BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Brocard

Life, prayer and novena

Feast day: September 2

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IN BRIEF

Saint Brocard

Prior of the first Latin hermits of Mount Carmel, at the origins of the Carmelite Order (12th and 13th centuries).

Feast day	September 2
Born	c. 1150
Died	c. 1231, Mount Carmel (Holy Land)
Canonized	cult recognized in the Carmelite Order (feast approved by the Congregation of Rites in 1672)
Era	13th century

In this booklet

Life

Prayer to Saint Brocard for a Life of Prayer and Silence

Novena to Saint Brocard

Credits and sources

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LIFE

Saint Brocard

Saint Brocard (or Burchard) was one of the first Latin hermits of Mount Carmel, in the Holy Land, at the time of the Crusades. The successor of Berthold as head of the small community, he is traditionally identified with the brother "B." to whom the patriarch Saint Albert of Jerusalem gave, around 1207-1209, the rule on which the Carmelite Order is founded. He died around 1231. His feast day is September 2.

Who was Saint Brocard?

Brocard belongs to the origins of the Order of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. At the end of the 12th century, pilgrims and former crusaders from the West settled as hermits on the slopes of Mount Carmel, near the spring known as Elijah's spring, to live in prayer and silence after the example of the prophet. Brocard was one of them, and then their prior. His biography remains very uncertain: the archives of Carmel were lost when the monastery was destroyed by the Mamluks at the end of the Crusades, and later Carmelite historians filled the gaps with unreliable accounts. Some say he was born in Jerusalem, others that he came from France. Carmelite tradition honors him as a saint; some calendars, such as the French Nominis, give him the title of Blessed.

Key dates in the life of Brocard

- **c. 1150**: Born, in Jerusalem according to one tradition, in France according to others; the sources are uncertain.
- **Late 12th century**: He joins the Latin hermits settled on Mount Carmel, near Elijah's spring.
- **Between 1195 and 1198**: On the death of Berthold, he becomes prior of the community.

- **c. 1207-1209**: The patriarch Albert of Jerusalem gives the hermits a rule of life, addressed to their prior "B.", whom tradition identifies with Brocard.
- **1226**: Pope Honorius III approves the Carmelite rule.
- **c. 1231**: Brocard dies on Mount Carmel, after leading the hermits for more than thirty years.
- **1564**: The general chapter of the Carmelite Order orders that his memory be celebrated.
- **1672**: The Congregation of Rites approves the liturgy of his feast, set on September 2.

The hermits of Mount Carmel

Mount Carmel, which overlooks the bay of Haifa, is linked in the Bible to the prophet Elijah. It was there that he confronted the prophets of Baal and prayed for rain to return to Israel. At the time of the Crusades, Latin Christians chose this place to lead a hermit's life. Each lived in a cell; they met for prayer and Mass, and devoted their lives to meditating on the Word of God. Very early, they placed their little church under the patronage of the Virgin Mary: the order would bear the name of Brothers of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel.

The first known leader of these hermits was Berthold. On his death, at the end of the 12th century, Brocard succeeded him. Tradition says that he led the community for about thirty-five years, and that he was respected even by the Muslims of the region.

The Rule of Saint Albert

At the beginning of the 13th century, the hermits asked the Latin patriarch of Jerusalem, Saint Albert, to give them a "formula of life". The document Albert wrote is addressed to "B." and the other hermits living near the spring on Mount Carmel. No text gives the full name of this prior, but Carmelite

tradition identifies him with Brocard. This short rule asks each brother to remain in his cell, "meditating day and night on the law of the Lord and keeping watch in prayer", unless he is busy with other lawful tasks.

Pope Honorius III approved this rule in 1226. It was adapted and confirmed by Innocent IV in 1247, when the Carmelites, driven out of the Holy Land, settled in Europe. Even today, Carmelite friars and nuns, whose life was renewed by Saint Teresa of Avila and Saint John of the Cross, live by this rule.

Stories and legends

Carmelite historians of the following centuries attributed to Brocard several episodes whose authenticity cannot be checked. He is said to have been sent to the sultan of Damascus, to have healed a leper and to have baptized a high Muslim official from Egypt in the Jordan. Other accounts say that Pope Honorius III hesitated to recognize the rule before being confirmed in his decision by a vision of the Virgin Mary. These traditions above all express the order's attachment to its founder and to Mary's protection.

Devotion and art

Devotion to Brocard developed within the Carmelite Order. The general chapter of 1564 ordered that his memory be celebrated. After being removed from the breviary in 1585, he was honored again from 1609, and the Congregation of Rites approved his feast in 1672. It is set on September 2. His memorial is no longer among the obligatory feasts of the order, but it may still be freely celebrated. He is shown in the Carmelite habit, sometimes with the striped mantle of the early days, holding the book of the rule in his hands.

What can we learn from Saint Brocard?

Brocard is a man of beginnings. He left no writings, and his life largely escapes us. But he received and handed on a rule that, for eight centuries, has given life to thousands of religious in prayer, silence and love of the Virgin Mary. He reminds us that God's works are often born in humility. You can pray to him for Carmelite friars and nuns, for contemplative life, for the Christians of the Holy Land and for those who seek God in silence.

