

BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Lioba

Life, prayer and novena

Feast day: September 28

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IN BRIEF

Saint Lioba

Anglo-Saxon Benedictine nun, abbess of Tauberbischofsheim and coworker of Saint Boniface in Germany.

Feast day	September 28
Born	c. 700-710, Wessex, England
Died	782, Schornsheim, Germany
Era	8th century

In this booklet

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Credits and sources

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LIFE

Saint Lioba

Saint Lioba was an Anglo-Saxon Benedictine nun of the eighth century, a relative and coworker of Saint Boniface, the apostle of Germany. Formed at the abbey of Wimborne, in Wessex, she joined Boniface on the continent and became abbess of Tauberbischofsheim, in Franconia. A learned woman, a trusted adviser to bishops and a friend of Queen Hildegard, wife of Charlemagne, she died in 782 at Schornsheim, near Mainz. Her relics rest at Petersberg, near Fulda, and the Church celebrates her on September 28.

Who was Saint Lioba?

Her Anglo-Saxon baptismal name seems to have been Truthgeba. The nickname Lioba, which is linked to a Germanic word meaning "love" or "beloved", is said to have come from the affection she inspired.

We know her mainly through the *Life of Saint Lioba* written around 836 by Rudolf, a monk of Fulda, from the memories of four of her disciples. A letter she herself wrote to Boniface in her youth has also survived.

Lioba belongs to the great generation of Anglo-Saxon missionaries, men and women, who evangelized Germany in the eighth century. With Saint Walburga and Saint Thecla of Kitzingen, she brought to life women's monasteries that were both houses of prayer and schools.



Saint Lioba, abbess of Tauberbischofsheim.

Key dates in the life of Saint Lioba

- **c. 700-710**: Born in Wessex, England, into a noble family related to Saint Boniface.
- **Childhood**: Entrusted to the double abbey of Wimborne, under the guidance of Abbess Tetta.
- **c. 732**: Writes to Boniface a letter in Latin, ending with a few lines of verse of her own.
- **c. 748**: At the call of Boniface, she leaves for Germany with other nuns.
- **c. 750**: Becomes abbess of the monastery of Tauberbischofsheim, in Franconia.
- **754**: Before his last journey to Frisia, Boniface gives her his monastic cowl and asks that she one day be buried near him; he dies a martyr that same year.

- **782**: Dies at Schornsheim, near Mainz, and is buried at Fulda.
- **Ninth century**: Her relics are moved to the Church of Saint Peter at Petersberg, near Fulda.

A young nun at Wimborne

According to Rudolf of Fulda, her mother, long childless, had dedicated her to God before her birth. As a child, Lioba was entrusted to the monastery of Wimborne, where a community of monks and a community of nuns lived side by side under the authority of Abbess Tetta.

There she learned Latin, Scripture, the Fathers of the Church and canon law. Rudolf describes her as a tireless reader, who had Scripture read aloud beside her even while she rested.

Her letter to Boniface, a relative on her mother's side, reveals a shy and fervent young woman. She asks him to pray for her parents and to correct her style, and adds a few Latin verses composed according to the rules she had just learned. It is one of the rare personal writings of a nun of that time.

Abbess in Germany

Around 748, Boniface, by then an archbishop, asked the abbess of Wimborne to send him Lioba to help with his mission. He entrusted to her the monastery of Tauberbischofsheim, in the Tauber valley.

The house soon became a seedbed: several of her nuns would be called to lead other communities in Germany. Rudolf states that, in Boniface's name, she had authority over the nuns of the whole mission.

Lioba governed with wisdom and moderation. She made sure her sisters did not wear themselves out with excessive vigils and fasting, required a rest in the afternoon during summer so that study and prayer remained possible, and welcomed everyone with kindness.

Her *Life* reports several miracles: she is said to have calmed through her prayer a violent storm that terrified the inhabitants, and to have exposed a slander that threatened the good name of her monastery.

The trust of Boniface

In 754, before leaving for Frisia, Boniface sent for her, urged her never to abandon the land of her mission, and gave her his monk's cowl. He asked the monks of Fulda to bury her near him after her death, so that they might await the resurrection together. A few weeks later, he was killed at Dokkum with his companions.

