BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Notburga

Life, prayer, novena and pilgrimage

Feast day: September 14

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IN BRIEF

Saint Notburga

Tyrolean servant, friend of the poor, patron of domestic workers, farm workers and rural youth.

Feast day	September 14
Born	c. 1265, Rattenberg (Tyrol, Austria)
Died	September 14, 1313, Eben am Achensee (Tyrol, Austria)
Canonized	cult confirmed by Pope Pius IX on March 27, 1862
Era	14th century
Patron saint of	maids and domestic workers, farm workers, rural youth

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Church of Saint Notburga, Eben am Achensee

Credits and sources

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LIFE

Saint Notburga

Saint Notburga, known as Notburga of Rattenberg or of Eben, was a Tyrolean servant born around 1265 who died on September 14, 1313 at Eben, by the Achensee lake, in present-day Austria. A cook in a castle, then a farm servant, she remained in popular memory as the friend of the poor and the patron of servants and farm workers. Her cult was confirmed by Pius IX in 1862, and her feast day is September 14.

Who was Saint Notburga?

Notburga is one of the most popular saints of Tyrol and Bavaria. She founded no order and wrote no book: she served, in the kitchen of a castle and then in the fields, sharing the little she had with the poor and defending her time for prayer. Her life has come down to us through popular accounts, embellished with legends over the centuries. They paint the portrait of a simple woman, faithful to her work and to God, who made her condition as a servant a path to holiness.

Key dates in the life of Notburga

- **c. 1265**: Born at Rattenberg, in the Inn valley, in Tyrol.
- **c. 1283**: At eighteen, she becomes a cook at the castle of Rattenberg, in the service of Lord Henry.
- **A few years later**: The lady of the castle, Ottilia, forbids her to give leftovers to the poor, then dismisses her.
- **Afterward**: She becomes a servant for a farmer at Eben, near the Achensee lake, on condition that she may go to church on the eves of Sundays and feasts.

- **Later**: According to tradition, Lord Henry calls her back to the castle and allows her to help the poor again.
- **September 14, 1313**: Death; according to legend, the oxen carrying her body stop before the chapel of Saint Rupert at Eben, where she is buried.
- **March 27, 1862**: Pope Pius IX officially confirms her cult and sets her feast on September 14.

The castle cook

Born around 1265 at Rattenberg, a small town in the Inn valley, Notburga entered the castle's service at eighteen as a cook. Lord Henry, who administered the region for the count of Tyrol, valued her. After meals, she carried the leftover food to the poor waiting at the gate. But the lady of the castle, Ottilia, disliked this generosity: she ordered her to give the leftovers to the pigs. Notburga obeyed, but then went without part of her own meal in order to keep feeding the hungry. Ottilia ended up dismissing her.

The servant of Eben and the sickle

Notburga found a place with a farmer at Eben, above the valley, near the Achensee lake. She set only one condition: to be able to stop work in time, on the eves of Sundays and feasts, to go and pray in church. One evening, during the harvest, her master wanted to keep her in the fields. According to the story, Notburga then threw her sickle into the air, and the tool stayed hanging there, as if to say that work must give way to God. That is why she is always shown with a sickle. The legend expresses a very Christian conviction: Sunday rest and prayer are not a luxury, but a right and a need.

Return to the castle

Tradition says that after Notburga left, misfortunes fell upon the castle of Rattenberg: Ottilia died, and her ghost was said to wander near the pigsty; the country was struck by war. Lord Henry saw in this the consequence of the injustice done to the servant. He went to fetch her and promised that she could again give the leftovers to the poor. Notburga came back and served at the castle until the end of her life, remaining the mother of the poor of the region.

Her death and cult

Feeling death approach, Notburga is said to have asked that her body be placed on a cart drawn by two oxen, left free to choose the place of her burial. The animals are said to have stopped before the chapel of Saint Rupert, near Eben, where she was buried on September 14, 1313. Her tomb became a place of pilgrimage. Her cult spread through Tyrol, Bavaria, all of Austria and as far as Istria. On March 27, 1862, Pope Pius IX officially confirmed this ancient cult and set her feast on September 14. She is the patron of maids and servants, of farm workers and rural youth, and she is invoked for the respect of Sunday rest.

