

BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint John Eudes

Life, prayer, novena and pilgrimage

Feast day: August 19

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IN BRIEF

Saint John Eudes

17th-century French priest from Normandy, missionary, founder of the Eudists and apostle of the Hearts of Jesus and Mary.

Feast day	August 19
Born	November 14, 1601, Ri, Normandy (France)
Died	August 19, 1680, Caen, France
Canonized	May 31, 1925, by Pope Pius XI
Era	17th century

In this booklet

Life

Prayer to Saint John Eudes, Apostle of the Sacred Hearts

Novena to Saint John Eudes

Church of Notre-Dame-de-la-Gloriette in Caen, Tomb of Saint John Eudes

Credits and sources

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LIFE

Saint John Eudes

Saint John Eudes was a 17th-century French priest from Normandy and one of the great figures of the Catholic renewal in France. A tireless missionary, he preached more than a hundred parish missions, founded the Congregation of Jesus and Mary, known as the Eudists, to train priests, and the Order of Our Lady of Charity to welcome women in distress. He is best known for promoting the liturgical worship of the Hearts of Jesus and Mary. He died in Caen on August 19, 1680, and his feast is celebrated on that day.

Who was Saint John Eudes?

Jean Eudes was born on November 14, 1601, in Ri, a small village in Normandy near Argentan, into a family of farmers. His parents, Isaac Eudes and Marthe Corbin, had waited a long time for a child and had entrusted him to the Virgin Mary by making a pilgrimage. One of his younger brothers later became famous as François Eudes de Mézeray, royal historiographer and member of the Académie française.

A student of the Jesuits at the college in Caen, John stood out for his piety and his love of study. He chose the priesthood and in 1623 entered the French Oratory, the society of priests founded in Paris a few years earlier by Pierre de Bérulle. There he received a deep spiritual formation, centered on the mystery of Christ and the dignity of the priesthood, which shaped all his later work.

Key dates

- **November 14, 1601**: Born in Ri, Normandy.
- **1623**: Enters the Oratory in Paris.
- **December 1625**: Ordained a priest.
- **1627 and 1631**: Cares for plague victims in Argentan, then in Caen.

- **From 1632**: Begins his parish missions in Normandy and beyond.
- **1637**: Publishes *The Life and Kingdom of Jesus in Christian Souls*.
- **1641**: Founds the house of Our Lady of Charity in Caen.
- **March 25, 1643**: Leaves the Oratory and founds the Congregation of Jesus and Mary in Caen.
- **1648**: First liturgical celebration of the feast of the Heart of Mary, in Autun.
- **1672**: His communities celebrate a feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus for the first time.
- **August 19, 1680**: Dies in Caen.
- **April 25, 1909**: Beatified by Pope Saint Pius X.
- **May 31, 1925**: Canonized by Pope Pius XI, on the same day as the Curé of Ars.

Serving plague victims and parishes

As a young priest, John Eudes volunteered when the plague struck his home region in 1627. In 1631 the epidemic reached Caen. So as not to infect his fellow priests, he lived apart, in a large barrel set up in a meadow, and went out from it every day to nurse the sick and hear their confessions. This often-told episode sums up his courage and his practical good sense.

From 1632 he devoted himself to missions. For several weeks a team of priests would settle in a parish, preaching, teaching the catechism and hearing confessions without rest. John Eudes led more than a hundred of these missions, in Normandy, Brittany, the Paris region and Burgundy, and even preached before the royal court. Everywhere he saw the same problem: there were not enough well-trained priests to carry on the work of the missions once the preachers had left.



Saint John Eudes, old portrait.

The founder

During his missions, John Eudes met women who wanted to leave prostitution but had nowhere to go. A woman of the people in Caen, Madeleine Lamy, reproached him for doing nothing for them. In 1641 he opened a house of refuge, which became the Order of Our Lady of Charity, approved by the pope in 1666. In the 19th century, Saint Mary Euphrasia Pelletier drew from it the Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, now present throughout the world, including in the United States, Ireland and the Philippines.

