BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Oranna of Eschweiler

Life, prayer, novena and pilgrimage

Feast day: September 15

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IN BRIEF

Saint Oranna of Eschweiler

6th-century saint, evangelizer of the Moselle and Saar valleys according to tradition, patron of German-speaking Moselle.

Feast day	September 15
Born	6th century, Ireland, Scotland or Lorraine, according to different traditions
Died	6th or 7th century, Eschweiler, near Berus (Saarland, Germany)
Canonized	immemorial cult
Era	6th century
Patron saint of	German-speaking Moselle, bailiwick of Germany (Lorraine), ear ailments, dizziness, young women seeking a husband

In this booklet

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Credits and sources

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LIFE

Saint Oranna of Eschweiler

Saint Oranna (Oranne in French) is a 6th-century saint, honored as one of the first messengers of the Gospel in the valleys of the Moselle and the Saar. With her companion Cyrilla, she lived near Berus, on today's border between Lorraine and the Saarland, where their relics are still venerated in the chapel of Saint Oranna. Patron saint of German-speaking Moselle, she is called on against ear ailments and dizziness. Her feast day is September 15.

Who was Saint Oranna?

Oranna is one of those very early saints whose cult is well attested but whose life is lost in legend. No contemporary text mentions her. What we know for certain concerns mainly her tomb, her relics and the pilgrimage that, for centuries, has gathered the faithful on both sides of the border. Accounts of her origin vary: for some, she was a princess from Ireland or Scotland; for others, the daughter of a duke of Lorraine. It is better to present them for what they are, pious traditions, while keeping the essential: a woman who served God in solitude and whose name Christian people have never forgotten.

Key dates in the life of Oranna

- **6th century**: According to tradition, Oranna and her companion Cyrilla evangelize the basins of the Moselle and the Saar and settle near Berus.
- **6th or 7th century**: Death of Oranna; she is buried with Cyrilla in the church of the village of Eschweiler.
- **14th century**: Eschweiler is destroyed by war and abandoned; only the church, which becomes the chapel of Saint Oranna, survives.
- **May 3, 1480**: A document records the exhumation of the bones of Oranna and Cyrilla, which are clothed and returned to their sarcophagus.

- **September 17, 1719**: The relics are moved to the parish church of Saint Martin in Berus.
- **French Revolution**: The faithful hide the relics in a crevice in the forest; the chapel, sold at auction, falls into ruin.
- **From 1814**: The chapel is rebuilt.
- **Second World War**: The relics are taken to safety at Lebach, then to the church of Saint Louis in Saarlouis; the chapel is badly damaged.
- **September 22, 1969**: After restoration, the relics return to the chapel.

The legends of Saint Oranna

The most widespread legend makes Oranna a princess of Ireland or Scotland, the daughter of a viceroy named Frochard and of a mother called Iveline. She is said to have fled her country to serve God in solitude, like her brother, whom tradition identifies with Saint Wendelin, the hermit and shepherd venerated at Sankt Wendel, not far away. Another version says she was the daughter of a duke of Lorraine who rejected her because she was deaf.

Several pious episodes are linked to her life. It is said that she rescued a Frankish hunter lost in the forest of Lorraine and healed him of his deafness: it is easy to see why she is called on for ear ailments. It is also said that when an overly insistent admirer pursued her, the spring seedlings suddenly grew to full height to hide her from his sight. These stories, typical of popular legends, show the trust that local people placed in her.

A tomb at the heart of a pilgrimage

Oranna and Cyrilla were first buried in the church of the village of Eschweiler. When the village was destroyed in the 14th century, the church alone remained: it is today's chapel of Saint Oranna, the *Orannakapelle*. For a long time it served as the parish church for Berus, Felsberg and Altforweiler. The history of her relics is eventful: exhumed in 1480, moved to Berus in 1719,

hidden during the Revolution, evacuated during the Second World War, they returned to the restored chapel in 1969. Its stained-glass windows tell the saint's story.