After Boniface's death, Lioba remained in Germany. Bishops consulted her, and according to Rudolf she was the only woman allowed to enter the monastery of Fulda to pray and speak with the monks. She was received at the court of Pepin the Short, then of Charlemagne, and Queen Hildegard regarded her as a dear friend.

Death and cult

In old age, Lioba withdrew with a few companions to an estate at Schornsheim, near Mainz, on the advice of Bishop Lull, Boniface's successor. She died there in 782. The monks of Fulda, not daring to open the martyr's tomb, buried her near the altar, not far from him.

In the ninth century, her relics were moved to the Church of Saint Peter at Petersberg, on a hill near Fulda, which is sometimes called Lioba's church for that reason. Her cult remains alive in Hesse and Franconia, and several Benedictine communities look to her, such as the Benedictine Sisters of Saint Lioba, founded in Germany in the twentieth century.

Why pray to Saint Lioba?

Saint Lioba has no official patronage, but she shows that a life entirely given to God puts out neither intelligence nor friendship. She joined study, prayer and leadership with a remarkable sense of balance, and she recalls the place of women in the evangelization of Europe.

She can be invoked for nuns and religious sisters, for teachers and students, for all who hold responsibility, and for friendships lived in God.

Symbols and how to recognize Saint Lioba in art

Lioba is shown as a Benedictine abbess, with a crosier and a book, the signs of her authority and her love of learning. She sometimes holds a bell or a lamp.

Where to pray to Saint Lioba

- **Petersberg** (Hesse, Germany): the Church of Saint Peter, which keeps her relics.
- **Fulda**: the cathedral, where Saint Boniface rests and near whom she was first buried.
- **Tauberbischofsheim** (Baden-Württemberg): the town of her abbey, where her memory is still honored.
- **Schornsheim** (Rhenish Hesse): the place of her death, where a fountain recalls her memory.
- **Wimborne Minster** (Dorset, England): the church that is heir to the abbey where she was formed.

To pray with her, see the prayer to Saint Lioba and the novena to Saint Lioba.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Lioba

Saint Lioba, abbess of Tauberbischofsheim and coworker of Saint Boniface, joined prayer, study and service to the mission. As far as we know, no traditional prayer to her has come down to us. Here is an original prayer, followed by intentions inspired by her life. This prayer is an original text by Saintspedia, free to use for personal and community prayer.

Prayer to Saint Lioba

Saint Lioba, you whom people called the beloved,
you left everything to serve Christ in a foreign land.
Teach me to love with a wide and faithful heart.

You never tired of reading the Word of God.
Give me a love for Scripture,
and a mind that seeks the truth with humility.

You led your sisters with gentleness and balance.
Pray for all who hold responsibility in the Church, in a school or in a family:
may they ask much without crushing,
and encourage without flattering.

You kept the friendship of Saint Boniface to the end.
Obtain for me true friendships that lead to God.
I entrust to you my intention: (name it in silence).

By your prayer you calmed the storm.
Calm the storms of my heart
and give me the peace of Christ. Amen.

Intentions to entrust to Saint Lioba

- For nuns and religious sisters, and for vocations among women.
- For teachers, students and researchers.
- For missionaries who live far from their homeland.
- For those who exercise authority, that they may keep a sense of balance.
- For spiritual friendships and teamwork in the Church.

When to pray this prayer

Saint Lioba is celebrated on September 28. You can also pray to her at the start of a school year, before taking on a new responsibility, or in a time of inner turmoil. For a longer time of prayer, follow the novena to Saint Lioba, and read the life of Saint Lioba.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Lioba

This novena to Saint Lioba is an original composition by Saintspedia. Over nine days, it follows the Anglo-Saxon nun who left England to help Saint Boniface in his mission, led the abbey of Tauberbischofsheim and became a trusted adviser of bishops and queens. To end on her feast day, September 28, begin it on September 20. You can also pray it at any time, for example at the start of a school year or before taking on a new responsibility.