Where to pray to Saint Brocard

- **Mount Carmel** (Haifa, Israel): the place where the first hermits lived and where the Stella Maris monastery keeps the memory of the prophet Elijah.
- In Carmelite monasteries throughout the world: communities of Carmelite friars and nuns still live by the rule he received.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Brocard for a Life of Prayer and Silence

Saint Brocard, prior of the first hermits of Mount Carmel, received according to tradition the rule given by Saint Albert of Jerusalem, which has sustained the Carmelite Order for eight centuries. Prayer composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. It entrusts to him the life of prayer, Carmelite friars and nuns, and all who seek God in silence.

Prayer to Saint Brocard

Saint Brocard,
hermit of Mount Carmel,
you sought God in the silence of the mountain,
near the spring of the prophet Elijah.
Teach me to remain in the Lord's presence
and to meditate on his word day and night.

You received a rule of life for your brothers
and kept it faithfully.
Help me to love simple prayer,
fraternal charity
and trusting obedience.

Entrust me to the Virgin Mary,
Our Lady of Mount Carmel,
and watch over Carmelites throughout the world.
Bless the Christians of the Holy Land
and give peace to all who live there.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

When to pray to Saint Brocard

- On his feast day, September 2.
- For Carmelite friars and nuns and for vocations to contemplative life.
- When you want to rediscover a taste for silence and prayer.
- For those who lead religious communities.
- For peace in the Holy Land.

A short invocation

> *Saint Brocard, friend of silence,*
> *lead me to the Virgin of Carmel,*
> *and pray for us. Amen.*

To prepare for his feast, you can pray the novena to Saint Brocard from August 25 to September 2, and read the life of Saint Brocard.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Brocard

This novena is an original composition inspired by the life of Saint Brocard, prior of the first hermits of Mount Carmel. Novena composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. It is not an official liturgical text. To finish it on his feast day, September 2, begin on August 25. 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 Brocard, pray for us." The act suggested each day helps you live the novena concretely. Brocard's life is little known: these meditations draw mainly on the Carmelite rule he received according to tradition.

Day 1: Going up the mountain

Brocard and his companions chose Mount Carmel to seek God. In the Bible, the mountain is the place of encounter with the Lord.

Prayer: Lord, draw me to you and give me the desire to seek you with all my heart.

Act of the day: Take ten minutes of silence simply to be in God's presence.

Day 2: In the footsteps of Elijah

The hermits lived near Elijah's spring. The prophet had said: "As the Lord lives, before whom I stand." Their whole life sought to be this presence before God.

Prayer: Lord, may I live before your face, with the zeal and trust of the prophet Elijah.

Act of the day: Read the story of Elijah on Mount Carmel (First Book of Kings, chapter 18).

Day 3: Under Mary's mantle

The first hermits dedicated their church to the Virgin Mary. The Carmelite Order was born under her gaze and bears her name.

Prayer: Virgin Mary, Our Lady of Mount Carmel, keep me close to your Son.

Act of the day: Pray a decade of the Rosary, entrusting your intention to Mary.

Day 4: Taking over

On the death of Berthold, Brocard became prior of the hermits. He accepted the task of guiding his brothers and carried it for more than thirty years.

Prayer: Lord, bless those who are responsible for guiding others and give them the heart of a servant.

Act of the day: Pray for a superior, a leader or the head of a community.

Day 5: Receiving a rule

Brocard asked the patriarch Albert of Jerusalem for a rule of life for his brothers. He did not want to invent his own path alone, but to receive it from the Church.

Prayer: Lord, give me the humility to let myself be guided and to welcome the counsel of the Church.

Act of the day: Choose a small rule of daily prayer and keep to it.

Day 6: Remaining in one's cell

The rule asks each brother to remain in his cell, meditating day and night on the law of the Lord and keeping watch in prayer. The cell is also the heart where God dwells.

Prayer: Lord, make my heart a cell where I find you at every moment.

Act of the day: Meditate slowly on a passage from the Gospel.

Day 7: Life as brothers

The hermits lived alone, but not isolated: they met each day for Mass and each week to help and correct one another with charity.

Prayer: Lord, teach me to live as a brother, to forgive and to accept correction.

Act of the day: Go to Mass, or make a gesture of peace toward someone close to you.

Day 8: Respected by all

Tradition says that Brocard was respected even by the Muslims of the region. His life of prayer and peace spoke to those who did not share his faith.

Prayer: Lord, make me a witness of peace to those who do not know you.

Act of the day: Pray for peace in the Holy Land and for the Christians who live there.

Day 9: Handing on what we have received

Brocard died around 1231. The rule he had received has come down through the centuries: thousands of Carmelite friars and nuns still draw from the same spring.

Prayer: Lord, let my life bear fruit for those who will come after me. Through the intercession of Saint Brocard, grant me the grace I ask in this novena, if it is your will.

Act of the day: Pray for a Carmelite monastery, or support a contemplative community.

Closing prayer

> *Saint Brocard,*
> *father of the hermits of Mount Carmel,*
> *you lived in silence and prayer*
> *under the gaze of the Virgin Mary.*
> *Present to the Lord the intention I have entrusted to you.*
> *Teach me to remain in him*
> *and to live as a brother to all.*
> *Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

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

Credits and sources

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