BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Judoc

Life, prayer, novena and pilgrimage

Feast day: December 13

IN BRIEF

Saint Judoc

Breton prince of the 7th century who became a hermit in Ponthieu, patron of pilgrims.

Feast day	December 13
Born	7th century, Domnonia (northern Brittany)
Died	c. 669, Sidraga, now Saint-Josse-sur-Mer (Pas-de-Calais)
Canonized	immemorial cult
Era	7th century
Patron saint of	pilgrims

In this booklet

Life

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Novena to Saint Judoc

Church of Saint Peter, Saint-Josse-sur-Mer

Credits and sources

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LIFE

Saint Judoc

Saint Judoc (Josse in French, Judoce in Brittany) was a Breton prince of the 7th century, son of King Judael of Domnonia. He renounced the crown to become a priest and hermit in Ponthieu, in northern France, where he died around 669. His tomb gave birth to the village and pilgrimage of Saint-Josse-sur-Mer, in the Pas-de-Calais. Patron of pilgrims, his feast day is December 13.

Who was Saint Judoc?

Judoc belonged to the royal family of Domnonia, the Breton kingdom that covered the north of present-day Brittany. His elder brother was Saint Judicael, a king who also became a monk. Judoc chose the same path: he left power for a life of prayer, poverty and pilgrimage. His life is known to us through a Latin Life written several centuries after his death, which mixes historical memories with many wondrous stories. His cult, on the other hand, is very old and spread across a large part of Europe, from Brittany to Bavaria, by way of Flanders and Switzerland.

Key dates in the life of Judoc

- **7th century**: Born in Domnonia, into the family of King Judael.
- **After Judael's death**: His brother Judicael becomes king, then abdicates and leaves him the throne.
- **Shortly after**: Judoc in turn renounces the crown and sets out with a group of pilgrims toward Rome.
- **Then**: Welcomed by Haymon, count of Ponthieu, he becomes his chaplain, then lives as a hermit on the banks of the Authie, then of the Canche.
- **Later**: He finally makes his pilgrimage to Rome, then returns to settle on a hill near the sea.

- **c. 669**: Dies in his hermitage at Sidraga, present-day Saint-Josse-sur-Mer; he is buried in his oratory.
- **c. 793**: A monastery is founded on the place of his death; it will become the abbey of Saint-Josse.
- **1772**: The abbey is suppressed, before being sold and destroyed during the Revolution; the relics remain in the village church.

A prince who renounced the crown

According to tradition, when King Judael died, his eldest son Judicael took power. But he abdicated to withdraw to the monastery of Gaël and handed the throne to his younger brother Judoc. Judoc, in turn, refused the crown: he preferred religious life. He joined a group of pilgrims leaving for Rome. This double renunciation by the two brothers struck people's minds: in an age when power was often fought over with weapons, two princes chose prayer.

Hermit in Ponthieu

On the way, the pilgrims reached the banks of the Authie, the river that today separates the Pas-de-Calais from the Somme. The count of Ponthieu, Haymon, welcomed them and kept Judoc with him: he became a priest and the count's chaplain. But Judoc was looking for silence. With Haymon's agreement, he settled in a hermitage on the banks of the Authie, then on the banks of the Canche. He then founded a small community at the tip of a wooded plateau overlooking the shore. After finally making his pilgrimage to Rome, he returned and never left this place again. According to his Life, he built there with his own hands two oratories, dedicated to Saint Peter and Saint Paul. He died around 669 and was buried in his oratory.

The wondrous stories of his Life

His Life reports several miracles that say, in their own way, who he was. One day, when he had only one loaf left to share with his disciple, a beggar came by: Judoc gave him everything. The beggar was Christ, and four boats laden with food arrived shortly after. Another time, while crossing dry land with Count Haymon, he planted his staff in the ground and a spring gushed out; the hunting dogs rushed to it, and Judoc made a second spring gush out for the men. The account also tells of the long years in which the hermit had to resist the attacks of the devil. These stories are not historical reports, but they show the image people kept of him: a man of great charity and total trust in God.

A European cult

A monastery was built over his tomb at the end of the 8th century. In the early 10th century, fleeing the Normans, the monks took refuge in England with the relics. On their return, the abbey became a much-visited center of pilgrimage, especially by German pilgrims in the 14th and 15th centuries. Saint Judoc became the patron of pilgrims and is often shown as one of them, with the hat, the scrip and the staff, the pilgrim's walking stick.

