

BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Medericus (Saint Merri)

Life, prayer, novena and pilgrimage

Feast day: August 29

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IN BRIEF

Saint Medericus (Saint Merri)

Abbot of saint-martin in autun, died a hermit in paris in 700, patron of prisoners.

Feast day	August 29
Born	7th century, the region of Autun, France
Died	August 29, 700, Paris, France
Canonized	immemorial cult
Era	7th century
Patron saint of	prisoners, the sick

In this booklet

Life

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Novena to Saint Medericus (Saint Merri)

Church of Saint-Merri in Paris

Credits and sources

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LIFE

Saint Medericus (Saint Merri)

Saint Medericus, better known in Paris as Saint Merri or Merry, was a monk of the abbey of Saint-Martin in Autun, in Burgundy, who became its abbot around 680. Drawn to solitude, he set out on a pilgrimage to Paris with his disciple Frodulphus and ended his life there as a hermit, near a small oratory on the Right Bank. He died on August 29, 700. The Church of Saint-Merri, in the heart of Paris, is built over his tomb. His feast day is August 29.

Who was Saint Medericus (Saint Merri)?

Medericus (Latin: *Medericus*) is a saint of the Merovingian era. We know his life from an early hagiographical account that mixes precise memories with many miracles. It shows a man who always sought God in silence, and whom his reputation for holiness kept catching up with. He is best known for the release of prisoners that tradition attributes to him, which made him their patron. His name turned into "Merri" in popular speech, and he became a very Parisian saint.

Key dates

- **7th century**: Born into a distinguished family in the Autun region of Burgundy.
- **Around age 13**: Offered as an oblate to the abbey of Saint-Martin in Autun, where he is raised according to the Rule of Saint Benedict.
- **c. 680**: On the death of Abbot Heroald, the monks unanimously elect him abbot, on the advice of the bishop of Autun.
- **After 680**: He withdraws as a hermit into the forest, but the bishop makes him return to the monastery.

- **Late 7th century**: Now elderly, he sets out on foot on a pilgrimage to Paris with his disciple Frodulphus; ill, he stops for several months at Champeaux, near Melun.
- **Until 700**: He lives as a recluse near the oratory of Saint-Pierre-des-Bois, on the Right Bank of Paris, for two years and nine months.
- **August 29, 700**: Dies in Paris, surrounded by his disciples, and is buried in the oratory.
- **884**: Bishop Gozlin of Paris has his remains raised and honored in a chapel.

The monk who fled honors

Offered at a young age to the abbey of Saint-Martin in Autun, Medericus grew up there in prayer, obedience and great austerity. According to his biographer, he ate only barley bread soaked in water, twice a week, and tried to hide his penances from his brothers. But his reputation for holiness crossed the walls of the cloister.

Around 680, on the death of Abbot Heroald, the bishop of Autun advised the monks to choose a shepherd able to protect the flock of Christ. After three days of fasting, they unanimously elected Medericus. The more he was raised up, the more he faded into the background. The crowds drawn by his miracles weighed on him. He fled into the forest of the Morvan to live alone with God. His saddened monks searched for him and found him, and the bishop had to threaten him with excommunication to make him agree to return.

The pilgrim to Paris, freer of prisoners

At the end of his life, Medericus set out on pilgrimage with his young disciple Frodulphus, also called Saint Frou, toward the tombs of Saint Denis and Saint Germain, bishop of Paris, who like them came from the Autun region. Elderly, he walked with difficulty and fell ill at Champeaux, near Melun, where the two monks stayed for several months.

This is where the story that made him famous is set. Going to Melun to practice charity, Medericus heard prisoners groaning in the depths of their dungeon. Moved, he prayed to God for their release, and, according to tradition, the prison doors opened by themselves. On the road to Paris, other healings and releases are attributed to him, at Bonneuil-sur-Marne and near Charenton. Whatever gifts people made him, he gave at once to the poor. The village of Saint-Méry, in Seine-et-Marne, keeps the memory of one of his stops.

The hermit of the Right Bank

On reaching Paris, Medericus settled in a small hermitage near the oratory of Saint-Pierre-des-Bois, beside the great Roman road that would become the rue Saint-Martin, in a marshy area. He lived there as a recluse for two years and nine months, in prayer, after kneeling at the tomb of Saint Germain. He died on August 29, 700, surrounded by a few disciples. Frodulphus then returned to Autun.

Devotion and iconography

Medericus's tomb drew the faithful very quickly. In 884 Bishop Gozlin of Paris had his remains raised, and in the time of the Norman sieges he was chosen as patron saint of the Right Bank. A church of Saint-Pierre-Saint-Merri was built in the tenth century, then the present church, in the Flamboyant Gothic style, between 1500 and 1565. His remains still rest in the crypt. Some of his relics were also given to Champeaux. He is listed in the Roman Martyrology on August 29.

