BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Briac

Life, prayer, novena and pilgrimage

Feast day: December 17

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IN BRIEF

Saint Briac

Monk honored in Brittany as a companion of Saint Tugdual and founder of Bourbriac according to tradition.

Feast day	December 17
Born	6th century according to tradition, Ireland according to tradition
Died	c. 627 according to tradition (555 according to Dom Lobineau), Bourbriac (Côtes-d'Armor)
Canonized	immemorial cult
Era	7th century

In this booklet

Life

Prayer to Saint Briac for Peace of Mind

Novena to Saint Briac

Church of Bourbriac

Credits and sources

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LIFE

Saint Briac

Saint Briac (Briag in Breton) is a monk honored in Brittany as one of the companions of Saint Tugdual. According to tradition, he came from Ireland, founded the monastery from which the town of Bourbriac, in the Côtes-d'Armor, grew, and died there around 627. His tomb is venerated in the church of Bourbriac, and the town of Saint-Briac-sur-Mer bears his name. His feast day is December 17.

Who was Saint Briac?

Briac is one of those Breton saints whose name has marked the landscape and the parishes far more than the archives. His whole story rests on an account published in 1636 by the Dominican Albert Le Grand in his *Lives of the Saints of Armorican Brittany*, who claimed to rely on older manuscripts now lost. No early text allows us to check this Life, and present-day historians question it: his cult is not attested before the 11th century, and his name seems Breton rather than Irish. Some scholars think he may have been a monk from eastern Brittany sent to the west in the 10th century, after the Viking raids. His story must therefore be read with caution. What remains is a saint deeply rooted in Breton piety, invoked for centuries.

Key dates in the life of Briac

- **6th century**: According to tradition, born in Ireland, into a noble family of the province of Ulster.
- **After his studies**: He joins the monastery of Abbot Tugdual in Wales.
- **Then**: With Tugdual and many monks, he crosses to Armorica and lands, according to Albert Le Grand, on the island of Kermorvan, near Le Conquet.

- **After a stay with Tugdual**: He builds his own monastery, the origin of Bourbriac, and an oratory near present-day Saint-Briac-sur-Mer.
- **c. 627**: Dies in his monastery, according to the date most often given (Dom Lobineau placed it in 555).
- **11th century**: First reliable traces of his cult, according to historians.
- **1636**: Albert Le Grand publishes his Life, the source of almost everything told about him.

A companion of Saint Tugdual

According to the traditional account, Briac was born in Ireland into a noble family. After his studies, he left his country to join the monastery led by Tugdual in Wales, whom the Bretons also call Pabu, meaning "the father." When Tugdual decided to cross the sea to proclaim the Gospel in Armorica, Briac went with him along with many monks; tradition speaks of about seventy companions. They landed in the Léon region and first settled in the monastery founded by Tugdual, before spreading out along the north coast of Brittany.

The founder of Bourbriac

Briac in turn founded a monastery, inland, in the Guingamp area. The very name of Bourbriac is said to keep his memory. Tradition also credits him with an oratory built on the coast, at the place that would become the parish of Saint-Briac, near Dinard. The accounts describe him as a man drawn to contemplation: he liked to withdraw into solitude, before returning, old and ill, to end his days among his monks.

He is credited with a spring whose water was believed to heal, and he has long been invoked for the healing of mental illness, like other Breton saints. These traditions show the trust the faithful placed in him.

Devotion and art

Saint Briac is celebrated on December 17. His tomb is in the church of Bourbriac, which is dedicated to him: a recumbent effigy represents him, and the whole is protected as a historic monument. The present parish is named Bourbriac and Saint-Briac. Statues and stained-glass windows recall his life in several churches of the Côtes-d'Armor, as at Lanleff. He is shown as a monk or abbot, sometimes with a crozier.

What can we learn from Saint Briac?

Even though his story remains little known, Briac recalls the work of the monks who gave birth to the Breton parishes: men who left everything to follow a master, who prayed, cleared the land and welcomed others. You can pray to him for those who suffer in mind, for religious communities, for Brittany and for all who faithfully follow a spiritual guide.

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

Where to pray to Saint Briac

- **Bourbriac** (Côtes-d'Armor): the church that houses his tomb and effigy.
- **Saint-Briac-sur-Mer** (Ille-et-Vilaine): the town that bears his name, where tradition places his oratory.
- **Lanleff** (Côtes-d'Armor): the church where a statue of the saint is found.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Briac for Peace of Mind

Saint Briac, honored in Brittany as a companion of Saint Tugdual, is said to have founded the monastery from which Bourbriac grew, where his tomb is found. His life has come down to us through late accounts, but his cult is old and he is invoked for the healing of mental illness. Prayer composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. It entrusts to him those who suffer in mind, religious communities and Brittany.

Prayer to Saint Briac

Saint Briac,
you who left your land
to follow your master Tugdual across the sea,
teach me to follow Christ with trust,
even when the way is long and uncertain.

You built a monastery where people prayed,
you loved silence and contemplation.
Help me to find each day
a moment of peace to listen to God.

