BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Pexina (Pezenne)

Life, prayer and novena

Feast day: June 26

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IN BRIEF

Saint Pexina (Pezenne)

Virgin from Spain who died near Niort according to tradition, honored in Poitou and western France.

Feast day	June 26
Born	Spain, according to tradition
Died	c. 726 according to tradition (sources differ), near Niort (Sainte-Pezenne, Deux-Sèvres)
Canonized	immemorial cult

In this booklet

Life

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Novena to Saint Pexina

Credits and sources

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LIFE

Saint Pexina (Pezenne)

Saint Pexina, also called Pecina, Pezenne, Pazanne or Perseveranda, is a virgin honored in Poitou and in western France. According to tradition, this young woman from Spain died of exhaustion near Niort while fleeing those who persecuted her, perhaps around 726. Her story is very poorly known and the accounts contradict one another, even on the century in which she lived. Her feast day is June 26, the date given in the old Roman Martyrology.

Who was Saint Pexina?

Pexina is one of those saints whose cult is ancient and well rooted, but whose life almost entirely escapes us. Her very name exists in more than a dozen forms: Pechine, Pécine, Peccina, Pecinna, Pacinne, Pezenne, Pezaine, Pazanne, Posanne, Possène, Persévérande... Most hagiographers think these names refer to one and the same saint. Some place her in the 8th century, at the time of the conquest of Spain by the Saracens; the Bollandists place her in the 7th century; a 19th century historian, Dom Chamard, has her living at the beginning of the 4th century. Her story must therefore be read with great caution. What is certain is that several places bear her name and that the faithful have prayed to her for centuries.

Key dates in the life of Pexina

- **Uncertain date**: Born in Spain, not far from the Pyrenees according to several accounts.
- **According to the traditions**: Driven out of Spain by persecution, she takes refuge in Aquitaine, on the borders of Poitou.
- **c. 726 (or 732)**: After several days of walking, she dies of exhaustion at the gates of Niort; some authors place her death much earlier, at the beginning

of the 4th century.

- **Then**: Her remains are laid in the village of Tauvinicus, on the Sèvre, which will take the name of Sainte-Pezenne.
- **c. 1090**: The count of Vermandois carries her relics from Niort to Saint-Quentin.
- **16th century**: The Roman Martyrology published under Gregory XIII mentions her on June 26.
- **1801**: The commune of Sainte-Pezenne, renamed Pezenne during the Revolution, recovers its name.

Diverging accounts

Several versions of the story of Pexina have come down to us. According to the first, she was a virgin who had fled Spain, conquered by the Saracens, and taken refuge in the diocese of Poitiers. A second, reported by an 18th century work, says that she had led an austere and penitent life in Spain with another virgin named Columba, at the time of the persecutions, and that a Roman praetor drove them both out; she is said to have died in Poitou, at a place called Thorignac. A third makes her a young Spanish princess persecuted by her own father, who walked for seven days before dying of exhaustion at the gates of Niort.

With Macrina and Columba

The fullest account was collected in the 19th century by Charles de Chergé, in his Lives of the Saints of Poitou. Two sisters of noble family, Macrina and Columba, had settled on the borders of Poitou to consecrate themselves to God. Pecina, who had come from Spain, joined them, and other companions came to live with them in a small monastery. A neighboring lord named Olivier, an impious and brutal man, wanted to seize them. Columba gave

herself up alone to protect the others. Warned in a dream, Macrina and Pecina fled through the forests. After seven days of exhausting walking, Pecina grew pale and died almost at once in her friend's arms.

With the help of charitable Christians, Macrina had Pecina's body carried to a village near Niort, on the right bank of the Sèvre, then called Tauvinicus. The account adds that Olivier's soldiers pursued Macrina, but that their leader was struck blind just as he was about to seize her. The village later took the saint's name: it is now Sainte-Pezenne, a district of Niort.

Devotion and art

Around 1090, the count of Vermandois, having defeated the count of Anjou, took advantage of the depopulation of Niort to seize the saint's relics and had them carried to Saint-Quentin, where, according to an 18th century author, a church and a collegiate chapter were founded in her honor. The cult of Pexina also reached Brittany, where she is known under several names. Three towns owe her their names: Sainte-Pexine in Vendée, Sainte-Pezenne near Niort, in Deux-Sèvres, and Sainte-Pazanne in Loire-Atlantique, where the first name Pécine was still given in the countryside at the beginning of the 19th century.

At Sainte-Pazanne, she has been shown in a long robe, bareheaded, with long hair, her eyes raised to heaven and a palm in her hand, a sign of her holiness and her witness. The old Roman Martyrology, published by order of Pope Gregory XIII, mentions her on June 26; some sources give June 25.

What can we learn from Saint Pexina?

Even if her story remains uncertain, all the accounts agree on the essentials: a young woman who left everything to remain faithful to God, who knew exile and persecution, and who died on the road, exhausted, in the arms of a friend. Her figure speaks to refugees, to people forced to flee, and to all women

threatened in their dignity. You can pray to her for exiles, for women who are victims of violence, and for those who walk without knowing where they will find refuge.

