BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Jaoua

Life, prayer, novena and pilgrimage

Feast day: March 2

IN BRIEF

Saint Jaoua

6th-century Breton monk and bishop, disciple of Saint Paul Aurelian, venerated at Plouvien and Brasparts.

Feast day	March 2
Born	c. 500, British Isles
Died	March 2, 554 according to Albert Le Grand (c. 570 according to other authors), Brasparts (Finistère)
Canonized	immemorial local cult in Brittany (not listed in the Roman Martyrology)
Era	6th century

In this booklet

Life

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Credits and sources

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LIFE

Saint Jaoua

Saint Jaoua (Joavan, Jouvin) was a Breton monk and bishop of the 6th century, who came from the British Isles and was a disciple of his uncle Saint Paul Aurelian. According to tradition, he was parish priest of Brasparts, first abbot of Daoulas and then bishop of Léon, and he died at Brasparts around the middle of the 6th century. His tomb is in the chapel of Saint Jaoua at Plouvien, in Finistère. His feast day is March 2.

Who was Saint Jaoua?

Jaoua is one of those founding saints of Brittany whose history blends with legend. He is not listed in the Roman Martyrology, but in Brittany he receives an ancient and living cult, with a tomb, relics, a holy spring and a pardon. His life is known mainly through the Dominican Albert Le Grand, who told it in the 17th century in his *Lives of the Saints of Armorican Brittany*, drawing on older traditions. Historians see in it a mixture of real memories and marvelous tales, and the dates it gives should be received with caution: the year of his death varies according to the authors, from 554 to around 570.

Key dates in the life of Jaoua

- **c. 500**: Born in the British Isles; tradition makes him a nephew, through his mother, of Saint Paul Aurelian.
- **c. 520**: He crosses to Armorica; according to Albert Le Grand, a storm drives him into the Bay of Brest, where he is welcomed at the abbey of Landévennec.
- **Then**: Ordained a priest by Saint Paul, he becomes parish priest of Brasparts, in the Monts d'Arrée.

- **Later**: He becomes the first abbot of Daoulas, an abbey founded, according to legend, in atonement for a massacre of monks.
- **Afterward**: He leads monasteries on the Île de Batz and at Plouguerneau, then succeeds Saint Paul as bishop of Léon.
- **March 2, 554 (according to Albert Le Grand)**: He dies at Brasparts, where he had come to help the people struck by famine.
- **1897-1898**: His tomb at Plouvien is opened and his relics are shared between Saint-Pol-de-Léon, Plouvien, Brasparts and the bishop's house in Quimper.

From Britain to Brasparts

According to tradition, Jaoua received a good education in his youth. His family wanted him to marry, but he preferred religious life and set sail to join his uncle Paul, who had settled in Armorica. A storm is said to have driven him into the Bay of Brest, where the abbot of Landévennec received him and gave him the novice's habit. Jaoua then joined Paul, who had become bishop of Léon, who ordained him a priest and sent him to Brasparts. The people there, the account says, were still attached to paganism. The old authors describe him as patient with some, harsher with others, but tireless in preaching and teaching.

Abbot of Daoulas and bishop of Léon

Albert Le Grand's account tells of a bloody episode: a lord of Le Faou, still a pagan, is said to have burst into the church of Daoulas and killed the monks who were there, among them Saint Tadec and the abbot Saint Judulus. Jaoua is said to have escaped the massacre. The legend adds that the lord, struck by divine punishment, was converted after a miracle of Saint Paul, who tamed a dragon that had come to ravage the land. In reparation, he is said to have founded the abbey of Daoulas, of which Jaoua became the first abbot. Leaving

Brasparts to Saint Tujan, he also led, according to tradition, monasteries on the Île de Batz and at Ac'h, in Plouguerneau. Paul, grown old, is said finally to have entrusted him with his office as bishop of Léon; the idea that he was consecrated at Dol by Saint Samson is disputed by historians.

