BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Ebrulf of Ouche

Life, prayer, novena and pilgrimage

Feast day: December 29

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IN BRIEF

Saint Ebrulf of Ouche

Frankish officer who became a monk, founder of the abbey of Ouche (Saint-Évroult) in Normandy.

Feast day	December 29
Born	627 (according to tradition), Bayeux
Died	December 29, 706, abbey of Ouche, present-day Saint-Evroult-Notre-Dame-du-Bois (Orne)
Canonized	immemorial cult
Era	8th century
Patron saint of	people with skin diseases, the feverish, herds

In this booklet

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Abbey of Saint-Évroult

Credits and sources

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LIFE

Saint Ebrulf of Ouche

Saint Ebrulf, in French Évroult and in Latin Ebrulfus, was a Frankish monk and abbot, born in Bayeux according to tradition. An officer at the court of the Frankish kings, he renounced the world by mutual agreement with his wife, became a monk, and then founded in the forest of Ouche, in Normandy, the abbey that bears his name today. The hagiographers place his life in the 7th century and his death on December 29, 706, but another tradition places him in the 6th century. His feast day is December 29.

Who was Saint Ebrulf?

Ebrulf is one of the great monastic saints of Normandy, and one of the most popular in the Pays d'Ouche and the Perche. His name, of Germanic origin, goes back to *Eberwulf*, "boar-wolf", and took in the Middle Ages the forms Evroul, Evrou or Yvrou. His Life, written long after him, presents the typical journey of a Frankish nobleman who leaves honors behind for solitude. Historians do not agree on when he lived: most hagiographers opt for the 7th century, but an older version places the founding of his monastery in 567. The abbey of Ouche itself is attested in a charter of King Charles the Simple in the year 900.

Key dates in the life of Ebrulf

- **627**: Born in Bayeux, according to the most widely followed tradition.
- **Adulthood**: He serves as an officer at the court of King Childeric II.
- **Shortly after**: By mutual agreement with his wife, he chooses monastic life; she does the same on her side.
- **Then**: He enters the monastery of Deux-Jumeaux, near Bayeux.

- **Late 7th century**: He withdraws to the forest of Ouche and founds a monastery there, the abbey of Ouche, later Saint-Évroult.
- **December 29, 706**: Dies in his abbey, at present-day Saint-Evroult-Notre-Dame-du-Bois (Orne).
- **c. 1050**: The abbey is restored under his name by the Giroie and Grandmesnil families.
- **From the 12th century**: His relics are divided among several places of worship.

From the court to the cloister

According to tradition, Ebrulf was born in Bayeux into a noble family and served as an officer under King Childeric II. He was married. One day, the couple decided together to live apart in order to consecrate themselves to God, each in a monastery. This choice, found among several saints of the Merovingian period, presupposes mutual consent: it is not an escape, but a shared offering. Ebrulf entered the monastery of Deux-Jumeaux, near Bayeux, where he learned the life of prayer and obedience.

The founder of the abbey of Ouche

Longing for greater solitude, Ebrulf left Deux-Jumeaux and went deep into the forest of Ouche, a wooded and isolated area of southern Normandy that has kept the name of Pays d'Ouche. Disciples joined him, and a monastery was born, placed under the patronage of Saint Peter. The version that places him in the 6th century even credits him with leading fifteen monasteries and fifteen hundred religious, figures that belong more to praise than to history. He died on December 29, 706, according to the hagiographers. His isolation may have protected his monastery: the abbey of Ouche seems to have escaped the Norse raids that ruined so many abbeys in the region.

Devotion and art

Saint Ebrulf is celebrated on December 29. In the 11th century, the abbey was rebuilt under his name and became one of the great intellectual centers of Normandy: the chronicler Orderic Vitalis lived and wrote there. Traditions differ on the fate of his relics: some are said to have been taken to Orléans, while the abbey kept others; from the 12th century, they were shared among several churches. A pilgrimage is dedicated to him at Pré-Saint-Évroult, in Eure-et-Loir, and the collegiate church of Mortain, in the Manche, bears his name.

