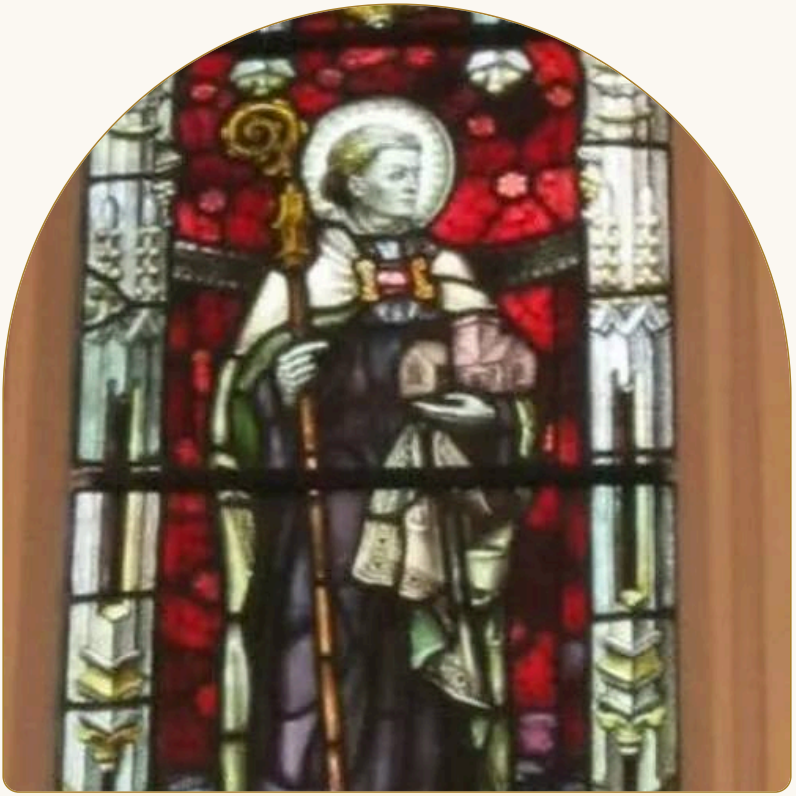


BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Illtud

Life, prayer and novena

Feast day: November 6

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IN BRIEF

Saint Illtud

Sixth-century British monk, founder and abbot of Llanilltud Fawr (Llantwit Major) in Wales, teacher of many saints.

Feast day	November 6
Born	Second half of the 5th century, Britain or Armorica (uncertain)
Died	First half of the 6th century, Llanilltud (Wales), or Dol-de-Bretagne according to tradition
Canonized	Immemorial cult
Era	6th century
Patron saint of	teachers, Llantwit Major

In this booklet

Life

Prayer to Saint Illtud, Master of the British Saints

Novena to Saint Illtud

Credits and sources

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LIFE

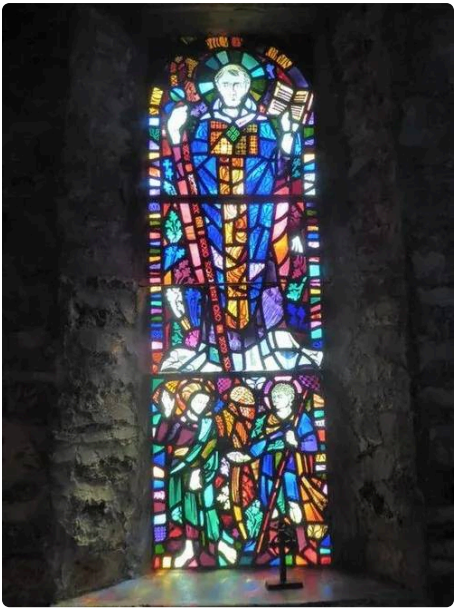
Saint Illtud

Saint Illtud, in Welsh *Illtud* or *Illtyd*, and in Breton *Ildut*, was a British monk of the late fifth and early sixth centuries, founder of the monastery of Llanilltud Fawr, today Llantwit Major, in South Wales. A renowned teacher, he trained, according to the ancient Lives, several of the great founding saints of Brittany and Wales, among them Saint Samson, Saint Paul Aurelian and Saint Gildas. His feast day is November 6, kept especially in the dioceses of Wales and in Brittany, where the names of Lanildut and the Aber-Ildut preserve his memory.