His death and the cart of Plouvien

Tradition says that a famine struck Brasparts and that Jaoua was called to help. Through his prayer, plenty returned, but he fell ill and died there. Before dying, he is said to have asked that his body be placed on a cart and buried wherever the horses stopped. The animals took the road to Léon of their own accord and the cart broke down at Plouvien, at the place called Porz-ar-Chraz. He was buried there, and a first church was built over his grave. That is why he is regarded as the founder of the parish of Plouvien.

Devotion, relics and art

Saint Jaoua is celebrated on March 2. His tomb, opened in 1856 and again in 1897, is in the chapel of Saint Jaoua at Plouvien, built in the 16th century on the site of a Romanesque church. In 1897 and 1898, fragments of his relics were solemnly carried to the cathedral of Saint-Pol-de-Léon, to the parish church of Plouvien, to Brasparts and to the bishop's house in Quimper. At Brasparts, the church of Notre-Dame and Saint-Tujan keeps a reliquary, a statue showing him as a bishop and a processional banner. His pardon (a traditional Breton religious festival) takes place every year at Plouvien, on the first Sunday of May. Places such as Saint-Jouan-de-l'Isle and Saint-Jouan-des-Guérets are linked to him by their names.

What can we learn from Saint Jaoua?

Jaoua is a saint of patient mission. He was given difficult parishes and served them without losing heart. He experienced violence and saw, according to tradition, the conversion of the man who had committed it. His last mission was to come back to help a starving people. You can pray to him for parish priests, for those who work in places indifferent to faith, and for regions affected by poverty.

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

Where to pray to Saint Jaoua

- **Plouvien** (Finistère): the chapel of Saint Jaoua, with his tomb and his spring, and the parish church, which keeps a relic.
- **Brasparts** (Finistère): the church of Notre-Dame and Saint-Tujan, with a reliquary and a statue of the saint.
- **Saint-Pol-de-Léon** (Finistère): the cathedral, which received part of his relics in 1897.
- **Daoulas** (Finistère): the former abbey of which he is said to have been the first abbot.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Jaoua for Priests and the Land of Léon

Saint Jaoua, a disciple of Saint Paul Aurelian, was according to tradition parish priest of Brasparts, abbot of Daoulas and bishop of Léon; his tomb is venerated at Plouvien. Prayer composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. It entrusts to him parish priests, struggling regions and the land of Léon.

Prayer to Saint Jaoua

Saint Jaoua,
who came from the sea to proclaim Christ in Brittany,
you patiently served difficult parishes
and did not abandon those who resisted the Gospel.
Give the priests of our parishes
your courage and perseverance.

You who returned to Brasparts in time of famine,
watch over those who lack what they need,
and teach us to share.
Keep Léon and all Brittany in the faith,
and bless those who come to pray at your tomb in Plouvien.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

When to pray to Saint Jaoua

- On his feast day, March 2, or at his pardon in Plouvien, on the first Sunday of May.

- For priests and parish pastors.
- For those who proclaim the Gospel in places indifferent to faith.
- In times of scarcity, poverty or crisis.

To prepare for his feast, you can pray the novena to Saint Jaoua from February 22 to March 2, and read the life of Saint Jaoua.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Jaoua

This novena follows the life of Saint Jaoua as Breton tradition tells it, as recorded by Albert Le Grand. Novena composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. To finish it on his feast day, March 2, begin on February 22 (February 23 in leap years).

How to pray this novena

Each day, make 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 Jaoua, pray for us." The episodes come from accounts that mix history and legend.

Day 1: Choosing God

The young Jaoua's family wanted him to marry, but he chose religious life. He followed the inner call rather than the plans of his relatives.

Prayer: Lord, give me the courage to choose you above all.

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

Day 2: The storm

A storm drove his boat into the Bay of Brest. This setback led him to Landévennec.

Prayer: Lord, teach me to see your hand in setbacks.

Act of the day: Accept an unexpected event of the day with peace.

Day 3: The novice

At Landévennec, Jaoua learned monastic life. Before teaching, he became a learner.

Prayer: Lord, give me a teachable heart to learn from you.

Act of the day: Read and meditate on a passage of the Gospel.

Day 4: A difficult parish

As parish priest of Brasparts, he found people little open to the Gospel. He preached and taught without growing weary.

