BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Pompeia

Life, prayer, novena and pilgrimage

Feast day: January 2

IN BRIEF

Saint Pompeia

Breton saint of the 6th century, who came from Britain, honored as the mother of Saint Tugdual and Saint Seva.

Feast day	January 2
Born	late 5th century, Britain, according to tradition
Died	after 545, Langoat, near Tréguier (Côtes-d'Armor), according to tradition
Canonized	immemorial cult
Era	5th century
Patron saint of	Langoat

In this booklet

Life

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Novena to Saint Pompeia

Church of Sainte-Pompée, Langoat

Credits and sources

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LIFE

Saint Pompeia

Saint Pompeia, called Koupaïa in Breton and sometimes Aspasia, was a Breton saint of the 6th century who came from Britain to Armorica. Tradition makes her the mother of Saint Tugdual, the founder of Tréguier, and of Saint Seva. She is said to have spent her last days near her son's monastery, at Langoat, in the Côtes-d'Armor, where her relics are kept. Her feast day is January 2.

Who was Saint Pompeia?

Saint Pompeia is one of those saints of early Brittany whose story has been handed down by tradition more than by documents. The accounts about her belong to the world of the legendary genealogies of Breton kings: they link her to figures such as King Hoël the Great, whose historical existence is not certain. They must therefore be read with caution. What is certain, on the other hand, is the age and faithfulness of her cult at Langoat, near Tréguier, where a church is dedicated to her and a medieval tomb bears her name. For Bretons, she is above all the mother of Saint Tugdual, one of the seven founding saints of Brittany.

Key dates in the life of Pompeia

- **Late 5th century**: Born in Britain, according to tradition, into a princely family; she is said to be the daughter of King Eusebius and Saint Landouenna.
- **Early 6th century**: According to legend, she marries Hoël, called "the Great", king of the Bretons of Armorica.
- **509**: According to the traditional account, an invasion forces the royal family to take refuge in Britain.

- **Following years**: Mother of several children, including Saint Tugdual and Saint Seva; tradition gives her seven children.
- **After 545**: On her husband's death, she returns to Armorica with her daughter Seva, in the group of emigrants led by Tugdual.
- **Mid 6th century**: She settles near the monastery founded by her son at Tréguier and dies there, where the church of Langoat stands.
- **1370**: Date attributed to the carved cenotaph dedicated to her at Langoat.
- **1771**: Rebuilding of the church of Sainte-Pompée at Langoat.
- **2012**: A statue of Saint Koupaïa is erected at the Valley of the Saints, at Carnoët.

A queen of Breton legend

According to tradition, Pompeia was born into a princely family of Britain. She is said to be the daughter of King Eusebius and Saint Landouenna, and was married to Hoël, whom the accounts call "the Great", king of the Bretons settled in Armorica. Early in their marriage, around 509, invaders seized the country and drove out the princes. The king and his family took refuge across the Channel. A few years later, Hoël returned alone to take back his kingdom, while Pompeia stayed in Britain with her children. These accounts, which mix memories of the Breton migrations with glorious genealogies, cannot be verified.

A mother of saints

Tradition credits Pompeia with seven children. Among them, two are honored as saints: Tugdual, a monk, founder of the monastery of Tréguier and its first bishop according to tradition, and Seva, who gave her name to the town of Sainte-Sève, in Finistère. Some accounts add Saint Leonorius (Lunaire) and

King Hoël II. The strength of this tradition says something true: in the Brittany of the beginnings, faith was often handed down by whole families, in which mothers played a decisive role.

The last years at Langoat

After Hoël's death, around 545, Pompeia and her daughter Seva are said to have joined Armorica with the group of emigrants led by Tugdual. She then settled not far from her son's monastery at Tréguier. According to local tradition, she led a withdrawn life of prayer on the site of today's chapel of Notre-Dame-du-Bois, at Langoat, called in Breton *Chapel ar C'hoad*. The very name Langoat, said to come from Old Breton *lann*, "hermitage", and *koad*, "wood", would keep the memory of this "monastery of the wood". She died there, at an unknown date.