Today, the church of Saint Peter in Saint-Josse keeps his reliquary. Each year at Pentecost, a novena and a procession gather the faithful there; the fishermen of Étaples once came to have their nets blessed before the herring season. Elsewhere, his name is borne by Saint-Josse-ten-Noode, near Brussels, by Saint-Judoce, in the Côtes-d'Armor, and by churches in Brittany such as those of Lohuec and Yvias. A pilgrimage on horseback is dedicated to him in Bavaria, and there is a pilgrimage church at Blatten, near Lucerne. His Latin name, Jodocus, gave rise to many first names: Joos, Joost, Jost and, in English, Joyce.

What can we learn from Saint Judoc?

Judoc gave up a throne to follow the poor Christ. He lived as a pilgrim, always ready to set out, and as a hermit, attentive to the poor who knocked at his door. His story reminds us that true greatness lies in service and self-giving. You can pray to him for pilgrims and travelers, for those who must make a life choice, and to learn to share the little you have.

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

Where to pray to Saint Judoc

- **Saint-Josse-sur-Mer** (Pas-de-Calais): the church of Saint Peter, which keeps his reliquary, and the Pentecost pilgrimage.
- **Saint-Judoce**, **Lohuec** and **Yvias** (Brittany): places that bear his name or are dedicated to him.
- **Saint-Josse-ten-Noode** (Belgium): the Brussels municipality that bears his name.
- **Blatten**, near Lucerne (Switzerland): the pilgrimage church of Saint Jost.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Judoc for Pilgrims and Travelers

Saint Judoc (Josse), a Breton prince of the 7th century, refused the crown of Domnonia to live as a pilgrim and hermit in Ponthieu, where he died around 669. Prayer composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. It is not an official liturgical text. It entrusts to him pilgrims, travelers and all who seek to share what they have.

Prayer to Saint Judoc

Saint Judoc,
son of a king who became a pilgrim,
you left your father's crown
to follow the poor Christ along the roads.
Teach me not to cling
to honors and riches that pass away.

You who gave your last loaf to the beggar
and recognized the Lord in him,
open my eyes to those who knock at my door,
and give me a generous heart,
trusting in Providence.

Patron of pilgrims,
watch over those who are on the road,
over travelers, sailors and exiles.
Lead us all to the Father's house.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

When to pray to Saint Judoc

- On his feast day, December 13, or during the Pentecost novena at Saint-Josse-sur-Mer.
- Before setting out on a pilgrimage or a journey.
- For sailors and coastal fishermen.
- When you must make an important life choice.
- When you have little, and yet want to share.

A prayer for pilgrims

> *Lord, guide the steps of those who are on the road,*
> *and bring them home in peace.*
> *Saint Judoc, pilgrim of God, pray for them. Amen.*

To prepare for his feast, you can pray the novena to Saint Judoc from December 5 to 13, and discover the life of Saint Judoc.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Judoc

This novena is inspired by the life of Saint Judoc (Josse), a Breton prince who became a priest, pilgrim and hermit in Ponthieu in the 7th century. Novena composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. It is not an official liturgical text. To finish it on his feast day, December 13, begin on December 5. You can also pray it at any other time, for example at Pentecost, when Saint-Josse-sur-Mer holds its own novena.

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 Judoc, pray for us." The act suggested each day helps you live the novena concretely. The episodes recounted come from his Life, which mixes history and legend.

Day 1: A king's son

Judoc was born into the royal family of Domnonia. He could have lived in honors. Yet God was calling him elsewhere.

Prayer: Lord, teach me to receive what I have as a gift, and to use it for you.

Act of the day: Thank God for three gifts you have received in your life.

Day 2: A brother's example

His brother Judicael left the throne to become a monk. Judoc saw in him a model and followed the same path.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for those who showed me the way by their example. Make me an example for others.

Act of the day: Pray for a brother, a sister or someone close to you.

Day 3: Refusing the crown

In his turn, Judoc refused power. He chose poverty and prayer rather than the glory of the world.

Prayer: Lord, free me from the desire to dominate and to be seen. Give me a humble heart.

Act of the day: Let someone else take first place in a concrete situation.

Day 4: Setting out

Judoc left with pilgrims for Rome. A pilgrim travels with little luggage, relying on God.

Prayer: Lord, make my life a pilgrimage toward you. Lighten me of what weighs me down.

Act of the day: Go for a walk while praying, or visit a nearby church.

Day 5: Serving where you are

Welcomed by Count Haymon, Judoc became his chaplain. He agreed to stop and to serve where God placed him.

Prayer: Lord, help me to serve faithfully where you have placed me today.

