BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Primael

Life, prayer and novena

Feast day: May 15

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IN BRIEF

Saint Primael

Breton hermit from Wales, friend of Saint Corentin, honored at Primelin and Saint-Évarzec.

Feast day	May 15
Born	5th or 6th century, Wales, according to tradition
Died	5th or 6th century, Cornouaille (Brittany)
Canonized	immemorial cult
Era	6th century
Patron saint of	Primelin, Saint-Évarzec

In this booklet

Life

Prayer to Saint Primael for Those Who Walk with Difficulty

Novena to Saint Primael

Credits and sources

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LIFE

Saint Primael

Saint Primael, or Primel, was a Breton hermit of the early Middle Ages, a native of Wales according to tradition. He lived in a forest of Cornouaille in the time of Saint Corentin, first Bishop of Quimper, in the 5th or 6th century. He is invoked above all in Finistère, where the municipality of Primelin bears his name. His feast day is May 15.

Who was Saint Primael?

Primael is one of the many Breton saints who came from Britain in the first centuries of Armorican Brittany, of whom we mostly know the name, a few local traditions and places of worship. No ancient Life of him has come down to us. The best-known account was recorded in the 17th century by the Dominican Albert Le Grand, of Morlaix, in his Lives of the Saints of Armorican Brittany, published in 1636, in connection with Saint Corentin. This late text gathers oral traditions and should be read as such.

The sources do not agree on the exact period: he is placed in the 5th or 6th century, depending on the date chosen for Saint Corentin himself. Still, his cult is well established in Cornouaille and in northern Finistère, with churches, chapels and places that bear his name.

Key dates in the life of Primael

- **5th-6th century**: Coming from Wales, he settles as a hermit in a forest of Cornouaille, according to tradition.
- **Same period**: Saint Corentin visits him in his hermitage and celebrates Mass there.
- **During this visit**: According to tradition, a spring gushes up near the hermitage at Corentin's prayer.

- **Uncertain date**: Tradition credits him, with Saint Meriadoc, with founding Plougasnou.
- **1636**: Albert Le Grand records the episode of the spring in his Lives of the Saints of Armorican Brittany.
- **Today**: The parish churches of Primelin and Saint-Évarzec are dedicated to him.

The lame hermit and Saint Corentin

According to Albert Le Grand's account, Primael was a solitary priest who led a very holy life in a forest of Cornouaille. Corentin, himself a hermit before becoming bishop, went to see him to receive his advice. Primael welcomed him gladly, and the two men spent the day speaking of God, then the night in prayer.

In the morning, Corentin wished to say Mass in his host's oratory. Primael prepared everything that was needed, then went to fetch water from a distant spring. Corentin waited for him a long time. Coming out, he saw him returning with small steps, out of breath, for the spring was far and the old hermit was lame. Moved with pity, Corentin prayed God to provide water closer to the hermitage. After Mass, he planted his staff in the ground, and a spring gushed up at that spot. The two saints gave thanks, and Corentin, after a few days, returned to his own hermitage at Plomodiern.

This story, whose historical truth cannot be checked, expresses well the spiritual friendship between these first Breton monks, and Corentin's brotherly care for an elderly, infirm companion.

Devotion and art

Saint Primael is celebrated on May 15 in the calendar of Breton saints. The parish church of Primelin, in Cap Sizun, is dedicated to him and the municipality takes its name from him; his pardon (a traditional Breton

religious festival) is held there on the first Sunday of August. A statue in the choir shows him with a cane, in memory of his infirmity. The parish church of Saint-Évarzec, near Quimper, is also under his patronage. At Saint-Thois, a chapel of Saint Primael, built on an ancient oratory, has now disappeared; a spring lay beneath its sacristy.

Tradition also says that Primael founded Plougasnou, in the Trégor area of Finistère, with Saint Meriadoc; a coastal village there bears his name, Primel. In Quimper, a lane called impasse Saint-Primel recalls that one of the city's seven chaplaincies was dedicated to him.

What can we learn from Saint Primael?

Saint Primael is presented to us as an old, lame hermit who welcomes his visitor, prays with him and goes himself to fetch water despite his difficulty. He reminds us of the value of hospitality, spiritual friendship and perseverance in weakness. You can pray to him for people with disabilities or who walk with difficulty, for the elderly, and for all who seek God in silence.

