BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Iestyn (Gestin)

Life, prayer and novena

Feast day: April 19

Saintspedia · saintspedia.com

IN BRIEF

Saint Iestyn (Gestin)

Welsh saint of the 6th century, companion of Saint Efflam according to tradition, patron of Plestin-les-Grèves.

Feast day	April 19
Born	6th century, Wales according to tradition
Died	6th century
Canonized	immemorial cult
Era	6th century
Patron saint of	Plestin-les-Grèves

In this booklet

Life

Prayer to Saint Iestyn for Hospitality and Brotherhood

Novena to Saint Iestyn (Gestin)

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 Iestyn (Gestin)

Saint Iestyn (Gestin in French, Jestin or Istan in Breton) was a Welsh saint of the 6th century, honored in Brittany and in Wales. Breton tradition makes him a companion of Saint Efflam and the founder of a hermitage on the coast of Trégor, at the place that now bears his name: Plestin-les-Grèves, "the parish of Iestyn." His life belongs almost entirely to legend, but his local cult is old and still alive. His feast day is April 19.

Who was Saint Iestyn?

The name Iestyn comes from the Latin *Justinus*, Justin. It is found in several forms: Yestin, Iestyn in Wales, Jestin or Istan in Brittany. Like many Breton saints of the early period, Iestyn is known through late traditions, handed down in parishes and collected in the 19th century. They connect the saints to great families and distant journeys, following the habits of medieval hagiography. We must therefore distinguish what is really known, that is, the existence of an old cult attested by place names, churches and statues, from what legend tells.

A Breton historian, François Gourvil, thought it more likely that only the cult of this Welsh saint crossed the Channel, carried by the emigrants who came from Britain in the 6th and 7th centuries, rather than the saint himself.

Key dates in the life of Iestyn

- **6th century**: According to tradition, born in Wales; legend calls him the son of Geraint, king of Dumnonia.
- **6th century**: According to Breton tradition, he crosses to Armorica with Saint Efflam and Saint Enora and settles at the place called Les Grèves.

- **Then**: He goes on pilgrimage to Rome and, on his return, shares his hermitage with Saint Efflam.
- **6th-7th centuries**: His cult takes root in Brittany, where the parish of Plestin takes his name.
- **1673**: The chapel of Saint-Gestin is rebuilt in the hamlet of Pen ar Ven, at Plestin.
- **1859**: The historian Benjamin Jollivet records the Plestin tradition about Iestyn and Efflam.
- **1957**: François Gourvil publishes a study on Saint Jestin and the name of Plestin.

The legend of Iestyn and Efflam

Tradition presents Iestyn as a Welsh prince, son of a King Geraint and descendant of Emperor Constantine, according to a genealogy meant above all to emphasize the saint's nobility. Having come to Armorica with Saint Efflam and Saint Enora, he is said to have settled by the sea, at the place called Les Grèves. There he built an oratory and a cell.

A popular account, recorded in the 19th century, tells the rest. Iestyn had to leave his hermitage for a journey to Rome. On his return, he found his cell occupied by Saint Efflam, who wanted to give it back to him. Iestyn refused, and the two hermits decided to live together. This little story, which is not historical, says something beautiful: two men of God preferred brotherhood to ownership. It is also found in the tradition of Efflam, who is said to have first lived for a time with Iestyn before building his own hermitage.

The cult at Plestin and elsewhere

The very name of Plestin-les-Grèves, in Côtes-d'Armor, comes from *Plou-Iestin*, "the parish of Iestyn." Iestyn is the patron of the parish, while Saint Efflam is the titular saint of the church. A statue there shows him as a priest,

wearing liturgical vestments. A pardon (a traditional Breton religious festival) is held every year on the fourth Sunday after Easter. Near the church, a fountain placed under his name was believed to cure fevers.

In the hamlet of Pen ar Ven, a chapel of Saint-Gestin, rebuilt in 1673, stood near a fountain; the whole, now in ruins, lies in an enclosure that, according to tradition, was his first hermitage. In Finistère, the church of Saint-Justin at Guiler-sur-Goyen, formerly called Saint-Gestin, houses a statue of "Saint Jestin." Finally, in Wales, his cult is attached to the old parish of Llaniestyn, where he is shown as a pilgrim carrying a walking staff.

What can we learn from Saint Iestyn?

We know few certain things about Saint Iestyn. But a parish has borne his name for centuries, and generations of Bretons have prayed to him. The legend that shows him sharing his hermitage with Efflam remains a simple lesson: to welcome the other rather than defend one's territory. You can pray to him for families who welcome others, for those who must share their space, for Brittany and Wales, and for the sick suffering from fever.

