

BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Hubert of Liège

Life, prayer, novena and pilgrimage

Feast day: November 3

Saintspedia · saintspedia.com

IN BRIEF

Saint Hubert of Liège

Bishop of Tongeren-Maastricht and founder of Liège, patron saint of hunters and of the Ardennes.

Feast day	November 3, May 30
Born	c. 656
Died	May 30, 727
Canonized	Pre-Congregation (relics elevated on November 3, 743)
Era	8th century
Patron saint of	hunters, foresters, woodcutters, Liège, the Ardennes

In this booklet

Life

Prayer to Saint Hubert for Conversion and Protection

Novena to Saint Hubert

Basilica of Saint-Hubert, in the Belgian Ardennes

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 Hubert of Liège

Saint Hubert was bishop of Tongeren-Maastricht in the early eighth century and the spiritual founder of the city of Liège, where he moved the relics of his predecessor, Saint Lambert. He died on May 30, 727, and over the centuries became the great saint of the Ardennes and the patron saint of hunters, thanks to the famous legend of the stag with a cross between its antlers. The Roman Martyrology commemorates him on May 30, but Saint Hubert's Day is celebrated on November 3, the anniversary of the elevation of his relics in 743, in Belgium, Luxembourg, France and many hunting countries.

Who was Saint Hubert?

Hubert belonged to the high Frankish nobility of the late Merovingian period. He was born around 656; tradition makes him the son of a Duke of Aquitaine, but his exact origins remain uncertain. He was probably related to the Pippinids, the family that would later give rise to the Carolingian dynasty, and he moved in the circles of Pippin of Herstal and Charles Martel. The chroniclers describe him as a worldly young lord with a passion for hunting. He was married and had a son, Floribert, who would become bishop after him.

Under the influence of Bishop Saint Lambert of Maastricht, Hubert changed his life: he gave up honors and his father's inheritance and became Lambert's disciple. When Lambert was murdered around 705, Hubert was chosen to succeed him as head of the diocese of Tongeren-Maastricht.

Key dates in the life of Saint Hubert

- **c. 656**: Born into a family of the high Frankish nobility.
- **Late 7th century**: Conversion and entry into the circle of Saint Lambert.
- **c. 705**: After Lambert's murder, becomes bishop of Tongeren-Maastricht.

- **Early 8th century**: Builds a church dedicated to Our Lady in Liège, on the site of Lambert's martyrdom, and moves his relics there.
- **May 30, 727**: Dies, at Tervuren or at Voeren depending on the sources; he is buried in the church of Saint Peter in Liège.
- **November 3, 743**: His son Floribert, now bishop, raises his relics to the altars, which at the time amounted to canonization.
- **825**: His body is moved to the abbey of Andage, in the Ardennes, which takes the name of Saint-Hubert.
- **15th century**: The legend of the stag bearing a cross becomes permanently attached to his name.

The founding bishop of Liège

In Hubert's day, Liège was still only an estate, the *villa Leodio*. By building a church on the place where Lambert had been killed and installing his relics there, Hubert drew pilgrims and gave birth to a religious center that never stopped growing. This church was the origin of the cathedral of Our Lady and Saint Lambert, destroyed at the end of the eighteenth century. That is why the people of Liège honor Hubert as their first bishop and the founder of their city, alongside Saint Lambert.

Historians qualify this title, however: the seat of the bishopric was probably only moved permanently to Liège later, in the time of Charlemagne. Tradition also remembers Hubert as an evangelizer of the Ardennes, an immense forest where Christianity was still slowly taking root.

The legend of the stag

The legend says that Hubert, so fond of hunting that he neglected his duties, went out hunting alone on Good Friday. He found himself face to face with a white stag bearing a shining cross between its antlers. After a long chase, the animal stopped and a voice from heaven challenged the hunter: how long

would he forget the salvation of his soul? It urged him to go to Lambert in Maastricht and be converted. A local tradition places the scene at Tenneville, in the Belgian Ardennes, where a cross marks the spot.

This story appears only in the fifteenth century, in a life of the saint presented to Duke Philip the Good of Burgundy. It repeats almost word for word the older legend of Saint Eustace, and its structure recalls the conversion of Saint Paul on the road to Damascus. The historical bishop was converted through Lambert's influence. Yet the legend expresses a truth Christians have recognized: God can reach a person in the very heart of their passion.

