BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Gurthiern

Life, prayer and novena

Feast day: July 3

Saintspedia · saintspedia.com

IN BRIEF

Saint Gurthiern

British prince who became a hermit, founder of the first monastery of Quimperlé according to tradition.

Feast day	July 3
Born	5th century, Cambria (Wales)
Died	6th century
Canonized	immemorial cult
Era	5th century

In this booklet

Life

Prayer to Saint Gurthiern for Those Who Carry the Weight of a Fault

Novena to Saint Gurthiern

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 Gurthiern

Saint Gurthiern, also called Gunthiern, was a hermit who came from Britain to Armorican Brittany, probably in the 6th century. According to his Life, this prince gave up the throne after a family tragedy, lived in solitude, passed through the island of Groix and founded the first monastery of Quimperlé, at the meeting of the Isole and the Ellé. His memory remains linked to the chapel of Locoyarn, near Hennebont. His feast day is July 3.

Who was Saint Gurthiern?

Gurthiern is one of the many saints who came from the island of Britain and marked the Christian beginnings of Armorica in the 5th and 6th centuries. His life is known to us through an account preserved in the cartulary of the abbey of Sainte-Croix in Quimperlé, a collection of charters compiled in the Middle Ages. Historians consider this text largely a literary construction, meant to give the monks of Quimperlé a prestigious founder. It should therefore be read as a pious legend, which may keep the memory of a real hermit, but whose details cannot be verified.

Key dates in the life of Gurthiern

- **5th century**: Born in Cambria, present-day Wales, into a royal family according to his Life.
- **Youth**: In a battle, he kills his own nephew without recognizing him, and decides to give up the crown.
- **About a year**: He lives hidden in a wild place, between two mountains, in the north of Britain.
- **Several years**: He withdraws to a more remote solitude, on the banks of the river Tamar.

- **6th century**: He crosses to Armorica and settles on the island of Groix, near the mouth of the Blavet.
- **Then**: Count Gradlon gives him land at the meeting of the Isole and the Ellé, where he founds a monastery, the cradle of Quimperlé.
- **Unknown date**: He lives as a hermit at Locoyarn, south of Hennebont, in a cave that still bears his name.
- **868**: The monastery of Quimperlé is destroyed by the Vikings.

A prince turned penitent

According to his Life, Gurthiern was the son of one of the British kings of Cambria, destined for the crown. In a battle he killed an opponent who turned out to be his own nephew. Shattered by this tragedy, he decided to leave everything and do penance for the rest of his days. Slipping away from his court, he fled to a wild place between two mountains, in the north of the island, where he stayed nearly a year without being found. Discovered, and fearing to be taken back to the palace, he went farther still, to the banks of the Tamar, the river that today separates Devon from Cornwall, and lived there for several years.

From Groix to Quimperlé

Gurthiern then crossed the sea and settled on the island of Groix, off the mouth of the Blavet. Only the island's fishermen knew him. The local lord, told of his presence, showed him great respect and spoke of him to Count Gradlon, ruler of the region, whom Breton tradition also links to Saint Winwaloe and Saint Corentin. Gradlon sent for him and was struck by his virtue, above all by his humility.

To keep him on the mainland, Gradlon gave him an estate called Anaurot, at the meeting of the Isole and the Ellé, with land around it and the territory of the parish of Baye. Gurthiern built a monastery there, on the bank of the Laïta.

This is where Quimperlé was born, whose Breton name means "confluence of the Ellé". This first monastery was destroyed by the Vikings in 868. Much later, in the 11th century, the abbey of Sainte-Croix was founded in the town, and its monks kept the memory of Gurthiern.

The hermit of Locoyarn

Tradition also links Gurthiern to Locoyarn, south of Hennebont, on the banks of the Blavet. A cave there bears his name, and the very name of the place is said to be a Breton corruption of his own. The Romanesque chapel of Saint-Gunthiern at Locoyarn is among the oldest in the Morbihan. For a long time it drew pilgrims who came to honor the hermit.

Devotion

Saint Gurthiern is honored in Brittany, especially around Quimperlé, Hennebont and Groix. His feast day is July 3. His Life tells of no spectacular miracles and no martyrdom: it highlights a man who fled power and sought God in penance, solitude and humility. In stained glass, he appears as a monk or hermit.

What can we learn from Saint Gurthiern?

Gurthiern is first of all a man wounded by a tragic fault. Instead of hardening himself or fleeing his conscience, he made it the starting point of a conversion. He gave up the crown, sought silence and let himself be led where God wanted, even to founding a monastery in a foreign land. You can pray to him for those who carry the weight of a grave fault, for those who must give up power or ambition, and for Brittany.