What can we learn from Saint Notburga?

Notburga spent her whole life serving others, in humble jobs. She showed that one can obey without giving up one's conscience: when she was forbidden to give away the leftovers, she gave her own portion. With her sickle, she also defended the place of God in a working life. You can pray to her for domestic workers, cooks, farmers, workers deprived of rest, and all who want to share with the poor.

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

Where to pray to Saint Notburga

- **Eben am Achensee** (Tyrol, Austria): the church dedicated to her, the former chapel of Saint Rupert, where her relics rest.
- **Rattenberg** (Tyrol, Austria): her hometown, overlooked by the ruins of the castle where she served.
- Many churches and chapels of Tyrol and Bavaria, where her statue with the sickle is a familiar sight.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Notburga for Servants and Workers

Saint Notburga, a Tyrolean servant who died in 1313, fed the poor with the leftovers from the castle table, then with her own portion. As a farm servant at Eben, she defended, according to the legend of the sickle, the time for prayer and Sunday rest. Prayer composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. It is not an official liturgical text.

Prayer to Saint Notburga

Saint Notburga, faithful servant,
you worked with all your heart in kitchens and fields,
and shared your bread with those who were hungry.
Teach me to give, even from what I lack.

You who threw your sickle toward heaven
to keep God's place in your life,
help me not to be swallowed up by work,
to respect the Lord's Day
and to take time to pray.

Protect domestic workers, cooks,
farmers and young people in the countryside.
Defend those deprived of rest and dignity,
and keep our hearts open to the poor.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

When to pray to Saint Notburga

- On her feast day, September 14.
- For domestic workers, home helpers, cooks and service staff.
- For farmers and young people in rural areas, at harvest time.
- When work takes over everything and leaves no room for rest or prayer.
- When you suffer an injustice from an employer.
- Before sharing a meal with someone in need.

A short invocation

> *Saint Notburga, friend of the poor,*
> *teach us to serve and to share.*
> *Pray for us. Amen.*

To prepare for her feast, you can pray the novena to Saint Notburga from September 6 to September 14, and read the life of Saint Notburga.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Notburga

This novena accompanies Saint Notburga, Tyrolean servant and friend of the poor, who died in 1313. To finish it on her feast day, September 14, begin on September 6. Novena composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. It is not an official liturgical text.

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 Notburga, pray for us." The episodes recalled come from popular accounts, where history mingles with legend.

Day 1: A simple childhood

Notburga was born around 1265 at Rattenberg, into a modest Tyrolean family. Nothing destined her for fame: her holiness would grow in ordinary life.

Prayer: Lord, teach me to seek you in the simplest tasks of my days.

Act of the day: Do carefully and without complaining a household chore you dislike.

Day 2: Serving willingly

At eighteen she became a cook at the castle. She did not despise her work: she did it well, out of love.

Prayer: Lord, bless all who prepare our meals and look after our homes.

Act of the day: Sincerely thank someone who serves you, at work or in a restaurant.

Day 3: Leftovers for the poor

After meals, Notburga carried the leftovers to the poor waiting at the gate. Nothing is wasted when we think of the hungry.

Prayer: Lord, keep me from waste, and open my eyes to those who are hungry near me.

Act of the day: Throw away nothing today that could be eaten or given.

Day 4: Giving her own portion

When she was forbidden to give away the leftovers, she gave part of her own meal. She obeyed, but her charity found another way.

Prayer: Lord, give me a generous heart that knows how to give from what costs it.

Act of the day: Go without a small thing and give its value to a charity.

Day 5: Dismissed

Ottilia drove her from the castle. Notburga lost her job for loving the poor. She did not take revenge and looked for other work.

