BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Drausinus of Soissons

Life, prayer and novena

Feast day: March 5

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IN BRIEF

Saint Drausinus of Soissons

7th-century bishop of Soissons, founder of monasteries, invoked to obtain justice.

Feast day	March 5
Born	first half of the 7th century, Soissons
Died	c. 674, Soissons
Canonized	immemorial cult
Era	6th century
Patron saint of	those who defend a just cause

In this booklet

Life

Prayer to Saint Drausinus to Obtain Justice

Novena to Saint Drausinus of Soissons

Credits and sources

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LIFE

Saint Drausinus of Soissons

Saint Drausinus (Drausin in French, Drausius in Latin) was bishop of Soissons in the 7th century, from about 658 until his death around 674. A charitable pastor toward the sick and prisoners and a founder of monasteries, after his death he became the saint people came to invoke to obtain justice. His tomb drew even Saint Thomas Becket. His feast day is March 5.

Who was Saint Drausinus?

Drausinus lived in Merovingian Gaul in the second half of the 7th century, at the time when the mayor of the palace Ebroin dominated the kingdom of Neustria. Born into a Christian family of Soissons, he was entrusted very young to the bishop of the city, who trained him and made him his archdeacon. Elected bishop in turn around 658, he governed his Church for some fifteen years. The sources on his life are few and partly late: they mainly remember his charity, his monastic foundations and the very lively cult that surrounded his tomb in the Middle Ages. Some old lists place his death much earlier, in the 6th century, but the date most commonly accepted is around 674.

Key dates in the life of Drausinus

- **First half of the 7th century**: Born in Soissons, into a Christian family.
- **Youth**: He is brought up under the guidance of the bishop of Soissons, who makes him his archdeacon.
- **c. 658**: He is elected bishop of Soissons.
- **Episcopate**: He founds a monastery for men at Rethondes and a monastery for women at Soissons, with the support of Saint Audoin (Ouen).

- **c. 674**: Dies in Soissons; he is buried in the church of the monastery of Notre-Dame.
- **1163**: According to John of Salisbury, the knight Robert de Montfort prays at his tomb before a judicial duel.
- **1166**: Saint Thomas Becket, archbishop of Canterbury in exile, comes to pray at his tomb.
- **1792**: The black cross venerated on his tomb is broken during the Revolution.

A charitable bishop and founder

As bishop, Drausinus stood out for his great charity. Tradition remembers his care for the sick and for prisoners, two groups often forgotten in Merovingian society. Like many bishops of his time, he also promoted monastic life. He founded a monastery for men at Rethondes, in the forest of Compiègne, and a monastery for women in Soissons. The latter was built thanks to the generosity of the wife of Ebroin, the powerful mayor of the palace, and with the support of Saint Audoin, bishop of Rouen. The abbey of Notre-Dame of Soissons would become one of the most important women's abbeys in northern France.

The saint invoked to obtain justice

After his death, around 674, Drausinus was invoked by all who wanted to uphold justice and the freedom of the Church. In the Middle Ages, a popular belief grew up: in judicial duels, where two men fought to prove the rightness of their cause, the one who had the greatest devotion to Saint Drausinus would be assured of victory. A black cross placed on his tomb became the goal of many pilgrimages by champions and litigants. The Church never approved of these duels, but this devotion shows how much people saw Drausinus as a defender of what is right.

The most illustrious witness to this cult is Saint Thomas Becket. According to the historians of Soissons, the archbishop of Canterbury, exiled in France because of his conflict with King Henry II of England over the freedom of the Church, came to pray at the tomb of Saint Drausinus in 1166, before pronouncing excommunications against the king's advisers. John of Salisbury, his close collaborator, also reports that a knight, Robert de Montfort, prayed in the saint's chapel before his duel of 1163.

The tomb and the relics

Drausinus was buried in the church of the monastery of Notre-Dame of Soissons. According to local tradition, his body was placed in an older stone sarcophagus decorated with vine scrolls. This sarcophagus, found in Soissons, was taken to the Louvre Museum, where it still is, despite the town's protests. The black cross that stood on it was broken in 1792. Saint Drausinus is celebrated on March 5, and his memory remains attached to the town of Soissons.

What can we learn from Saint Drausinus?

Saint Drausinus was first of all a pastor close to the most vulnerable, the sick and prisoners. He was also a builder of monastic life. But the memory of the centuries made him the saint of justice: the one to pray to when defending a just cause, when suffering injustice, or when the freedom of the Church is threatened. You can pray to him for judges, lawyers and litigants, for prisoners, and for those who struggle to have their rights recognized.