You whom the Bretons call upon
for those whose minds are troubled,
present to the Lord those who suffer from anxiety,
depression or mental illness.
Obtain peace for them, and bless Brittany.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

When to pray to Saint Briac

- On his feast day, December 17, in the heart of Advent.
- For someone who suffers from a mental disorder or anxiety.
- For monks, nuns and religious communities.
- During a visit to Bourbriac or Saint-Briac-sur-Mer.
- To thank God for a spiritual guide or teacher.

A simple invocation

> *Lord, give peace to anxious minds.*
> *Saint Briac, pray for us. Amen.*

To prepare for his feast, you can pray the novena to Saint Briac from December 9 to 17, and read the life of Saint Briac.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Briac

This novena is an original composition inspired by the life of Saint Briac, a monk honored in Brittany as a companion of Saint Tugdual and, according to tradition, the founder of Bourbriac. Novena composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. It is not an official liturgical text. To finish it on his feast day, December 17, begin on December 9. 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 Briac, pray for us." The small act suggested each day helps you live the novena concretely. The episodes recalled come from Breton tradition, which mixes history and legend; this novena falls during Advent, the season of waiting for the Lord.

Day 1: A call to leave

According to tradition, Briac left Ireland after his studies to join a monastery in Wales. He answered an inner call.

Prayer: Lord, help me to hear your call and to answer it generously.

Act of the day: Take a moment to look back on your life and give thanks for the calls you have received.

Day 2: Following a master

In Wales, Briac placed himself in the school of Abbot Tugdual. No one grows in faith alone.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for those who have guided me to you. Bless spiritual directors.

Act of the day: Thank someone who has helped you grow in faith.

Day 3: Crossing the sea

With Tugdual and many monks, Briac crossed the sea to Armorica. They set out without knowing what awaited them.

Prayer: Lord, when I must cross unknown waters, keep me in trust.

Act of the day: Entrust to God a stage of your life that frightens you.

Day 4: A community of brothers

The monks first settled in the monastery founded by Tugdual. Together they lived prayer, work and sharing.

Prayer: Lord, make our families and parishes fraternal communities.

Act of the day: Pray for a religious community in your area.

Day 5: Building a monastery

Briac in turn founded a monastery, from which the parish of Bourbriac is said to have grown. A place of prayer became the heart of a whole area.

Prayer: Lord, bless those who build places where you are prayed to.

Act of the day: Go into a church and pray there for a few minutes.

Day 6: The oratory by the sea

Tradition says that Briac built an oratory on the coast, where Saint-Briac would later grow. A small place of prayer is enough for God to be present.

Prayer: Lord, make my heart an oratory where you love to dwell.

Act of the day: Set up or tend a prayer corner at home.

Day 7: A love of solitude

Briac loved contemplation and withdrew into solitude. Silence allowed him to listen to God.

Prayer: Lord, in this season of Advent, teach me to be silent as I wait for you.

Act of the day: Turn off screens for an hour and pray in silence.

Day 8: Peace of mind

For centuries, Bretons have called on Saint Briac for those whose minds are troubled. God wants peace for our whole being.

Prayer: Lord, calm those who suffer from anxiety, depression or mental illness.

Act of the day: Check in on someone going through a mental health struggle.

Day 9: Coming home to die

Old and ill, Briac returned to die among his monks. He ended his life where he had served God.

Prayer: Lord, grant me a peaceful end, surrounded by those I love. Through the intercession of Saint Briac, grant me the grace I ask in this novena, if it is your will.

Act of the day: Visit an elderly or sick person.

Closing prayer

Saint Briac,
companion of Saint Tugdual and founder of Bourbriac,
you sought God in prayer and silence.
Present to the Lord the intention I have entrusted to you.
Give peace to those whose minds are troubled,
and prepare our hearts to welcome Christ who comes.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

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

PILGRIMAGE

Church of Bourbriac

The church of Bourbriac stands in the center of this small town in the Côtes-d'Armor, south of Guingamp, in Brittany. It is dedicated to Saint Briac, a monk honored as a companion of Saint Tugdual, who according to tradition founded a monastery here and died around 627. His tomb, topped by a recumbent effigy, is still venerated there.

A town born of a monastery

The name Bourbriac is said to keep the memory of the saint: according to tradition, the parish grew up around the monastery he founded. Historians remain cautious about the details of his life, known mainly from the account of Albert Le Grand in the 17th century, and think his cult is not attested before the 11th century. But the devotion of the inhabitants to their patron saint has been handed down without interruption. The present parish is named Bourbriac and Saint-Briac.

What you can see

The church combines several periods and is dominated by a tall bell tower visible from far across the countryside. Inside, the tomb of Saint Briac, with its recumbent effigy, is protected as a historic monument. Statues and stained-glass windows recall the saint's life as tradition tells it: his departure from Ireland, his arrival in Brittany with Saint Tugdual, the founding of his monastery. The place invites silent prayer near the one whom Bretons call upon for peace of mind.

Praying on site

Before you come, you can read the life of Saint Briac. Near his tomb, entrust to him people who suffer in mind, religious communities and Brittany, then say the prayer to Saint Briac. These suggestions are offered by Saintspedia.

Practical information

Bourbriac is in the Côtes-d'Armor, about ten kilometers south of Guingamp, and is easy to reach by car. The church is a place of worship: silence and modest dress are requested, especially during Mass. Opening hours and service times may vary: check with the parish or the tourist office before you come.

Credits and sources

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