BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Ceronne

Life, prayer, novena and pilgrimage

Feast day: November 15

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IN BRIEF

Saint Ceronne

Hermit honored in the Perche as its first known Christian, who died in 490 according to tradition.

Feast day	November 15
Born	c. 410 according to legend, Corneilhan, near Béziers (according to legend)
Died	November 15, 490 according to tradition, Sainte-Céronne-lès-Mortagne (Orne)
Canonized	immemorial cult, approved by Rome for the diocese of Sées in 1857
Patron saint of	people suffering from fever, people with eye ailments

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Credits and sources

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LIFE

Saint Ceronne

Saint Ceronne (Céronne in French) is a hermit honored in the Perche, in Normandy, as the first known Christian of that region. According to her legend, she was born around 410 at Corneilhan, near Béziers, founded a small community near Mortagne and died there on November 15, 490. Yet no historical source allows us to date her life with certainty. Her tomb and her springs, at Sainte-Céronne-lès-Mortagne, have been places of pilgrimage for centuries. Her feast day is November 15.

Who was Saint Ceronne?

Ceronne is one of those saints of the Christian beginnings of Gaul whose cult is far better known than her life. Her biography comes from a Latin Life written between the mid-11th and the mid-12th century, perhaps by a cleric of the diocese of Sées, more than five centuries after the time she is said to have lived. The philologist François Dolbeau, who studied it in 1986 in a publication of the Bollandists, sees in it above all an edifying story, built on the model of other Lives of saints from the region. Her story must therefore be read as a pious legend. What is certain is the fervor that has surrounded her since the Middle Ages in the Perche of the Orne, and the living bond that today unites the village bearing her name with Corneilhan, in the Hérault, where she is said to have been born.

Key dates in the life of Ceronne

- **c. 410**: According to legend, born at Corneilhan, near Béziers, into a pagan family; her father Olympius governs the city.
- **Youth**: She converts her brother Sophronius and leaves with him for Bordeaux, where Bishop Amandus baptizes them; she receives the veil of

virgins.

- **c. 450**: Arrival in the Perche; she settles on the banks of the Hoëne and founds a small community, with a chapel dedicated to Saint Marcellus.
- **November 15, 490**: Death according to tradition, having become blind at the end of her life; she is buried in the oratory of Saint-Marcel.
- **c. 912**: Adelin, bishop of Sées, is said to have found her body on Mont-Romigny and built a church to shelter it.
- **11th or 12th century**: Her Latin Life is written.
- **Hundred Years' War**: Her relics are carried off by the English; only an arm and a few fragments return to the church.
- **1857**: Rome approves her cult for the diocese of Sées.
- **1898**: Beginning of the spiritual twinning between Sainte-Céronne and Corneilhan.
- **1990**: The 1500th anniversary of her death is celebrated in the presence of the bishop of Sées.

From Corneilhan to the Perche: the legend

According to the Latin Life, Ceronne was born into a family attached to idols: her father Olympius was governor of the city and her mother, Sarrabia, shared his beliefs. The young girl discovered Christ and drew her brother Sophronius into her faith. Both left their family for Bordeaux, where Bishop Amandus instructed and baptized them. Sophronius became a priest and Ceronne received the veil of virginity, the sign of her consecration to God.

The story tells that they were soon suspected of not being brother and sister and of hiding a disordered life. To silence the slander, they chose to separate. Sophronius left for Rome to pray at the tombs of the apostles and died there in holiness. Ceronne followed the Roman roads up to the Perche, then covered with forests and still largely pagan.

A hermit on the banks of the Hoëne

Between Mont-Cacune and Mont-Romigny, in a wooded and solitary place, Ceronne stopped. With the agreement of the bishop of Sées, she gathered a small community, built a chapel in honor of Pope Saint Marcellus, to whom she was very devoted, and an oratory on Mont-Romigny. Tradition describes her uniting solitary prayer with proclaiming the Gospel to the people of the area. She drew her water from two springs that can still be seen: the spring of the Good Saint Ceronne and the Orion spring.

At the end of her life, Ceronne went blind. Yet she kept going every day from one oratory to the other, about two hundred paces apart, guiding herself by a thread stretched between them. Legend says that children or shepherds broke it several times out of mischief, and that it was always found tied again. She died, according to tradition, on November 15, 490.

A cult across the centuries

Buried at Saint-Marcel, Ceronne soon drew pilgrims, and healings were reported. Fearing that her relics would be stolen, the inhabitants moved them to the oratory of Mont-Romigny. Around 912, according to tradition, Bishop Adelin of Sées found her body after a vision and raised a church for it. During the Hundred Years' War, the English are said to have carried the relics to Mont-Saint-Michel; only an arm and a few bones were returned. In 1794, a revolutionary ransacked the church and took the reliquary bust, but forgot the arm, which two parishioners hid until peace returned.