To train priests, he left the Oratory in 1643, not without pain, and founded in Caen the Congregation of Jesus and Mary, a society of priests living in community without religious vows. The Eudists opened seminaries in Caen, Coutances, Lisieux, Rouen, Évreux and Rennes, and helped put into practice

in France the reform of the clergy called for by the Council of Trent. John Eudes also met strong opposition, especially from the Jansenists, and at the end of his life fell out of favor with the court.

Apostle of the Hearts of Jesus and Mary

For John Eudes, the heart means the inner self of a person, the center of their love. To contemplate the Heart of Jesus and the Heart of Mary is to enter into the love with which the Son and his mother love God and all people. He composed liturgical offices in their honor and had the feast of the Heart of Mary celebrated from 1648, then that of the Heart of Jesus in 1672, a few years before the revelations received by Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque at Paray-le-Monial. For this reason Pope Saint Pius X hailed him as the originator of the liturgical worship of the Sacred Hearts.

His written work is abundant. *The Life and Kingdom of Jesus in Christian Souls* invites every baptized person to let Christ live in them. *The Admirable Heart of the Most Holy Mother of God*, his last book, was completed shortly before his death and published in 1681.



The Church of Notre-Dame-de-la-Gloriette in Caen, where the remains of Saint John Eudes rest.

Why is Saint John Eudes linked to the Sacred Heart?

Saint John Eudes is not the patron of a particular profession, but he is honored as the father of the liturgical devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Long before these feasts entered the universal calendar, he composed their Masses and offices and had them celebrated in his communities. He is also naturally invoked for priests and seminarians, whose formation was his life's work, and for women and girls in distress, whom his foundation of Our Lady of Charity served.

His holiness unites contemplation and action: a man of prayer, wholly turned toward the love of Christ, who spent himself without counting the cost for the sick, sinners, rejected women and the training of priests. He reminds us that devotion to the Heart of Jesus is not a vague feeling but a call to love as Jesus loves.

Symbols and how to recognize Saint John Eudes in art

- **The dress of a 17th-century French priest**: a black cassock with the white bands (rabat) at the collar.
- **A heart**, held in his hand or shown above him, often the Hearts of Jesus and Mary united, sometimes surrounded by flames.
- **Stained-glass windows** in Normandy and in Eudist houses show him presenting the two Hearts to the faithful.

How to pray with Saint John Eudes

To pray with him, read the prayer to Saint John Eudes, or follow the novena to Saint John Eudes from August 10 to 18, so that it ends on the eve of his feast.

Where to pray to Saint John Eudes

- **Caen** (France): the Church of Notre-Dame-de-la-Gloriette, the former chapel of the Jesuit college where he studied as a young man, which keeps his tomb. Pilgrims gather there especially around August 19.
- **Ri** (Normandy): his native village, near Argentan.
- **Argentan**: the nearby town where he nursed plague victims in 1627.
- **Angers**: the motherhouse of the Good Shepherd Sisters, heirs of Our Lady of Charity.
- **Paray-le-Monial**: the shrine of the Sacred Heart, linked to the devotion he helped prepare.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint John Eudes, Apostle of the Sacred Hearts

Saint John Eudes wrote a great deal to teach Christians how to pray. His book *The Life and Kingdom of Jesus in Christian Souls* (1637) is at the heart of his work, and an excerpt from it is read every August 19 in the Liturgy of the Hours. This page offers a short passage from it, followed by an original prayer to Saint John Eudes.

"Jesus is your true head" (*The Kingdom of Jesus*)

John Eudes speaks directly to the reader to help them discover their union with Christ. This 17th-century text is in the public domain; we give its first sentence in an English translation by Saintspedia, followed by a summary of what comes next.

> *I beg you to consider that our Lord Jesus Christ is your true head, and that you are one of his members.*

John Eudes goes on to explain that everything that belongs to Christ is ours, just as what belongs to the head belongs to the body, and that Christians are called to continue in their own lives the life, the prayer and the love of Jesus. Source: Saint John Eudes, *The Life and Kingdom of Jesus in Christian Souls*, Part II; an excerpt is read in the Office of Readings on his feast.

