

BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Conwoion

Life, prayer, novena and pilgrimage

Feast day: January 5

Saintspedia · saintspedia.com

IN BRIEF

Saint Conwoion

9th-century Breton monk, founder and first abbot of the abbey of Saint-Sauveur in Redon.

Feast day	January 5
Born	c. 790, Comblessac (Ille-et-Vilaine, France)
Died	January 5, 868, Maxent, near Plélan-le-Grand (Ille-et-Vilaine, France)
Canonized	cult confirmed in 1866 by Pius IX
Era	9th century
Patron saint of	Redon

In this booklet

Life

Prayer to Saint Conwoion for Brittany and Religious Communities

Novena to Saint Conwoion

Abbey Church of Saint-Sauveur in Redon

Credits and sources

Booklet offered by Saintspedia, the directory of Catholic saints: lives of the saints, prayers, novenas and places of pilgrimage, at saintspedia.com. Texts written by Saintspedia, except traditional prayers marked as such. Original prayers and novenas are not official liturgical texts. Free booklet, to print and share for personal, family or parish use; please do not sell it.

LIFE

Saint Conwoion

Saint Conwoion was a ninth-century Breton monk, born around 790 at Comblessac, in today's Ille-et-Vilaine. Archdeacon of Vannes, he left that office for the monastic life and in 832, with six companions, founded the abbey of Saint-Sauveur in Redon, where the Oust meets the Vilaine. An adviser to the Breton ruler Nominoe, he died on January 5, 868, at Maxent, where Viking invasions had forced him to withdraw. His feast day is January 5.

Who was Saint Conwoion?

Conwoion (also spelled Convoyon, and in Breton Konvoion) is one of the great figures of Christian Brittany in the early Middle Ages. His name, of Celtic origin, is thought to combine the ideas of "warrior" and "sincere." He came from a family of Gallo-Roman origin and senatorial rank. His life is fairly well known thanks to the cartulary of Redon Abbey and to the *Deeds of the Saints of Redon*, an account written by a monk of the abbey in the ninth century. It shows a man of prayer, but also a tenacious founder, able to defend his work before the powerful.

Key dates

- **c. 790**: Born at Comblessac, into a family of senatorial rank.
- **Early 9th century**: A priest, he becomes archdeacon to Regnier, bishop of Vannes.
- **832**: With a few companions, he settles at Roton, today's Redon, on land given by the machtiern Ratvili, and founds the abbey of Saint-Sauveur.
- **834**: Emperor Louis the Pious confirms the foundation, with the support of Nominoe.

- **c. 848**: He travels to Rome to Pope Leo IV, who entrusts him with the relics of Saint Marcellinus, pope and martyr.
- **1860s**: Driven out by Viking raids, the monks withdraw to Maxent, near Plélan-le-Grand.
- **January 5, 868**: Dies at Maxent.
- **1866**: Pope Pius IX confirms his cult.

From Vannes to the wilderness of Redon

As a young priest, Conwoion received from the bishop of Vannes the office of archdeacon, an important post in the administration of the diocese. But he longed for a life entirely given to God. He left Vannes with a few companions and looked for a secluded place. He found it at Roton, where the Oust meets the Vilaine, surrounded by hills. Following Breton custom, the local lord, the machtiern Ratvili, held his court beside a spring: it was there that he agreed to give the land to the monks, in the presence of his son and of witnesses.

The six disciples who founded the abbey with him are honored as saints in Redon: Tethwin, Gerfroi, Fivetein, Conhouarn, Condéloc and Riowen. Conwoion had the community adopt the Rule of Saint Benedict, which the Carolingian Empire was then trying to make standard in its monasteries.

Defending his work

The foundation met strong opposition. The bishop of Vannes reproached Conwoion for taking the best of his clergy with him, and the count of Nantes thought the site too strategic to be entrusted to monks. Conwoion had to go and plead his case before Emperor Louis the Pious, who at first refused to receive him. The account reports that after one failure, he simply asked his brothers to sell at the market the wax they had brought as a gift, and to go

home. His patience won out in the end: with the support of Nominoe, the emperor's representative in Brittany, the foundation was confirmed, and new lands were given to the abbey.