The relics were authenticated in 1832, and in 1857 Rome approved the celebration of her feast in the diocese of Sées. She is invoked against fevers, at the spring of the Good Saint Ceronne, and for eye ailments, at the Orion spring. Masses are celebrated on November 15 and on the third Sunday of July,

in memory of the translation of her relics. Since 1898, pilgrims from Corneilhan and Sainte-Céronne have visited each other, uniting Languedoc and the Perche around their saint.

What can we learn from Saint Ceronne?

Even if her life has come down to us as a legend, the figure of Ceronne speaks clearly: a young woman leaves everything to follow Christ, bears slander without defending herself, and takes root in a distant land to pray and make the Gospel known there. Blind, she keeps on her way, leaning on a fragile thread, an image of faith that moves forward without seeing. We can pray to her for the sick, for those losing their sight, for people who are slandered and for the Christians of the Perche.

Where to pray to Saint Ceronne

- **Sainte-Céronne-lès-Mortagne** (Orne): the 12th-century church built on the site of her tomb, to which her relics were returned after the Revolution.
- **The chapel of Saint-Marcel and the springs**, in the same village: the spring of the Good Saint Ceronne and the Orion spring.
- **Corneilhan** (Hérault): the village where she is said to have been born, which has kept a fragment of her relics since 1898.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Ceronne for the Sick and the Slandered

Saint Ceronne, honored as the first known Christian of the Perche, is said to have left her family in Languedoc to follow Christ, then lived as a hermit near Mortagne until her death, having gone blind. Her story has come down to us as a legend, but her spring and her tomb have drawn pilgrims for centuries. Prayer composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. It is not an official liturgical text.

Prayer to Saint Ceronne

Saint Ceronne,
you left your father's house
to follow the Christ you had discovered,
and you drew your brother into the faith.
Help me to love Jesus above all things,
and to know how to make him known.

Suspected and slandered,
you chose silence and separation
rather than scandal.
Support those whose name is tarnished,
and keep them in peace.

Blind, you still walked toward prayer,
guided by a simple thread.
Take care of the sick, of those with fever
and of those who are losing their sight.
Teach us to move forward in faith without seeing,
holding on to the hand of God.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

When to pray to Saint Ceronne

- On her feast day, November 15, or on the third Sunday of July, at the pilgrimage of Sainte-Céronne.
- For someone suffering from fever or from eye trouble.
- When you are the victim of slander or unjust suspicion.
- For a family member who has drifted away from the faith.
- For the Christians of the Perche and of Languedoc.

An invocation for the sick

> *Lord, light of those who no longer see,*
> *relieve our sick and keep them in your peace.*
> *Saint Ceronne, pray for them. Amen.*

To prepare for her feast, you can pray the novena to Saint Ceronne from November 7 to 15, and discover the life of Saint Ceronne.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Ceronne

This novena is an original composition inspired by the life of Saint Ceronne, a hermit honored in the Perche. Novena composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. It is not an official liturgical text. To finish it on her feast day, November 15, begin on November 7. You can also pray it before the pilgrimage on the third Sunday of July, or 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 Ceronne, pray for us." The act suggested each day helps you live the novena concretely. The episodes recounted come from her Latin Life, written in the Middle Ages, which belongs to legend more than to history.

Day 1: Discovering Christ

Ceronne grew up in a pagan family. Yet she discovered Christ and chose to follow him. Faith is first of all a personal encounter.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, make the joy of having met you grow in me, and renew my faith today.

Act of the day: Reread a Gospel passage that has mattered in your life.

Day 2: Drawing a brother along

Ceronne persuaded her brother Sophronius to convert. They left together. Faith is often handed on first within the family.

Prayer: Lord, I entrust to you the members of my family who are far from you. Give me the right words and patience.

Act of the day: Pray for a brother, a sister or a relative, and get in touch with them.

Day 3: Baptism

At Bordeaux, Bishop Amandus baptized Ceronne and her brother. Baptism makes us children of God and members of the Church.

Prayer: Father, thank you for my baptism. Keep me faithful to the grace I received that day.

Act of the day: Find out the date of your baptism, and make the Sign of the Cross with holy water.

Day 4: Giving oneself to God

Ceronne received the veil of consecrated virgins. She gave her whole life to God, keeping nothing for herself.

