BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Harlindis

Life, prayer and novena

Feast day: October 12

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IN BRIEF

Saint Harlindis

Frankish nun of the 8th century, founder and first abbess of Aldeneik with her sister Saint Relindis.

Feast day	October 12
Born	c. 695, region of Maaseik (present-day Belgium)
Died	745 or 753, Aldeneik (Maaseik, Belgium)
Canonized	immemorial cult
Era	8th century

In this booklet

Life

Prayer to Saint Harlindis for Brothers and Sisters and for Communities

Novena to Saint Harlindis

Credits and sources

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LIFE

Saint Harlindis

Saint Harlindis (Herlinde in French) was a Frankish nun of the 8th century, the elder sister of Saint Relindis. With her, she founded the abbey of Aldeneik, on the banks of the Meuse, near present-day Maaseik in Belgium, and was its first abbess, blessed by Saint Willibrord. She died in 745 or 753, depending on the sources. Her feast day is October 12, together with her sister.

Who was Saint Harlindis?

Harlindis was born toward the end of the 7th century into a family of the Frankish nobility settled in the Meuse valley. This was the time when missionaries from England, Saint Willibrord and then Saint Boniface, were proclaiming the Gospel to the peoples of the North and organizing the Church in these regions. What we know of her comes mainly from a Life of the two sisters, the *Vita Harlindis et Relindis*, written in the 9th century, more than a hundred years after their death. This edifying text leaves uncertainties, especially about dates. But the existence of the abbey of Aldeneik is well attested, as is the cult paid to the two sisters since the early Middle Ages.

Key dates in the life of Harlindis

- **c. 695**: Born into the family of the Frankish noble Adalard, in the region of Maaseik.
- **Youth**: With her sister Relindis, she is entrusted for her education to the Benedictine nuns of Valenciennes.
- **c. 730**: Their parents found a monastery for them at Aldeneik, on the banks of the Meuse.
- **Same period**: Saint Willibrord, bishop of Utrecht, blesses Harlindis as first abbess.

- **745 or 753**: Harlindis dies at Aldeneik; the sources differ on the year.
- **Shortly after**: Saint Boniface appoints Relindis to succeed her at the head of the abbey.
- **Between 855 and 881**: The Life of Saints Harlindis and Relindis is written.
- **1570**: The relics of the two sisters and the abbey treasury are taken for safekeeping to the church of Saint Catherine in Maaseik.

An education with the nuns of Valenciennes

According to the Life, Adalard and his wife sent their two daughters to the monastery of Valenciennes to be educated. There the girls learned to read and write, to sing the psalms, but also to copy books and to do needlework, embroidery and weaving, which were highly valued in monasteries. Harlindis and Relindis grew attached to prayer there and decided to consecrate themselves to God. Their parents, rather than marrying them according to the customs of their rank, respected their choice.

Founder and first abbess of Aldeneik

Around 730, their parents founded on their lands, at Aldeneik, a monastery for their daughters. Harlindis, the elder, became its first abbess: it was Saint Willibrord, the apostle of the Frisians and bishop of Utrecht, who blessed her in this office. A community of nuns formed around the two sisters, living by prayer, work and hospitality. The Life stresses their zeal in copying and decorating holy books and in embroidering altar vestments.

Harlindis governed the community until her death, which took place in 745 or 753 depending on the sources. Saint Boniface, who was then administering the Church of Utrecht, entrusted the succession to her sister Relindis. The two sisters rest together, and their memory has remained inseparable.

The treasury of Maaseik and the cult

Over the centuries, the abbey of Aldeneik suffered the ravages of the Vikings and then became a chapter of canons. In 1570, during the Wars of Religion, its treasury was transferred to the church of Saint Catherine in Maaseik. There are kept the relics of the two saints, Anglo-Saxon embroideries of the 8th century that tradition attributes to them, and the *Codex Eyckensis*, a Gospel book of the same period, one of the oldest books preserved in Belgium.

Harlindis and Relindis are celebrated together on October 12; in Liège they were also commemorated on February 13. Their feast is regional and does not appear in the universal calendar of the Church. Iconography usually shows them side by side, as abbesses, holding a crozier or a model of their monastery, sometimes surrounded by nuns.

What can we learn from Saint Harlindis?

Harlindis opened a path. With her sister, she founded a house of prayer that lasted for centuries, and she accepted the responsibility of leading it. Her life united prayer, study and the work of the hands, offered to God with care. She also recalls the strength of fraternity: Harlindis is never spoken of without Relindis. We can pray to her for brothers and sisters, for religious communities, for craftspeople and for all who are beginning a new work.

