BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Monon of Nassogne

Life, prayer, novena and pilgrimage

Feast day: October 18

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IN BRIEF

Saint Monon of Nassogne

7th-century hermit from the British Isles, martyred near Nassogne in the Belgian Ardennes.

Feast day	October 18
Born	c. 600, Scotland or Ireland (traditions differ)
Died	c. 645 (between 630 and 645), Near Nassogne (province of Luxembourg, Belgium)
Canonized	immemorial cult
Era	6th century
Patron saint of	farmers, livestock, harvests

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Credits and sources

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LIFE

Saint Monon of Nassogne

Saint Monon (Muno in Latin) was a 7th-century hermit who came from Scotland or Ireland to live in the Ardennes forest. He settled near Nassogne, in what is now the province of Luxembourg in Belgium, where he is said to have been murdered around 645, and he is therefore honored as a martyr. His life is poorly known, but his cult has remained very much alive in the Ardennes. His feast day is October 18 in the diocese of Namur.

Who was Saint Monon?

Monon belongs to the great wave of monks from the British Isles who, in the 6th and 7th centuries, traveled through Gaul to pray and proclaim the Gospel. The information we have about him is scarce and comes mainly from the local tradition of Nassogne. He is said to have come from a well-off family, to have been raised in the Christian faith and drawn to monastic life at a young age. The accounts present him as a hermit of simple speech whose holiness attracted crowds. They must be read with caution: they probably mix real memories with legendary elements added over the centuries.

Key dates in the life of Monon

- **c. 600**: Born in Scotland or Ireland, according to different traditions.
- **Early 7th century**: Having become a monk, he feels called in a dream, three nights in a row, to leave for the Ardennes forest.
- **Shortly after**: He spends a few months with John the Lamb, bishop of Tongeren.
- **Then**: He builds a hermitage and a chapel at Fridier, near Nassogne, at the spot that, according to tradition, an angel had shown him.

- **Between 630 and 645**: He is murdered near Nassogne; the traditional date is 645.
- **After his death**: John the Lamb has a church dedicated to the Virgin built at Nassogne, where his body is moved.
- **8th century**: Pepin the Short visits the site; his gift allows a church with a chapter of canons to be built.
- **17th century**: A confraternity of Saint Monon is approved by Pope Gregory XV.
- **1911**: The confraternity, which had disappeared during the Revolution, is restored by Bishop Heylen of Namur.

A hermit in the Ardennes forest

According to tradition, Monon received God's call in a dream to go to Gaul, into the great Ardennes forest, to evangelize its people. The same message is said to have come back to him three nights in a row, and he saw in it the will of God. He first spent a few months with the bishop of Tongeren, John the Lamb, which shows that he acted in union with the local Church. He then settled in a wooded place called Fridier, where he built a hermitage and a small chapel.

The hermit's reputation spread. Visitors came to listen to him, and many asked for baptism. This success disturbed those who still lived from pagan cults and the practices connected with them.

The death of Monon

The sources do not agree on the circumstances of his death. According to one tradition, he was killed by people from the neighboring village of Forrières because he had overturned their idols, or destroyed an ancient pagan place of

worship made of standing stones, known as the "Devil's Stones." Other accounts simply say that he fell victim to robbers whom he had rebuked for their evil lives. His death is placed between 630 and 645.

This story long fueled a rivalry between Forrières and Nassogne. Historical research carried out in the 20th century, notably by Willy Lassance, concluded that the people of Forrières had borne the blame for this murder without reason for centuries. What remains is the memory of a man of God who died a violent death for his faith and his preaching.

Devotion and pilgrimage

Monon's body was first laid in his oratory, which quickly became a place of pilgrimage. Bishop John the Lamb then had a church dedicated to the Virgin built at Nassogne, where his remains were moved. A century later, his cult was widespread enough for Pepin the Short, the father of Charlemagne, to visit the site. Thanks to his gift, a new church was built and entrusted to a chapter of canons: it became the collegiate church of Nassogne, rebuilt in the 17th and 18th centuries.