Prayer: Lord, support priests who give themselves in difficult parishes.

Act of the day: Thank your parish priest or pray for him.

Day 5: Escaping violence

According to legend, he escaped the massacre at Daoulas, where his brother monks were killed. He continued his mission despite fear.

Prayer: Lord, protect Christians who are victims of violence and keep them in peace.

Act of the day: Pray for persecuted Christians.

Day 6: An enemy converted

The guilty lord was converted and founded the abbey of Daoulas. God can change the hardest hearts.

Prayer: Lord, I entrust to you someone who seems far from you.

Act of the day: Pray for someone who has wronged you.

Day 7: Abbot and bishop

Jaoua became abbot of Daoulas, then bishop of Léon. He carried heavy burdens in the service of all.

Prayer: Lord, give strength to those who bear responsibilities in the Church.

Act of the day: Pray for the bishop of your diocese.

Day 8: Helping the hungry

When famine struck Brasparts, he came back to pray for his former parishioners. He gave his last strength.

Prayer: Lord, come to the aid of the hungry, and make me generous.

Act of the day: Give to a food bank or a charity.

Day 9: The last journey

After his death, the cart carrying his body stopped at Plouvien. There a parish grew up around his tomb.

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

Act of the day: Attend Mass, or plan a pilgrimage to Plouvien.

Closing prayer

> *Saint Jaoua,*
> *patient apostle of Léon and the Monts d'Arrée,*
> *present to the Lord the intention I have entrusted to you,*
> *and keep Brittany in the faith.*
> *Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

You can also pray the prayer to Saint Jaoua, and read the life of Saint Jaoua.

PILGRIMAGE

Chapel of Saint Jaoua, Plouvien

The chapel of Saint Jaoua stands at Plouvien, in Finistère, in the heart of the Léon country. According to tradition, this is where the cart carrying the body of Saint Jaoua, who died at Brasparts in the 6th century, came to a stop. It shelters his tomb, and a holy spring bearing his name is close by. It is the saint's main place of pilgrimage.

A chapel born from a tomb

According to the account recorded by Albert Le Grand, Saint Jaoua had asked to be buried wherever the horses of his funeral cart stopped. The cart broke down at Plouvien, at the place called Porz-ar-Chraz. The saint was buried there, and a first wooden chapel was raised over his grave. A Romanesque church replaced it in the 11th century: it was the first parish church of Plouvien, before the center of the parish moved to the present village.

The chapel seen today dates from the 16th century, but it reuses elements of the Romanesque building. Saint Jaoua's tomb was opened in 1856, then again in 1897; fragments of relics were then shared among several churches of the diocese.

What you can see

Inside, the saint's tomb recalls the origin of the place. Old statues, including a depiction of Saint Jaoua, adorn the chapel. Nearby, the spring of Saint Jaoua, topped by a statue of the saint, carries on the Breton tradition of devotional springs. A local association looks after the chapel and organizes its activities.

The pardon of Saint Jaoua

The pardon of Saint Jaoua (a traditional Breton religious festival) is celebrated every year at the chapel on the first Sunday of May. It is the high point of the life of the place: Mass, procession and a gathering of the people of Plouvien and the surrounding area. The saint's liturgical feast, March 2, is also an occasion to come and pray there.

Praying on site

Before you come, you can read the life of Saint Jaoua. Before his tomb, entrust to him parish priests, the families of Léon and those going through times of poverty, then say the prayer to Saint Jaoua. A quiet visit to the spring can extend the prayer. These suggestions are offered by Saintspedia.

Other places of Saint Jaoua

- **Brasparts** (Finistère): the church of Notre-Dame and Saint-Tujan, with a reliquary, a statue and a banner of the saint.
- **Saint-Pol-de-Léon** (Finistère): the cathedral, which received part of his relics in 1897.
- **Daoulas** (Finistère): the abbey of which he is said to have been the first abbot.

Practical information

The chapel is in the commune of Plouvien, in northern Finistère, between Brest and Lannilis; it can be reached by car. Opening arrangements may vary: check with the parish or the chapel's association before you come, especially outside the pardon.

Credits and sources

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