Devotion and art

Pompeia is the patron saint of Langoat. The parish church, rebuilt in 1771, is dedicated to her. It houses a carved cenotaph, dated 1370 and listed as a historic monument in 1911, with bas-relief panels telling her legend, as well as old statues of Saint Pompeia, of Saint Tugdual shown as a pope, of Saint Leonorius and of Saint Seva. Her relics are kept there. She also appears as a statue in the church of Sainte-Sève and in a stained glass window in the church of Trézény. She is shown as a queen, crowned, sometimes surrounded by her children.

What can we learn from Saint Pompeia?

Behind the crowns and genealogies, the figure of Saint Pompeia is that of a mother who went through exile, separation and grief, and ended her life in prayer, near her son who had become a monk. She can be prayed to by

mothers, especially those whose children have consecrated themselves to God, by families separated by migration, and by widows. She also reminds us that holiness is often passed on within a family.

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

Where to pray to Saint Pompeia

- **Church of Sainte-Pompée** (Langoat, Côtes-d'Armor): her carved tomb, her relics and her statues.
- **Chapel of Notre-Dame-du-Bois** (Langoat): the site of her hermitage according to tradition.
- **Tréguier Cathedral** (Côtes-d'Armor): the town of her son Saint Tugdual's monastery.
- **Church of Sainte-Sève** (Finistère): a statue of Saint Pompeia, near her daughter.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Pompeia, Mother of Saint Tugdual

Saint Pompeia, called Koupaïa in Breton, is honored as the mother of Saint Tugdual and Saint Seva. According to tradition, after exile and the death of her husband, she ended her life in prayer at Langoat, near her son's monastery. Prayer composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. It is not an official liturgical text. It entrusts to her mothers, separated families and widows.

Prayer to Saint Pompeia

Saint Pompeia,
mother of Saint Tugdual and Saint Seva,
you knew exile and separation,
the sea to cross and grief to bear.
Support the families that life scatters,
and those who must leave their country.

You gave your children the faith
that led them to God.
Teach mothers and fathers
to hand on the Gospel with patience,
and to offer their children to the Lord.

You who ended your life in prayer,
near your son's monastery,
comfort widows and those who are alone,
and keep Brittany faithful to Christ.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

When to pray to Saint Pompeia

- On her feast day, January 2.
- For mothers, and especially for mothers of priests and religious.
- For families separated by exile or migration.
- For widows and those who are grieving.
- For the country of Tréguier and for Brittany.

A short invocation

> *Saint Pompeia, mother of saints,*
> *watch over our families. Amen.*

To prepare for her feast, you can pray the novena to Saint Pompeia from December 25 to January 2, and read the life of Saint Pompeia.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Pompeia

This novena is inspired by the figure of Saint Pompeia (Koupaïa), mother of Saint Tugdual, honored at Langoat. Novena composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. It is not an official liturgical text. To finish it on her feast day, January 2, begin on December 25, Christmas Day. 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 Pompeia, pray for us." The act suggested each day helps you live the novena concretely. The episodes recalled come from Breton tradition, which mixes history and legend.

Day 1: A mother at Christmas

This novena begins on Christmas Day, before the Virgin Mary and the Child. Pompeia, a mother too, received her children as a gift from God.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, born of the Virgin Mary, bless the mothers and children of our families.

Act of the day: Pray before the crib for a mother you know.

Day 2: A princely family

Tradition says that Pompeia was a king's daughter and a king's wife. Honors did not draw her away from God.

Prayer: Lord, keep me from clinging to honors, and teach me to serve.

Act of the day: Do a humble service without expecting thanks.

Day 3: Exile

According to legend, an invasion forced the royal family to flee overseas. Pompeia knew fear and uprooting.

Prayer: Lord, protect refugees and those fleeing war, and give them a safe place.

Act of the day: Support a charity that welcomes refugees, or pray for them.

Day 4: Separated from her husband

Hoël returned alone to Armorica, and Pompeia stayed with her children. Separations are part of many family lives.

Prayer: Lord, keep united in love the spouses whom life separates.

Act of the day: Pray for a couple in difficulty.