Where to pray to Saint Harlindis

- **Aldeneik** (Maaseik, Belgium): the former abbey church and the chapel of Saints Harlindis and Relindis.
- **Maaseik**: the church of Saint Catherine, which keeps their relics and the abbey treasury.
- **Ellikom** (Belgian Limburg): the church dedicated to the two saints.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Harlindis for Brothers and Sisters and for Communities

Saint Harlindis, a Frankish nun of the 8th century, founded with her sister Relindis the abbey of Aldeneik, on the banks of the Meuse, and was its first abbess. She united prayer, study and the work of the hands. Prayer composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. It entrusts to her brothers and sisters, religious communities and those who are beginning a work.

Prayer to Saint Harlindis

Saint Harlindis,
with your sister Relindis
you chose to give your life to God
and built for him a house of prayer by the Meuse.
Teach me to put God at the center of my life.

You who knew how to guide a community,
give those who bear responsibility
gentleness, patience and wisdom.
Bless brothers and sisters,
and keep them united in affection and in faith.

You who also prayed through the work of your hands,
let my daily work become an offering.
Support those who are beginning a new work
and watch over religious communities.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

When to pray to Saint Harlindis

- On her feast day, October 12, together with Saint Relindis.
- For harmony between brothers and sisters.
- For abbesses, superiors and all religious communities.
- For craftspeople, embroiderers and those who work with their hands.
- When founding or beginning a project.

A prayer for brothers and sisters

> *Lord, keep in your love the brothers and sisters of our families.*
> *Saints Harlindis and Relindis, pray for them. Amen.*

To prepare for her feast, you can pray the novena to Saint Harlindis from October 4 to 12, and read the life of Saint Harlindis.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Harlindis

This novena is an original composition inspired by the life of Saint Harlindis, founder and first abbess of Aldeneik in the 8th century. Novena composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. It is not an official liturgical text. To finish it on her feast day, October 12, begin on October 4. 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 Harlindis, pray for us." The act suggested each day helps you live the novena concretely. The episodes recounted come from a Life written in the 9th century, more than a century after her death.

Day 1: Two sisters

Harlindis and Relindis grew up together and chose together to follow Christ. Their sisterhood became a path of holiness.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for my brothers and sisters, by blood or in the faith. Keep us united.

Act of the day: Get in touch with a brother, a sister or a close friend.

Day 2: Learning

At Valenciennes, the two sisters learned to read, to sing the psalms, to copy books. Study opens the mind to God.

Prayer: Lord, give me a taste for your Word and the desire to know you better.

Act of the day: Read and meditate on a psalm.

Day 3: Choosing God

The two young women decided to consecrate themselves to God, and their parents respected their choice. Every vocation calls for a free yes.

Prayer: Lord, help me say yes to what you expect of me.

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

Day 4: Generous parents

Adalard and his wife founded a monastery for their daughters. They offered to God what was dearest to them.

Prayer: Lord, bless parents who accompany their children on the path of faith.

Act of the day: Thank your parents, or pray for them if they have died.

Day 5: Receiving a charge

Saint Willibrord blessed Harlindis as first abbess. She received responsibility for a whole community.

Prayer: Lord, give those who bear responsibility wisdom and humility.

Act of the day: Pray for those in charge of you, at work, in the Church or in society.

Day 6: Praying with one's hands

The Life says that the two sisters excelled at embroidery and copying books. Work well done becomes praise.

Prayer: Lord, may my work today be an offering to you.

Act of the day: Do an ordinary task with special care, offering it to God.

Day 7: A growing community

Around Harlindis and Relindis a community took shape. Common prayer bears fruit beyond the walls of the monastery.

Prayer: Lord, bless religious communities and give them new vocations.

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

Day 8: Passing on the torch

When Harlindis died, her sister Relindis carried on her work. What is begun for God does not end with us.

Prayer: Lord, help us to pass on the torch and entrust our works to others.

Act of the day: Share a skill or some knowledge with someone younger.

Day 9: A treasure kept safe

The relics and embroideries of the two sisters have been kept at Maaseik for centuries. The memory of the saints passes through time.

Prayer: Lord, let us live in communion with the saints. Through the intercession of Saint Harlindis, grant me the grace I ask of you in this novena, if it be your will.

Act of the day: Attend Mass if you can and pray for your family.

Closing prayer

Saint Harlindis,
founder of Aldeneik and faithful sister,
you who served God through prayer and work,
present to the Lord the intention I have entrusted to you.
Keep brothers and sisters united
and bless those who begin a work for God.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

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

Credits and sources

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