A monk sent to Nominoe expressed the community's purpose this way: to build an oratory "where each day we may call upon God for the salvation of all Brittany," not out of a desire for riches, but "solely out of the desire to gain Heaven."

Adviser to Nominoe and pilgrim to Rome

Conwoion became a close adviser to Nominoe, at the time when Nominoe was distancing himself from Charles the Bald and asserting Brittany's independence. Around 848, he made the journey to Rome to see Pope Leo IV. The pope entrusted him with the body of Saint Marcellinus, pope and martyr, and with objects for worship, which he brought back to Redon. The abbey then became a major spiritual and cultural center of Brittany.

Exile and death

In the 860s, the Vikings sailed up the Vilaine and threatened Redon. With the support of the Breton king Salomon, Conwoion and several monks withdrew inland to Maxent, near Plélan-le-Grand. Around 866-867, Ritcand succeeded him as abbot. Conwoion died at Maxent on January 5, 868, far from the abbey he had founded, but faithful to the monastic life to the end.

Devotion and art

Devotion to Saint Conwoion remained alive in Brittany for centuries. Nearly a thousand years after his death, Pope Pius IX confirmed it in 1866. His feast day is January 5. A parish in Redon bears his name. He is shown as a Benedictine abbot, with cowl and crozier, sometimes holding a model of his abbey.

What can we learn from Saint Conwoion?

Conwoion gave up a fine career to seek God. He founded a community and defended it patiently, without violence, accepting refusals and waiting for the right moment. He also knew how to accept exile when the Vikings threatened his work. You can pray to him for Brittany, for religious communities, for those who found a work or must defend it, and for all who are looking for a life more fully given to God.

Where to pray to Saint Conwoion

- **Redon** (Ille-et-Vilaine, France): the abbey church of Saint-Sauveur, heir to the abbey he founded.
- **Redon**: the parish that bears his name.
- **Comblessac** (Ille-et-Vilaine): his native village.
- **Maxent** (Ille-et-Vilaine): the place of his exile and death.

To pray with him at home, you can use the prayer to Saint Conwoion or the novena to Saint Conwoion.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Conwoion for Brittany and Religious Communities

Saint Conwoion, a ninth-century Breton monk, left his office as archdeacon of Vannes to found in 832 the abbey of Saint-Sauveur in Redon, where his monks prayed every day "for the salvation of all Brittany." He defended his work patiently before the powerful, then accepted exile in the face of the Vikings. This prayer is an original composition inspired by his life; it is not an official liturgical text. It entrusts to him Brittany, religious communities and all who carry a project for God.

Prayer to Saint Conwoion

Saint Conwoion,
you left the honors of Vannes
to seek God in the solitude of Redon.
Where the rivers meet, you built a house of prayer
where intercession rose each day for all of Brittany.

When the powerful closed their doors to you,
you did not answer with anger,
but waited patiently for God's hour.
When the Vikings threatened your abbey,
you accepted exile without losing your peace.

Pray for Brittany and for all who live there.
Pray for monks and nuns,
for those who found a work in the service of God,
and for those who must defend it or leave it behind.
Teach us perseverance and trust.

May our lives, like your abbey,
become places where God is praised each day.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

When to pray to Saint Conwoion

- On his feast day, January 5, at the end of the Christmas season.
- For Brittany, its parishes and its religious communities.
- When you launch a project, an association or a work in the service of others.
- When a project runs into refusals and calls for patience.
- When you must leave a place or a work you love.