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

Where to pray to Saint Drausinus

- **Soissons** (Aisne): the city of which he was bishop, where his tomb stood in the abbey of Notre-Dame.
- **Paris**: the Louvre Museum, which holds the so-called sarcophagus of Saint Drausinus.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Drausinus to Obtain Justice

Saint Drausinus, bishop of Soissons in the 7th century, was a charitable pastor toward the sick and prisoners, and after his death became the saint people invoked to obtain justice. Prayer composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. It is not an official liturgical text. It entrusts to him those who defend a just cause, those who suffer injustice, and prisoners.

Prayer to Saint Drausinus

Saint Drausinus,
shepherd of the Church of Soissons,
you visited the sick and prisoners
and gave your heart to the most vulnerable.
Teach me not to look away
from those who suffer.

You whom people invoked to obtain justice,
support those who defend a just cause,
comfort those who suffer injustice,
and enlighten judges and those who decide.

You at whose tomb Saint Thomas Becket came to pray,
keep the Church free and faithful to the Gospel,
and give me the courage of truth.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

When to pray to Saint Drausinus

- On his feast day, March 5.
- Before a trial, an administrative procedure or a difficult negotiation.
- When you or a loved one suffer an injustice.
- For prisoners and prison chaplains.
- For the freedom of the Church and of believers throughout the world.

A short invocation

> *Saint Drausinus, friend of prisoners and defender of what is right,*
> *obtain for us justice and peace.*
> *Pray for us. Amen.*

To prepare for his feast, you can pray the novena to Saint Drausinus from February 25 to March 5, and read the life of Saint Drausinus of Soissons.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Drausinus of Soissons

Novena composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. It is inspired by the life of Saint Drausinus, bishop of Soissons in the 7th century. It is not an official liturgical text. To finish it on his feast day, March 5, begin on February 25 (February 26 in leap years). 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 Drausinus, pray for us." The act of the day helps you live the novena concretely.

Day 1: Growing up in a Christian family

Drausinus was born in Soissons into a Christian family, which entrusted him very young to the bishop of the city. His vocation grew in that soil.

Prayer: Lord, bless Christian families and make them places where vocations are born.

Act of the day: Pray as a family, or for a family you know.

Day 2: Letting oneself be formed

With the bishop of Soissons, Drausinus learned the service of the Church. He became archdeacon, in charge of the poor and of administration.

Prayer: Lord, give me a teachable heart, ready to be taught.

Act of the day: Ask advice from a wise person and really listen.

Day 3: Receiving the charge of shepherd

Around 658, Drausinus was elected bishop. He received responsibility for a whole people, at a time marked by the violence of the powerful.

Prayer: Lord, sustain the bishops of your Church. Give them courage and humility.

Act of the day: Pray for the bishop of your diocese.

Day 4: Visiting the sick

Tradition remembers the charity of Drausinus toward the sick. He saw in them the suffering Christ.

Prayer: Lord, I entrust to you the sick, especially those who are alone. Give them strength and peace.

Act of the day: Visit or call someone who is ill.

Day 5: Remembering prisoners

Drausinus cared for prisoners. "I was in prison and you came to me," says Jesus.

Prayer: Lord, I entrust to you prisoners, their families and the victims. May no one be deprived of hope.

Act of the day: Pray for the inmates of a prison near you, or support an organization that accompanies them.

Day 6: Founding places of prayer

Drausinus founded monasteries at Rethondes and in Soissons. He knew that the prayer of monks and nuns carries the whole Church.

Prayer: Lord, bless religious communities and make the love of prayer grow in me.

Act of the day: Take a time of silent prayer, or pray one of the hours of the Divine Office.

Day 7: Seeking justice

After his death, people invoked Drausinus to obtain justice. God loves right and justice, and he hears the cry of the oppressed.

Prayer: Lord, make justice rise upon the earth. Support those who suffer injustice.

Act of the day: Repair an injustice, even a small one, for which you are responsible.

Day 8: The freedom of the Church

Saint Thomas Becket, who defended the freedom of the Church against the king of England, came to pray at the tomb of Drausinus. The courage of the saints is handed on.

Prayer: Lord, keep your Church free and faithful. Support persecuted Christians.

Act of the day: Pray for Christians who cannot live their faith freely.

Day 9: Entering into peace

Drausinus died around 674, and his tomb became a place of prayer for generations. His charity continues to bear fruit.

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

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

Closing prayer

Saint Drausinus,
bishop of Soissons and friend of the poor,
you visited the sick and prisoners,
and you became the refuge of those who seek justice.
Present to the Lord the intention I have entrusted to you.
Keep me upright and charitable,
and give peace to those who suffer injustice.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

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

Credits and sources

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