Prayer: Lord, bless consecrated women and men. Raise up vocations in our families.

Act of the day: Pray for a sister, a brother or a consecrated person you know.

Day 5: Facing slander

Ceronne and her brother were suspected of leading a disordered life. Rather than justify themselves endlessly, they separated to end the scandal.

Prayer: Lord, support those whose name is tarnished. Keep me from judging and spreading rumors.

Act of the day: Refuse any word of gossip today.

Day 6: Going far away

Ceronne walked to the Perche, an unknown land covered with forests. She agreed to start her life again where God led her.

Prayer: Lord, accompany those who go far from home. Give me trust for the departures you ask of me.

Act of the day: Welcome kindly someone who has recently arrived near you.

Day 7: Praying and proclaiming

On the banks of the Hoëne, Ceronne prayed in her oratories and spoke of Christ to the people of the area. Prayer and proclaiming the Gospel go together.

Prayer: Lord, may my prayer make me more attentive to others, and may my life bear witness to you.

Act of the day: Take ten minutes of silent prayer, then do a service for a neighbor.

Day 8: Walking without seeing

Having gone blind, Ceronne kept going to pray, guided by a thread. According to legend, when it was broken, it was found tied again. God does not let go of those who walk in the night.

Prayer: Lord, when I no longer see clearly, hold my hand. Relieve those who are losing their sight and those who have fever.

Act of the day: Visit or call someone who is sick or visually impaired.

Day 9: Entering the light

According to tradition, Ceronne died on November 15, 490. She who could no longer see entered the light of God. At her tomb, pilgrims still pray.

Prayer: Lord, grant me to live and die in your light. Through the intercession of Saint Ceronne, grant me the grace I ask of you in this novena, if it is your will.

Act of the day: Attend Mass if possible, and pray for the sick of your parish.

Closing prayer

Saint Ceronne,
daughter of the South who became a mother in faith for the Perche,
you left everything to follow Christ
and walked toward him even in the night.
Present to the Lord the intention I have entrusted to you.
Take care of the sick and the slandered,
and keep me faithful on the way.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

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

PILGRIMAGE

Church of Sainte-Céronne

The church of Sainte-Céronne stands at Sainte-Céronne-lès-Mortagne, in the Orne, in the heart of the Perche regional natural park, a few kilometers from Mortagne-au-Perche. It was built on Mont-Romigny, on the very spot of the oratory where, according to tradition, the body of Saint Ceronne was laid. Together with the chapel of Saint-Marcel and two springs, it forms a small pilgrimage site that has been alive since the Middle Ages.

A church around a tomb

According to tradition, Bishop Adelin of Sées found the saint's body around 912 in the ruins of the oratory on Mont-Romigny and had a church built to shelter it. The present building dates from the 12th century and is listed as a historic monument. Designed as a setting for the tomb, it does not face east like most churches, which earned it the familiar nickname of "Sainte-Céronne the badly turned". The diocese of Sées has given the whole surrounding parish the name of Sainte-Céronne-au-Perche.

What you can see

The church has a very simple plan: a single nave ending in a round apse. Its tall Romanesque tower, supported by buttresses, ends in a saddleback roof. Buttresses were added on the north side to hold the building, threatened by the slipping of the ground toward the nearby ravine. Inside, a high altar, tabernacle and altarpiece of the 17th and 18th centuries are listed. It was to this church that the fragments of the saint's reliquary arm, hidden by two parishioners during the upheaval, were returned after the Revolution.

In the nearby hamlet, the chapel of Saint-Marcel, rebuilt in the 19th century, marks the site of the chapel Ceronne is said to have dedicated to Pope Saint Marcellus. Two springs complete the pilgrimage: the spring of the Good Saint Ceronne, dug into the side of a ravine, where people come to pray for healing from fevers, and the Orion spring, restored in 1982 with a statue of the saint, where those who suffer from their eyes wash their faces in memory of her blindness.

Praying there

Before coming, you can read the life of Saint Ceronne. In the church, entrust the sick to her, especially those with fever or losing their sight, then say the prayer to Saint Ceronne. The path between the church and the chapel of Saint-Marcel recalls the one the blind saint walked each day, guided by a thread. Masses are celebrated on November 15 and on the third Sunday of July, the day of the village feast. These suggestions are offered by Saintspedia.

Practical information

Sainte-Céronne-lès-Mortagne lies in the Perche of the Orne, near Mortagne-au-Perche, and is reached by car. The church is a place of worship: modest dress and silence are requested. Opening hours and service times may vary: check with the parish of Sainte-Céronne-au-Perche or the town hall before your visit.

Credits and sources

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