Devotion and popular piety

Saint Oranna is celebrated on September 15. The neighboring villages of Berus, Felsberg and Altforweiler, along with the people of nearby Lorraine, celebrate their patron together on the third Sunday of September. She is the patron saint of the former bailiwick of Germany (the German-speaking part of the duchy of Lorraine) and of German-speaking Moselle. She is invoked for ear ailments and dizziness, and young women ask her, with humor and trust, for a good husband. A popular hymn, the *Orannalied*, composed in Metz shortly before 1914 and later completed, is still sung in her honor. The chapel is a much-loved place for weddings and baptisms.

What can we learn from Saint Oranna?

Oranna reminds us that the faith of a region can remain attached for fifteen centuries to a woman of whom almost nothing is known, except that she prayed and served. Her legend, born of a heart wounded by rejection, makes her a friend of those who live with a disability or an infirmity. Her chapel, straddling two cultures, unites the people of Lorraine and the Saarland in one prayer. You can pray to her for the hard of hearing, for those who suffer from dizziness, for young people hoping to start a family, and for peace between neighboring peoples.

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

Where to pray to Saint Oranna

- **Chapel of Saint Oranna** (*Orannakapelle*), at Berus (municipality of Überherrn, Saarland, Germany): her tomb and relics, goal of the September pilgrimage.
- **Church of Saint Martin in Berus**: the parish church to which her relics were moved in 1719.
- The parishes of **German-speaking Moselle**, of which she is the patron saint.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Oranna for Those with Ear Ailments and for Young Families

Saint Oranna, honored for centuries at Berus, on the border between Lorraine and the Saarland, is called on for ear ailments and dizziness, and by young people hoping to start a family. Prayer composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. It is not an official liturgical text.

Prayer to Saint Oranna

Saint Oranna,
you left your own people to serve God in solitude,
and tradition says you were rejected for your infirmity;
be close to those who feel pushed aside.
Teach us to welcome each person
as God loves them.

You whom people call on for ailing ears,
obtain healing or peace
for those who can no longer hear,
for those troubled by dizziness.
Open our hearts as well
so that we may hear the Word of God.

Watch over young people looking for love,
guide them toward a home founded on faithfulness.
Bless the families of Lorraine and the Saarland,
and keep neighboring peoples in peace.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

When to pray to Saint Oranna

- On her feast day, September 15, or on the third Sunday of September, the day of the pilgrimage.
- For someone suffering from ear trouble, deafness or dizziness.
- When a young person hopes to found a Christian home.
- Before a wedding or a baptism.
- For peace and friendship between France and Germany.

A traditional invocation

Local young women used to pray in dialect: "Saint Oranna, give me a good husband, so that I may keep him for a long time." You can take up this simple prayer, or say:

> *Saint Oranna, pray for us and for those we love. Amen.*

To prepare for her feast, you can pray the novena to Saint Oranna from September 7 to 15, and read the life of Saint Oranna.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Oranna

This novena invites you to pray for nine days with Saint Oranna, patron saint of German-speaking Moselle, venerated at Berus. Novena composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. To finish it on her feast day, September 15, begin on September 7. You can also pray it before the pilgrimage on the third Sunday of September, or 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 Oranna, pray for us." The episodes mentioned come from tradition and popular legend.

Day 1: Leaving for God

Legend says that Oranna left her country to serve God in solitude. She left behind the life of a princess.

Prayer: Lord, give me the courage to let go of what keeps me from following you.

Act of the day: Give up something unnecessary today to make room for prayer.

Day 2: A companion on the way

Oranna did not live alone: Cyrilla shared her life and rests beside her. Spiritual friendship is a gift from God.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for the friends who help me believe. Keep our friendships in your light.

Act of the day: Thank a friend who supports you in faith.

Day 3: Rejected and welcomed

One tradition says her father rejected her because of her deafness. The one whom people push aside, God welcomes.

Prayer: Lord, teach me to welcome those who are set aside because of a disability or a difference.

Act of the day: Pay attention to someone around you who is isolated.

Day 4: Healing the ear

It is said that she healed a lost hunter of his deafness. She has remained the friend of those who suffer from their ears.

Prayer: Lord, relieve those who can no longer hear or who are in pain, and bless those who care for them.

Act of the day: Pray for someone who is hard of hearing, or learn a word in sign language.

