagree about his burial: most traditions place his body at Parigny, where his reliquary is kept, but one account also mentions the cathedral of Lisieux.

Devotion and art

The reliquary of Saint Berthevin and the heifer's horn are still kept in the church of Parigny, where a side chapel is dedicated to him, with a stained-glass window telling the legend. The fountain at Parigny was a place of pilgrimage until the early 20th century. Near Laval, a healed sick man named Renaud is said to have settled by the fountain to help pilgrims, and freed prisoners came to offer their chains to the saint. Two villages in the Mayenne bear his name: Saint-Berthevin, near Laval, and Saint-Berthevin-la-Tannière. His feast is July 11 (some sources give February 11). He is shown as a deacon, wearing the dalmatic and holding the palm of martyrdom.

What can we learn from Saint Berthevin?

Saint Berthevin served with all his heart, as teacher and steward, without ever giving up prayer or the purity of his life. Slandered, he died praying. His story, full of wonders, tells a simple truth: faithfulness to God can disturb others, but it bears fruit far beyond death. You can pray to him for teachers and educators, for those who are unjustly accused, for deacons and for the sick who seek healing.

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

Where to pray to Saint Berthevin

- **Parigny** (Manche): the church, its chapel of Saint Berthevin, his reliquary, the heifer's horn and the fountain.
- **Saint-Berthevin-la-Tannière** (Mayenne): the church born, according to legend, on the site of the miracle of the doe, and the fountain.
- **Saint-Berthevin** (Mayenne): the cave of the Petit-Saint-Berthevin, on the banks of the Vicoin.
- **Laval** (Mayenne): the chapel of Notre-Dame de Pritz, which has a statue of the saint.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Berthevin for Educators and the Slandered

Saint Berthevin, a deacon born at Parigny, in the Manche, lived as a hermit on the banks of the Vicoin before serving the lord of Laval. Slandered by jealous rivals, he was killed while he was praying. Prayer composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. It is not an official liturgical text. It entrusts to him educators, people who are unjustly accused and the sick.

Prayer to Saint Berthevin

Saint Berthevin,
deacon with a pure heart,
you sought God in the silence of your cave
and served him in the households of men.
Teach me to keep prayer alive
in the midst of my activities.

You taught children with patience
and served your lord faithfully.
Bless parents, teachers, educators,
and all who are responsible for a household.

You who were unjustly accused
and died at prayer,
support those who are slandered,
keep them from hatred and despair.
You who were prayed to at your springs,
obtain relief and peace for the sick.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

When to pray to Saint Berthevin

- On his feast day, July 11.
- When you are falsely accused or the victim of rumors.
- For educators, teachers and those who pass on the faith to children.
- For deacons and their families.
- For a sick person waiting for healing.

A short invocation

> *Saint Berthevin, deacon and martyr, keep us pure and faithful. Amen.*

To prepare for his feast, you can pray the novena to Saint Berthevin from July 3 to July 11, and read the life of Saint Berthevin.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Berthevin

This novena is an original composition inspired by the tradition of Saint Berthevin, deacon and martyr born at Parigny. Novena composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. It is not an official liturgical text. To finish it on his feast day, July 11, begin on July 3. 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 Berthevin, pray for us." The act of the day helps you live the novena concretely. The episodes come from local tradition, rich in wonders.

Day 1: A child of Parigny

Berthevin was born at Parigny, into a noble family. He could have sought honors; he chose to serve God as a cleric.

Prayer: Lord, bless the land where I was born and those who passed on the faith to me.

Act of the day: Pray for the parish where you grew up.

Day 2: The deacon's service

Berthevin was ordained a deacon. A deacon is ordained to serve, in the image of Christ who came not to be served but to serve.

Prayer: Lord, bless the deacons of your Church. Give me the heart of a servant.

Act of the day: Do a humble service without being asked.

Day 3: The cave on the Vicoin

Around 900, Berthevin withdrew to a small cave on the banks of the Vicoin. There he prayed and taught the children of the area.

Prayer: Lord, help me to love the silence in which you speak to me.

Act of the day: Take ten minutes of prayer in a quiet place.

Day 4: Educating children

The lord of Laval entrusted Berthevin with the education of his children. He carried out this task with zeal and patience.

Prayer: Lord, bless parents and educators. Give them patience, gentleness and firmness.

Act of the day: Thank a teacher or an educator.

Day 5: Faithful in the household

As steward, Berthevin served his lord faithfully, but went back to pray in his cave whenever he could.

Prayer: Lord, make me faithful in my work and faithful in prayer.

Act of the day: Carefully complete a thankless task.

Day 6: Slander

Jealous rivals falsely accused Berthevin. His purity disturbed them. The lie prepared his death.

Prayer: Lord, support those who are unjustly accused, and keep my tongue from gossip.

Act of the day: Refuse to repeat a rumor.

Day 7: Dying at prayer

Berthevin was surprised in his oratory and killed while he was praying. His last action was an act of faith.

Prayer: Lord, may death find me at prayer and at peace with you.

Act of the day: Pray for those who are dying today.

Day 8: Springs of mercy

Tradition tells that springs gushed out along the way as his body was brought home. The sick came there to ask for healing.

Prayer: Lord, source of life, heal the sick and comfort those who suffer.

Act of the day: Visit or call a sick person.

Day 9: Chains offered

Freed prisoners came to offer their chains to Saint Berthevin. God sets free those who call on him.

Prayer: Lord, free me from what binds me. Through the intercession of Saint Berthevin, grant me the grace I ask in this novena, if it is your will.

Act of the day: Attend Mass and pray for prisoners.

Living the novena with Saint Berthevin

Saint Berthevin united silent prayer and service of others, and paid with his life for the integrity of his heart. During these nine days, you can carry educators, people who are slandered, deacons, the sick and prisoners. If you can, visit Parigny or one of the villages in the Mayenne that bear his name.

Closing prayer

Saint Berthevin,
deacon and martyr,
you served faithfully
and died at prayer.
Present to the Lord the intention I have entrusted to you.
Keep me pure and upright
and support those who suffer.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

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

Credits and sources

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