BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Erlembald

Life, prayer and novena

Feast day: July 27

Saintspedia · saintspedia.com

IN BRIEF

Saint Erlembald

11th-century Milanese knight, leader of the Pataria and martyr of Church reform.

Feast day	July 27
Born	early 11th century, Milan
Died	April 15, 1075 (according to most sources), Milan
Canonized	cult recognized in early times (body raised by Pope Urban II in 1095 according to tradition)
Era	11th century

In this booklet

Life

Prayer to Saint Erlembald for a Pure and Faithful Church

Novena to Saint Erlembald

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 Erlembald

Saint Erlembald (Erlembaldo Cotta in Italian) was a Milanese knight of the 11th century. With the deacon Saint Ariald, he led the Pataria, a popular movement that demanded a poor and chaste clergy, free from the power of money. Military leader of the movement for nearly fifteen years and standard-bearer of the Roman Church, he was killed in the streets of Milan in 1075. The Church honors him as a martyr. His feast day is July 27.

Who was Saint Erlembald?

Erlembald belonged to the nobility of Milan, to the Cotta family. His brother Landolfo was one of the first leaders of the Pataria. What we know of him comes mainly from a Life devoted to "the holy martyrs Ariald, deacon, and Erlembald, knight", written in the 11th century by Andrew, a monk of Vallombrosa and disciple of Ariald. This text is the work of a supporter, and historians read it with caution. It nevertheless allows us to follow the main stages in the life of a layman who put his sword at the service of Church reform, in the time of Pope Saint Gregory VII.

Key dates in the life of Erlembald

- **Early 11th century**: Born in Milan, into the noble Cotta family.
- **c. 1061**: After the death of his brother Landolfo, he becomes military leader of the Pataria, alongside the deacon Ariald.
- **1066**: Violent clashes break out in Milan; Erlembald, Ariald and Archbishop Guido da Velate are wounded.
- **June 27, 1066**: Ariald is murdered on an island in Lake Maggiore; Erlembald is left alone at the head of the movement.

- **1067**: Pope Alexander II entrusts him with the banner of the Roman Church; he becomes "gonfalonier of the Church".
- **1071-1072**: At the succession of Guido, he supports the candidacy of Atto against Godfrey of Castiglione, chosen by the imperial party.
- **1073**: The new pope, Gregory VII, recognizes Atto and supports the Pataria.
- **April 15, 1075**: He is killed in Milan during a riot; some sources give another date.
- **1095**: According to Milanese tradition, Pope Urban II has his body raised, thus recognizing his cult as a martyr.

The Pataria, a revolt for a pure Church

In the middle of the 11th century, the Church of Milan was rich and powerful. Many church offices were bought, which is called simony, and many priests lived with women. Archbishop Guido da Velate, appointed by the emperor, was himself accused of these abuses. Against this state of affairs rose a movement of clerics and lay people, often humble folk, whom their opponents scornfully nicknamed "patarines". They urged the faithful to refuse the sacraments of unworthy priests and demanded a poor and chaste Church.

The first leaders of the Pataria were the deacon Ariald and Landolfo Cotta, Erlembald's brother. Landolfo died around 1061, from the effects of an attack. Erlembald then took his place as military leader of the movement.

A knight in the service of the Church

According to his Life, Erlembald had first wanted to enter a monastery. Ariald dissuaded him: his vocation, he told him, was to serve the Church in the world, as a knight. Erlembald accepted. For many years he protected the patarines, led

their supporters and defended the cause of reform by arms. In 1066, violent clashes broke out in Milan; a few weeks later, Ariald was captured and murdered. Erlembald carried on the struggle alone.

Pope Alexander II, himself a Milanese and once close to the Pataria, gave him the banner of Saint Peter in 1067: Erlembald became the "gonfalonier of the Church". This is one of the first examples of a layman entrusted by the pope with defending the freedom of the Church.

The struggle for the archbishopric and his death

In 1071, Archbishop Guido, old and ill, gave up his office. The imperial party chose Godfrey of Castiglione to succeed him, while the patarines, with the papal legate, had Atto elected. Milan found itself with two archbishops. In 1073, the new pope, Saint Gregory VII, a great architect of Church reform, recognized Atto and excommunicated Godfrey. Tensions mounted. On April 15, 1075, during unrest in the city, Erlembald was killed. His death marked the decline of the Milanese Pataria.

Some years later, the name "patarines" came to be used for heretical groups with no direct link to the movement of Ariald and Erlembald, which had remained united to the pope.

Devotion and art

Erlembald was soon honored as a martyr who died for the freedom and purity of the Church. According to Milanese tradition, Pope Urban II had his body raised in 1095, which at the time amounted to recognition of his cult. His Life closely associates him with Saint Ariald, and the Church of Milan keeps their memory together. He is shown as a knight, sometimes carrying the banner of the Church; a 19th-century bas-relief shows him in the basilica of San Calimero in Milan. His feast is given as July 27, but calendars vary.

What can we learn from Saint Erlembald?

