BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Donald of Ogilvy

Life, prayer and novena

Feast day: July 15

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IN BRIEF

Saint Donald of Ogilvy

Scottish layman of the 7th and 8th centuries, a widower who made his home a community of prayer with his nine daughters.

Feast day	July 15
Born	7th century, Angus (Scotland), according to tradition
Died	c. 716, Scotland
Canonized	immemorial cult
Era	8th century

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Credits and sources

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LIFE

Saint Donald of Ogilvy

Saint Donald was a Scottish layman who lived between the 7th and 8th centuries in Angus, on the lands later known as Ogilvy. A widower and the father of nine daughters, he turned his home into a small community of prayer and became its leader. He is said to have died around 716. His daughters remained in Scottish memory as the "Nine Maidens". His feast day is July 15.

Who was Saint Donald?

Donald belongs to the Scotland of the early Middle Ages, where Christianity, brought by monks from Ireland and Iona, was gradually taking root among the Picts. We have no early biography of him. What we know comes from a short hagiographical tradition, taken up in collections of lives of the saints: that of a father who, after the death of his wife, chose to live a consecrated life with his daughters. The details are few and must be received with caution. But this tradition outlines an endearing figure: a married man, then a widower, who discovers that his home can become a place of prayer.

Key dates in the life of Donald

- **7th century**: Born in Scotland, in the region of Angus, according to tradition.
- **Date unknown**: He marries and becomes the father of nine daughters.
- **Date unknown**: His wife dies, asking him to settle their daughters well.
- **Shortly after**: His daughters all wish to consecrate themselves to God; he turns his house into a community and becomes its leader.
- **c. 716**: Death of Donald, according to tradition.
- **After his death**: His daughters join the monastery of Abernethy, where they are called the "Nine Maidens".

- **Over the centuries**: Several churches in Scotland are dedicated to the Nine Maidens.

A father who became a spiritual guide

Tradition says that as she lay dying, Donald's wife entrusted their nine daughters to him and asked him to find each of them a good husband. But the young women had another desire: they all wanted to become nuns. Far from opposing it, Donald rejoiced. He saw in their choice a way for his children to give themselves entirely to Christ.

Rather than sending them far away, he turned his large house into a convent and became the head of the small community, whom the accounts call its "abbot". The day was divided between working the land and prayer. According to tradition, the family prayed for a large part of the day and night, and took only one very simple meal each day. This life recalls that of the early Celtic monastic communities, where poverty, manual work and the praise of God went together.

The Nine Maidens of Abernethy

After Donald's death, around 716, his daughters left the family home to enter the monastery of Abernethy. According to tradition, this monastery had been begun under the inspiration of Saint Brigid of Ireland and founded by the abbess Darlugdach. The nine sisters became known there as the "Nine Maidens". Over time, many parish churches in Scotland were dedicated to them. This memory of the daughters no doubt helped keep alive the remembrance of their father.

Devotion and art

Saint Donald is celebrated on July 15. His cult has remained discreet and local, linked to Scotland and to the memory of the Nine Maidens. He appears in Catholic collections of lives of the saints, and he is also honored by Orthodox communities in Britain. No well-established early iconography or identified relics are known. Nor do the sources allow us to locate his house or his burial place precisely: it is better to say so than to invent.

What can we learn from Saint Donald?

Saint Donald shows that a family can become a school of holiness. As a widower, he could have sought above all to marry his daughters well, as his wife had asked. He knew how to listen to their desire and accompany it, instead of imposing his own plans. He turned his home into a place of prayer, without leaving his land or his work. You can pray to him for fathers, for widowers, for parents whose children discover a vocation, and for all families who want to make room for God at the heart of their lives.

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

Where to pray to Saint Donald

- **Angus** (Scotland): the region where he lived according to tradition.
- **Abernethy** (Perth and Kinross, Scotland): the site of the old monastery his daughters entered after his death.
- **At home**: since Saint Donald made his house a place of prayer, it is natural to pray to him as a family, in a prayer corner.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Donald for Families and Vocations

Saint Donald, a Scottish layman of the 7th and 8th centuries, became a widower and turned his home into a community of prayer with his nine daughters, who wished to consecrate themselves to God. Prayer composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. It entrusts to him fathers, widowers, parents and vocations.