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

Where to pray to Saint Gurthiern

- **Chapel of Saint-Gunthiern at Locoyarn**, Hennebont (Morbihan, France): the old Romanesque chapel linked to his hermitage.
- **Quimperlé** (Finistère): the town born, according to tradition, around the monastery he founded.
- **Island of Groix** (Morbihan): the chapel of Notre-Dame-de-Placemanec, where a stained glass window depicts him.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Gurthiern for Those Who Carry the Weight of a Fault

Saint Gurthiern, a British prince, gave up the crown after killing his nephew without recognizing him, and sought God in penance as far as Armorica, where by tradition he founded the first monastery of Quimperlé. Prayer composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. It entrusts to him those who carry the weight of a fault, those who give up power, and Brittany.

Prayer to Saint Gurthiern

Saint Gurthiern,
you who knew the weight of a terrible fault,
you did not flee your conscience,
but sought God's mercy
in penance and solitude.
Help those who carry a remorse too heavy to bear
to believe in forgiveness and to rise again.

You left the crown that awaited you
to follow Christ, humble and poor.
Free me from ambition and the taste for power,
and teach me to serve.

You whom God led from the island of Groix
to the banks of the Ellé,
bless Brittany and those who live there,
and guide me to where the Lord awaits me.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

When to pray to Saint Gurthiern

- On his feast day, July 3.
- When you carry the weight of a grave fault or of an accident for which you feel responsible.
- Before receiving the sacrament of reconciliation.
- When you must give up a position, a power or an ambition.
- For Quimperlé, Hennebont, Groix and all of Brittany.

A short invocation

> *Saint Gurthiern, prince turned penitent,*
> *you who found peace in God,*
> *pray for us. Amen.*

To prepare for his feast, you can pray the novena to Saint Gurthiern from June 25 to July 3, and read the life of Saint Gurthiern.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Gurthiern

This novena accompanies Saint Gurthiern, a hermit from Britain honored as the founder of the first monastery of Quimperlé. 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 3, begin on June 25. 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 Gurthiern, pray for us." The act suggested each day helps you live the novena concretely. The episodes recalled come from his medieval Life, which is largely legend.

Day 1: A tragic fault

According to his Life, Gurthiern killed his own nephew in battle, without recognizing him. This tragedy turned his whole life upside down.

Prayer: Lord, I entrust to you those who have caused irreparable harm, even unintentionally. Give them your peace.

Act of the day: Pray for someone who lives with heavy remorse.

Day 2: Not fleeing one's conscience

Gurthiern did not try to forget. He faced his fault and made it the starting point of a conversion.

Prayer: Lord, give me the courage to recognize my faults, and trust in your mercy.

Act of the day: Make an examination of conscience, and if possible receive the sacrament of reconciliation.

Day 3: Giving up the crown

Destined for the throne, he gave it up to do penance. Power was nothing compared with peace with God.

Prayer: Lord, free me from the desire to dominate and to be seen.

Act of the day: Let someone else take first place in a concrete situation.

Day 4: The desert

He lived nearly a year hidden in a wild place, between two mountains. The desert is the place where God speaks to the heart.

Prayer: Lord, lead me into the desert and speak to my heart.

Act of the day: Take a walk alone, in silence, praying.

Day 5: On the banks of the Tamar

Once discovered, he went farther, to the banks of the Tamar, and stayed there several years. He was seeking God, not the recognition of others.

Prayer: Lord, teach me to do good without seeking to be seen.

Act of the day: Do a service without telling anyone.

Day 6: Among the fishermen of Groix

On the island of Groix, only the fishermen knew him. He lived among the humble, in simplicity.

Prayer: Lord, bless sailors and fishermen, and keep them safe from the dangers of the sea.

Act of the day: Pray for those who work at sea.

Day 7: Humility that attracts

Count Gradlon was struck by Gurthiern's virtue, and above all by his humility. True humility touches hearts.

Prayer: Lord, give me a humble heart that does not seek its own glory.

Act of the day: Accept a remark or criticism without justifying yourself.

Day 8: Founding a house of prayer

On the land received from Gradlon, where two rivers meet, Gurthiern built a monastery. A town grew up around this place of prayer.

Prayer: Lord, bless our towns and villages, and may they remain places where you are prayed to.

Act of the day: Pray in your local church for all the people of your town.

Day 9: Peace regained

Tradition also shows him as a hermit at Locoyarn, in prayer. The wounded man became a saint. God's mercy is greater than our faults.

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

Act of the day: Attend Mass if you can, or visit a chapel in your area.

Closing prayer

Saint Gurthiern,
prince turned penitent and hermit,
in God's mercy you found
the peace the world cannot give.
Present to the Lord the intention I have entrusted to you.
Keep me in humility and trust.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

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

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