BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Cizy

Life, prayer and novena

Feast day: August 16

IN BRIEF

Saint Cizy

Soldier of the Carolingian era, martyred near Martres-Tolosane according to tradition, patron of Rieux-Volvestre.

Feast day	August 16
Born	8th or 9th century, Besançon, according to tradition
Died	8th or 9th century (date unknown), near Angonia, present-day Martres-Tolosane (Haute-Garonne)
Canonized	immemorial cult
Patron saint of	Rieux-Volvestre

In this booklet

Life

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Novena to Saint Cizy

Credits and sources

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LIFE

Saint Cizy

Saint Cizy, also called Cizy of Rieux or Cizy of Besançon, was a Christian soldier of the Carolingian era, honored as a martyr in the Comminges and Volvestre regions, south of Toulouse. According to tradition, he was taken prisoner by Muslim troops coming from Spain and put to death for refusing to deny Christ, near present-day Martres-Tolosane. He is the patron saint of Rieux-Volvestre, in the Haute-Garonne, and his feast day is August 16.

Who was Saint Cizy?

Saint Cizy is one of those local saints whose memory has been handed down mainly through the devotion of a town and a few relics, far more than through documents of his own time. The sources that speak of him are late and few; they do not even agree on the century in which he lived, the 8th or the 9th. His story must therefore be read with caution. What tradition keeps is simple: a man of arms, a native of Besançon, in the service of Charlemagne in the south of Gaul, who fell into enemy hands and stayed faithful to his faith until death.

One tradition says he came from a great family of Burgundy. Another links him to the circle of Saint Vidian, a Christian leader also venerated as a martyr at Martres-Tolosane, in the stories connected with the wars against the Saracens. These links remain uncertain, and specialists see in them mainly the work of legend around facts that are hard to establish.

Key dates in the life of Cizy

- **8th or 9th century**: Born in Besançon, according to tradition; the sources hesitate about the period.
- **Time of Charlemagne**: He serves as a soldier in the Frankish armies engaged in the south of Gaul.

- **Perhaps**: He fights under the command of Saint Vidian, according to a link suggested by local tradition.
- **During a raid from Spain**: He is taken prisoner by Muslim troops.
- **Shortly after**: He refuses to abjure his Christian faith and is put to death at the foot of the town of Angonia, present-day Martres-Tolosane.
- **Middle Ages**: Rieux, which became the seat of a diocese in 1317, honors him as its patron saint.
- **August 16**: His feast day, which remains a highlight of religious life in Rieux-Volvestre.

A soldier faithful to the end

The heart of the story fits in a few lines. Cizy is a Frankish soldier. Captured by Muslim troops coming from the Iberian Peninsula, he is offered his life if he agrees to deny Christ and embrace Islam. He refuses. This refusal costs him his life: he is executed near Angonia, an ancient town on the site of present-day Martres-Tolosane, not far from the Garonne.

Neither the exact circumstances of his capture nor the date of his death are known. Tradition does not credit him with great miracles: above all, it remembers his courage. That is the strength of his figure. Cizy was neither a bishop nor the founder of a monastery, but a layman, a man with a trade, who kept his faith at the moment when everything urged him to abandon it.

The patron of Rieux-Volvestre

Rieux-Volvestre, a small town in the Haute-Garonne, has made Saint Cizy its protector. For a long time it was the seat of a diocese, created in 1317 and suppressed at the Revolution, and it keeps its former cathedral, dedicated to the Nativity of Mary. The treasury of this church holds several medieval

reliquaries. One of them contains a tooth attributed to Saint Cizy, set in a silver cylinder: the art historian Francis Salet described it in a study of the portable reliquaries of the treasury of Rieux.

The saint's feast, on August 16, is still an occasion for the inhabitants to honor their patron. The regional press regularly reports on it: a sign that, more than a thousand years after the events recounted, the memory of this soldier martyr remains alive in the Volvestre.

Devotion and art

The cult of Saint Cizy is essentially local. He is listed, under the name of Saint Cizy of Besançon, in collections of saints of the French calendar, with a feast on August 16. Like many early martyrs, he was never canonized in the modern sense: his cult was established through the veneration of the faithful and the practice of the local Church. He is readily shown as a soldier, with the attributes of a man of arms and the palm of the martyrs.

What can we learn from Saint Cizy?

We know little about Saint Cizy, and perhaps that is what makes him close to us. He wrote nothing, founded nothing, and his name would not have reached us without the faithfulness of a small town. But he reminds us that faith can be tested in the most concrete situations, and that the witness of a simple soldier is worth as much in God's eyes as that of a scholar. You can pray to him for military personnel, for prisoners, for persecuted Christians and for all who must choose between their safety and their conscience.