Who was Saint Illtud?

Illtud is one of the founding figures of Celtic Christianity. The oldest witness to him is found in the *Life of Saint Samson*, written in the seventh century, perhaps even earlier. It presents him as "the renowned master of the Britons," the most learned of all in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, and also in geometry, rhetoric, grammar, arithmetic and philosophy. It calls him a disciple of Saint Germanus of Auxerre, which probably means that he belonged to his school rather than that he knew him personally.

A second *Life of Saint Illtud*, much later, was written around 1140. It is full of marvelous tales and even makes him a cousin of King Arthur. We must therefore distinguish the little that is certain, the existence of a great monastic teacher at Llanilltud in the early sixth century, from the legends that grew up around his name.



Saint Illtud, stained glass.

Key dates in the life of Illtud

- **Second half of the 5th century**: Born in Britain according to most historians, in Armorica (Brittany) according to the twelfth-century Life.
- **Late 5th century**: After a youth devoted to letters and, according to legend, to arms, he embraces monastic life.
- **c. 500**: Founds the monastery of Llanilltud Fawr, in Glamorgan, with the support of the bishop Saint Dubricius according to tradition.
- **Early 6th century**: Trains many disciples, including Saint Samson, future bishop of Dol.
- **First half of the 6th century**: Dies, around 522 according to some, later according to others; the late Life places his death at Dol, on a November 6.

From soldier to monk, according to legend

The twelfth-century *Life* tells that Illtud, son of a prince of Letavia, that is, Armorica, and of a Welsh princess, was first trained in letters, then in the art of war. He is said to have served at the court of a king of Glamorgan with his wife, Trynihid.

A miracle of Saint Cadoc, abbot of Llancarfan, is said to have overwhelmed him. Illtud then laid down his arms and parted from his wife, who also withdrew into solitude, and went to live as a hermit in a fertile valley called Hodnant. The story is legendary, but it expresses a frequent trait among the British saints: many came from the aristocracy and gave up a warrior's destiny.

Llanilltud, the school of saints

At Hodnant arose the monastery that would bear his name, *Llan Illtud*, "the sacred enclosure of Illtud." It became one of the greatest centers of learning in Britain. Students learned Scripture, the liturgy and the liberal arts, but also farming: tradition credits Illtud with introducing better methods of plowing. The monastery welcomed the sons of the British aristocracy, who received there both spiritual and intellectual training.

Several saints' Lives connect their heroes with this school. The *Life of Saint Samson* tells that Samson was entrusted to Illtud as a child, and that Illtud recognized in him an exceptional calling. The *Life of Saint Paul Aurelian*, written in the ninth century at Landévennec, names among his fellow students David, Samson and Gildas. Other traditions add Saint Magloire or Saint Brieuc. Not every one of these links can be verified, but they show the authority attached to Illtud's name: to have been his disciple was a title of honor.



St Illtud's Church, Llantwit Major, on the site of his monastery.

Hermit, abbot and provider

The late *Life* multiplies episodes: conflicts with a local king, retreats in caves, and the discovery of his hiding place thanks to the sound of a bell that Gildas was sending to Saint David. It also tells that, hearing of a famine in Armorica, Illtud sent ships loaded with wheat. This story probably contributed to his popularity in Brittany, where he is often invoked as a protector of harvests and of the sea.

