BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Praejectus of Clermont

Life, prayer, novena and pilgrimage

Feast day: January 25

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IN BRIEF

Saint Praejectus of Clermont

7th-century bishop of Clermont, founder of hospitals and monasteries, murdered at Volvic in 676 and honored as a martyr.

Feast day	January 25
Born	c. 625, Vézézoux (Haute-Loire, France)
Died	January 25, 676, Volvic (Puy-de-Dôme, France)
Canonized	immemorial cult
Era	7th century

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Credits and sources

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LIFE

Saint Praejectus of Clermont

Saint Praejectus, known in French as Saint Priest, Saint Prix, Saint Projet or Saint Préjet depending on the region, was a bishop of Clermont in the 7th century. Born around 625 at Vézézoux, in Auvergne, he was a pastor devoted to the poor and a founder of hospitals and monasteries, before he was murdered at Volvic on January 25, 676. Honored as a martyr, his feast day is January 25.

Who was Saint Praejectus?

Praejectus belongs to Merovingian Auvergne, an age when bishops were at once pastors, builders and public figures caught up in the affairs of the Frankish kings. We know him mainly through the *Passion of Saint Praejectus* (*Passio Praejecti*), a Latin account that historians consider very close to the events. This is rare for a saint of that period: behind the edifying features, we discover a real bishop, involved in the conflicts of his time, who paid for it with his life.

His name took very different forms as it spread across France: Saint Priest in Clermont, Limousin and the Lyonnais, Saint Prix in the Île-de-France and Picardy, Saint Projet in Cantal, Angoumois, Quercy and Bordeaux, Saint Préjet in Haute-Loire and Allier. All the places that bear his name show how far his cult spread.

Key dates in the life of Praejectus

- **c. 625**: Born at Vézézoux (Vesedone), in Auvergne, into a family of Roman tradition; his parents are named Gundolenus and Elidia.
- **Youth**: He studies letters and chant with the monks of Saint-Austremoine at Issoire, then places himself under the guidance of Genesius, archdeacon

of Clermont.

- **650s**: Having become bishop, Genesius entrusts him, while he is still only a deacon, with the parish of Issoire.
- **After the death of Bishop Genesius**: The new bishop, Felix, appoints him abbot of the monastery of Chantoin, which he reforms.
- **Shortly after**: After the deaths of Felix and of his successor Garivald, he is elected bishop of Clermont with the agreement of King Childeric II.
- **Easter 675**: He is at Autun with King Childeric II; the patrician Hector of Marseille is put to death there.
- **January 25, 676**: He is murdered at Volvic with his companions Amarin and Elidius.
- **Late 7th century**: A monastery is founded at Volvic to keep his body; it later becomes a priory of the abbey of Mozac.

A young cleric at the service of the poor

Born into a family of Roman culture, Praejectus received a solid education at Issoire, at the monastery founded in memory of Saint Austremonius, the first bishop of Auvergne. He was a diligent student who loved letters and liturgical chant. The archdeacon Genesius, the future bishop of Clermont, took him under his guidance and, once bishop, entrusted him very young with the parish of Issoire, while he was still only a deacon.

The young pastor combined the study of theology with the care of the faithful. According to the tradition of Issoire, he had a church built outside the walls, and he founded a church and a hospital. All the accounts stress his devotion to the poor and the weak. He was also interested in the history of his Church: he is said to have written the Lives of the first martyrs of Auvergne, but these texts are now lost.

Abbot, then bishop of Clermont

After the death of Bishop Genesius, his successor Felix appointed Praejectus abbot of Chantoin, a monastery in Clermont, which he reformed. The episcopal succession was then troubled: Felix died, and the archdeacon Garivald, elected in his place, survived only forty days. People turned to the count of Auvergne, a layman who also bore the name Genesius; he refused the office and persuaded the clergy to choose Praejectus, who already had the support of the people. With the agreement of King Childeric II, Praejectus became bishop of Clermont.

His episcopate was that of a builder. Thanks to the friendship of Count Genesius, who had no heir and gave many estates, he founded hospitals, churches and monasteries. The best known is the convent of women at Chamalières, whose rule drew on Saint Benedict, Saint Caesarius of Arles and Saint Columbanus at once. Praejectus frequented the court of King Childeric II, where he defended the cause of ordinary people and opposed the injustice of the powerful.

The martyrdom at Volvic

This freedom of speech earned him the hostility of part of the Auvergne aristocracy. A dispute set him against Hector, patrician of Marseille. In the spring of 675, while Praejectus was celebrating Easter at Autun with the king, Hector was put to death there on Childeric's orders. The bishop was suspected of having inspired, or at least advised, this execution. After the king's death a few months later, Hector's supporters sought revenge.

