BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Mildgyth

Life, prayer and novena

Feast day: January 17

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IN BRIEF

Saint Mildgyth

7th-century Anglo-Saxon princess, sister of Mildburh and Mildred, a nun in Kent according to tradition.

Feast day	January 17
Born	7th century, kingdom of the Magonsæte (western Midlands, England)
Died	7th or 8th century, Kent or Northumbria, according to different traditions
Canonized	immemorial cult
Era	7th century

In this booklet

Life

Prayer to Saint Mildgyth for Families and the Hidden Life

Novena to Saint Mildgyth

Credits and sources

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LIFE

Saint Mildgyth

Saint Mildgyth was an Anglo-Saxon princess of the 7th century who, according to tradition, became a nun in Kent. She is said to have been the youngest daughter of Merewalh, king of the Magonsæte, and of Domne Eafe, and the sister of two great abbesses, Saint Mildburh and Saint Mildred. Her life is very poorly known, so much so that historians doubt whether she really existed. Her feast day is January 17.

Who was Saint Mildgyth?

Mildgyth belongs to an Anglo-Saxon royal family that gave several saints to the Church. Her mother, Domne Eafe, was a granddaughter of King Eadbald of Kent; her father, Merewalh, ruled the Magonsæte, a people of the western Midlands subject to Mercia. Her elder sisters are well known: Mildburh was abbess of Wenlock, and Mildred (Mildrith) abbess of Minster-in-Thanet. Mildgyth, however, appears only in late texts. Scholars do not doubt that her two sisters existed, but remain cautious about her. What follows should therefore be read as the memory of a monastic tradition, not as an established biography.

Key dates in the life of Mildgyth

- **7th century**: Presumed birth, the last daughter of Merewalh and Domne Eafe.
- **Youth**: She grows up in a family where her sisters Mildburh and Mildred choose religious life.
- **Next**: According to the tradition of Minster-in-Thanet, she becomes a nun at Eastry, in Kent.

- **Later**: The same tradition has her succeed her sister Mildred at the head of their community; she is said to have been buried beside her.
- **After the Viking raids**: The bones of the two sisters are said to have been hidden at Lyminge.
- **1085**: Archbishop Lanfranc has these relics moved to St Gregory's Priory in Canterbury.
- **13th century**: Her name appears in a catalogue of the saints resting in England, kept at Lambeth Palace.

A sister in the shadows

The main witness to Mildgyth's life is a catalogue of the saints of England copied in the 13th century, which repeats the tradition of the abbey of Minster-in-Thanet. According to this text, she took the veil at Eastry, then succeeded Mildred as abbess, before being buried at her side. When Thanet was ravaged by the Vikings, their bones are said to have been taken to safety at Lyminge, then moved in 1085 to St Gregory's Priory in Canterbury by Archbishop Lanfranc.

Another tradition, however, places her religious life in a monastery in the north of England, whose name is not given, and puts her tomb in Northumbria. The sources therefore disagree, and nothing allows us to decide. This uncertainty takes nothing away from the value of her example: that of a young woman who, in a royal family, chose prayer rather than power.

Devotion

Mildgyth is celebrated on January 17. Her cult has remained discreet, in the shadow of that of her sisters, who were very popular in Kent and Shropshire. It bears witness to the attachment of Anglo-Saxon communities to the memory of their founders and their families. She has no iconography of her own; when she is shown, it is as a nun or abbess, like her sisters.

What can we learn from Saint Mildgyth?

We know little about Mildgyth, and that may be her lesson. Most of the Church's saints left neither writings nor great works; they lived faithfully, often in the shadow of others who are better known. Mildgyth recalls the beauty of the vocation of little sisters, of those who serve without being noticed. You can pray to her for families in which several children seek God, for religious vocations, and for all who live their faith quietly.

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

Where to pray to Saint Mildgyth

- **Minster-in-Thanet** (Kent): the abbey where her sister Mildred lived and where tradition makes her abbess.
- **Canterbury** (Kent): the city to which her relics are said to have been moved in 1085.
- Anywhere, in communion with the nuns who pray in the silence of their monasteries.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Mildgyth for Families and the Hidden Life

Saint Mildgyth, an Anglo-Saxon princess of the 7th century, is said to have followed her sisters Mildburh and Mildred into religious life in Kent. Her life, almost erased, speaks to us of quiet faithfulness. Prayer composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. It is not an official liturgical text. It entrusts to her families, vocations and those who serve in the shadows.