John Eudes also wrote a Latin salutation to the Hearts of Jesus and Mary, the *Ave Cor sanctissimum* ("Hail, most holy Heart"), which the Eudists still pray today.

Prayer to Saint John Eudes, Apostle of the Sacred Hearts

Saint John Eudes, you wanted Jesus to live and reign in the heart of every baptized person: teach me to give him all the room in my life.

You contemplated the love of the Heart of Jesus and the tenderness of the Heart of Mary: open my heart to that love, so that I may love God and my neighbor with a heart like theirs.

You nursed the victims of the plague, welcomed women wounded by life and preached to the poorest people of the countryside: give me the courage to serve those who are forgotten. Pray for priests and seminarians, that they may be shepherds after the Heart of God.

I also entrust to you my intention (name it in silence). Heart of Jesus, Heart of Mary, be the refuge of my life. Amen.

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

When to pray this prayer

Saint John Eudes is celebrated on August 19, the anniversary of his death. You can also pray to him on the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the memorial of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, which follow Pentecost, during the month of June, traditionally dedicated to the Sacred Heart, or whenever you pray for vocations to the priesthood.

This prayer also suits anyone who works with people in great distress, those who care for the sick, and anyone who wants to grow in a simple, heartfelt love of Jesus and Mary.

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

NOVENA

Novena to Saint John Eudes

This novena is an original composition by Saintspedia that follows the stages of Saint John Eudes's life, from his native village of Ri to Caen. It is not an official liturgical text, nor was it written by the saint. To finish it on the eve of his feast on August 19, begin it on August 10; it ends on August 18.

You can pray it for a personal intention, for priests and seminarians, for the sick, or for people wounded by life. If you miss a day, simply continue where you left off: what matters is to persevere in prayer.

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 and a Hail Mary. The small act suggested for each day helps you live the day with the Heart of Jesus. You may pray alone, as a family or with a parish group.

Day 1: A child entrusted to Mary

John's parents had entrusted him to the Virgin Mary before he was born. All his life he kept a son's bond with her. We too can place our lives in her hands, and the lives of those we love.

Prayer: Virgin Mary, I entrust to you my life and those I love. Keep us close to your Son.

Today: Pray a decade of the Rosary for your family.

Day 2: Choosing to serve

At twenty-two, John entered the Oratory to become a priest. He answered a call by giving his youth. Every vocation is a gift for others, and every baptized person is called to serve. John did not know where this road would lead him; he simply took the first step.

Prayer: Lord, call young people to follow you, and give them the generosity to answer.

Today: Pray for a seminarian or for a young person discerning a vocation.

Day 3: The plague barrel

During the plague in Caen, John lived in a barrel in a meadow so that he could nurse the sick without infecting his brothers. Charity can be inventive and courageous at the same time. He did not wait for ideal conditions to love.

Prayer: Lord, I entrust to you the sick and those who care for them. Give them strength and hope.

Today: Call or visit someone who is sick.

Day 4: Bringing the Gospel to the poor

In his missions, John preached to farmers, craftsmen and the poor of the countryside. He wanted every person to discover the love of God, and he spoke simply so that all could understand. He spent long hours in the confessional, where hearts were healed one by one.

Prayer: Lord, make me a witness of your goodness to everyone I meet.

Today: Offer a word of encouragement to someone who is struggling with doubt.

Day 5: Christ lives in us

"Our Lord Jesus Christ is your true head, and you are one of his members." For John Eudes, the Christian life means letting Jesus live in us, so that our prayer, our work and our love become his.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, live in me. Pray in me, love in me, act in me.

Today: At the start of each activity, offer it to Jesus.

Day 6: Welcoming the wounded

John Eudes opened a house for women who wanted to leave prostitution. He even listened to the reproach of a woman of the people who told him he was doing nothing. Mercy begins with a look that does not judge, and sometimes with the humility to accept a fair criticism.