Erlembald was a layman who wanted a Church more faithful to the Gospel. He gave up the monastic life he longed for in order to serve where he was needed. His struggle, waged in a century of violence, is not a model to imitate in its means, but it shows the value of total commitment to the Church and the price some paid for its reform. You can pray to him for lay people engaged in the Church, for the holiness of the clergy, and for those who fight against corruption.

Where to pray to Saint Erlembald

- **Milan**: the city where he lived and died, whose Church honors his memory together with that of Saint Ariald.
- **The basilica of San Calimero** (Milan): it keeps depictions of Saints Ariald and Erlembald.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Erlembald for a Pure and Faithful Church

Saint Erlembald, a Milanese knight of the 11th century, gave up monastic life to defend, with the deacon Saint Ariald, a Church that was poor, chaste and free from the power of money. He was killed in Milan in 1075 and honored as a martyr. Prayer composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. It entrusts to him committed lay people, the reform of the Church and those who fight corruption.

Prayer to Saint Erlembald

Saint Erlembald,
knight of Milan,
you longed for the peace of the cloister,
and you agreed to serve the Church in the midst of the world.
Help me to recognize my vocation
and to serve where I am needed.

You wanted a poor and pure Church,
free from money and faithful to the Gospel.
Obtain holiness of life for our pastors,
and help me to begin the reform
with the conversion of my own heart.

You who gave your life in the struggles of your time,
teach me to defend the truth
without hatred and without violence.
Support those who fight corruption
and keep the Church united with the successor of Peter.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

When to pray to Saint Erlembald

- On his feast day, July 27.
- For lay people who commit themselves to serving the Church.
- For the holiness of priests and the purification of the Church.
- For those who fight corruption at the risk of their safety.
- When you are unsure about your vocation.

A short invocation

> *Saint Erlembald, knight of Christ,*
> *give me the courage of truth,*
> *and pray for us. Amen.*

To prepare for his feast, you can pray the novena to Saint Erlembald from July 19 to 27, and read the life of Saint Erlembald.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Erlembald

This novena is an original composition inspired by the life of Saint Erlembald, a Milanese knight of the 11th century and a martyr of Church reform. Novena composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. It is not an official liturgical text. To finish it on his feast day, July 27, begin on July 19. 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 Erlembald, pray for us." The act suggested each day helps you live the novena concretely. The episodes recounted come mainly from the Life written by Andrew of Vallombrosa in the 11th century.

Day 1: A Church to be purified

In 11th-century Milan, church offices were bought and many priests lived badly. Erlembald suffered to see the Church disfigured.

Prayer: Lord, purify your Church of all that disfigures it, and begin with my heart.

Act of the day: Make a sincere examination of conscience.

Day 2: Longing for the cloister

Erlembald wanted to enter a monastery. He longed for a life wholly given to God in prayer.

Prayer: Lord, keep alive in me the desire for you, and give me a taste for prayer.

Act of the day: Take a longer time of prayer than usual.

Day 3: Listening to advice

Ariald dissuaded him from entering the monastery: his place was in the world. Erlembald accepted this advice and gave up his own plan.

Prayer: Lord, give me good counselors and the humility to listen to them.

Act of the day: Ask a wise person for advice about a decision you are facing.

Day 4: Taking over

After the death of his brother Landolfo, Erlembald took his place at the head of the movement. He accepted a heavy and dangerous task.

Prayer: Lord, give me the courage to take my share of responsibility, even when it costs.

Act of the day: Accept a task you would rather have left to others.

Day 5: Losing a friend

In 1066, Ariald was murdered. Erlembald lost his companion and guide, but he did not give up the struggle they had waged together.

Prayer: Lord, comfort those who have lost a friend, and give them the strength to go on.

Act of the day: Pray for a departed friend, or call a friend who is grieving.

Day 6: The banner of Peter

Pope Alexander II entrusted Erlembald with the banner of the Roman Church. He became the defender of the Church's freedom, united to the successor of Peter.

Prayer: Lord, bless our pope and keep me faithful to the Church.

Act of the day: Pray for the pope and his intentions.

Day 7: Living amid division

Milan had two archbishops, and the city was torn apart. Erlembald lived at the heart of the divisions of the Church and the city.

Prayer: Lord, heal the divisions of your Church and of our cities, and make me a peacemaker.

Act of the day: Take a step toward reconciliation with someone.

Day 8: Defending the truth without hatred

Erlembald fought in a violent century. Today Christ asks us to defend the truth with the weapons of the word, justice and charity.

Prayer: Lord, teach me to speak the truth with courage, without hatred for anyone.

Act of the day: Pray for those who fight corruption in your country.

Day 9: The price of witness

On April 15, 1075, Erlembald was killed in Milan. The Church honored him as a martyr who died for its freedom and purity.

Prayer: Lord, grant me to remain faithful to you to the end. Through the intercession of Saint Erlembald, grant me the grace I ask in this novena, if it is your will.

Act of the day: Attend Mass and pray for Christians who risk their lives for their faith.

Closing prayer

Saint Erlembald,
knight of the Church and martyr of Milan,
you wanted a poor and faithful Church
and gave your life for her.
Present to the Lord the intention I have entrusted to you.
Make me courageous in the truth
and gentle toward all.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

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

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