Devotion to Saint Illtud

At Llantwit Major, a carved cross kept in the church bears a Latin inscription mentioning the soul of Illtud alongside those of Samson and others: it is one of the oldest material witnesses to his memory. Many Welsh churches are dedicated to him, as is the parish of Llantwit Major.

In Brittany his name can be read in Lanildut and the Aber-Ildut, on the coast of Léon, and in several chapels. He is celebrated on November 6 in the calendar of the Catholic dioceses of Wales. He is also venerated by the Orthodox Church, which honors the saints of the ancient British Church.

Why is Saint Illtud the patron saint of teachers?

Illtud is a saint of handing on. He left no writings, but he trained men who evangelized Wales, Cornwall and Brittany. The oldest source about him praises him above all as a master, learned in Scripture and in the sciences of his time. Teachers, educators and students therefore see in him a natural patron. He is also the patron of Llantwit Major, the town that grew around his monastery.

He reminds us that faith and learning go together, that study can be a prayer, and that working the land has its own dignity. He can be invoked for teachers and educators, for students, for farmers, and for the unity of the Celtic peoples and their Churches. To pray with him, see the prayer to Saint Illtud and the novena to Saint Illtud.

Symbols and how to recognize Saint Illtud in art

- **The abbot's crozier**, as founder and head of Llanilltud.
- **The book**, sign of the learned master of the Britons.



The Aber-Ildut, in Finistère, bears the saint's name.

Where to pray to Saint Illtud

- **Llantwit Major** (Wales): St Illtud's Church, on the site of his monastery, with its early medieval carved crosses.
- **Lanildut** (Finistère, France): the parish church and the Aber-Ildut area, which bear his name.
- **Caldey Island** (Wales): a monastic community continues religious life on an island that tradition links with Illtud's disciples.
- **Dol-de-Bretagne** (Ille-et-Vilaine, France): the cathedral of Saint Samson, his disciple, where the late Life places his death.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Illtud, Master of the British Saints

Saint Illtud, master of the British saints, is honored in Wales and Brittany as an educator, a learned monk and a protector of harvests. No traditional prayer to him is in common use today, so Saintspedia offers here an original prayer, followed by a prayer for teachers and students.

Prayer to Saint Illtud

Saint Illtud, you laid down your arms to follow Christ. Help me to give up violence, harshness and pride, and to seek peace of heart.

You founded at Llanilltud a house of prayer and study. Give me a love for the Word of God and the desire to learn. May my mind and my knowledge serve the truth and the good of others.

You trained Saint Samson, Saint Gildas and so many other missionaries. Watch over those who teach and those who learn. Give teachers patience and wisdom, and students curiosity and perseverance.

You sent wheat to the hungry of Armorica. Bless the work of farmers and fishermen, and open our hands to share with those who are hungry.

Pray for Wales and Brittany, and for all the lands your disciples evangelized, so that they may keep alive the faith they received. I entrust to you my intention: (name it in silence). Amen.

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

Prayer for teachers and students

> *Lord, through the intercession of Saint Illtud, the renowned master of the Britons, bless schools, colleges, universities and every place where people learn. Give those who teach a love for their students, and those who study the joy of discovery. May all knowledge lead us to you, the source of all wisdom. Amen.*

This prayer is an original text by Saintspedia.

When to pray this prayer

Saint Illtud is celebrated on November 6. You can pray to him at the start of the school year, before an exam, for teachers and educators, for farmers at sowing and harvest time, and for Wales and Brittany. For nine days of prayer, follow the novena to Saint Illtud, and read the life of Saint Illtud.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Illtud

This novena is an original composition by Saintspedia, inspired by the life and traditions of Saint Illtud, founder of the monastery of Llanilltud Fawr in Wales and master of many saints. It is not an official liturgical text. To finish it on his feast day, November 6, begin it on October 29. It is also well suited to the start of a school year or the time before exams.