Where to pray to Saint Iestyn

- **Plestin-les-Grèves** (Côtes-d'Armor): the parish church, with his statue, and the fountain of Saint-Gestin; the pardon is held on the fourth Sunday after Easter.
- **Pen ar Ven**, at Plestin: the ruins of the chapel of Saint-Gestin and its fountain.
- **Guiler-sur-Goyen** (Finistère): the church of Saint-Justin, formerly Saint-Gestin.
- **Llaniestyn** (Wales): the parish that bears his name.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Iestyn for Hospitality and Brotherhood

Saint Iestyn (Gestin), a Welsh saint of the 6th century, is the patron of the parish of Plestin-les-Grèves, in Trégor, which owes him its name. Tradition makes him the companion of Saint Efflam, with whom he is said to have shared his hermitage. Prayer composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. It entrusts to him hospitality, brotherhood, the sick and the land of Brittany.

Prayer to Saint Iestyn

Saint Iestyn,
who came from Wales according to tradition,
you sought God by the sea,
in prayer and silence.
Teach me to make my life
a place open to God and to others.

You who shared your cell with Saint Efflam
rather than claiming it for yourself,
give me a welcoming heart,
that prefers brotherhood to possession.

Watch over the parish of Plestin and all Brittany,
relieve those who suffer from fever and illness,
and keep us in the faith of our fathers.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

When to pray to Saint Iestyn

- On his feast day, April 19.
- On the fourth Sunday after Easter, the day of the Plestin pardon.
- For a sick person suffering from fever.
- When you must share your home, your office or your time.
- For Brittany, Wales and the bonds between Celtic peoples.

A short invocation

> *Saint Iestyn and Saint Efflam, hermits of the Lieue de Grève,*
> *pray for us. Amen.*

To prepare for his feast, you can pray the novena to Saint Iestyn from April 11 to 19, and read the life of Saint Iestyn.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Iestyn (Gestin)

This novena is inspired by the tradition of Saint Iestyn (Gestin), a Welsh saint honored at Plestin-les-Grèves, in Trégor, as the companion of Saint Efflam. Novena composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition; it is not an official liturgical text. To finish it on his feast day, April 19, begin on April 11. You can also pray it to prepare for the Plestin pardon, on the fourth Sunday after Easter.

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 Iestyn, pray for us." The episodes recalled come from Breton popular tradition, which belongs more to legend than to history.

Day 1: A name meaning just

Iestyn comes from *Justinus*, Justin: the just one. To be just, in the Bible, is to live according to God's heart.

Prayer: Lord, make me just in my words and actions, and faithful to your will.

Act of the day: Put right a small injustice you have committed.

Day 2: Crossing the sea

Tradition has him come from Wales with Saint Efflam and Saint Enora. Like many Breton saints, he left his country to follow God.

Prayer: Lord, bless those who leave home to serve you, missionaries and migrants, and give them a good welcome.

Act of the day: Pray for a missionary or support a missionary work.

Day 3: A hermitage by the sea

Iestyn settled at Les Grèves, facing the sea. There he built an oratory and a cell for prayer.

Prayer: Lord, help me to find each day a place and a time of silence for you.

Act of the day: Take ten minutes of silence, without screens or noise.

Day 4: The pilgrimage to Rome

Tradition says he set out for Rome. Pilgrimage to the tombs of the apostles recalls our attachment to the universal Church.

Prayer: Lord, keep me united to your Church and to the successor of Peter.

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

Day 5: An occupied cell

On his return, he found his cell occupied by Saint Efflam. He could have claimed it back. He did not.

Prayer: Lord, free me from the spirit of possession. Teach me to make room for others.

Act of the day: Give up your place, literally or figuratively, to someone.

Day 6: Living together

Iestyn and Efflam decided to live together. Life in common is not always easy, but it is a path to holiness.

Prayer: Lord, bless those I live with. Give us patience and gentleness toward one another.

Act of the day: Show a sign of attention to someone in your household.

Day 7: A parish that bears his name

Plestin, "the parish of Iestyn," has kept his name for centuries. A parish is a family gathered around Christ.

Prayer: Lord, bless my parish, its priests and its faithful. Make it a home open to all.

Act of the day: Welcome with a smile a newcomer at Mass.

Day 8: The fountain of fevers

Near the church, a fountain under his name was believed to cure fevers. Water recalls our baptism and God's tenderness for the sick.

Prayer: Lord, relieve the sick, especially those suffering from fever. Give them strength and healing.

Act of the day: Ask after someone who is ill.

Day 9: The faith of our fathers

Iestyn belongs to the Christian beginnings of Brittany and Wales. Generations have prayed to him before us.

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

Act of the day: Attend Mass if possible, or a Breton pardon.

Closing prayer

Saint Iestyn,
hermit of Les Grèves and patron of Plestin,
present to the Lord the intention I have entrusted to you.
Give me a welcoming and brotherly heart,
and keep Brittany in the faith.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

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

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