On January 25, 676, Praejectus was overtaken at Volvic, near Clermont, and murdered with his companions, Abbot Amarin and Elidius. Historians hesitate over how much politics and how much faith lay behind this murder, and some older chronologies place it a little earlier; but the Church very soon saw in him a pastor who died for defending justice, and honored him as a

martyr. A tradition says that one of the murderers, named Ursio, seized with remorse, went to Vézézoux and had a church built around the room where the bishop had been born.

Devotion and art

His body was laid to rest at Volvic, where a monastery of men was founded in the last quarter of the 7th century to keep his tomb. In the 12th century, the community was attached to the abbey of Mozac and became a Cluniac priory; the present church of Saint-Priest keeps a Romanesque choir and transept from that time. The saint's cult, at first limited to Auvergne, then spread throughout France: Saint-Prix in the Val-d'Oise, Saint-Priest near Lyon, Saint-Priest-en-Jarez, Saint-Projet-de-Salers and many other places bear his name.

Saint Praejectus is commemorated on January 25, the day of his death. He is shown as a bishop, with miter and crozier, sometimes with the palm of martyrdom. An old French country saying still goes: "Sun on Saint Priest's day, plenty of millet."

What can we learn from Saint Praejectus?

Saint Praejectus shows that a pastor cannot separate prayer from the service of the most vulnerable. He built hospitals as well as churches, and he dared to speak to the powerful in the name of the little ones. His death, amid the rivalries of his time, reminds us that defending justice can come at a high price. You can pray to him for bishops and priests, for those who care for the sick and the poor, and for all who must tell the truth to those in power.

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

Where to pray to Saint Praejectus

- **Volvic** (Puy-de-Dôme): the church of Saint-Priest, built at the place of his martyrdom and burial.
- **Vézézoux** (Haute-Loire): his native village, where according to tradition a church was built around the room of his childhood.
- **Issoire** (Puy-de-Dôme): the town where he was trained and exercised his first ministry.
- **Saint-Prix** (Val-d'Oise) and the many parishes of Saint-Priest, Saint-Prix or Saint-Projet in France.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Praejectus for Pastors and the Poor

Saint Praejectus (Priest), bishop of Clermont in the 7th century, founded hospitals and monasteries, defended the little ones before the powerful, and was murdered at Volvic on January 25, 676. Prayer composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. It is not an official liturgical text. It entrusts to him pastors, the poor and those who must stand up for justice.

Prayer to Saint Praejectus

Saint Praejectus,
pastor of Auvergne and friend of the poor,
as a young man you learned to sing the praise of God
and to serve those who had no one.
Teach me to unite prayer and charity.

You who built churches and hospitals,
bless those who care for the sick,
those who welcome the most deprived,
and those who serve the Church faithfully.

You who spoke to the powerful in the name of the little ones,
give me the courage of truth
and the gentleness of peace.
You who died by the violence of men,
keep me from bitterness and revenge.
Pray for our bishops and our priests,
and lead us all to Christ our Lord. Amen.

When to pray to Saint Praejectus

- On his feast day, January 25, or in a church dedicated to Saint Priest, Saint Prix or Saint Projet.
- For bishops, priests and deacons, especially those beginning their ministry.
- For caregivers, hospitals and charities serving the poor.
- When you must defend a vulnerable person against an injustice.
- For those who suffer violence, and for the conversion of those who commit it.

A short invocation

> *Saint Praejectus, bishop and martyr,*
> *defender of the little ones,*
> *pray for us. Amen.*

To prepare for his feast, you can pray the novena to Saint Praejectus from January 17 to 25, and read the life of Saint Praejectus.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Praejectus of Clermont

Novena composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. It is inspired by the life of Saint Praejectus (Priest), bishop of Clermont and martyr, who died at Volvic on January 25, 676. It is not an official liturgical text. To finish it on his feast day, January 25, begin on January 17. 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 Praejectus, pray for us." The act suggested each day helps you live the novena concretely. The episodes recalled come from the Passion of Saint Praejectus, written shortly after his death.

Day 1: A childhood in Auvergne

Praejectus was born around 625 at Vézézoux, into a Christian family. The faith he received at home would bear fruit for a whole Church.

Prayer: Lord, bless our families and make them places where people learn to know and love you.

Act of the day: Thank God for those who passed on the faith to you.

Day 2: The school of praise

At Issoire, the young Praejectus studied letters and chant. He learned to pray with the psalms and to sing the glory of God.

Prayer: Lord, open my lips, and my mouth shall proclaim your praise.

Act of the day: Pray or sing a psalm, slowly.

Day 3: A teacher in the faith

Praejectus put himself in the school of Genesius, archdeacon and then bishop of Clermont. He let himself be formed and accepted the guidance of an elder.

Prayer: Lord, give me the humility to learn and the docility to be guided.