Day 5: Handing on the faith

Two of her children, Tugdual and Seva, are honored as saints. Faith is learned first at home.

Prayer: Lord, help parents to hand on the faith by their words and by their lives.

Act of the day: Pray with a child, or for your godchildren.

Day 6: Grief

Around 545, Pompeia lost her husband. She went through grief without losing hope.

Prayer: Lord, comfort widows and widowers, and keep alive in them the hope of the resurrection.

Act of the day: Visit or call someone who is grieving.

Day 7: The crossing with her son

Pompeia returned to Armorica with the emigration led by Tugdual. The mother now followed her son on the path he had chosen.

Prayer: Lord, bless the parents who let their children answer your call.

Act of the day: Pray for vocations to the priesthood and religious life.

Day 8: The hermitage in the wood

According to tradition, Pompeia lived in retreat at Langoat, the "monastery of the wood", near Tréguier. She gave the last part of her life to prayer.

Prayer: Lord, teach me to make every season of my life a time of prayer.

Act of the day: Take a time of silent prayer, in a chapel if you can.

Day 9: Resting at Langoat

Pompeia died at Langoat, where her tomb has been venerated for centuries. Her memory still unites the faithful of the Tréguier country.

Prayer: Lord, through the intercession of Saint Pompeia, grant me the grace I ask in this novena, if it is your will, and keep my family in your peace.

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

Closing prayer

Saint Pompeia,
mother of Saint Tugdual and Saint Seva,
you went through exile and grief in faith.
Present to the Lord the intention I have entrusted to you.
Watch over our families and our children,
and lead us all to Christ.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

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

PILGRIMAGE

Church of Sainte-Pompée, Langoat

The church of Sainte-Pompée is at Langoat, in the Côtes-d'Armor, a few kilometers from Tréguier, in the Jaudy valley. It is dedicated to Saint Pompeia, called Koupaïa in Breton, whom tradition presents as the mother of Saint Tugdual. According to tradition, the saint spent her last days here. The church keeps her carved tomb and her relics.

The "monastery of the wood"

The name Langoat is said to come from Old Breton *lann*, meaning a hermitage, and *koad*, "wood": the "monastery of the wood". Local tradition links this name to Saint Pompeia, who is said to have withdrawn here to pray, not far from the monastery founded by her son at Tréguier. Her hermitage is said to have stood on the site of the chapel of Notre-Dame-du-Bois, called in Breton *Chapel ar C'hoad*, about two hundred and fifty meters east of the village. This chapel dates from the 15th century and from 1592.

The parish church, dedicated to the saint, was rebuilt in 1771. It has kept the most precious elements of her cult, notably a medieval funerary monument.

What you can see

The heart of the pilgrimage is the tomb said to be that of Saint Pompeia, a carved cenotaph dated 1370 and listed as a historic monument in 1911. Bas-relief panels on it tell her legend. The church also houses old statues of the saint and her children: Saint Tugdual, shown as a pope according to a tradition proper to Tréguier, Saint Leonorius and Saint Seva. The relics of Saint Pompeia are kept there.

Praying on site

Before you come, you can read the life of Saint Pompeia. Before her tomb, entrust to her mothers, separated families and those who are grieving, then say the prayer to Saint Pompeia. You can continue your prayer at the chapel of Notre-Dame-du-Bois. These suggestions are offered by Saintspedia.

Other places of Saint Pompeia

- **Tréguier** (Côtes-d'Armor): the town of her son Saint Tugdual's monastery, and its cathedral.
- **Sainte-Sève** (Finistère): the church dedicated to her daughter houses a statue of Saint Pompeia.
- **Trézény** (Côtes-d'Armor): a stained glass window shows her in the church.
- **The Valley of the Saints** (Carnoët, Côtes-d'Armor): a statue of Saint Koupaïa was erected there in 2012.

Practical information

Langoat is a few kilometers south of Tréguier and is easy to reach by car. The church is a place of worship: modest dress and silence are requested. Opening hours and Mass times may vary: check with the parish or the Tréguier tourist office before you come.

Credits and sources

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