BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Drogo of Sebourg

Life, prayer, novena and pilgrimage

Feast day: April 16

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IN BRIEF

Saint Drogo of Sebourg

12th century shepherd, pilgrim and recluse at Sebourg, patron of shepherds in northern France.

Feast day	April 16
Born	1118, Épinoy, today Carvin (Pas-de-Calais, France)
Died	April 16, 1186, Sebourg (Nord, France)
Canonized	cult recognized by the elevation of his relics on June 11, 1612, by the archbishop of Cambrai
Era	12th century
Patron saint of	shepherds, people suffering from hernias (popular tradition)

In this booklet

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Church of Saint-Druon, Sebourg

Credits and sources

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LIFE

Saint Drogo of Sebourg

Saint Drogo (Druon in French) was a 12th century pilgrim and hermit, born in 1118 at Épinoy, in Artois, and died in 1186 at Sebourg, near Valenciennes. A shepherd, then a tireless pilgrim on the roads to Rome, he lived for about forty years as a recluse in a cell against the church of Sebourg. Patron of shepherds in northern France, his feast day is April 16.

Who was Saint Drogo?

Drogo is a popular saint of Hainaut and Artois, whose cult has lasted for more than eight centuries around his tomb. His life is known through local traditions and old accounts, in which facts mingle with legends. Local historians have shown, for example, that he probably did not belong to the family of the lords of Épinoy, as was long said. What remains are the broad lines of a very simple life: a child marked by tragedy, a young man who gave up his goods, a shepherd, a pilgrim, then a recluse who prayed for others.

Key dates in the life of Drogo

- **1118**: Born at Épinoy, today part of Carvin (Pas-de-Calais); his father has already died and his mother dies giving birth to him.
- **Adolescence**: He gives away his inheritance and takes to the road.
- **Following years**: He becomes a shepherd at Sebourg, in the service of a devout woman, Élisabeth de La Haire.
- **Adulthood**: According to tradition, he makes the pilgrimage to Rome nine times, in utter poverty.
- **Mid 12th century**: Having come back disabled from his last journey, he settles as a recluse in a cell attached to the church of Sebourg.

- **Before 1186**: A fire destroys the church; he stays at prayer in his cell and comes out alive.
- **April 16, 1186**: Dies at Sebourg, in Easter week; he is buried in the church.
- **June 11, 1612**: The archbishop of Cambrai, Jean Richardot, carries out the elevation of his relics, officially recognizing his cult.

A painful birth

Drogo was born at Épinoy in 1118. His father had died before his birth, and his dying mother could only bring him into the world by a caesarean that cost her life. Tradition says that when the child learned how he was born, he felt deep guilt, as if he were responsible for his mother's death. From an early age he imposed very harsh penances on himself. One may see in this the excesses of a wounded soul; one may also read the desire to offer his life for the one who had given it to him.

The shepherd of Sebourg

As a teenager, Drogo gave away his goods and left his homeland. He came to Sebourg, a village of Hainaut near Valenciennes, and took work as a shepherd for a devout woman, Élisabeth de La Haire. He lived to the rhythm of the flocks, in simplicity and prayer. A legend says that he was seen both minding his sheep in the fields and attending services in the church: people said he could be in two places at once. This story, which is not historical, shows how much his union with God had struck the villagers.

Nine times on the road to Rome

As an adult, Drogo left his sheep for another vocation: pilgrimage. According to tradition, he went to Rome nine times, on foot, without money, living on alms, to pray at the tomb of the apostles. Pilgrimage was then a form of

penance and self-stripping: one gave up everything to walk toward God. From his last journey he came back disabled, suffering from a hernia that deformed him and prevented him from ever again walking far.

The recluse of the church

Drogo then settled as a recluse at Sebourg, in a small cell built against the church. He stayed there for about forty years, in prayer and penance, apart from the world. One day a fire ravaged the church; it is said that he did not leave his cell, went on praying in the midst of the flames and came out unharmed. He died on April 16, 1186, in the week after Easter.

His relatives from Épinoy wanted to take his body back to Artois. But, according to tradition, the cart grew heavier and heavier and the team refused to move on. The villagers saw a sign in this: Drogo wanted to stay among them. He was buried in the church of Sebourg, rebuilt after the fire, and a cross still marks, at the edge of the village, the place where the cart stopped.