Act of the day: Do a quiet favor for a colleague or a neighbor.

Day 6: The silence of the hermitage

Judoc withdrew to the banks of the Authie, then of the Canche. In solitude, he learned to listen to God.

Prayer: Lord, help me to love the silence in which you speak to the heart.

Act of the day: Turn off screens for an hour and pray for a few minutes.

Day 7: The last loaf

His Life tells that he gave his last loaf to a beggar, who was Christ, and that boats laden with food then arrived. God is never outdone in generosity.

Prayer: Lord, teach me to recognize your face in the poor, and to share even when I have little.

Act of the day: Give a meal or concrete help to a person in need.

Day 8: The spring in the desert

According to the story, Judoc made a spring gush out by planting his staff in dry ground. God gives living water to those who thirst.

Prayer: Lord, source of living water, quench the thirst of my heart and of all who thirst for you.

Act of the day: Make the Sign of the Cross with holy water, thinking of your baptism.

Day 9: The end of the pilgrimage

Judoc died around 669 in his hermitage, near the sea. For him, the pilgrimage ended in the Father's house.

Prayer: Lord, lead me to you at the end of my road. Through the intercession of Saint Judoc, grant me the grace I ask in this novena, if it is your will.

Act of the day: Pray for the departed members of your family and, if possible, attend Mass.

Living the novena with Saint Judoc

Judoc chose to be poor among the poor and a pilgrim among pilgrims. During these nine days, you can carry travelers, sailors, migrants and all who are searching. If you can, visit Saint-Josse-sur-Mer, where his relics are still venerated.

Closing prayer

> *Saint Judoc,*
> *prince who became poor and a pilgrim of God,*
> *you gave everything to follow Christ.*
> *Present to the Lord the intention I have entrusted to you.*
> *Keep me generous and trusting,*
> *and watch over those who are on the road.*
> *Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

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

PILGRIMAGE

Church of Saint Peter, Saint-Josse-sur-Mer

Saint-Josse, sometimes called Saint-Josse-sur-Mer, is a village in the Pas-de-Calais a few kilometers from the Opal Coast and from Montreuil-sur-Mer. It was here, at the place then called Sidraga, that Saint Judoc (Josse) lived as a hermit and died around 669. Its church of Saint Peter keeps the reliquary with his relics, and the village has been a place of pilgrimage for centuries.

From hermitage to abbey

According to his Life, Judoc had settled on a hill overlooking the sea, where he built two oratories dedicated to Saint Peter and Saint Paul. He was buried there. At the end of the 8th century, a monastery was founded over his tomb. In the early 10th century, the monks, fleeing the Norman invasions, took refuge in England with the relics. On their return, the abbey of Saint-Josse became a much-visited pilgrimage center, especially for pilgrims from Germany in the 14th and 15th centuries. Suppressed in 1772, the abbey was sold and then destroyed during the Revolution: almost nothing remains of it.

The church of Saint Peter and the reliquary

The parish church of Saint Peter inherited the memory of the abbey. Its Gothic choir was originally the outer chapel of the abbey; it was built under Abbot Mathieu de La Warenne, between the late 15th and early 16th centuries. On either side of the high altar you can still see the coats of arms of the abbey and of this abbot. The nave and the brick bell tower date from the second half of the 19th century.

In a recess of the choir rests the reliquary containing the relics of Saint Judoc. For centuries they were wrapped in a precious oriental fabric, the "shroud of Saint Josse", removed in the early 1920s and now kept at the Louvre Museum. Outside, on the walls of the choir, you can see votive graffiti carved by sailors from the end of the 19th century onward.

Praying on site

Before you come, you can read the life of Saint Judoc. Before his reliquary, entrust to him pilgrims, travelers and sailors, then say the prayer to Saint Judoc. The high point of the year is Pentecost: a novena begins, and a procession carries the reliquary to the calvary on the hill of Bavémont, at Airon-Saint-Vaast. These suggestions are offered by Saintspedia.

Other places of Saint Judoc

- **Saint-Judoce** (Côtes-d'Armor): the Breton municipality that bears his name.
- **Saint-Josse-ten-Noode** (Belgium): a Brussels municipality named after him.
- **Blatten**, near Lucerne (Switzerland): the pilgrimage church of Saint Jost.

Practical information

Saint-Josse lies between Montreuil-sur-Mer and Berck, a few kilometers from the coast, and is easily reached by car. The church is a place of prayer: modest dress and silence are requested during services. Opening hours, Mass times and the program of the Pentecost pilgrimage may vary: check with the parish or the town hall before you come.

Credits and sources

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