Prayer: Lord, give me eyes of mercy for those whom society rejects.

Today: Support a charity that welcomes people in great distress.

Day 7: Forming shepherds

John founded seminaries so that parishes would have well-trained priests. He knew that the faith of a people also depends on its shepherds, and he gave his life to forming them.

Prayer: Lord, give your Church priests after your own Heart, humble, learned and close to the poor.

Today: Thank a priest for his ministry.

Day 8: The Heart of Jesus and Mary

John Eudes contemplated the love of Christ and his mother, united in one love for God and for us. He wanted the Church to celebrate that love in her liturgy, and composed Masses and offices in honor of the two Hearts.

Prayer: Heart of Jesus, Heart of Mary, teach me to love as you love.

Today: Spend a few minutes before an image of the Sacred Heart, or before the Blessed Sacrament.

Day 9: Persevering to the end

Opposition, failure, disgrace: John Eudes went through many trials. He died in peace in Caen at the age of seventy-eight, entrusting his works to God. His foundations, which seemed fragile, still live today on several continents.

Prayer: Lord, at the end of this novena, I place my intention in your hands. Through the intercession of Saint John Eudes, give me perseverance in love. Amen.

Today: Name before God a trial you are going through, and hand it over to him.

Closing prayer

Saint John Eudes, missionary and apostle of the Hearts of Jesus and Mary, I entrust to you the intention of these nine days. Pray for priests, for the sick and for those whom life has wounded. Obtain for me a heart after the Heart of God. Amen.

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

PILGRIMAGE

Church of Notre-Dame-de-la-Gloriette in Caen, Tomb of Saint John Eudes

Caen is the city of Saint John Eudes: he studied here, cared for plague victims, founded his two great works, and died here in 1680. His remains now rest in the Church of Notre-Dame-de-la-Gloriette, the former chapel of the Jesuit college, in the heart of the city. It is the main place of remembrance and pilgrimage dedicated to the saint.

From the Eudist seminary to the Gloriette

At his death, John Eudes was buried in the chapel of the seminary he had founded in Caen for his Congregation of Jesus and Mary. The Revolution scattered the Eudists and upended the city's places of worship. His remains were later moved to the Church of Notre-Dame-de-la-Gloriette, built in the late 17th century for the Jesuit college, the very place where the young John Eudes had studied.



The Church of Notre-Dame-de-la-Gloriette in Caen.

A Jesuit church of the Grand Siècle

The Gloriette is a rare Caen example of a Jesuit-style church, with a classical facade and a bright interior with rich 17th-century decoration. It keeps the tomb of Saint John Eudes, which the faithful and members of the Eudist families come to venerate, especially around August 19.



The Church of Notre-Dame-de-la-Gloriette, the interior.

Praying beside Saint John Eudes

Before your visit, you can reread the life of Saint John Eudes. On site, a time of silence near his tomb is a chance to entrust an intention, especially for priests, the sick, and people wounded by life. The prayer to Saint John Eudes can accompany this moment. These suggestions are offered by Saintspedia.

Other places of Saint John Eudes

- **Ri** (Orne): his native village, near Argentan, which keeps his memory.
- **Argentan**: the neighboring town, where he cared for plague victims in 1627.
- **Caen**: the neighborhood of the former Eudist seminary, where he lived and died.

- **Angers**: the motherhouse of the Sisters of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, founded in the 19th century from his Order of Our Lady of Charity.
- **Paray-le-Monial** (Saône-et-Loire): the great shrine of the Sacred Heart, whose devotion he prepared the way for.

Practical information

The Church of Notre-Dame-de-la-Gloriette is in the center of Caen, a few minutes' walk from city hall and the Abbaye aux Hommes. Access has at times been limited in recent years because of construction work. Ask the parish or the Diocese of Bayeux and Lisieux about the church's opening and the celebrations held for the August 19 feast before you come.

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