Act of the day: Ask a wise person for advice about a question that troubles you.

Day 4: Caring for the poor

While still a deacon, Praejectus received the parish of Issoire. There he founded a church and a hospital, for in his eyes the praise of God and the service of the poor go together.

Prayer: Lord, teach me to recognize you in those who are hungry, sick or alone.

Act of the day: Visit a sick or lonely person, or give them a call.

Day 5: Keeping the memory of witnesses

Praejectus wrote the lives of the first martyrs of Auvergne. He wanted the Church to remember those who had given their lives before her.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for the saints of our land. Help us keep their memory alive.

Act of the day: Read the life of a saint from your region or your parish.

Day 6: Accepting the burden

After troubled years, the clergy and the people chose Praejectus as bishop. He accepted a heavy service, for the good of all.

Prayer: Lord, support our bishops and our priests. Give them the strength and the joy to serve you.

Act of the day: Pray by name for your bishop and for the priests of your parish.

Day 7: Building for God

With the help of Count Genesius, Praejectus founded churches, monasteries and hospitals, including the convent of women at Chamalières. His generosity became a lasting work.

Prayer: Lord, bless those who give their goods for your Church and for the poor.

Act of the day: Make a gift, even a small one, to a charity or to your parish.

Day 8: Speaking up for the little ones

At the king's court, Praejectus defended ordinary people against the powerful. This freedom made him enemies.

Prayer: Lord, give me the courage to take the side of those who are crushed, with truth and without hatred.

Act of the day: Refuse today to take part in mockery or in an injustice.

Day 9: Dying at Volvic

On January 25, 676, Praejectus was murdered at Volvic with his companions Amarin and Elidius. The Church honors him as a martyr: his life given joins that of Christ.

Prayer: Lord, keep me from revenge and give me a forgiving heart. Through the intercession of Saint Praejectus, grant me the grace I ask in this novena, if it is your will.

Act of the day: Forgive someone who has hurt you, at least in your prayer, and attend Mass if you can.

Closing prayer

> *Saint Praejectus,*
> *bishop of Clermont and martyr,*
> *you loved God in praise*
> *and served him in the poor.*
> *Present to the Lord the intention I have entrusted to you.*
> *Give me a just and merciful heart,*
> *and keep me faithful to the end.*
> *Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

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

PILGRIMAGE

Church of Saint-Priest, Volvic

The church of Saint-Priest in Volvic stands in the Puy-de-Dôme, at the foot of the volcanoes, a few kilometers north of Clermont-Ferrand. It was at Volvic that Saint Praejectus (Priest), bishop of Clermont, was murdered on January 25, 676, and it was there that his body was buried. The church that bears his name stands on the site of the monastery founded to keep his tomb.

From the martyr's tomb to a Cluniac priory

In the last quarter of the 7th century, shortly after the bishop's death, a monastery of men was established at Volvic to receive his remains. The place became a center of his cult, which then spread throughout France under the names of Saint Priest, Saint Prix or Saint Projet. In the first half of the 12th century, the community was attached to the nearby abbey of Mozac and became a priory of the order of Cluny. This was probably the occasion for rebuilding the church in the Romanesque style.

Before the Revolution, Saint-Priest was one of the three parish churches of the town. The Romanesque nave had disappeared by the 19th century: the diocesan architect Aymon Mallay rebuilt it between 1869 and 1874, in the Neo-Romanesque style. The older parts were restored in the early 20th century.

What you can see

The church combines two periods. From the Romanesque building remain the choir, part of the ambulatory, three radiating chapels and a wall of the transept, built of arkose; these parts have been listed as historic monuments since 1903. The 19th-century nave, aisles and facade are of Volvic stone, the lava stone that made the town famous; they have been registered as historic

monuments since 2007. The capitals of the choir, studied by art historians, recall the memory of the founders of the place. Near the church stands a mission cross of Volvic stone, restored in 2011.

Praying on site

Before you come, you can read the life of Saint Praejectus. In the Romanesque choir, entrust to him the pastors of the Church, caregivers and those who serve the poor, then say the prayer to Saint Praejectus. January 25, his feast day, is a special time to come and pray where he gave his life. These suggestions are offered by Saintspedia.

Other places of Saint Praejectus

- **Vézézoux** (Haute-Loire): his native village.
- **Issoire** (Puy-de-Dôme): the town of his training and first ministry.
- **Clermont-Ferrand**: the see of his episcopate.
- **Mozac** (Puy-de-Dôme): the abbey on which the priory of Volvic depended.

Practical information

Volvic can be reached by car from Clermont-Ferrand and Riom. The church is a place of worship: modest dress and silence are requested, especially during services. Opening hours and Mass times may vary: check with the parish or the Volvic tourist office before your visit.

Credits and sources

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