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

Where to pray to Saint Pexina

- **Sainte-Pezenne**, in Niort (Deux-Sèvres): the place where tradition places her burial.
- **Sainte-Pazanne** (Loire-Atlantique): the town that bears her name, where she is shown with the palm.
- **Sainte-Pexine** (Vendée): another town that owes her its name.
- **Saint-Quentin** (Aisne): the town to which her relics were carried around 1090.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Pexina for Exiles and Women Under Threat

Saint Pexina, or Pezenne, was a young virgin from Spain who, according to tradition, died of exhaustion near Niort while fleeing those who persecuted her. Her story is poorly known, but her cult is ancient in Poitou and western France. Prayer composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. It entrusts to her exiles, women under threat and all who seek refuge.

Prayer to Saint Pexina

Saint Pexina,
young woman from Spain,
you left everything to remain faithful to God
and knew exile and fear.
Watch over those who must flee their country,
over those who walk without knowing where they will sleep.

Among your sisters you found
friendship and shared prayer.
Teach me to be for others
a support in trial,
a faithful presence to the end.

Protect women threatened in their dignity
and give them strength and peace.
Obtain for me the grace I entrust to you,
if it is according to God's will.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

When to pray to Saint Pexina

- On her feast day, June 26.
- For refugees, exiles and displaced people.
- For women who are victims of violence or harassment.
- For a friend going through a trial.
- When tiredness and discouragement weigh on your path.

A short invocation

> *Saint Pexina, faithful to the end of the road,*
> *pray for those who flee and for us. Amen.*

To prepare for her feast, you can pray the novena to Saint Pexina from June 18 to June 26, and read the life of Saint Pexina.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Pexina

This novena is inspired by the tradition of Saint Pexina, or Pezenne, a young virgin from Spain who died near Niort. Novena composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. To finish it on her feast day, June 26, begin on June 18. You can also pray it 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 Pexina, pray for us." The act suggested each day helps you live the novena concretely. The story of Saint Pexina is known through late and diverging accounts: the meditations rely on tradition.

Day 1: Given to God

According to tradition, Pexina had chosen to consecrate herself entirely to God. She gave him her youth and her heart.

Prayer: Lord, I give you my life as it is. Do with it what you will.

Act of the day: Pray for young people preparing for consecrated life.

Day 2: Leaving one's country

Pexina had to leave Spain because of persecution. She knew uprooting and exile.

Prayer: Lord, be the refuge of those who must leave their country.

Act of the day: Support an association that welcomes refugees.

Day 3: Finding sisters

Arriving in Aquitaine, Pexina joined Macrina and Columba. With them she found friendship and shared prayer.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for the friends who help me seek you.

Act of the day: Get in touch with a long-standing friend.

Day 4: A house of prayer

The young women built a small monastery to live in peace and recollection.

Prayer: Lord, make my home a place of peace and prayer.

Act of the day: Pray for a few minutes at home, with your family or alone.

Day 5: Facing the threat

A brutal lord, Olivier, wanted to seize them. Their dignity and their consecration were threatened.

Prayer: Lord, protect women threatened in their bodies and their dignity.

Act of the day: Pray for women who are victims of violence, or support a work that shelters them.

Day 6: The gift of Columba

Columba gave herself up alone to protect her companions. Her sacrifice allowed the others to flee.

Prayer: Lord, give me a heart able to give itself for others.

Act of the day: Do someone a favor that costs you.

Day 7: Seven days on the road

Pexina and Macrina fled through the forests for seven days. They walked on in their weariness, entrusting their way to God.

Prayer: Lord, when I am exhausted, be my strength and my way.

Act of the day: Offer God the tiredness of your day.

Day 8: Dying in a friend's arms

Exhausted, Pexina died in Macrina's arms. She was not alone at the moment of passing.

Prayer: Lord, grant that no one should die alone, and make me a presence for those who suffer.

Act of the day: Visit a sick or elderly person.

Day 9: A name that remains

The village where she rests took her name, and several towns still bear it. Humble faithfulness leaves a lasting mark.

Prayer: Lord, keep me faithful to the end of the road. Through the intercession of Saint Pexina, 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.

Living the novena with Saint Pexina

Saint Pexina reminds us that faithfulness to God sometimes passes through exile, flight and weariness, but that it is never lived alone. During these nine days, you can carry refugees, women under threat, and those who accompany

the dying. If you can, visit Sainte-Pezenne, Sainte-Pazanne or Sainte-Pexine, which keep her name.

Closing prayer

> *Saint Pexina,*
> *virgin from Spain,*
> *exiled and persecuted,*
> *you died on the road in the peace of God.*
> *Present to the Lord the intention I have entrusted to you.*
> *Keep me faithful in trial*
> *and attentive to those who seek refuge.*
> *Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

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

Credits and sources

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