BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Edern

Life, prayer, novena and pilgrimage

Feast day: August 26

IN BRIEF

Saint Edern

Hermit monk who came to Brittany from overseas at the end of the 9th century, patron of Lannédern, Edern and Plouédern.

Feast day	August 26
Born	9th century, Ireland or Wales (traditions differ)
Died	September 1 according to tradition, year unknown (late 9th or 10th century), Lannédern (Finistère)
Canonized	immemorial cult (local cult, diocese of Quimper and Léon)
Era	9th century
Patron saint of	Lannédern, Edern, Plouédern, people with eye diseases (traditional invocation)

In this booklet

Life

Prayer to Saint Edern for Gentleness and the Healing of the Eyes

Novena to Saint Edern

Church of Saint Edern, Lannédern

Credits and sources

Booklet offered by Saintspedia, the directory of Catholic saints: lives of the saints, prayers, novenas and places of pilgrimage, at saintspedia.com. Texts written by Saintspedia, except traditional prayers marked as such. Original prayers and novenas are not official liturgical texts. Free booklet, to print and share for personal, family or parish use; please do not sell it.

LIFE

Saint Edern

Saint Edern was a hermit monk who came to Brittany from Ireland or Wales at the end of the 9th century. According to tradition, he lived in Cornouaille, between Quimper and the Monts d'Arrée, and died at Lannédern, where his tomb is still venerated. He is almost always shown riding a stag. His feast day is August 26.

Who was Saint Edern?

Edern is one of the many Breton saints whose life has come down to us mainly through popular tradition. The great Breton hagiographers, Albert Le Grand in the 17th century and Dom Lobineau in the 18th, do not mention him. What is told of his life comes from two late sources: a notice published in 1892 by the Benedictine Dom François Plaine, and a *gwerz*, a popular song in Breton collected at Plouvorn by Anatole Le Braz. The old archives of Plouédern mentioned a Life of the saint on parchment, now lost. Despite these fragile sources, his cult is real and ancient: three parishes in Finistère bear his name, and the diocese of Quimper and Léon counts him among the saints it celebrates.

Key dates in the life of Edern

- **9th century**: Born in Ireland or Wales; traditions differ.
- **Youth**: According to tradition, a wealthy young man, he renounces the world and becomes a monk.
- **c. 894**: In the reign of Alan the Great, he lands on the coast of Cornouaille, near Douarnenez, at Le Juch.
- **Afterwards**: He lives as a hermit near Quimper, at the place that will become the parish of Edern.

- **Later**: According to legend, a duke of Brittany has a church built in his honor at Plouédern.
- **End of his life**: He settles at Lannédern, at the foot of the Monts d'Arrée, where his hermitage stood.
- **September 1, year unknown**: According to the *gwerz*, he dies on this day at Lannédern, where he is buried.
- **14th century**: A tomb with his recumbent statue is set up in the church of Lannédern.

A monk from across the sea

According to tradition, Edern was a wealthy young man, perhaps a warrior or a nobleman, who left everything to become a monk. Some accounts link him to the monastic tradition of Saint Columbanus. He left his native land, Cambria (Wales) or Ireland, in the time of King Alan the Great, and around 894 landed on the coast of Cornouaille near Douarnenez. Legend gives him his sister as a traveling companion, sometimes associated with Saint Genevieve, honored at Loqueffret. He is said to have built a house for her and a simple hut for himself.

Edern first settled in a forest a few leagues from Quimper, where he made his hermitage and built a chapel: this is the origin of the parish of Edern. He ended his life further north, at Lannédern, whose name means "the hermitage of Edern". A 16th-century chapel, Notre-Dame de Coat ar Roc'h, stands where tradition places his cell.

The stag, the cow and the duke

Three legendary stories are attached to Saint Edern. The most famous is that of the stag: pursued by a lord's hounds, a stag took refuge under the monk's habit. Tamed, it never left him until his death. Another version says that

Edern, riding the stag all night long, marked out the boundaries of the territory he was to evangelize. That is why he is almost always shown mounted on a stag.

The second legend tells of the hermit's poor cow, which strayed onto the lands of a neighboring lord and was left for dead by his hounds: Edern is said to have brought it back to life. The third features a duke of Brittany and his troop. A soldier struck the monk, who was slow to show him the way; Edern, following the Gospel, turned the other cheek. The whole troop was then struck blind, and the duke vowed to build a church where he recovered his sight: this would be the origin of the church of Plouédern.

These stories, which are not historical, show how Bretons understood Edern's holiness: a gentle man, at peace with animals, protecting the poor and answering violence with forgiveness. Some authors also see in the stag, an ancient symbol of renewal, a Christian image of the resurrection.