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

Where to pray to Saint Cizy

- **Rieux-Volvestre** (Haute-Garonne): the former cathedral of the Nativity of Mary, whose treasury keeps a reliquary of the saint.
- **Martres-Tolosane** (Haute-Garonne): the town where tradition locates his martyrdom, also linked to the memory of Saint Vidian.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Cizy for Soldiers, Prisoners and Christians in Trial

Saint Cizy, a soldier of the Carolingian era, was put to death near Martres-Tolosane, according to tradition, for refusing to deny Christ. Patron of Rieux-Volvestre, he is celebrated on August 16. Prayer composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. It is not an official liturgical text. It entrusts to him those who serve in the armed forces, prisoners, and Christians whose faith is put to the test.

Prayer to Saint Cizy

Saint Cizy,
soldier in the service of your country
and faithful servant of Christ,
you chose to lose your life
rather than deny your Lord.
Obtain for me an upright and steadfast heart
when my faith is put to the test.

You who knew captivity,
remember prisoners and hostages,
those who are far from their loved ones
and those who suffer for their faith.
Watch over soldiers and their families,
and keep them from hatred.

Protect the town of Rieux that honors you,
and all who come to pray to you.
Teach us to bear witness
in the simple things of every day.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

When to pray to Saint Cizy

- On his feast day, August 16, in union with the faithful of Rieux-Volvestre.
- For military personnel on mission and for their families.
- For prisoners, hostages and all who are deprived of their freedom.
- For Christians persecuted because of their faith.
- When you must choose between your comfort and your conscience.

A short invocation

> *Saint Cizy, faithful witness of Christ,*
> *keep me steadfast in the faith*
> *and pray for those who suffer for it. Amen.*

To prepare for his feast, you can pray the novena to Saint Cizy from August 8 to 16, and read the life of Saint Cizy.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Cizy

This novena is inspired by the life of Saint Cizy, a soldier martyr of the Carolingian era and patron of Rieux-Volvestre. Novena composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. It is not an official liturgical text. To finish it on his feast day, August 16, begin on August 8. 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 Cizy, pray for us." The act suggested each day helps you live the novena concretely. What we know of Saint Cizy comes from an old and sparsely documented local tradition: the meditations keep to the essentials.

Day 1: A faith received

Tradition says Cizy was born in Besançon. Before he was a soldier, he was a baptized child to whom the faith was handed on. All witness begins with a gift received.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for the faith I have received. Bless those who passed it on to me and help me to pass it on in turn.

Act of the day: Pray for your godparents, or for the person who first made God known to you.

Day 2: Serving

Cizy was a man of arms in the service of the Frankish kingdom. Service to others, when it is lived with integrity, can become a path to holiness.

Prayer: Lord, teach me to do my work honestly, as a service rendered to you and to my brothers and sisters.

Act of the day: Do an ordinary task with special care, offering it to God.

Day 3: Far from home

Born in Besançon, Cizy died in the south of Gaul, near the Garonne. He knew distance, the roads, life in camp. God also meets us where we did not expect him.

Prayer: Lord, be with those who live far from their families, and give them brothers and sisters along the way.

Act of the day: Get in touch with someone who lives far away or alone.

Day 4: Captivity

Taken prisoner, Cizy lost his freedom. In captivity, all he had left was his faith and his prayer. This stripping revealed what truly mattered to him.

Prayer: Lord, remember prisoners and hostages. Be their strength and their hope.

Act of the day: Pray for someone in prison, or support an organization that visits prisons.

Day 5: The hour of choice

He is offered his life if he denies Christ. Cizy refuses. There are moments when faithfulness requires us to say no, even when it costs.

Prayer: Lord, give me the courage to remain faithful when it would be easier to give in.

Act of the day: Refuse today a small compromise that goes against your conscience.

Day 6: Without hatred

The Christian martyr does not die cursing his executioners. He imitates Christ, who prayed for those who crucified him.

Prayer: Lord, keep my heart from hatred, and teach me to pray for those who do me harm.

Act of the day: Pray by name for someone with whom you are in conflict.

Day 7: Persecuted Christians

Even today, Christians are threatened because of their faith. The witness of Cizy joins theirs across the centuries.

Prayer: Lord, sustain persecuted Christians. Give them peace of heart and the freedom to pray to you.

Act of the day: Learn about the situation of Christians in a country where they are persecuted, and pray for them.

Day 8: A faithful town

If we know the name of Cizy, it is because Rieux has kept it in its memory and in its prayer. A community that remembers keeps its saints alive.

Prayer: Lord, bless our parishes and our villages. Help us keep alive the memory of those who went before us in the faith.

Act of the day: Find out who is the patron saint of your parish or your town.

Day 9: The martyr's palm

The soldier received the palm of victory, not the victory of arms, but that of faithfulness. On August 16, Rieux celebrates its patron.

Prayer: Lord, through the intercession of Saint Cizy, grant me the grace I ask in this novena, if it is your will, and keep me faithful to the end.

Act of the day: Attend Mass if you can, and give thanks for the witness of the martyrs.

Closing prayer

> *Saint Cizy,*
> *soldier of Christ and martyr,*
> *you kept the faith in captivity*
> *and confessed it unto death.*
> *Present to the Lord the intention I have entrusted to you.*
> *Make me steadfast in trial,*
> *and watch over those who suffer for their faith.*
> *Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

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

Credits and sources

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