Prayer: Lord, I entrust to you those who have lost their jobs and those treated unjustly at work.

Act of the day: Pray for someone who is unemployed, and offer your help if you can.

Day 6: God's time

At Eben, she asked for only one thing: to be able to go to church on the eves of Sundays and feasts. She knew that work is not everything.

Prayer: Lord, teach me to keep time for you, even when work presses on me.

Act of the day: Plan now how to keep your next Sunday holy.

Day 7: The hanging sickle

When her master wanted to keep her in the fields, Notburga threw her sickle, which stayed hanging in the air. The legend reminds us that the Lord's rest must be respected.

Prayer: Lord, protect workers deprived of rest, and give people back a love for Sunday.

Act of the day: Next Sunday, avoid any purchase or work that is not necessary.

Day 8: Forgiveness and return

Lord Henry recognized his injustice and called Notburga back. She returned without resentment and took up her place among the poor again.

Prayer: Lord, help me to forgive those who have wronged me, and to begin again with them.

Act of the day: Take a step toward reconciliation with someone you have fallen out with.

Day 9: Led by the oxen

According to legend, the oxen carrying her body led her to the chapel of Eben. Even in death, she let herself be guided by God.

Prayer: Lord, through the intercession of Saint Notburga, grant me the grace I ask in this novena, if it is your will.

Act of the day: Attend Mass and share a meal with someone who is alone or in need.

Closing prayer

> *Saint Notburga,*
> *humble servant and mother of the poor,*
> *you gave your bread and kept God's time.*
> *Present to the Lord the intention I have entrusted to you.*
> *Teach me to serve with joy,*
> *to share with the hungry*
> *and to rest in the Lord.*
> *Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

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

PILGRIMAGE

Church of Saint Notburga, Eben am Achensee

The church of Saint Notburga in Eben stands in the village of Eben am Achensee, in Tyrol, Austria, on the plateau overlooking the Inn valley, not far from the Achensee lake. It is the main place of pilgrimage to Saint Notburga, the servant who died in 1313: according to tradition, she was buried here in the former chapel of Saint Rupert, and her relics are still venerated here.

The chapel chosen by the oxen

Legend says that Notburga, before dying, asked that her body be placed on a cart drawn by two oxen, and that she be buried wherever the animals stopped. They stopped before the little chapel of Saint Rupert, near Eben, where the servant had so often prayed. She was buried there on September 14, 1313. Pilgrims soon came to pray at her tomb, and the chapel became a sanctuary dedicated to the saint herself. The ancient cult paid to Notburga there was officially confirmed by Pope Pius IX in 1862.

What you can see

The present church has been enlarged and decorated over the centuries to welcome pilgrims. The relics of Saint Notburga are displayed there for the veneration of the faithful, above the altar. Images of the saint, with her sickle and Tyrolean peasant clothing, recall the episodes of her life: her charity toward the poor of the castle of Rattenberg, the sickle hanging in the air, the cart led by the oxen. Visitors find a very living sanctuary, marked by the popular piety of Tyrol.

Praying on site

Before you come, you can read the life of Saint Notburga. In the church, entrust to her domestic workers, farm workers, young people in the countryside, those who lack rest and those who are hungry, then say the prayer to Saint Notburga. September 14, her feast day, is the best time for this pilgrimage. These suggestions are offered by Saintspedia.

Other places of Saint Notburga

- **Rattenberg** (Tyrol): her hometown, on the Inn, where the castle she served stood.
- **The Achensee lake**: the mountain landscape where she worked as a farm servant.
- The many churches of Tyrol and Bavaria that have a statue of the saint with her sickle.

Practical information

Eben am Achensee lies above Jenbach, in the district of Schwaz, on the road that climbs from the Inn valley to the Achensee lake. The village can be reached by car and by regional public transport. The church is a place of prayer: modest dress and silence are requested. For Mass and visiting times, check with the parish of Eben or the Achensee tourist office before you come.

Credits and sources

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