How to pray this novena

Each day, place your intention before God, read the short meditation, then say the prayer of the day followed by an Our Father, a Hail Mary and a Glory Be. The small act suggested for each day helps you live in Illtud's spirit of conversion, study, work and generosity. Teachers can pray it for their students, parents for their children, and students for themselves and their classmates.



St Illtud's Church, Llantwit Major.

Day 1: A master of the Britons

The oldest source about Illtud calls him "the renowned master of the Britons," learned in Scripture and in the sciences of his time. Faith does not fear intelligence: it seeks understanding. God gave us minds to know him and his creation. Study, when it is humble and patient, can itself become a form of prayer.

Prayer: Lord, give me a love for your Word and a desire to learn, so that my mind may serve the truth.

Today: Read a chapter of the Gospel slowly and attentively.

Day 2: Laying down arms

According to legend, Illtud was a soldier before he became a monk. He gave up the sword to follow Christ. Each of us has weapons to lay down: harsh words, grudges, the desire to dominate.

Prayer: Lord, disarm my heart, and make me gentle and peaceful.

Today: Avoid every harsh word, and choose a gentle response in a moment of tension.

Day 3: The call to conversion

Illtud's life changed after an encounter with the holy abbot Cadoc, the legend says. God often speaks to us through other people. Conversion is not a single moment but a road walked every day.

Prayer: Lord, make me attentive to your call, and give me the courage to change what must change.

Today: Make a good examination of conscience, or go to confession if you can.

Day 4: The hermit of Hodnant

Illtud first withdrew to live as a hermit in a quiet valley. Before teaching others, he listened to God in silence. Every fruitful mission is rooted in prayer. Busy lives also need such a valley of silence, even if only for a few minutes a day.

Prayer: Lord, teach me to be silent before you, so that I may hear your voice.

Today: Spend fifteen minutes in silent prayer.

Day 5: A school of saints

At Llanilltud, Illtud welcomed young people and formed them in prayer, study and work. Many of them became missionaries and founders. A good teacher shapes not only minds but lives.

Prayer: Lord, bless all teachers and educators, and give them patience, wisdom and love for their students.

Today: Pray for a teacher who marked your life, or thank a teacher you know.

Day 6: Recognizing a calling

Illtud recognized in the child Samson an exceptional calling, and helped him follow it. To discern and encourage the gifts of others is a beautiful service.

Prayer: Lord, help me to see the gifts you have placed in others, and to encourage them.

Today: Encourage a young person in a talent or a project.

Day 7: The dignity of work

At Llanilltud, monks studied but also worked the land; tradition credits Illtud with better methods of plowing. Work done with care is a way of sharing in God's creation.

Prayer: Lord, bless the work of farmers and of all who labor, and make my own work an offering to you.

Today: Do your work today with special care, offering it to God.

Day 8: Bread for the hungry

The late Life tells that Illtud sent ships of wheat to Armorica during a famine. Generosity crosses borders. Hunger is still a wound in our world, and Christ tells us that what we do for the least of his brothers and sisters, we do for him.

Prayer: Lord, open my hands to share with the hungry, near and far.

Today: Give to a food bank or to an organization fighting hunger.

Day 9: A legacy of faith

Illtud left no writings, but his disciples carried the Gospel to Wales, Cornwall and Brittany. His legacy lives in those he formed. What we hand on to others outlives us: a word of faith, a good example, a prayer taught to a child can bear fruit long after we are gone.

Prayer: Lord, grant that the faith I have received may bear fruit in those who come after me.

Today: Share your faith with someone in a simple way, and give thanks for the graces of this novena.

Closing prayer

Saint Illtud, renowned master of the Britons, you left the sword for the Cross, the court for the cloister, and you formed saints for the Church. Intercede for me and for the intention I have carried during these nine days. Bless teachers and students, farmers and all workers, and the lands of Wales and Brittany. May my mind, my hands and my heart serve God and my neighbor, until the day I see him face to face. Amen.

To continue praying with him, see the prayer to Saint Illtud.

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