Why is Saint Hubert the patron saint of hunters and the Ardennes?

In 825, the Benedictine monks of the abbey of Andage, deep in the Ardennes forest, obtained permission to take Hubert's body. The village and the abbey then took his name: Saint-Hubert. It was there, in hunting country, that the bishop gradually became a hunting lord in the popular imagination. The monks bred a breed of hounds that bore his name, and people came to invoke the saint against rabies. From the ninth century, the first fruits of the hunt were offered to him.

His patronage extends to the trades of the forest (foresters, woodcutters, tanners) and to many guilds, from butchers to armorers and opticians. On his feast day, bread, salt and water are still blessed, along with dogs, horses and packs of hounds. King Louis XI of France, a keen hunter, himself sent offerings to the abbey for each of his dogs. In the English-speaking world, some hunts also hold a blessing of the hounds in early November, in the spirit of Saint Hubert's Day.

Beyond the hunt, Saint Hubert is first of all an example of conversion: a courtier attached to his pleasures who let himself be transformed and then gave his life to the service of a people. Popular tradition made him the friend of

hunters, but also a saint who invites us to respect creation and not to make the hunt an idol.



The basilica of Saint-Hubert in the Belgian Ardennes.

Symbols and how to recognize Saint Hubert in art

Saint Hubert is shown in two main ways. As a bishop, he wears a miter and holds a crozier, often with a stag at his feet. As a hunter, he kneels before the stag with the crucifix between its antlers, sometimes with his horse and hounds nearby and a hunting horn at his belt. The stag with a cross has become his unmistakable emblem, and the hunting horn is also associated with him. The key of Saint Hubert, kept in Liège, is another sign of his cult.

To pray with him, read the prayer to Saint Hubert and follow the novena to Saint Hubert, from October 25 to November 2.



The key of Saint Hubert, kept in the treasury of Liège Cathedral.

Where to pray to Saint Hubert

The relics of Saint Hubert disappeared when Huguenot troops looted the abbey in 1568. Several places nevertheless remain bound to his memory:

- **Saint-Hubert** (Luxembourg province, Belgium): the basilica of Saint-Hubert, the former abbey church where his body once rested.
- **Liège**: the treasury of Saint Paul's Cathedral, which keeps the key of Saint Hubert and a sixteenth-century silver monstrance-reliquary.
- **Maastricht** (Netherlands): the treasury of the Basilica of Our Lady, which holds a horn-reliquary and a bust-reliquary of the saint.
- **Tenneville** (Belgium): the chapel of Saint Hubert, which tradition links to the vision of the stag.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Hubert for Conversion and Protection

Saint Hubert left no writings, and the many popular prayers recited on Saint Hubert's Day vary from one region to another without any well-established ancient source. Saintspedia offers below an original prayer drawn from what history and tradition remember of him: his conversion, his service as bishop in Liège and his bond with the forest and those who live from it.

A living tradition: the blessings of Saint Hubert's Day

Since the Middle Ages, on Saint Hubert's Day, bread, salt and water have been blessed, and dogs, horses and packs of hounds have been brought to the priest. This custom, still very much alive in Wallonia, Luxembourg, Alsace and many regions of France, entrusts to the saint's protection the people and animals who share the life of the forest. It is often accompanied by a Saint Hubert Mass played on hunting horns. In some English-speaking countries, hunts keep a similar blessing of the hounds in early November.



Saint Hubert in prayer before the vision of the stag.

Prayer to Saint Hubert

Saint Hubert, God came looking for you in the middle of your passion for the hunt: teach me to recognize his call in my own life, even where I do not expect it.

You left the honors of the world to follow Saint Lambert: obtain for me the courage to be converted and to choose what truly matters.

Bishop of Liège, you built a church on the place where your teacher was martyred: help us to keep faithfully the memory of those who handed on the faith to us.

Patron of foresters and hunters, protect those who work in nature. Give them respect for creation and for the animals God has made, and keep them from every accident.

I also entrust to you my intention: (name it in silence). Present it to the Lord, who called you by name. Amen.