Devotion and art

Edern is the original patron of Edern, Lannédern and Plouédern, in Finistère. His tomb at Lannédern bears his recumbent statue, dressed in the habit and the almuce, hands joined, feet resting on the stag. The church also keeps a reliquary, a 16th-century triptych telling his life, and many statues. He was invoked especially for diseases of the eyes, perhaps in memory of the legend of the blinded soldiers. A pardon (a traditional Breton religious festival) in his honor long drew many faithful to Lannédern.

His feast is set on August 26; old calendars placed it on August 30 or September 1, the day of his death according to the *gwerz*. He should not be confused with Saint Teilo (Théleau), patron of Landeleau, who is also shown on a stag, but as a bishop.

What can we learn from Saint Edern?

Behind the legends, Saint Edern is one of those monks from overseas who rooted the Gospel in the Breton countryside through prayer and a simple life. He chose solitude, poverty and gentleness. The stag at his side reminds us that the peace of Christ extends to all creation, and the episode of the other cheek, that the disciple answers evil with good. You can pray to him for Brittany, for those who suffer from eye diseases, for animals, and to learn gentleness.

Where to pray to Saint Edern

- **Lannédern** (Finistère): the church of Saint Edern, with his tomb, his relics and its parish close.
- **Edern** (Finistère): the parish church, with a stained glass window showing three episodes of his life.
- **Plouédern** (Finistère): the parish which, according to legend, owes its church to the vow of a duke of Brittany.
- **Plougar** (Finistère): the church keeps an old statue of the saint.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Edern for Gentleness and the Healing of the Eyes

Saint Edern, a monk who came from Ireland or Wales at the end of the 9th century, lived as a hermit in Cornouaille and died at Lannédern, where his tomb is venerated. Tradition shows him riding a stag he had saved from the hunters. Prayer composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. It entrusts to him Brittany, those with eye diseases and all who want to learn gentleness.

Prayer to Saint Edern

Saint Edern,
monk who came from the sea,
you left your family and your wealth
to seek God in the solitude of our countryside.
Teach me to let go of what weighs me down
and to prefer Christ above all things.

You who sheltered the stag pursued by the hounds,
give me a gentle and welcoming heart
for all who seek refuge.
You who turned the other cheek to the one who struck you,
teach me to answer evil with good.

You whom our forebears invoked for ailing eyes,
obtain healing for those who suffer
and open the eyes of my heart to God's light.
Bless Brittany and its parishes.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

When to pray to Saint Edern

- On his feast day, August 26, or at a pardon in Lannédern.
- For those who suffer from an eye disease.
- When you find it hard to forgive an offense.
- For animals and for respect for creation.
- For the parishes of Brittany and those who proclaim the Gospel there.

A short invocation

> *Saint Edern, friend of the humble and of animals,*
> *keep me in the gentleness of Christ,*
> *and pray for us. Amen.*

To prepare for his feast, you can pray the novena to Saint Edern from August 18 to 26, and read the life of Saint Edern.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Edern

This novena is an original composition inspired by the life of Saint Edern, a hermit monk who came to Brittany from overseas at the end of the 9th century. Novena composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. It is not an official liturgical text. To finish it on his feast day, August 26, begin on August 18. 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 Edern, pray for us." The act suggested each day helps you live the novena concretely. The episodes recounted come from Breton popular tradition, which mixes the memory of the saint with legend.

Day 1: Leaving everything

According to tradition, Edern was a wealthy young man. He gave up his goods and his rank to become a monk and follow the poor Christ.

Prayer: Lord, free my heart from what keeps it far from you, and teach me to prefer you to everything.

Act of the day: Give away an object or a sum of money you can do without.

Day 2: Crossing the sea

Edern left Ireland or Wales to land on the coast of Cornouaille, near Douarnenez. He agreed to become a foreigner in order to proclaim the Gospel.

Prayer: Lord, bless those who have left their country, and make me welcoming to the stranger.

Act of the day: Greet or help someone who has recently arrived in your neighborhood.

Day 3: The desert of the forest

Edern settled as a hermit in a forest near Quimper. In solitude, he learned to listen to God.

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

Act of the day: Turn off screens for an hour and pray in silence for a few minutes.

Day 4: The stag that sought refuge

A stag pursued by hounds hid under Edern's habit. The monk protected it, and the animal never left him again.

Prayer: Lord, make me a refuge for those who are hunted and defenseless.

Act of the day: Stand up for someone who is vulnerable or mocked.

Day 5: The poor man's cow

Legend says that Edern brought back to life his poor cow, killed by a lord's hounds. God takes care of the little ones and of what keeps them alive.