He is shown as an abbot, often freeing prisoners, as in the large painting by Simon Vouet made around 1640 for the Church of Saint-Merri. He is invoked for prisoners and the sick.

What can we learn from Saint Medericus?

Medericus spent his whole life trying to disappear, and God made him a saint known to all of Paris. He obeyed when called back, he walked despite illness, and he was never indifferent to those who suffered behind bars. We can pray to him for prisoners and their families, for the sick, and for all who seek inner silence in the bustle of the city.

Where to pray to Saint Medericus

- **Paris** (4th arrondissement): the Church of Saint-Merri, rue Saint-Martin, built over his tomb, whose crypt keeps his remains.
- **Champeaux** (Seine-et-Marne): the collegiate church of Saint-Martin, where he stayed while ill and which received part of his relics.
- **Saint-Méry** (Seine-et-Marne): the village that grew up around a chapel built in memory of his passage.
- **Autun** (Saône-et-Loire): the town of the abbey of Saint-Martin, where he was a monk and abbot.

To pray with him at home, you can use the prayer to Saint Medericus or the novena to Saint Medericus.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Medericus (Saint Merri) for Prisoners and the Sick

Saint Medericus, or Saint Merri, was a monk and then abbot of Saint-Martin in Autun. Drawn to silence, he ended his life as a hermit in Paris, where he died in 700. Tradition says that his prayer made the doors of a prison open at Melun, which made him the patron of prisoners. This prayer is an original composition inspired by his life; it is not an official liturgical text. It entrusts to him prisoners, the sick and all who seek inner peace.

Prayer to Saint Medericus

Saint Medericus,
monk of Autun and hermit of Paris,
you sought God in silence
and fled the honors people wanted to give you.

On the roads of your pilgrimage,
sick and weary,
you heard the cry of prisoners
and you prayed for their release.
You gave to the poor
everything that was offered to you.

Pray for those in prison,
for their families who wait,
and for those who work among them.
Pray for the sick and for those who care for them.
Free us from the inner prisons
of fear, resentment and sin.

Watch over Paris, the city where you ended your journey,
and grant us, in the midst of the noise,
to find a place of silence for God.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

When to pray to Saint Medericus

- On his feast day, August 29.
- For a person in prison, or awaiting trial.
- For a sick person slow to recover.
- Before a pilgrimage or a long walk.

- When the busyness of life keeps you from praying.

A short prayer for prisoners

As you think of a person in detention, you can say:

> *Lord, you who came to proclaim liberty to captives,*
> *visit those in prison and open their hearts to your peace.*
> *Saint Medericus, pray for them. Amen.*

To prepare for his feast, you can pray the novena to Saint Medericus from August 21 to 29, and read the life of Saint Medericus.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Medericus (Saint Merri)

This novena is an original composition by Saintspedia, inspired by the life of Saint Medericus, or Saint Merri, abbot of Saint-Martin in Autun who died a hermit in Paris on August 29, 700. It is not an official liturgical text. To end it on his feast day, August 29, begin on August 21. It is especially fitting for praying for a prisoner, a sick person, or to find inner peace, and you can pray it at any time of the year.

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 Medericus, pray for us." The small act proposed each day helps you live the novena concretely.

Day 1: Offered to God from childhood

Medericus was entrusted at a young age to the abbey of Saint-Martin in Autun. There he learned prayer and life in community. What we receive in childhood can bear fruit for a lifetime.

Prayer: Lord, bless children and young people. Give them teachers who lead them to you.

Today: Pray for a child in your family or circle.

Day 2: Simplicity of life

Medericus lived very simply and hid his penances. He did not seek to be admired, but to belong wholly to God.

Prayer: Lord, free me from the need to be seen and admired. Let me serve you in secret.

Today: Make a small fast or sacrifice, without telling anyone.

Day 3: Elected in spite of himself

The monks unanimously elected him abbot. He accepted, but the more he was raised up, the more he faded into the background. True authority in the Church is a service.

Prayer: Lord, give those who hold responsibility a humble and serving heart.

Today: Do a service for someone who depends on you.

Day 4: Thirst for silence

Medericus fled into the forest to be alone with God. We too need places and moments of silence to hear his voice.

Prayer: Lord, give me a silent heart, able to listen to you in the midst of noise.

Today: Take fifteen minutes of complete silence, without screens or music.

Day 5: Obeying

His monks and his bishop called him back to the monastery, and he returned. The desire for solitude can be an escape; obedience purifies it.

Prayer: Lord, teach me to discern your will, even when it crosses my desires.

Today: Simply accept a request that is inconvenient for you.