This prayer is an original text by Saintspedia, free to use for personal and community prayer.

When to pray this prayer

Saint Hubert is celebrated on November 3, the anniversary of the elevation of his relics in 743, in Belgium, Luxembourg and popular tradition; the Roman Martyrology commemorates him on May 30, the day of his death in 727. This prayer suits the opening of the hunting season, a Saint Hubert Mass or blessing, a day of work in the woods, or any moment when you sense God calling you to a change of life. It can also be said for a dog or other animal in your care.

For a longer time of prayer, follow the novena to Saint Hubert, and read the life of Saint Hubert.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Hubert

This novena is an original composition by Saintspedia, inspired by the life and tradition of Saint Hubert. It is not an official liturgical text. To finish it on the eve of Saint Hubert's Day on November 3, begin on October 25; it ends on November 2. You can also pray it before his commemoration on May 30, beginning on May 21, or at any time when you are seeking a fresh start with God.

How to pray this novena

Each day, entrust your intention to God, read the meditation, say the prayer of the day, then an Our Father. The suggested act helps carry the prayer into the day. If you can, pray part of the novena outdoors, in a park or a wood: Saint Hubert met God in the heart of the forest.

Day 1: A scattered life

The young Hubert lived at court, among honors and pleasures. The chroniclers speak of the "wild joys" of his worldly life. Nothing seemed to point him toward holiness. Yet God does not wait for us to be ready before he starts looking for us.

Prayer: Lord, you know what scatters me and draws me away from you. Gather my life around what is essential.

Today: Notice one activity that takes too much of your time, and give a little of that time to prayer instead.

Day 2: The unexpected call

The legend says that a stag bearing a cross stopped Hubert in the middle of the hunt. God did not wait for him in church: he met him where he was, in what he loved most. The story was told much later, but its message is true: no place and no passion is closed to God's grace.

Prayer: Lord, open my eyes so that I may recognize you in the middle of my everyday occupations.

Today: Take a short walk in silence, attentive to what God may be saying to you.

Day 3: Letting yourself be led

In the legend, the voice sends Hubert to Lambert. In history, it was indeed with this bishop that he was converted. No one changes alone: God places guides along our path.

Prayer: Thank you, Lord, for those who have helped me to believe. Give me the humility to accept advice.

Today: Thank, with a message or a prayer, someone who has helped you grow in faith.

Day 4: Giving up in order to follow

Hubert gave up military honors and his father's inheritance. This letting go was not a loss but a freedom regained in order to serve. What we release for God's sake makes room for something greater.

Prayer: Lord, free me from what weighs me down, so that I may be free to follow you.

Today: Give away an object or a sum of money you can do without.

Day 5: Keeping the memory of the martyrs

When Lambert was murdered, Hubert succeeded him and built a church on the place of his death. He turned a place of violence into a place of prayer. Faithfulness to those who went before us is part of our own faith.

Prayer: Lord, I entrust to you the Christians who are persecuted today. May their witness bear fruit.

Today: Pray for a country where Christians suffer for their faith.

Day 6: Building a community

Around the church Hubert built, a village gradually became a city: Liège. An act of faith can bear fruit far beyond a single lifetime, in ways we will never see. Hubert could not have imagined the great city that would grow around his small church.

Prayer: Lord, bless my parish, my town and those who live there. Make us builders of communion.

Today: Do a concrete service in your neighborhood or your parish.

Day 7: Proclaiming the Gospel

Tradition sees Hubert as an evangelizer of the Ardennes. He traveled through a rough, wooded region to bring the faith there, where Christianity was still slowly taking root.

Prayer: Lord, give me the courage to speak of you simply to those close to me.

Today: Share with someone a reason for your hope.

Day 8: Respecting creation

As patron of hunters and foresters, Hubert reminds us that nature is not a mere resource: it is God's work, entrusted to human beings so that they may take care of it. Tradition invites hunters to respect the animal and never to kill for mere pleasure or waste.

Prayer: God our Creator, teach me to respect the earth, the forests and the animals you have made.

Today: Do something concrete for creation: pick up litter, save water or energy.

Day 9: God's protection

For centuries people have called on Saint Hubert against rabies and bites, and animals are blessed on his feast. This simple trust says that nothing in our lives is a matter of indifference to God.