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

Where to pray to Saint Primael

- **Church of Saint-Primel in Primelin** (Finistère): the parish church that bears his name, where his pardon is held on the first Sunday of August.
- **Church of Saint-Primel in Saint-Évarzec** (Finistère): another parish church dedicated to him.
- **Primel**, at Plougasnou (Finistère): the coastal village that keeps his name.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Primael for Those Who Walk with Difficulty

Saint Primael, a hermit from Wales, lived in Cornouaille in the time of Saint Corentin. Tradition describes him as an old, lame man, hospitable and prayerful. Prayer composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. It entrusts to him those who walk with difficulty, the elderly and those who seek God.

Prayer to Saint Primael

Saint Primael,
hermit of Cornouaille,
you left your country to seek God
in the silence of the forest.
Teach me to keep silence
and to live in his presence.

You welcomed Saint Corentin with joy,
you prayed with him all night
and, despite your lame leg, you went
to fetch water for the Mass.
Give me a hospitable heart,
and patience in my weaknesses.

Watch over those who walk with difficulty,
over the elderly and the sick,
and make the spring of grace flow for us.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

When to pray to Saint Primael

- On his feast day, May 15, or at the pardon of Primelin, on the first Sunday of August.
- For a person with a disability or who walks with difficulty.
- For elderly people who live alone.
- Before welcoming someone into your home.
- When you are looking for a time of silence and retreat.

A short invocation

> *Saint Primael, you who walked with small steps toward the spring, support those who struggle on the road. Amen.*

To prepare for his feast, you can pray the novena to Saint Primael from May 7 to May 15, and read the life of Saint Primael.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Primael

This novena walks with Saint Primael, a Breton hermit from Wales and a friend of Saint Corentin according to tradition. Novena composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. To finish it on his feast day, May 15, begin on May 7. You can also pray it to prepare for the pardon of Primelin, at the beginning of August.

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 Primael, pray for us." The episode of the spring comes from an account recorded by Albert Le Grand in the 17th century.

Day 1: From across the sea

According to tradition, Primael came from Wales. Like many Breton saints, he crossed the sea to serve God.

Prayer: Lord, bless those who have left their country, and make our land a land of welcome.

Act of the day: Pray for someone from elsewhere who lives near you.

Day 2: The silence of the forest

Primael lived as a hermit in a forest of Cornouaille. He chose silence in order to listen to God.

Prayer: Lord, teach me to keep silence amid the noise of my days.

Act of the day: Walk in nature for a few minutes, in silence, before God.

Day 3: Welcoming a visitor

When Corentin came to see him, Primael welcomed him with joy. The hermit was not closed to others.

Prayer: Lord, help me to welcome everyone as if it were you who came.

Act of the day: Invite someone to share a coffee or a meal.

Day 4: Speaking of God

The two saints spent the day speaking of the things of God. Spiritual friendship helps us grow.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for the friends who help me believe. Help me to be such a friend.

Act of the day: Share with a friend a word of the Gospel that touched you.

Day 5: A night of prayer

The following night, Primael and Corentin prayed together. Common prayer is a strength.

Prayer: Lord, teach us to pray together, in our families and communities.

Act of the day: Pray for a moment with a loved one or a family member.

Day 6: Walking with difficulty

Primael was lame. Yet he went to fetch water from the distant spring, with small steps.

Prayer: Lord, I entrust to you people with disabilities and those who walk with difficulty.

Act of the day: Do a concrete service for an elderly person or someone with limited mobility.

Day 7: A brother's compassion

Seeing Primael out of breath, Corentin was moved with pity and prayed for him. Compassion becomes prayer.

Prayer: Lord, give me eyes attentive to the tiredness of others.

Act of the day: Relieve someone of a burdensome task today.

Day 8: The spring that gushed up

At Corentin's prayer, the account says, a spring gushed up near the hermitage. God gives living water to those who thirst.

Prayer: Jesus, spring of living water, quench my thirst for you.

Act of the day: Make the Sign of the Cross with holy water and give thanks for your baptism.

Day 9: A living memory

Centuries later, churches, a village and a municipality still bear Primael's name. The saints remain present in our landscapes.

Prayer: Lord, keep Brittany faithful to the faith of its saints. Through the intercession of Saint Primael, grant me the grace I ask in this novena, if it is your will.

Act of the day: Attend Mass if possible, or visit a chapel in your area.

Closing prayer

Saint Primael,
hermit of Cornouaille and friend of Saint Corentin,
you sought God in silence and poverty.
Present to the Lord the intention I have entrusted to you,
and support me in my weaknesses.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

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

Credits and sources

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