In this region of farming and livestock, Saint Monon is invoked as protector of farmers, cattle and harvests. A confraternity in his honor, approved in the 17th century by Pope Gregory XV, disappeared during the Revolution along with the chapter of the collegiate church; it was restored in 1911 by Bishop Thomas-Louis Heylen of Namur. Every year, on the Sunday after the Ascension, the great pilgrimage known as the "Remuages" takes place: the reliquary shrine containing his relics is carried in procession to the chapel of Saint Monon, at the presumed place of his martyrdom, and then brought back to the collegiate church.

What can we learn from Saint Monon?

Monon left his country to answer a call he had discerned at length. He did not set out alone and without ties: he first placed himself under the guidance of the bishop before living in solitude. His life as a hermit was not an escape: it became a place of welcome for those who were seeking God. Thirteen centuries after his death, the people of the Ardennes still entrust to him their work, their animals and their fields. You can pray to him for rural life, for those who leave on mission and for those who suffer from violence.

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

Where to pray to Saint Monon

- **Nassogne** (province of Luxembourg, Belgium): the collegiate church of Saint Monon, which keeps the shrine containing his relics.
- **The chapel of Saint Monon**, near Nassogne: the presumed place of his martyrdom and the destination of the Remuages procession.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Monon for the Countryside and Those Who Seek God

Saint Monon, a monk from Scotland or Ireland, lived as a hermit in the Ardennes forest, near Nassogne, where he is said to have died a martyr around 645. Country people have called on him for centuries for their animals and their harvests. Prayer composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. It entrusts to him the work of the land, rural families and those who seek to follow God's call.

Prayer to Saint Monon

Saint Monon,
you heard God's call in the silence of the night
and left your country for the Ardennes forest.
Help me to recognize the voice of the Lord
and to answer him without delay.

In your hermitage you welcomed those who were seeking God,
and many received baptism through you.
Teach me to pray in solitude
and to open my door to those who knock.

You whom farmers have called on for centuries,
bless the work of those who till the land,
protect their animals and their harvests,
and support the families of the countryside.
You who died a violent death,
obtain peace for places where hatred reigns.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

When to pray to Saint Monon

- On his feast day, October 18, or during the Remuages pilgrimage, on the Sunday after the Ascension.
- For farmers, stockbreeders and rural families.
- For the protection of livestock and harvests, especially in a difficult season.
- When you are discerning a call to leave or to change your life.
- For victims of violence and for reconciliation between neighbors.

A prayer for the fields

> *Lord, let the earth bear fruit*
> *and let those who work it live in peace.*
> *Saint Monon, pray for us. Amen.*

To prepare for his feast, you can pray the novena to Saint Monon from October 10 to 18, and read the life of Saint Monon.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Monon of Nassogne

This novena offers nine days of prayer with Saint Monon, hermit of the Ardennes, who died a martyr near Nassogne around 645. Novena composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. To finish it on his feast day, October 18, begin on October 10. You can also pray it before the Remuages pilgrimage, or at any other 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 Monon, pray for us." The act of the day helps you live the novena concretely. The episodes recounted come from the tradition of Nassogne, which mixes history and legend.

Day 1: A faith received in childhood

According to tradition, Monon was raised in the Christian faith by his family, somewhere in Scotland or Ireland. Everything he did afterwards was rooted in this first upbringing.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for those who handed on the faith to me. Bless the parents who teach it to their children.

Act of the day: Pray for your parents, living or departed, and for those who made God known to you.

Day 2: A call in the night

Monon heard in a dream the call to leave for the Ardennes. The message came back three nights in a row. He took time to recognize God's voice before setting out.

Prayer: Lord, speak to my heart, and give me the patience to discern what you expect of me.

Act of the day: Take ten minutes of silence to look back over your day before God.

Day 3: Leaving one's country

The young monk left his native land for a distant forest. Like Abraham, he set out without knowing everything that awaited him, trusting in the word he had received.

Prayer: Lord, give me the courage to set out when you call me, and bless missionaries far from home.

Act of the day: Pray for a missionary, or support a missionary work.

Day 4: Learning from the bishop

Before settling in the forest, Monon stayed a few months with John the Lamb, bishop of Tongeren. He did not want to act alone, but in communion with the Church.

Prayer: Lord, bless our bishop and our priests. Keep me united to your Church.

Act of the day: Pray by name for the bishop of your diocese.

Day 5: A hermitage in the forest

At Fridier, Monon built a hermitage and a chapel. He lived there in prayer, among the trees, far from noise.