Prayer to Saint Donald

Saint Donald,
father of a family and man of prayer,
you joyfully welcomed
your daughters' desire to give themselves to Christ.
Teach me to listen to those entrusted to me
and to respect the path God opens for them.

In grief for your wife,
you did not close your heart:
you made your home a house of God,
where work and prayer went together.
Help me to make my home
a place of peace, simplicity and praise.

Watch over fathers and mothers,
over widows, widowers and orphans,
over young people seeking their vocation.
Obtain for us a generous and faithful heart.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

When to pray to Saint Donald

- On his feast day, July 15.
- For a father, especially one raising his children alone.
- In grief after the death of a spouse.
- When a child discovers a vocation to religious life or the priesthood.
- So that prayer may find its place in the life of the home.

A short invocation

> *Saint Donald, you who made your home a house of prayer,*
> *bless our families and keep them in the love of God. Amen.*

To prepare for his feast, you can pray the novena to Saint Donald from July 7 to 15, and read the life of Saint Donald.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Donald

Novena composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. It draws on what tradition tells of Saint Donald, a Scottish father who turned his home into a community of prayer with his nine daughters. To finish it on his feast day, July 15, begin on July 7. 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 Donald, pray for us." The act suggested each day helps you live the novena concretely. The sources on Saint Donald are very brief: the meditations keep to what tradition reports.

Day 1: A married man

Before being a consecrated man, Donald was a husband and a father. His holiness began in the ordinary life of a household.

Prayer: Lord, bless couples and families. Make faithful love grow in our homes.

Act of the day: Pray for your family, naming each of its members.

Day 2: Grief

Tradition says that Donald's wife died entrusting their nine daughters to him. He knew the pain of separation and the burden of raising his children alone.

Prayer: Lord, comfort those who have lost their spouse. Give them the strength to go on.

Act of the day: Get in touch with a widow or widower.

Day 3: Listening to one's children

Donald's wife wanted her daughters to marry. They wanted to give themselves to God. Donald knew how to hear their desire.

Prayer: Lord, teach parents to listen to their children and to respect your call on them.

Act of the day: Take a moment of real listening with someone close to you.

Day 4: The joy of a vocation

According to the account, Donald rejoiced at his daughters' choice. He did not experience their vocation as a loss, but as a gift.

Prayer: Lord, raise up vocations in our families, and give parents the joy of welcoming them.

Act of the day: Pray for a priest, a religious brother or a sister you know.

Day 5: A house open to God

Donald turned his large house into a convent. The place of family life became a place of prayer.

Prayer: Lord, come and dwell in my home. May it be a place where you are prayed to and where people love one another.

Act of the day: Set up or tidy a prayer corner in your home.

Day 6: Working the land

The small community farmed the land. The work of their hands was part of their praise.

Prayer: Lord, bless the work of our hands, and teach us to offer it to you.

Act of the day: Do an ordinary task carefully, offering it to God.

Day 7: Praying day and night

Tradition says that Donald and his daughters prayed for a large part of the day and night. Prayer was the heart of their life.

Prayer: Lord, teach me to pray with perseverance, even when I am tired.

Act of the day: Add a time of prayer in the evening, before going to sleep.

Day 8: Simplicity

The community took only one simple meal a day. This sobriety left all the room to God.

Prayer: Lord, free me from what is superfluous and give me a simple heart.

Act of the day: Give up a small pleasure and give its cost to a charity.

Day 9: A memory that endures

After Donald's death, around 716, his daughters entered the monastery of Abernethy. They were called the "Nine Maidens", and churches in Scotland were dedicated to them.

Prayer: Lord, through the intercession of Saint Donald, grant me the grace I ask in this novena, if it is your will, and keep our families in your peace.

Act of the day: Pray for the departed members of your family and, if possible, attend Mass.

Closing prayer

Saint Donald,
father by nature and in the spirit,
you made your home a house of prayer.
Present to the Lord the intention I have entrusted to you.
Bless our families, comfort those who mourn,
and help us follow Christ where we live.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

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

Credits and sources

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