Popular devotion called on him against skin diseases and blood diseases, against fever and madness, and for the protection of herds. Outbreaks of pimples were even called "flowers of Saint Yvrou". A 15th-century seal of the abbey shows him as an abbot, with crozier and book.

What can we learn from Saint Ebrulf?

Ebrulf left a brilliant career to seek God, and he did so in agreement with his wife, in a shared choice. He sought solitude, and that solitude became a community that lasted for centuries. He reminds us that life's great decisions are made in dialogue and prayer. You can pray to him for the sick, especially those suffering from skin conditions or fever, for farmers and their herds, for couples who discern together, and for Normandy.

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

Where to pray to Saint Ebrulf

- **Saint-Evroult-Notre-Dame-du-Bois** (Orne): the ruins of the abbey he founded, its museum and the parish church of Saint-Évroult.
- **Pré-Saint-Évroult** (Eure-et-Loir): a place of pilgrimage in his honor.

- **Mortain** (Manche): the collegiate church of Saint-Évroult.
- **Bayeux** (Calvados): his birthplace according to tradition.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Ebrulf for the Sick and for Rural Life

Saint Ebrulf (Évroult), an officer at the court of the Frankish kings who became a monk, founded in the forest of Ouche the abbey in Normandy that bears his name, and died there on December 29, 706, according to tradition. Popular devotion called on him for the sick and for herds. Prayer composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. It is not an official liturgical text.

Prayer to Saint Ebrulf

Saint Ebrulf,
you left the honors of the court
to seek God in the forest of Ouche.
Teach me to prefer the Lord
to success and the esteem of others.

With your wife, you made a shared choice
to give yourself entirely to God.
Bless couples who seek his will together
and keep them united in trust.

You on whom our forebears called
for the sick, the feverish and the herds,
present to the Lord those who suffer in their bodies,
and protect the work of those who live from the land.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

When to pray to Saint Ebrulf

- On his feast day, December 29.
- For the sick, especially those suffering from skin conditions or fever.
- For herders, farmers and their animals.
- For couples who must make an important decision together.
- For those who change their lives to follow Christ.

A short invocation

> *Saint Ebrulf, father of the monks of Ouche,*
> *relieve the sick and keep our countryside.*
> *Pray for us. Amen.*

To prepare for his feast, you can pray the novena to Saint Ebrulf from December 21 to 29, and read the life of Saint Ebrulf.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Ebrulf of Ouche

This novena is inspired by the life of Saint Ebrulf (Évroult), a Frankish officer who became a monk and founded the abbey of Ouche, in Normandy. Novena composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. It is not an official liturgical text. To finish it on his feast day, December 29, begin on December 21: it thus accompanies the last days of Advent and the octave of Christmas. 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 Ebrulf, pray for us." The small act suggested each day helps you live the novena concretely.

Day 1: A child of Bayeux

According to tradition, Ebrulf was born in Bayeux, into a noble family. A life of honors lay before him.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for the gifts you have given me. Teach me to put them at your service.

Act of the day: Thank God for a talent you have received, and use it to serve someone.

Day 2: Officer of the king

Ebrulf served King Childeric II. We can serve God in the responsibilities of this world, with honesty and justice.

Prayer: Lord, bless those who hold authority, and give them a concern for the common good.

Act of the day: Pray for the leaders of your town or your country.

Day 3: A decision made together

Ebrulf and his wife chose together to consecrate themselves to God. A great decision is made in prayer and dialogue.

Prayer: Lord, bless married couples, and help them seek your will together.

Act of the day: Take time for a real conversation with someone close to you.

Day 4: Learning in the monastery

At Deux-Jumeaux, the former officer became a simple monk. He learned to obey and to pray.

Prayer: Lord, give me the humility to start learning again.

Act of the day: Accept a piece of advice without justifying yourself.

Day 5: The forest of Ouche

Ebrulf sought greater solitude in the forest. The silence of the woods became for him a place of meeting with God.

Prayer: Lord, amid the bustle of these festive days, give me a little silence to welcome you.

Act of the day: Take ten minutes of silence, before a crib if possible.