Devotion and art

After his death, healings were reported at his tomb, especially of fractures; a fountain at Sebourg bore his name and was said to relieve hernias, which explains why he was invoked against this ailment. Drogo was never canonized in the modern sense, but on June 11, 1612, the archbishop of Cambrai carried out the solemn elevation of his relics, which at that time amounted to official recognition of his cult. His feast is April 16. At Sebourg, a festival is held every year on the Sunday after Pentecost. At Carvin, a chapel built in the 19th century on the supposed site of his birthplace receives a procession on Pentecost Monday, and in Cambrai, the church of Saint-Druon hosts that day the shepherds' Mass, with their sheep. He is shown as a shepherd, with a crook and a sheep, or as a pilgrim, with staff and scrip.

What can we learn from Saint Drogo?

Drogo founded nothing, wrote nothing, governed nothing. He kept sheep, walked to Rome, then prayed for years in a cell. His holiness is that of the little ones: a stripped-down life, marked by a wound he offered to God. You can pray to him for shepherds and livestock farmers, for pilgrims, for those who carry too heavy a burden of guilt, for the sick suffering from hernias or fractures, and for those whom illness has immobilized.

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

Where to pray to Saint Drogo

- **Sebourg** (Nord, France): the church of Saint-Martin, known as the church of Saint-Druon, which keeps his tomb, his cell and his effigy.
- **Sebourg**: the chapel of Saint-Druon, where he grazed his sheep, and the cross of Saint-Druon, on the road to Estreux.
- **Carvin** (Pas-de-Calais): the chapel of Saint-Druon, on the supposed site of his birthplace.
- **Cambrai** (Nord): the church of Saint-Druon, where the shepherds' Mass is celebrated on Pentecost Monday.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Drogo, Shepherd and Pilgrim

Saint Drogo, shepherd, pilgrim and recluse of the 12th century, lived for about forty years in prayer in a cell against the church of Sebourg, where he died in 1186. Patron of shepherds in northern France, he was also invoked by the sick. Prayer composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. It is not an official liturgical text.

Prayer to Saint Drogo

Saint Drogo, shepherd of Sebourg,
you kept the flocks in the peace of the fields,
your heart turned toward God.
Bless shepherds, livestock farmers
and all who live from the land.

Poor pilgrim on the road to Rome,
you left everything to walk toward the Lord.
Teach me to let go of what weighs me down
and to move forward with trust.

You who carried the weight of an old wound
and offered it to God in prayer,
console those crushed by guilt,
support the sick and those whom infirmity immobilizes.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

When to pray to Saint Drogo

- On his feast day, April 16, or during the festivals of Sebourg, Carvin and Cambrai around Pentecost.
- For shepherds, livestock farmers and the farming world.
- Before setting out on pilgrimage.
- For the sick suffering from a hernia or a fracture, and for those whom infirmity keeps from getting about.
- When you carry a guilt that keeps you from living in peace.
- For mothers who die in childbirth and the children who grow up without them.

A short invocation

> *Saint Drogo, shepherd and pilgrim,*
> *keep us on the way of God.*
> *Pray for us. Amen.*

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

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Drogo of Sebourg

This novena accompanies Saint Drogo, shepherd, pilgrim and recluse of Sebourg, who died in 1186. To finish it on his feast day, April 16, begin on April 8. You can also pray it before the local festival of Sebourg, on the Sunday after Pentecost. Novena composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. It is not an official liturgical text.

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 Drogo, pray for us." Several episodes come from popular tradition, where history mingles with legend.

Day 1: A birth in sorrow

Drogo was born an orphan: his father had died, and his mother died giving him life. From his entry into the world, he was marked by loss.

Prayer: Lord, I entrust to you orphaned children and mothers who die in childbirth. Welcome them into your peace.

Act of the day: Pray for your mother, living or departed.

Day 2: The weight of guilt

Drogo felt guilty for his mother's death. He carried this burden for a long time, and offered it to God through penance.

Prayer: Lord, free me from guilt that does not come from you, and help me believe in your forgiveness.

Act of the day: Go to confession if possible, or hand over to God, in silence, a fault you cannot let go of.

Day 3: Leaving everything

As a teenager, he gave away his inheritance and took to the road. He chose to be poor in order to be free.

Prayer: Lord, show me what I must leave behind to follow you more freely.

Act of the day: Give something you value to someone who needs it.

Day 4: Keeping the flocks

At Sebourg, Drogo became a shepherd. In the silence of the fields, he learned patience and prayer.

Prayer: Lord, bless shepherds, livestock farmers and farmers. Let them live from their work.

Act of the day: Pray for a farmer you know, or buy a product from a local producer.