Day 5: Listening to God

The saint we pray to for hearing invites us to another kind of listening: listening to the Word of God.

Prayer: Lord, open my ears and my heart, so that I may hear your voice in my life.

Act of the day: Read the Gospel of the day slowly and keep one sentence from it.

Day 6: Proclaiming the Gospel

Tradition presents her as an evangelizer of the valleys of the Moselle and the Saar. Faith is passed on through witness.

Prayer: Lord, make me a humble and joyful witness to your love.

Act of the day: Speak simply about your faith to someone who asks you.

Day 7: Relics saved

During the Revolution, the faithful hid her relics in the forest. During the war, they were again taken to safety. The faith of simple people protected this treasure.

Prayer: Lord, help me to keep faithfully what I have received, even in hard times.

Act of the day: Pray for Christians who must live their faith in secret.

Day 8: Founding a home

Local young women asked her for a good husband. Her chapel still welcomes many weddings.

Prayer: Lord, bless engaged and newly married couples. Give them a faithful and patient love.

Act of the day: Pray for a couple you know who are preparing for marriage.

Day 9: Two peoples, one prayer

The people of Lorraine and the Saarland celebrate their patron together. Her chapel, near the border, has become a place of peace.

Prayer: Lord, keep neighboring peoples in peace. Through the intercession of Saint Oranna, grant me the grace I ask in this novena, if it is your will.

Act of the day: Attend Mass and pray for peace in Europe.

Closing prayer

Saint Oranna,
servant of God in solitude,
friend of the sick and of young families,
present to the Lord the intention I have entrusted to you.
Open my ears to his Word
and my heart to my brothers and sisters.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

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

PILGRIMAGE

Chapel of Saint Oranna at Berus

The chapel of Saint Oranna (*Orannakapelle*) stands at Berus, in the municipality of Überherrn, in the Saarland, a short distance from the border with the French department of Moselle. It keeps the relics of Saint Oranna and her companion Cyrilla, who, according to tradition, evangelized the region in the 6th century. It is a much-loved place of pilgrimage on both sides of the border.

The church of a vanished village

The chapel is the only remnant of the village of Eschweiler, destroyed during the wars of the 14th century and abandoned by its inhabitants. Oranna and Cyrilla had been buried in its church, which long continued to serve as the parish church for Berus, Felsberg and Altforweiler. A monument also recalls that the dead of Altforweiler were buried here until 1923.

The history of the relics is eventful. A document dated May 3, 1480 describes their exhumation: the two skeletons, laid side by side in a sarcophagus, were clothed and then put back in place. On September 17, 1719, they were moved to the church of Saint Martin in Berus. During the Revolution, the faithful hid them in a crevice in the forest, while the chapel, sold at auction, fell into ruin. Rebuilt from 1814, it was badly hit by bombing in the Second World War; the relics were then evacuated to Lebach, and later to the church of Saint Louis in Saarlouis. After the restoration, they returned to the chapel on September 22, 1969.

What you can see

Inside, colorful stained-glass windows tell the saint's story, and the chapel holds her relics. Around the chapel, the site includes an open-air altar for outdoor celebrations, a stele dedicated to Saint Oranna with a cross of consolation for the souls in purgatory, and a fountain topped by a statue of the saint. The place, quiet and picturesque, is often chosen for weddings and baptisms.

The pilgrimage

Saint Oranna is celebrated on September 15. The villages of Berus, Felsberg and Altforweiler celebrate their patron together on the third Sunday of September, joined by the faithful from neighboring Lorraine. The hymn known as the *Orannalied*, composed in Metz in the early 20th century, accompanies the feast.

Praying on site

Before you come, you can read the life of Saint Oranna. Near her relics, entrust to her those who suffer from their ears, young couples and peace between France and Germany, then say the prayer to Saint Oranna. These suggestions are offered by Saintspedia.

Practical information

Berus lies in the Saarland, near Saarlouis, very close to the border with Moselle. The chapel stands away from the village. Opening times and the schedule of celebrations may vary: check with the parish of Berus or the municipality of Überherrn before you come.

Credits and sources

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