Prayer to Saint Mildgyth

Saint Mildgyth,
daughter of a king who became a servant of Christ,
you preferred prayer to power
and the hidden life to honors.
Teach me to seek God
without seeking to be seen.

You who walked in your sisters' footsteps,
watch over families
where brothers and sisters help one another
to grow in faith.
Raise up in our homes
generous vocations.

Keep in peace those who serve without being noticed,
the nuns who pray for the world,
and all whose lives seem small.
Remind us that God sees in secret.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

When to pray to Saint Mildgyth

- On her feast day, January 17.
- For the unity and faith of brothers and sisters.
- For a young woman thinking about religious life.
- When you feel overshadowed by a brother, a sister or a colleague.
- For the nuns and monasteries of your country.

To prepare for her feast, you can pray the novena to Saint Mildgyth from January 9 to 17, and read the life of Saint Mildgyth.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Mildgyth

This novena invites you to pray for nine days with Saint Mildgyth, an Anglo-Saxon princess of the 7th century who, according to tradition, became a nun. Novena composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. To finish it on her feast day, January 17, begin on January 9. You can also pray it at any other time.

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 Mildgyth, pray for us." Her life is very little known: the meditations start from what tradition reports, without adding to it.

Day 1: A family of saints

Mildgyth was born into a royal family in which several children chose to serve God. Faith is often handed on first between brothers and sisters.

Prayer: Lord, bless our families. Make our brothers and sisters companions on the road of faith.

Act of the day: Get in touch with a brother, a sister or a cousin.

Day 2: The youngest

Tradition presents her as the last of the daughters. In the Gospel, the little ones are those to whom the Kingdom is promised.

Prayer: Jesus, you who welcome the little ones, give me a simple and trusting heart.

Act of the day: Listen carefully to the youngest person around you.

Day 3: Choosing prayer

As a king's daughter, Mildgyth could have sought power or a rich marriage. She is said to have chosen the veil and prayer.

Prayer: Lord, help me to choose what really matters, and to give you the first place.

Act of the day: Set aside a time of prayer before any other activity.

Day 4: Following an example

Her sisters Mildburh and Mildred had gone before her into religious life. Good examples draw us toward God.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for the witnesses who showed me the way. Make me, in turn, an example for others.

Act of the day: Thank someone whose faith has touched you.

Day 5: Life in common

Mildgyth is said to have lived in community, first at Eastry. Common life teaches patience, forgiveness and service.

Prayer: Lord, bless religious communities. Teach me to live in peace with those around me.

Act of the day: Do a quiet service for someone at home or at work.

Day 6: Serving in her turn

Tradition has her succeed her sister at the head of the community. Taking on responsibility means, first of all, serving.

Prayer: Lord, give those who hold authority a humble and attentive heart.

Act of the day: Pray for those in charge of you: superiors, elected officials, pastors.

Day 7: In times of trial

Viking raids ravaged the monasteries of Kent. The relics of the saints had to be hidden. Faith passes through trials.

Prayer: Lord, support persecuted Christians and those who have had to flee their homes.

Act of the day: Pray or give for a charity that helps persecuted Christians.

Day 8: A life almost erased

We know very little about Mildgyth. But God knows each one by name, even those whom history has forgotten.

Prayer: Father, you who see in secret, keep me from seeking the approval of others more than yours.

Act of the day: Do a good deed without telling anyone.

Day 9: United in the memory of the Church

According to tradition, Mildgyth rests near her sister. Their memory was kept by generations of monks and nuns.

Prayer: Lord, gather one day all those we love. Through the intercession of Saint Mildgyth, grant me the grace I ask in this novena, if it is your will.

Act of the day: Attend Mass and pray for the departed members of your family.

Closing prayer

Saint Mildgyth,
humble sister among the saints of your family,
you served God quietly.
Present to the Lord the intention I have entrusted to you.
Keep our families united in faith
and teach us the joy of the hidden life.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

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

Credits and sources

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