BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Honestus

Life, prayer, novena and pilgrimage

Feast day: February 16

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IN BRIEF

Saint Honestus

Priest born in Nîmes, disciple of Saint Saturninus, evangelizer of Pamplona and martyr around 270.

Feast day	February 16
Born	3rd century, Nîmes
Died	c. 270, Pamplona (Navarre)
Canonized	immemorial cult
Era	3rd century

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Credits and sources

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LIFE

Saint Honestus

Saint Honestus (Honest in French) was a priest and preacher of the 3rd century, born in Nîmes. According to tradition, he was baptized by Saint Saturninus, accompanied him on his mission in Gaul, then went to proclaim the Gospel in Pamplona, in Navarre, where he is said to have died a martyr around 270. Part of his relics has been venerated since 1526 at Yerres, in Essonne. His feast day is February 16.

Who was Saint Honestus?

Honestus belongs to the first witnesses of the faith in southern Gaul and northern Spain. His story has come down to us through the accounts linked to Saint Saturninus, first bishop of Toulouse, and to Saint Firmin, first bishop of Amiens. These accounts were written long after the events, and historians read them with caution: they mix ancient memories with legendary developments. They present Honestus as a faithful disciple, a missionary priest who opened the city of Pamplona to the faith and prepared the conversion of Saint Firmin's family.

Key dates in the life of Honestus

- **3rd century**: Born in Nîmes, in Roman Gaul.
- **Mid-3rd century**: According to tradition, Saint Saturninus, sent from Rome to Gaul, passes through Nîmes and baptizes him.
- **Shortly after**: He accompanies Saturninus on his mission; at Carcassonne, both are imprisoned, then freed.
- **Then**: Saturninus settles in Toulouse; Honestus continues on to Pamplona, in Navarre.

- **In Pamplona**: The senator Firmus and his wife are moved by his preaching; Saturninus comes to baptize them, along with many inhabitants, including their son Firmin.
- **c. 270**: Martyrdom of Honestus, under the Emperor Aurelian, according to tradition.
- **Carolingian era**: According to tradition, Charlemagne has his relics brought to Saint-Sernin in Toulouse.
- **April 27, 1526**: Part of his relics is transferred to Yerres, whose church takes his name.

The disciple of Saint Saturninus

According to tradition, Saint Saturninus had been sent from Rome to evangelize Gaul, in the time of Pope Fabian. Passing through Nîmes, he met the young Honestus, who was moved by his message and received baptism from him. Honestus then chose to follow his master. The two men preached the Gospel together. At Carcassonne, the Roman prefect had them thrown into prison, but they managed to regain their freedom and set out again.

When he reached Toulouse, Saturninus settled there: he was to become its first bishop and die there as a martyr. Honestus, now a priest, continued the journey south. He crossed the Pyrenees and reached Pamplona, in Navarre.

The apostle of Pamplona

In Pamplona, the preaching of Honestus moved a senator named Firmus. Encouraged by his wife, he asked to meet Saturninus himself. Honestus went to fetch his master, who came to Pamplona and baptized the couple. The two missionaries then went on preaching and converted a great number of inhabitants. Among them was the senator's son, Firmin, who would become the first bishop of Amiens and die a martyr. Saturninus returned to Toulouse with a new disciple, Hilary. Honestus remained in Pamplona.

Tradition says that he was put to death for his faith under the Emperor Aurelian, around 270. The exact circumstances of his martyrdom are not known.

Devotion and relics

Saint Honestus is celebrated on February 16. According to tradition, his relics were brought to France by Charlemagne and placed in the basilica of Saint-Sernin in Toulouse, near those of his master. On April 27, 1526, part of these relics was transferred to Yerres, in the Île-de-France region: the town's church then took the name of Saint-Honest, which it still bears. A reliquary bust of Saint Honestus is also kept in Braga, Portugal.

In Pamplona, the memory of Honestus is inseparable from that of Saint Firmin, whose cult flourished from the end of the 12th century, with the arrival of his relics and the growth of the Way of Saint James.

What can we learn from Saint Honestus?

Saint Honestus is the image of the disciple who in turn becomes a missionary. Baptized by Saturninus, he first walked at his side and shared his dangers, then agreed to set out alone toward an unknown city. His patient work prepared the conversion of a whole family, and through it the vocation of Saint Firmin. You can pray to him for catechists, for missionaries, for those who accompany adults toward baptism, and for the courage to bear witness to your faith.

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

Where to pray to Saint Honestus

- **Yerres** (Essonne): the church of Saint-Honest, which has kept part of his relics since 1526.

- **Toulouse** (Haute-Garonne): the basilica of Saint-Sernin, where his relics were placed according to tradition.
- **Pamplona** (Navarre, Spain): the city he evangelized and where he died a martyr.
- **Nîmes** (Gard): his hometown.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Honestus for Missionaries and Catechists

Saint Honestus, a priest born in Nîmes in the 3rd century, was according to tradition a disciple of Saint Saturninus and the evangelizer of Pamplona, where he died a martyr around 270. Prayer composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. It entrusts to him missionaries, catechists and all who seek to bear witness to their faith.

Prayer to Saint Honestus

Saint Honestus,
you received baptism from the hand of Saint Saturninus
and followed him along the roads of Gaul:
teach me to walk in the footsteps of Christ
with a faithful and courageous heart.

You set out alone toward an unknown city
to proclaim the Gospel there,
and your word opened to the faith
the family of Saint Firmin.
Bless missionaries and catechists,
and those preparing for baptism.