Prayer: Lord, teach me to keep silence so as to meet you, even in the midst of my activities.

Act of the day: Take a walk in nature while praying, or turn off screens for an hour.

Day 6: Welcoming those who seek

The hermit's reputation spread, and many came to him to ask for baptism. His solitude became a place of welcome.

Prayer: Lord, make me a welcoming witness who helps others to find you.

Act of the day: Pray for the catechumens preparing for baptism.

Day 7: A word that disturbs

Monon's preaching displeased those who clung to the old cults. The accounts also say that he rebuked robbers for their evil lives. Truth spoken with courage sometimes has a price.

Prayer: Lord, give me the courage of truth, and the gentleness to speak it.

Act of the day: Dare to say, with charity, a just word you have long held back.

Day 8: Dying for Christ

Monon was murdered near Nassogne around 645. The exact circumstances are debated, but he is honored as a martyr. His memory long set two villages against each other, until history cleared Forrières of the accusation.

Prayer: Lord, welcome the victims of violence, and heal the grudges that divide families and villages.

Act of the day: Take a step toward reconciliation with someone you are on bad terms with.

Day 9: The protector of the countryside

For centuries, the people of the Ardennes have entrusted their animals and harvests to Saint Monon, and carried his shrine in procession. His holiness reaches into people's everyday lives.

Prayer: Lord, bless the work of the land and those who feed us. Through the intercession of Saint Monon, grant me the grace I ask in this novena, if it is your will.

Act of the day: Thank God for your meal and pray for farmers; if possible, attend Mass.

Living the novena with Saint Monon

Saint Monon reaches us through his simplicity: a call heard, a departure, a life of prayer in the forest, a violent death, and a people who never forgot him. During these nine days, you can carry rural families, missionaries and victims of violence in your prayer. If you can, go to Nassogne, to the collegiate church or to the chapel of Saint Monon.

Closing prayer

Saint Monon,
hermit of the Ardennes and martyr of Christ,
you left everything to answer God's call.
Present to the Lord the intention I have entrusted to you.
Bless our countryside and those who work it,
and keep us faithful to the end.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

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

PILGRIMAGE

Collegiate Church of Saint Monon, Nassogne

The collegiate church of Saint Monon stands in the heart of the village of Nassogne, in the province of Luxembourg in Belgium, on the edge of the Ardennes forest. It keeps the shrine containing the relics of Saint Monon, a hermit from Scotland or Ireland who died a martyr near here around 645. For thirteen centuries, the people of the region have come here to entrust their work, their animals and their harvests to their saint.

A church born from a tomb

After his death, Monon's body was first laid in his oratory, which soon drew pilgrims. According to tradition, John the Lamb, bishop of Tongeren and a friend of the hermit, had a church dedicated to the Virgin built at Nassogne, where his remains were moved. In the 8th century, Pepin the Short visited the site. His gift made it possible to build a new church, entrusted to a chapter of canons: this is the origin of the title of collegiate church.

The present building dates mostly from the 17th and 18th centuries. The chapter of canons disappeared during the French Revolution, as did the confraternity of Saint Monon, approved in the 17th century by Pope Gregory XV. The confraternity was restored in 1911 by Bishop Heylen of Namur.

The Remuages pilgrimage

The high point of the year is the pilgrimage known as the "Remuages," on the Sunday after the Ascension. The saint's shrine is carried in procession from the collegiate church to the chapel of Saint Monon, at the place where, according

to tradition, he was murdered, and then brought back to the church. This procession unites prayer, the memory of the martyr and the life of the village.

Praying on site

Before you come, you can read the life of Saint Monon. Before his shrine, entrust to him farmers, rural families and those who suffer from violence, then say the prayer to Saint Monon. If you have time, walk to the chapel of Saint Monon while meditating on the call that led the hermit to the Ardennes. These suggestions are offered by Saintspedia.

Practical information

Nassogne lies in the Belgian Ardennes, not far from Marche-en-Famenne, and is easy to reach by car. The collegiate church is a parish church: modest dress and silence are requested, especially during services. Opening hours, Mass times and the program of the Remuages pilgrimage may vary: check with the parish or the local tourist office before you come.

Credits and sources

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