Prayer: Lord, I place the intention of this novena in your hands. Through the intercession of Saint Hubert, keep me and those I love. Amen.

Today: If possible, take part in a Saint Hubert Mass or blessing.

Closing prayer

Saint Hubert, at the end of these nine days, I entrust to you the intention I have presented to you. The Lord called you in the heart of the forest: pray that I may be converted a little more each day. Protect those who live from nature and teach us to respect it. Amen.

To go further: the life of Saint Hubert and the prayer to Saint Hubert.

PILGRIMAGE

Basilica of Saint-Hubert, in the Belgian Ardennes

In the heart of the Belgian Ardennes, in the province of Luxembourg, the little town of Saint-Hubert grew up around the old Benedictine abbey where the body of the Bishop of Liège rested for more than seven centuries. Its abbey church, now a basilica, is the main shrine of Saint Hubert and the place where his legend as patron of hunters took shape.

From Andage to Saint-Hubert

The monastery was first called Andage (or Ambra). In 825, Bishop Walcaud of Liège, with the agreement of Emperor Louis the Pious and a council gathered at Aachen, allowed the Benedictine monks to take there the entire body of Hubert, until then kept in Liège. The village and the abbey then took the saint's name. Pilgrims flocked there: people came to ask for healing from rabies, to offer the first fruits of the hunt, or to entrust their dogs. The monks even bred a strain of hunting hounds there that still bears the name of Saint Hubert.

On October 15 and 16, 1568, during the Wars of Religion, the abbey was plundered and burned by Huguenot troops. The saint's remains then disappeared, and what became of them is unknown; the reliquary was sold a few years later to fund repairs. The abbey was suppressed at the end of the 18th century, but the abbey church has remained a place of worship and pilgrimage.



The Basilica of Saint-Hubert seen from the outside.

Visiting the basilica

The present building is a large Gothic church, largely rebuilt in the 16th century, preceded by a Baroque facade added in the 18th century. Its interior, vast and bright, keeps many mementos of the saint and of monastic life. The buildings of the former abbey, around the square, recall the importance this monastery had in the history of the Ardennes.

Every year, around November 3, the town celebrates Saint-Hubert's Day: a solemn Mass, often accompanied by hunting horns, with a blessing of animals, bread, and salt. It is the liveliest time to discover the shrine, but also the busiest.

Praying on site

Before your visit, you may read the life of Saint Hubert, to distinguish the historical bishop from the legend of the stag. In the basilica, take time to entrust to God a conversion you desire, then pray the prayer to Saint Hubert for those who live from the forest and for your loved ones. These suggestions are offered by Saintspedia.

Other places of Saint Hubert

- **Liège**: the treasury of Saint Paul's Cathedral, where Saint Hubert's key and a 16th-century silver reliquary monstrance are kept.
- **Maastricht** (Netherlands): the treasury of the Basilica of Our Lady, with a reliquary horn, a reliquary bust, and a reliquary monstrance.
- **Tenneville**: the Chapel of Saint Hubert and the "Rouge-Croix," which local tradition associates with the vision of the stag.
- **Tervuren** (Flemish Brabant): one of the two places where, according to the sources, he died in 727.

Practical information

Saint-Hubert is in the center of the Belgian province of Luxembourg, in the middle of a vast forest massif good for walking. The basilica is generally open to visitors outside of services, but the hours and the program of the Saint-Hubert festivities vary from year to year: check the official website of the parish or the Saint-Hubert tourist office before you come.

CREDITS

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).

Images

- Cover: Flamenc, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons. Source · License
- The basilica of Saint-Hubert in the Belgian Ardennes.: Image: Jean-Pol GRANDMONT, CC BY 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons. Source · License
- The key of Saint Hubert, kept in the treasury of Liège Cathedral.: Image: Okapi071, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons. Source · License
- Saint Hubert in prayer before the vision of the stag.: Image: Pierre Poschadel, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons. Source · License
- The Basilica of Saint-Hubert seen from the outside.: Image: Jean-Pol GRANDMONT, CC BY 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons. Source · License

More free booklets

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

saintspedia.com