You who gave your life for Christ,
obtain for me the strength to bear witness to him
in my family, my work and my town.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

When to pray to Saint Honestus

- On his feast day, February 16.
- For missionaries and catechists.
- For an adult preparing for baptism.
- When you must set out into the unknown in order to serve.
- For the courage to bear witness to your faith.

A short invocation

> *Saint Honestus, faithful disciple and martyr of Christ,*
> *give us your courage to proclaim the Gospel. Amen.*

To prepare for his feast, you can pray the novena to Saint Honestus from February 8 to 16, and read the life of Saint Honestus.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Honestus

Novena composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. It draws on the life of Saint Honestus, a priest born in Nîmes, disciple of Saint Saturninus and martyr in Pamplona according to tradition. To finish it on his feast day, February 16, begin on February 8. 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 Honestus, pray for us." The act suggested each day helps you live the novena concretely. The episodes recalled come from traditional accounts written long after the events.

Day 1: A meeting in Nîmes

According to tradition, Honestus met Saint Saturninus when he passed through Nîmes. This meeting changed his life.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for the people who helped me discover your love.

Act of the day: Thank, with a word or a prayer, the person who passed on the faith to you.

Day 2: Baptism

Honestus received baptism from the hands of Saturninus. He became a child of God and a member of the Church.

Prayer: Lord, renew in me the grace of my baptism.

Act of the day: Make the Sign of the Cross with holy water, remembering your baptism.

Day 3: Following a master

Honestus chose to follow Saturninus along the roads of Gaul. He learned to proclaim the Gospel by walking at his side.

Prayer: Lord, give me the humility to learn from those who go before me in the faith.

Act of the day: Read a passage from the Acts of the Apostles.

Day 4: The prison of Carcassonne

At Carcassonne, Honestus and Saturninus were thrown into prison, then regained their freedom. The mission went on despite the obstacles.

Prayer: Lord, support persecuted Christians and those in prison.

Act of the day: Pray for a persecuted Christian somewhere in the world.

Day 5: Setting out alone

Saturninus stayed in Toulouse. Honestus crossed the Pyrenees to Pamplona, a city where Christ was not yet known.

Prayer: Lord, give me the courage to go where you send me.

Act of the day: Take a step toward someone far from the Church.

Day 6: A family touched

In Pamplona, the senator Firmus and his wife were moved by the preaching of Honestus and asked for baptism.

Prayer: Lord, bless families who seek you, and make our homes places of faith.

Act of the day: Pray for a couple you know.

Day 7: Preparing a saint

Among the newly baptized was Firmin, the future bishop of Amiens. Honestus did not know what this child would become, but he sowed the seed.

Prayer: Lord, teach me to sow without seeing the harvest, and bless catechists.

Act of the day: Pray for the children and young people of your parish.

Day 8: The witness of blood

According to tradition, Honestus died a martyr around 270. He gave his life for the One he proclaimed.

Prayer: Lord, keep me faithful in trials, small or great.

Act of the day: Accept patiently an annoyance of the day.

Day 9: Relics that travel

The relics of Honestus were venerated in Toulouse, and since 1526 partly in Yerres. The saints continue to accompany us.

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

Act of the day: Attend Mass if possible, and pray for missionaries.

Closing prayer

Saint Honestus,
disciple of Saturninus and apostle of Pamplona,
you followed Christ even to martyrdom.
Present to the Lord the intention I have entrusted to you.
Give me the heart of a disciple
and the courage to bear witness.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

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

PILGRIMAGE

Church of Saint-Honest, Yerres

The church of Saint-Honest stands in the town center of Yerres, in Essonne, on the pedestrian square of 11 November 1918, on the right bank of the river Yerres. A parish church of the diocese of Évry-Corbeil-Essonnes, it is dedicated to Saint Honestus, a priest and martyr of the 3rd century, and has kept part of his relics since the 16th century.

A church named after a martyr

The church is thought to have been built in the 11th or 12th century. On April 27, 1526, part of the relics of Saint Honestus, until then kept in the basilica of Saint-Sernin in Toulouse, was transferred here. The church then took the saint's name. From its medieval state it has kept the 12th-century choir and the 13th-century bell tower; the rest of the building was rebuilt in the 19th century in a neoclassical style.

What you can see

The symmetrical, colorful façade bears a clock; the back of the building, in stone, has kept an older look. Inside, several works are protected as historic monuments: a gilded wooden pulpit from the Louis XV period, an altarpiece, and a painting commissioned from Raphael but executed after his death by his pupils Giulio Romano and Giovanni Francesco Penni. The organ, built by John Abbey, dates from 1878. During restoration work in 2005, a crypt was discovered beneath the Lady Chapel.

From Nîmes to Yerres

It may seem surprising that a martyr born in Nîmes who died in Pamplona should be honored near Paris. The journey of his relics explains this link: first venerated in Toulouse near Saint Saturninus, his master, they were divided in the 16th century, and Yerres received a share. For nearly five centuries, the parish has thus carried the memory of a missionary from the early days of Christian Gaul.

Praying on site

Before you come, you can read the life of Saint Honestus. In the church, entrust to him missionaries, catechists and those preparing for baptism, then say the prayer to Saint Honestus. These suggestions are offered by Saintspedia.

Practical information

Yerres is in Essonne, south-east of Paris, and the church is right in the town center. It is a place of worship: modest dress and silence are requested. Opening and Mass times may vary: check with the parish before you come.

Credits and sources

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