BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Dwynwen

Life, prayer, novena and pilgrimage

Feast day: January 25

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IN BRIEF

Saint Dwynwen

Welsh saint of the 5th century, honored on Llanddwyn Island, patron saint of lovers in Wales.

Feast day	January 25
Born	5th century, Wales
Died	c. 460 (uncertain date), Llanddwyn Island (Anglesey), according to tradition
Canonized	immemorial cult
Era	5th century
Patron saint of	lovers

In this booklet

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Credits and sources

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LIFE

Saint Dwynwen

Saint Dwynwen is a Welsh saint of the 5th century, presented by tradition as one of the many daughters of Brychan, king of Brycheiniog. She is said to have ended her life in solitude on the island of Llanddwyn, off Anglesey, which became a great place of pilgrimage in the Middle Ages. Patron saint of lovers in Wales, she is celebrated on January 25. She is also honored in Brittany under the name Douenwenn.

Who was Saint Dwynwen?

Dwynwen belongs to the group of early Welsh saints whose memory has been handed down through place names, churches and popular traditions far more than through written documents. No ancient Life tells her story in detail. She is linked to the family of Brychan, king of a small realm in south Wales, to whom tradition gives twenty-four daughters, several of them honored as saints. Her death is placed around 460, but this date remains uncertain. What is certain is the age and strength of her cult, in Wales as in Brittany.

Key dates in the life of Dwynwen

- **5th century**: Born in Wales; according to tradition, she is one of the daughters of King Brychan of Brycheiniog.
- **After her youth**: According to tradition, she consecrates herself to God and withdraws to the island of Llanddwyn, off Anglesey.
- **c. 460**: Dies, according to the date generally accepted, which remains uncertain.
- **Middle Ages**: Llanddwyn, which belongs to the bishopric of Bangor, becomes a much-visited place of pilgrimage.

- **16th century**: The church whose ruins survive on the island is built, on an older site.
- **Modern era**: In Brittany, she is honored at Plouha as Santez Twina ar Mor, at the pardon of May 16, and at Saint-Malo as Sainte Ouine.
- **Today**: On January 25, her feast is celebrated in Wales as the day of lovers.

A life known through tradition

Welsh tradition says that Dwynwen chose to consecrate her life to God and withdrew to the island of Llanddwyn, whose name means "the church of Dwynwen". A popular legend, handed down much later, tells that she had known an unhappy love for a young man named Maelon. After much prayer, she is said to have asked God to watch over all true lovers, and then to have given up marriage to live as a hermit. This story cannot be verified, but it explains why the Welsh call on her for lovers and couples.

Llanddwyn, a place of pilgrimage

In the Middle Ages, the island of Llanddwyn, owned by the bishopric of Bangor, drew many pilgrims. They came to pray to Saint Dwynwen and to draw water from her well, the *Ffynnon Ddwynwen*. The church whose ruins can be seen today dates from the 16th century, but it was built on an older site. The Reformation brought the pilgrimage to an end, but the attachment of the Welsh to their saint was never lost.

Dwynwen in Brittany

Like many saints who came from Britain, Dwynwen is also known in Armorica, under the name Douenwenn. At Plouha, in the Côtes-d'Armor, she was called *Santez Twina ar Mor* and was celebrated at the pardon of May 16.

At Saint-Malo, where she is called Sainte Ouine, the February fair bears her name. These traces bear witness to the ancient ties between Wales and Brittany, woven by monks and emigrants from the early Middle Ages.

Devotion and art

Saint Dwynwen is celebrated on January 25. She is not on the universal calendar of the Church: her cult is local, like that of many early Celtic saints. In Wales, her feast day has become the equivalent of Saint Valentine's Day. She is most often shown as a young consecrated woman, sometimes near the sea or her island.

What can we learn from Saint Dwynwen?

Behind the legends, Dwynwen reminds us that human love has its place in prayer. According to tradition, she offered her own sorrow to God and chose to consecrate her life to him, while interceding for those who love one another. You can pray to her for engaged couples, for married couples, for those who suffer from a wounded love and for those seeking their vocation.

To pray with her, see the prayer to Saint Dwynwen and the novena to Saint Dwynwen.

Where to pray to Saint Dwynwen

- **Llanddwyn Island** (Anglesey, Wales): the ruins of her church and her well.
- **Plouha** (Côtes-d'Armor, France): where she was honored at the pardon of May 16.
- **Saint-Malo** (Ille-et-Vilaine, France): where her memory lives on under the name Sainte Ouine.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Dwynwen for Lovers and Couples

Saint Dwynwen, a Welsh saint of the 5th century, is called on in Wales as the patron saint of lovers. According to tradition, she entrusted her own sorrow to God and consecrated her life to him on the island of Llanddwyn. Prayer composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. It is not an official liturgical text. It entrusts to her engaged couples, married couples and those who suffer from a wounded love.

Prayer to Saint Dwynwen

Saint Dwynwen,
you who knew, it is said, the pain of a wounded love,
you placed your heart in God's hands
and found peace in him.
Teach me to entrust to him my joys and my sorrows.

Watch over engaged couples preparing for marriage,
over spouses who love and give themselves to each other,
over those whose love is passing through trial.
Obtain for them faithfulness, patience and forgiveness.

Comfort those who are alone
and those whose hopes have been disappointed.
Help each one to find the path
on which God calls them to love.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

When to pray to Saint Dwynwen

- On her feast day, January 25.
- For engaged couples and those preparing for marriage.
- For couples in difficulty or separated.
- When you suffer from a wounded love or a breakup.
- For those seeking their vocation, in marriage or consecrated life.