How to pray this novena

Each day, find a quiet moment. Make the Sign of the Cross, read the short meditation, say the prayer of the day, then an Our Father, a Hail Mary and a Glory Be. End with the small act suggested. Since Lioba loved Scripture, you might read a short passage of the Bible each day as well. If you miss a day, simply continue the next.

Entrust to Saint Lioba a precise intention at the start: a vocation, a student, a teacher, a friendship, a community or a person who carries heavy responsibilities.

Day 1: The beloved

Her baptismal name was probably Truthgeba, but she was called Lioba, a name linked to the word for "love" or "beloved", because of the affection she inspired. Holiness makes a person more lovable, not less.

Prayer: Saint Lioba, teach me to love others warmly and simply, so that they may sense God's love through me. Amen.

Today: Show affection to someone who rarely receives it.

Day 2: A child offered to God

According to her biographer, her mother, long childless, dedicated her to God before her birth. As a child, Lioba was entrusted to the abbey of Wimborne. Her vocation grew from the faith of her family.

Prayer: Saint Lioba, pray for parents who long for a child, and for children who are discovering God's call. Amen.

Today: Pray for a couple hoping for a child, or for a young person discerning a vocation.

Day 3: A lover of Scripture

At Wimborne, Lioba learned Latin, Scripture, the Fathers of the Church and canon law. She never stopped reading, and even had Scripture read aloud beside her while she rested. Study, for her, was a way of loving God with her mind.

Prayer: Saint Lioba, give me a love for God's Word and the perseverance to study it. Amen.

Today: Read a chapter of a Gospel slowly.

Day 4: A humble letter

As a young nun, Lioba wrote to Boniface, asking him to pray for her parents and to correct her Latin, and adding a few verses of her own. She was not afraid to show her shyness and her desire to learn.

Prayer: Saint Lioba, give me the humility to ask for help and to accept correction. Amen.

Today: Write a few words of thanks to someone who has taught you something important.

Day 5: Leaving for the mission

Around 748, at Boniface's call, Lioba left England for Germany, a land she did not know. She answered God's call wherever it led her.

Prayer: Saint Lioba, pray for missionaries far from their homeland, and give me the courage to go where God sends me. Amen.

Today: Pray for a missionary, or support a mission in a concrete way.

Day 6: Leading with balance

As abbess of Tauberbischofsheim, Lioba made sure her sisters did not exhaust themselves with excessive vigils and fasts, and insisted on rest so that prayer and study remained possible. Wisdom knows the measure of things.

Prayer: Saint Lioba, pray for all who lead others, that they may be demanding without crushing, and kind without weakness. Amen.

Today: Take a real moment of rest, and offer it to God.

Day 7: Calming the storm

Her *Life* tells that through her prayer she calmed a violent storm that terrified the people, and that she cleared her monastery of a slander. Her trust in God brought peace to others.

Prayer: Saint Lioba, calm the storms in my heart and in my family, and protect those who are falsely accused. Amen.

Today: Refuse to repeat gossip, and say something good about the person concerned.

Day 8: A faithful friendship

Before his martyrdom in 754, Boniface gave Lioba his monk's cowl and asked that she be buried near him. Their friendship in Christ lasted beyond death. True friends help each other toward God.

Prayer: Saint Lioba, bless my friendships, and give me friends who lead me to God. Amen.

Today: Pray for your closest friends, and contact one of them.

Day 9: Resting in peace

In old age, Lioba withdrew to Schornsheim, where she died in 782. She was buried at Fulda near Boniface, and her relics now rest at Petersberg. Her life, given from childhood, ended in the peace of God, among the companions who had shared her prayer.

Prayer: Saint Lioba, obtain for me the grace to remain faithful to the end, and to await the resurrection with hope. Amen.

Today: Pray for the deceased members of your family and your friends.

Closing prayer

> *Lord our God, you gave Saint Lioba a great love for your Word, a wise heart to lead her sisters and a faithful friendship with Saint Boniface in the service of the Gospel. Through her intercession, bless religious sisters, teachers, students and missionaries, and grant us wisdom, balance and peace. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

You can also pray the prayer to Saint Lioba on any day, and read her life.

CREDITS

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