An invocation for founders

You can also simply say:

> *Lord, if this project comes from you, make it grow.*
> *If it does not come from you, give me the peace to let it go.*
> *Saint Conwoion, pray for us. Amen.*

To prepare for his feast, you can pray the novena to Saint Conwoion from December 28 to January 5, and read the life of Saint Conwoion.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Conwoion

This novena is an original composition by Saintspedia, inspired by the life of Saint Conwoion, a Breton monk, founder and first abbot of Saint-Sauveur in Redon, who died on January 5, 868. It is not an official liturgical text. To end it on his feast day, January 5, begin on December 28: it will then accompany the passage into the new year. You can also pray it at any time, especially when you are carrying a project for God.

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 Conwoion, pray for us." The small act proposed each day helps you live the novena concretely.

Day 1: A deeper call

Conwoion was archdeacon of Vannes, an honorable position. But he felt within him a deeper call, to a life entirely given to God. He dared to listen to it.

Prayer: Lord, what do you desire for my life? Give me the courage to listen to your call, even if it upsets my plans.

Today: Take ten minutes of silence to ask God what he expects of you this year.

Day 2: Setting out with brothers

Conwoion did not leave alone: companions followed him. God's great works are often born of friendship in faith.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for the brothers and sisters you have placed on my path. Help us move forward together toward you.

Today: Share with a friend a desire or a project you are bringing before God.

Day 3: Finding one's place

At Roton, where the Oust meets the Vilaine, Conwoion found the place to settle. God gives us a concrete place to serve him: a home, a town, a community.

Prayer: Lord, teach me to love the place where you have put me, and to serve there with all my heart.

Today: Pray for your town or village, and for the people who live there.

Day 4: The Rule of Saint Benedict

Conwoion had his monks follow the Rule of Saint Benedict: prayer, work, life together. A spiritual life needs a rhythm and faithfulness.

Prayer: Lord, help me put order in my life, so that prayer has its place in it every day.

Today: Choose a small prayer resolution for the new year, and keep it.

Day 5: Praying for a whole people

The monks of Redon wanted to call upon God every day "for the salvation of all Brittany." Praying for others is a very real way of loving them.

Prayer: Lord, I entrust to you my country, its leaders and its people. Give us peace and justice.

Today: Pray for those who govern your country and your region.

Day 6: Closed doors

The bishop of Vannes and the count of Nantes opposed Conwoion, and the emperor at first refused to receive him. He did not rebel: he had the wax of the gift sold and went home. Patience is a strength.

Prayer: Lord, when my plans meet with refusal, keep me from bitterness. Teach me to wait for your hour.

Today: Entrust to God a project that is blocked, without trying to force things.

Day 7: The pilgrim to Rome

Conwoion made the long journey to Rome to see Pope Leo IV, and brought back the relics of Saint Marcellinus. He loved the universal Church and unity around the successor of Peter.

Prayer: Lord, bless our pope. Keep the Church united in faith and in love.

Today: Pray for the pope and for his intentions.

Day 8: Exile

When the Vikings threatened Redon, Conwoion had to withdraw to Maxent with his monks. He left the abbey he had founded. There are times when we must let go of what we have built.

Prayer: Lord, I entrust to you those who have had to leave their home or their country. Give me too the freedom to let go of what I cling to.

Today: Pray for refugees, or support an organization that welcomes them.

Day 9: A peaceful death

Conwoion died at Maxent on January 5, 868, surrounded by his brothers. His abbey would outlive him for centuries. What we found for God does not die with us.

Prayer: Lord, I entrust to you the work of my life. Through the intercession of Saint Conwoion, grant me the grace I ask in this novena, if it is your will.

Today: Give thanks for a work or a community that came before you and gives you life.

Living the novena with Saint Conwoion

This novena spans the end of one year and the beginning of the next: a good time to look back over your life and entrust your plans to God. Saint Conwoion is a precious companion for all who found something: a family, a business, an association, a community. He teaches patience in the face of refusal, trust in trials and freedom toward what we have built. If you are in Brittany, you can go and pray in the abbey church of Saint-Sauveur in Redon.