Prayer: Lord, watch over farmers and all who live from working the land.

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

Day 6: Turning the other cheek

Struck by a soldier, Edern turned the other cheek, as the Gospel asks. He did not answer violence with violence.

Prayer: Jesus, gentle and humble of heart, teach me to forgive and not to repay evil with evil.

Act of the day: Forgive an offense in your heart and pray for the one who hurt you.

Day 7: Opening the eyes

The soldiers were struck blind, then the duke recovered his sight and built a church. Saint Edern was invoked for diseases of the eyes.

Prayer: Lord, heal those who suffer in their eyes, and open the eyes of my heart to your light.

Act of the day: Pray for a visually impaired or blind person, or do them a service.

Day 8: The hermitage of Lannédern

Edern ended his life at Lannédern, "the hermitage of Edern". A parish was born around the place of his prayer.

Prayer: Lord, bless our parishes, and let them remain places of prayer and fellowship.

Act of the day: Do a service for your parish or for those who lead it.

Day 9: Resting with Jesus

The old Breton song says that Edern went "to rest with Jesus, in his Paradise". His tomb at Lannédern recalls the hope of the resurrection.

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

Act of the day: Pray for your departed and, if possible, visit a cemetery.

Closing prayer

> *Saint Edern,*
> *monk of Cornouaille and friend of the humble,*
> *you lived in poverty and gentleness,*
> *protecting the weak and forgiving offenses.*
> *Present to the Lord the intention I have entrusted to you.*
> *Keep Brittany in the faith*
> *and open our eyes to the light of Christ.*
> *Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

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

PILGRIMAGE

Church of Saint Edern, Lannédern

The church of Saint Edern at Lannédern stands in Finistère, at the foot of the Monts d'Arrée, between Brasparts and Pleyben. The very name of the village, Lannédern, means "the hermitage of Edern": according to tradition, this is where the monk from Ireland or Wales ended his life at the end of the 9th or in the 10th century. The church keeps his tomb and his relics, at the heart of a parish close typical of Lower Brittany.

The hermit's village

The early history of Lannédern is little known. The name appears in documents around 1330. Long attached to the parish of Pleyben, the community grew up around the memory of Saint Edern. In the 16th and 17th centuries, the parish enjoyed a certain prosperity, due in part to the noble Lezormel family, whose coat of arms appears several times in the church. From this period date the present church, its south porch dated 1662, and the elements of the parish close.

What you can see

The heart of the pilgrimage is the tomb of Saint Edern. It once stood in the middle of the nave; around 1860 it was moved to the lower end of the north aisle to leave more room for the faithful. It is a slab resting on an arcade that seems to date from the 14th century, on which lies the recumbent statue of the saint: dressed in the habit and the almuce, hands joined, a prayer book under his arm, his feet rest on the stag of his legend.

The church also houses a 16th-century polychrome triptych telling the life of Saint Edern in six scenes, a reliquary containing his relics, an altarpiece, a pulpit, many old statues and a silver processional cross from 1620. In the close,

the ossuary dated 1660 bears a statue of the saint riding his stag, as well as a figure of the Ankou, death in Breton tradition, with the inscription "Remember that you must die". A calvary completes the ensemble.

Praying on site

Before you come, you can read the life of Saint Edern. Before his tomb, entrust to him those who suffer from eye diseases, Brittany and its parishes, and those who find it hard to forgive. You can say the prayer to Saint Edern there. The pardon of Saint Edern long drew many faithful to Lannédern: ask the parish for its date. These suggestions are offered by Saintspedia.

Other places of Saint Edern

- **The chapel of Notre-Dame de Coat ar Roc'h** (Lannédern): a 16th-century chapel built, according to tradition, on the site of his hermitage.
- **Edern** (Finistère): the parish church, with a stained glass window showing three episodes of his life.
- **Plouédern** (Finistère): the parish whose church is said to have come from the vow of a duke of Brittany.
- **Plougar** (Finistère): the church keeps an old polychrome wooden statue of Saint Edern.

Practical information

Lannédern is a small rural village in central Finistère, reachable by car from Pleyben or Brasparts. The church is a place of worship: modest dress and silence are requested. Opening conditions and the dates of celebrations may vary: check with the parish or the town hall before you come.

Credits and sources

Texts: Saintspedia (saintspedia.com). The sources cited in each part are those of the corresponding page of the website. Biographical data partly from Wikidata (CC0). Font: EB Garamond (SIL Open Font License).



More free booklets

Lives of the saints, prayers, novenas and places of pilgrimage: find all the booklets to print at

saintspedia.com