Day 6: A pilgrim despite weariness

Old and ill, Medericus set out on foot for Paris with Frodulphus. He had to stop for a long time at Champeaux. The road to God also passes through weakness.

Prayer: Lord, I entrust to you the sick who are slow to recover. Give them patience and hope.

Today: Visit or call someone who is ill.

Day 7: The prison doors

At Melun, Medericus heard prisoners groaning and prayed for them. According to tradition, the doors opened. Christ identifies himself with prisoners: "I was in prison and you came to me."

Prayer: Lord, visit those in prison. Give them peace, hope and the path of conversion.

Today: Pray for an inmate, or support prison ministry.

Day 8: Giving everything

On the road, people showered Medericus with gifts. He gave them at once to the poor. What we receive is entrusted to us to be shared.

Prayer: Lord, make me generous with what I have received.

Today: Share with a poor person something that was given to you.

Day 9: A hermit in the heart of the city

Medericus ended his life as a recluse, in prayer, on the Right Bank of Paris. Today, in the middle of the city's bustle, the Church of Saint-Merri keeps his memory. We can find God in the heart of the world.

Prayer: Lord, in the midst of my busy life, help me find your peace. Through the intercession of Saint Medericus, grant me the grace I ask in this novena, if it is your will.

Today: Step into a city church and pray there for a few minutes.

Living the novena with Saint Medericus

If you are praying this novena for a person in detention, you can also think of their family, of the victims, of the guards and of the chaplains: all of them need God's peace. If you are praying it for yourself, ask Saint Medericus to free you from whatever shuts you in inwardly. And during these nine days, look each day for a little time of silence, in the manner of this hermit who knew how to pray in the heart of Paris.

Closing prayer

> *Saint Medericus,*
> *abbot of Autun and hermit of Paris,*
> *you loved the silence of God*
> *and you were attentive to the cry of prisoners.*
> *Present to God the intention I have carried during these nine days.*
> *Obtain freedom for those who are captive,*
> *healing for the sick,*
> *and for me the peace of a heart wholly given to God.*
> *Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

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

PILGRIMAGE

Church of Saint-Merri in Paris

The Church of Saint-Merri stands on the rue Saint-Martin, in the 4th arrondissement of Paris, a short walk from the Pompidou Center. It is built on the spot where Saint Medericus, abbot of Saint-Martin in Autun, lived as a hermit and died on August 29, 700. His remains still rest in the crypt of the church, which bears the popular form of his name.

From hermitage to Flamboyant church

In the seventh century, a small oratory dedicated to Saint Peter, called Saint-Pierre-des-Bois, stood here, beside the Roman road heading north, amid marshes. Medericus lived there as a recluse and was buried there. His tomb drew the faithful, and in 884 Bishop Gozlin of Paris had his remains raised. In the time of the Norman sieges, he became the patron saint of the Right Bank. In the tenth century a church of Saint-Pierre-Saint-Merri was built.

The present building was erected between 1500 and 1565, in the full Renaissance, but in a Flamboyant Gothic style so close to that of Notre-Dame that it was nicknamed "little Notre-Dame." It counts among the "four daughters" of the cathedral of Paris. It has been a listed historic monument since 1862.



The nave of the Church of Saint-Merri.

Visiting the church

The west facade, on the rue Saint-Martin, is covered with canopies, friezes of foliage and fantastic animals. The small bell turret holds a bell from 1311, considered one of the oldest in Paris. Inside, the church has one of the most renowned organs in the capital and a rich collection of seventeenth- and nineteenth-century paintings, including Simon Vouet's large canvas, *Saint Merri Freeing Prisoners*. The chapels of the ambulatory were decorated with frescoes between 1843 and 1849. The crypt keeps the memory of the saint's tomb.

Praying on site

Before your visit, you can read the life of Saint Medericus. Before Simon Vouet's painting or near the crypt, entrust to him prisoners and their families, the sick, and those seeking peace in the middle of the city, then recite the prayer to Saint Medericus. These suggestions are offered by Saintspedia.

Other places of Saint Medericus

- **Champeaux** (Seine-et-Marne): the collegiate church of Saint-Martin, where he stayed while ill and which received part of his relics.
- **Saint-Méry** (Seine-et-Marne): the village that grew up around a chapel built in memory of his passage.
- **Autun** (Saône-et-Loire): the town of the abbey of Saint-Martin, where he was a monk and abbot.

Practical information

The church is at the corner of the rue Saint-Martin and the rue de la Verrerie, in a very busy neighborhood, reachable by metro and on foot from Châtelet or Hôtel de Ville. It is a working church: modest dress and silence are requested, especially during services. Access to the crypt is not always possible. Opening hours, Mass times and visiting times may vary: check with the parish or the Paris tourist office before you come.

CREDITS

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