A short invocation

> *Saint Dwynwen, friend of wounded hearts,*
> *keep those who love one another faithful,*
> *and pray for us. Amen.*

To prepare for her feast, you can pray the novena to Saint Dwynwen from January 17 to 25, and read the life of Saint Dwynwen.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Dwynwen

This novena is an original composition inspired by the tradition of Saint Dwynwen, a Welsh saint of the 5th century and patron saint of lovers in Wales. Novena composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. It is not an official liturgical text. To finish it on her feast day, January 25, begin on January 17. You can also pray it at any other time, for example before an engagement or a wedding.

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 Dwynwen, pray for us." The act of the day helps you live the novena concretely. The life of Saint Dwynwen is known mainly through tradition and legend; the meditations draw on them without claiming historical accuracy.

Day 1: A large family

Tradition makes Dwynwen one of the many daughters of King Brychan. Several of her brothers and sisters are honored as saints.

Prayer: Lord, bless large families and all who grow up together. Make our homes schools of holiness.

Act of the day: Pray for your brothers and sisters, or for a family you know.

Day 2: The gift of love

Human love is a gift from God. The Welsh call on Dwynwen for those who love one another.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for the love you place in our hearts. Keep it pure, true and generous.

Act of the day: Tell someone you love what they mean to you.

Day 3: A wounded heart

Legend says that Dwynwen knew an unhappy love. She did not keep her sorrow to herself: she carried it into prayer.

Prayer: Lord, I entrust my wounds to you. Heal what is bruised in me.

Act of the day: Entrust to God, in writing or in silence, a sorrow you are carrying.

Day 4: Forgiveness

To love is also to forgive. According to the legend, Dwynwen prayed for the one who had made her suffer.

Prayer: Lord, give me the grace to forgive those who have hurt me, as you forgive me.

Act of the day: Pray by name for someone who has hurt you.

Day 5: Praying for others

It is said that Dwynwen asked God to watch over all true lovers. Her own sorrow became intercession.

Prayer: Lord, teach me to turn my trials into prayer for others.

Act of the day: Pray for a couple in difficulty.

Day 6: Choosing God

Dwynwen chose to consecrate her life to God. Every vocation, in marriage or consecrated life, is an answer to his call.

Prayer: Lord, help me to recognize your will for my life and to answer it with joy.

Act of the day: Pray for young people seeking their vocation.

Day 7: The silence of the island

According to tradition, Dwynwen withdrew to the island of Llanddwyn. Silence and the sea helped her to meet God.

Prayer: Lord, help me to find a moment of silence each day to be with you.

Act of the day: Turn off your screens for a while to pray in calm.

Day 8: Faithfulness

Pilgrims came to Llanddwyn for centuries. Faithfulness, in love as in faith, is built day after day.

Prayer: Lord, bless spouses and give them faithfulness. Strengthen those who are going through trials.

Act of the day: Pray for the married couples around you, or inwardly renew your own commitments.

Day 9: Love stronger than all

Dwynwen found in God the love that does not disappoint. All our loves lead toward him.

Prayer: Lord, you who are Love, fill our hearts. Through the intercession of Saint Dwynwen, grant me the grace I ask in this novena, if it is your will.

Act of the day: Attend Mass if possible, bringing with you those you love.

Closing prayer

> *Saint Dwynwen,*
> *saint of Llanddwyn and friend of wounded hearts,*
> *you found true love in God.*
> *Present to the Lord the intention I have entrusted to you.*
> *Keep those who love one another faithful*
> *and comfort those who weep.*
> *Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

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

PILGRIMAGE

Llanddwyn Island

Llanddwyn Island (*Ynys Llanddwyn* in Welsh) lies off the south of Anglesey, in north Wales, near the village of Newborough (Niwbwrch) and the entrance to the Menai Strait. Its name means "the church of Dwynwen". Since the Middle Ages, this small piece of land beaten by the sea has been linked to the cult of Saint Dwynwen, who according to tradition ended her life here.

An ancient place of pilgrimage

In the Middle Ages, Llanddwyn belonged to the bishopric of Bangor and was among the most visited places of pilgrimage in Wales. Pilgrims came to pray to Saint Dwynwen, to entrust to her their loves and their sorrows, and to draw water from her well, the *Ffynnon Ddwynwen*. The church whose ruins can be seen today dates from the 16th century, but it was built on an older site. After the Reformation, the pilgrimage declined, but the memory of the saint remained alive.

What you can see

On the island you will find the ruins of the church dedicated to Saint Dwynwen and, nearby, the site of her well. At the tip of the island stand two lighthouses: the old Tŵr Mawr lighthouse and the present automatic lighthouse of Tŵr Bach. The landscape of rocks, dunes and sea, facing the mountains of Snowdonia, makes Llanddwyn a place suited to silence and contemplation. The walk to the island, through the dunes and along the beach, can itself become a small pilgrimage.

Praying on site

Before you come, you can read the life of Saint Dwynwen. Before the ruins of her church, entrust to her those you love, couples going through trials and those who suffer from a wounded love. You can say the prayer to Saint Dwynwen, then take a moment of silence facing the sea. These suggestions are offered by Saintspedia.

Practical information

Llanddwyn is reached from Newborough, in the south of Anglesey. The island can be reached on foot only at low tide: check the tide tables before you go, so as not to be caught by the sea. The site is a fragile natural area that should be respected. To attend Mass, ask at the Catholic parishes of Anglesey.

Credits and sources

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