Day 6: Brothers around him

Disciples joined Ebrulf, and a monastery was born. Holiness draws people and gathers them.

Prayer: Lord, bless monks and nuns, and raise up vocations.

Act of the day: Pray for a religious community in your region.

Day 7: Caring for the sick

For a long time Saint Ebrulf was invoked for skin diseases, fever and many other ills. He carried the suffering of those who came to him.

Prayer: Lord, relieve the sick, and give them peace of heart.

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

Day 8: Keeping the herds

Farmers entrusted their animals to him. Popular faith knows that nothing in our daily life is foreign to God.

Prayer: Lord, bless the work of herders and farmers, and give them what they need to live with dignity.

Act of the day: Pray for the farming world, or buy directly from a local producer.

Day 9: A death in the heart of Christmas

Ebrulf died on December 29, in the light of Christmas. He joined the One he had sought all his life.

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

Act of the day: Attend Mass, or pray for the departed members of your family.

Living the novena with Saint Ebrulf

Ebrulf teaches us to leave what glitters in order to seek God, and to make great decisions in prayer. During these nine days, you can carry the sick, families, rural life and Normandy. If you can, visit the ruins of the abbey of Saint-Évroult, in the Orne.

Closing prayer

> *Saint Ebrulf,*
> *officer who became a monk and father of the abbey of Ouche,*
> *you left everything for God*
> *and consoled those who suffered.*
> *Present to the Lord the intention I have entrusted to you,*
> *and obtain for me a free and generous heart.*
> *Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

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

PILGRIMAGE

Abbey of Saint-Évroult

The ruins of the abbey of Saint-Évroult stand in the municipality of Saint-Evroult-Notre-Dame-du-Bois, in the Orne, in the heart of the Pays d'Ouche and not far from L'Aigle. It was here that, according to tradition, Saint Ebrulf founded a monastery in the forest and died on December 29, 706. Restored in the 11th century, the abbey became one of the great religious and intellectual centers of Normandy. Its remains are listed as a historic monument.

Twelve centuries of history

The monastery founded by Ebrulf, first called the abbey of Ouche and placed under the patronage of Saint Peter, appears in a charter of King Charles the Simple in the year 900. Protected by the forest, it seems to have escaped the Norse raids. Around 1050, it was restored under the name of Saint Ebrulf by William Giroie and his nephews Robert and Hugh of Grandmesnil, with the help of abbeys such as Le Bec and Jumièges. The new church was dedicated to the Virgin, then to Saint Peter and Saint Ebrulf, on November 13, 1099. The chronicler Orderic Vitalis, a monk of Saint-Évroult, wrote his great ecclesiastical history there in the 12th century.

The abbey was rebuilt in the 13th century, suffered from the Hundred Years' War and then from the commendam system. The Benedictines of the Congregation of Saint-Maur reformed it from 1628. At the Revolution, the monks left; the church was handed over to the municipality in 1790. On March 11, 1802, the transept tower collapsed, and the ruins were then quarried for a lime kiln.

What you can see

Visitors discover the remains of the abbey church, with sections of the nave walls, the bases of the columns and the piers of the old tower. Of the fortified abbey there also remain a gatehouse, parts of the enclosure wall and a lodging with a pepper-pot turret. A museum in the village presents the history of the abbey. Several precious objects from the former abbey have survived, including two 13th-century shrines and a rock crystal reliquary, listed as historic monuments. The 19th-century parish church of Saint-Évroult houses three listed altarpieces.

Praying on site

Before you come, you can read the life of Saint Ebrulf. Among the ruins of the abbey church, entrust to him the sick, rural life and those who seek God in silence, then say the prayer to Saint Ebrulf. The nearby forest, which covers more than half of the municipality, helps you imagine the solitude he came to find. These suggestions are offered by Saintspedia.

Practical information

Saint-Evroult-Notre-Dame-du-Bois is in the Orne, in the area of L'Aigle, and can be reached by car. The ruins are a listed site: respect the place and the visiting instructions. The opening hours of the museum and the church may vary by season: check with the town hall or the tourist office of the L'Aigle area before you come.

Credits and sources

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