Day 5: In two places at once

Legend says he was seen in the fields and in church at the same time. It expresses a simple truth: his work was already a prayer.

Prayer: Lord, let my daily work become a prayer offered to you.

Act of the day: In the morning, offer to God the work of your day.

Day 6: Pilgrim to Rome

Nine times, according to tradition, Drogo walked to Rome, poor among the poor. The pilgrim moves toward God step by step.

Prayer: Lord, bless pilgrims on the roads. Make my life a pilgrimage toward you.

Act of the day: Walk to a nearby church to pray there.

Day 7: Accepting infirmity

He came back from Rome disabled and could no longer walk far. He accepted this limit and turned it into a call to prayer.

Prayer: Lord, I entrust to you the sick and those whom infirmity immobilizes. Give them peace of heart.

Act of the day: Visit or call someone who can no longer leave their home.

Day 8: Praying in the midst of the flames

When the church burned, Drogo stayed at prayer in his cell and came out alive. His trust was stronger than fear.

Prayer: Lord, in the trials around me, keep me in prayer and trust.

Act of the day: Spend ten minutes in silence before the Blessed Sacrament or a cross.

Day 9: Staying among his own

After his death, the cart that was to carry him away refused to move. Drogo stayed at Sebourg, among those for whom he had prayed.

Prayer: Lord, through the intercession of Saint Drogo, grant me the grace I ask in this novena, if it is your will.

Act of the day: Attend Mass and pray for the people of your village or neighborhood.

Closing prayer

Saint Drogo,
humble shepherd, poor pilgrim and praying recluse,
you offered God your wound and your life.
Present to the Lord the intention I have entrusted to you.
Keep shepherds and the sick,
and lead us on the path of peace.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

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

PILGRIMAGE

Church of Saint-Druon, Sebourg

The church of Saint-Martin in Sebourg, commonly called the church of Saint-Druon, stands on a mound overlooking the village of Sebourg, in the Nord department of France, a few kilometers from Valenciennes. Dedicated to Saint Martin, it keeps the tomb of Saint Drogo (Druon), the shepherd and recluse who died here in 1186, as well as the cell where he lived. Listed as a historic monument since 1919, it is the heart of the cult of the shepherd saint.

A church rebuilt around a saint

A first Romanesque church stood here in the 12th century. Drogo was then living as a recluse in a cell built against it. Tradition says that a fire destroyed the building and that Drogo, who stayed at prayer in the midst of the flames, came out unharmed. After his death in 1186, the construction of a new church began, completed in the 13th century. Drogo was buried there, and pilgrims began to come and pray at his tomb; healings were reported, especially of fractures.

The building has changed a great deal over the centuries. The great bell tower, 73 meters high, dates from 1697: it replaced an older side tower. Damaged by shelling during the First World War, it was restored.

What you can see

The chapel of Saint Drogo occupies the site of his cell; its present layout dates from 1774. It contains an effigy of the saint carved in the 15th century, lit by a 20th century stained glass window. The altar of Saint Drogo, with its altarpiece and reliquary, belongs to the fine 17th century woodwork, like the pulpit of 1613, the high altar and the communion rail. The church also keeps the

medieval effigies of a lord and his wife, an oak organ case from 1780, a rare Romanesque piscina and 19th century paintings of Saint Martin and Saint Drogo.

Praying on site

Before you come, you can read the life of Saint Drogo. In his chapel, entrust to him shepherds and livestock farmers, the sick, pilgrims and those who carry too heavy a burden of guilt, then say the prayer to Saint Drogo. Every year, Sebourg celebrates its saint on the Sunday after Pentecost. These suggestions are offered by Saintspedia.

Other places of Saint Drogo

- **The chapel of Saint-Druon** (Sebourg): between the main road and the road to Curgies, where, according to tradition, he grazed his sheep.
- **The cross of Saint-Druon** (Sebourg): along the path to Estreux, where the cart carrying his body is said to have stopped.
- **Carvin** (Pas-de-Calais): the chapel built in the 19th century on the supposed site of his birthplace.
- **Cambrai** (Nord): the church of Saint-Druon, where the shepherds' Mass is celebrated on Pentecost Monday.

Practical information

Sebourg lies east of Valenciennes, near the Belgian border; the church stands on the Place de l'Église, at the top of the village. It belongs to the parish of Sainte-Maria-Goretti in the diocese of Cambrai. The church is not always open outside services: check with the parish or the town hall before you come, especially for the dates of the festivals of Saint Drogo.

Credits and sources

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