Closing prayer

Saint Conwoion,
monk and founder, friend of God and of Brittany,
you patiently built a house of prayer
and gave it back to God in exile.
Present to the Lord the intention I have entrusted to him during these nine days.
Obtain for me perseverance in my plans,
peace when I meet refusal
and trust in every trial.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

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

PILGRIMAGE

Abbey Church of Saint-Sauveur in Redon

The abbey church of Saint-Sauveur in Redon, in Ille-et-Vilaine, is the church of the former Benedictine abbey founded in 832 by Saint Conwoion, where the Oust meets the Vilaine. Now a parish church, it remains the great place of memory of the founding saint, whose feast is celebrated on January 5.

An abbey at the heart of Brittany

In 832, Conwoion and his companions settled on the land of Roton, given by the machtiern Ratvili. The abbey, dedicated to the Holy Savior and confirmed by Emperor Louis the Pious, became in the ninth century one of the great spiritual and cultural centers of Brittany. Its cartulary, a collection of the abbey's charters, is a precious source for the history of Brittany in the early Middle Ages.

The buildings were rebuilt over the centuries. The present abbey church keeps a remarkable Romanesque tower rising above the crossing, as well as a Gothic choir. A Gothic bell tower, separated from the church after a fire in the 18th century, stands some distance away. The former monastic buildings now house a school.



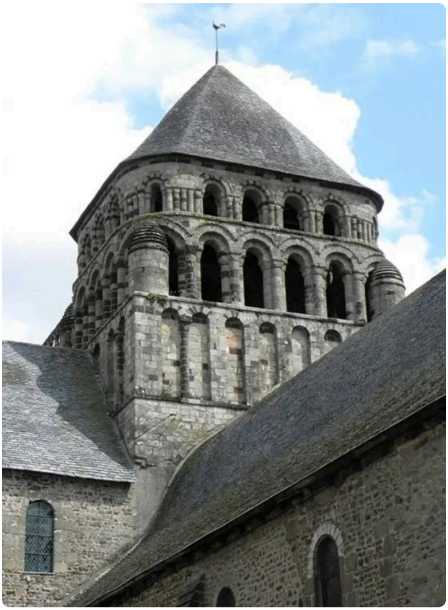
The abbey church of Saint-Sauveur in Redon.

Visiting the abbey church

The abbey church is in the historic center of Redon, not far from the port and the quays of the Vilaine. Take time to look at the Romanesque tower, with its stone arcades in alternating colors, and then the Gothic choir. The freestanding bell tower, tall and slender, is one of the town's landmarks.

Praying on site

Before your visit, you can read the life of Saint Conwoion. In the abbey church, entrust to him Brittany, religious communities and the projects you are carrying, then pray the prayer to Saint Conwoion. These suggestions are offered by Saintspedia.



The Romanesque tower of the abbey church of Saint-Sauveur.

Other places of Saint Conwoion

- **Comblessac** (Ille-et-Vilaine): his native village.
- **Vannes** (Morbihan): the episcopal city where he was archdeacon.
- **Maxent** (Ille-et-Vilaine): the place of his exile and death, in 868.

Practical information

Redon is served by train and lies halfway between Rennes, Nantes and Vannes. The abbey church is a working church: modest dress and silence are requested, especially during services. Opening hours and Mass times may vary: check with the parish or the Redon tourist office before you come.

Credits and sources

Texts: Saintspedia (saintspedia.com). The sources cited in each part are those of the corresponding page of the website. Biographical data partly from Wikidata (CC0). Font: EB Garamond (SIL Open Font License).

Images

- Cover: Alphonse Hénaff, public domain, via Wikimedia Commons. Source · License
- The abbey church of Saint-Sauveur in Redon.: Image: GO69, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons. Source · License
- The Romanesque tower of the abbey church of Saint-Sauveur.: Image: GO69, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons. Source · License



More free booklets

Lives of the saints, prayers, novenas and places of pilgrimage: find all the booklets to print at

saintspedia.com