BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Relindis

Life, prayer, novena and pilgrimage

Feast day: February 6

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IN BRIEF

Saint Relindis

Frankish nun of the 8th century, co-foundress and abbess of Aldeneik with her sister Saint Harlindis.

Feast day	February 6, October 12
Born	early 8th century, Meuse region (Austrasia)
Died	c. 750, Aldeneik (Maaseik, Belgium)
Canonized	immemorial cult
Era	8th century

In this booklet

Life

Prayer to Saint Relindis for Families and the Work of Our Hands

Novena to Saint Relindis

Former Abbey of Aldeneik

Credits and sources

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LIFE

Saint Relindis

Saint Relindis (Relinde, sometimes Renildis) was a Frankish nun of the 8th century, the younger sister of Saint Harlindis. Together with her, she is honored as foundress of the abbey of Aldeneik, on the banks of the Meuse, near present-day Maaseik in Belgium. She became abbess after her sister's death and is said to have died around 750. Her local feast is February 6, and she is also celebrated with Saint Harlindis on October 12.

Who was Saint Relindis?

Relindis belonged to the Frankish nobility of the Meuse region, at the time when Anglo-Saxon missionaries, Saint Willibrord and then Saint Boniface, were evangelizing the northern lands. What we know of her comes mainly from a Life of the two sisters, the *Vita Harlindis et Relindis*, written in the 9th century, between 855 and 881, more than a hundred years after their death. This account mixes real memories with elements meant for edification, and historians still debate some of its dates. Yet Aldeneik certainly existed, 8th-century embroideries attributed to the two sisters are kept at Maaseik, and their cult has continued to this day in Belgian Limburg.

Key dates in the life of Relindis

- **Early 8th century**: Born into the family of Count Adalard, a Frankish nobleman; she is the younger sister of Harlindis.
- **Youth**: According to tradition, the two sisters are brought up by the nuns of Valenciennes, where they learn reading, chant and the art of embroidery.
- **c. 728-730**: Their parents found a monastery for them at Aldeneik, on the Meuse; Harlindis becomes its first abbess.

- **730s**: The two sisters are in contact with Saint Willibrord, bishop of Utrecht, who blesses Harlindis as abbess.
- **Mid-8th century**: At the death of Harlindis (745 or 753, depending on the sources), Relindis succeeds her, at the request of Saint Boniface.
- **c. 750**: Relindis dies at Aldeneik; the exact date is unknown.
- **Between 855 and 881**: The Life of Saints Harlindis and Relindis is written.
- **952**: After the Viking raids, Bishop Richer of Liège installs Augustinian canons at Aldeneik.
- **1570**: During the wars of religion, the abbey treasury and the relics of the foundresses are taken for safety to the church of Saint Catherine in Maaseik.

Two sisters consecrated to God

The Life presents Harlindis and Relindis as two very close young women who chose together to consecrate themselves to God. They excelled in needlework, a skill highly valued in women's monasteries, where altar furnishings and liturgical vestments were made. Their father, moved by their choice, had a monastery built for them on his lands at Aldeneik, on the banks of the Meuse. It began as a small community and became an abbey that probably followed the Rule of Saint Benedict.

Harlindis was its first abbess. Relindis lived at her side, in common prayer, work and hospitality. The two sisters knew the great missionaries of their time: Saint Willibrord, apostle of the Frisians, and Saint Boniface, apostle of Germany. In its own way, their monastery helped the faith take root in a region only recently evangelized.

Abbess after her sister

When Harlindis died, the care of the community passed to Relindis. Tradition says that Saint Boniface himself asked for this. Relindis is said to have governed the abbey gently, continuing the work begun with her sister. Some texts also present her as a reformer of the monastery. She died around the middle of the 8th century; the sources do not agree on the dates, since the death of Harlindis is placed sometimes in 745 and sometimes in 753, which makes the chronology uncertain.

The embroideries and the treasury of Maaseik

An exceptional witness links these two women to our own time. The church of Saint Catherine in Maaseik keeps the treasury of the former abbey of Aldeneik: 8th-century Anglo-Saxon embroideries and liturgical textiles, which tradition attributes to the two sisters, and a manuscript of the same period, the *Codex Eyckensis*, considered the oldest book in Belgium. The relics of the two foundresses are also venerated there. These objects remind us that the prayer of the nuns also passed through the beauty of the work of their hands.

Devotion and art

Relindis is celebrated locally on February 6, and on October 12 together with her sister; the diocese of Liège has also commemorated them on February 13. Their feast remains regional. Several churches and chapels in Belgian Limburg are dedicated to them, such as the church of Saints Harlindis and Relindis at Ellikom and a chapel at Aldeneik. The two sisters are usually shown together, as abbesses, with a crozier or a model of their monastery, sometimes surrounded by nuns.

What can we learn from Saint Relindis?

Relindis did not seek the first place: she lived for a long time at her sister's side before receiving in her turn the responsibility for the community. She reminds us of the beauty of sisterhood lived in faith, the value of work well done and offered to God, and the faithfulness of those who carry on what others began. You can pray to her for brothers and sisters, for embroiderers and all who work with their hands, and for religious communities.

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

Where to pray to Saint Relindis

- **Aldeneik** (Maaseik, Belgium): the former abbey church, now the church of Saint Anne, and the chapel of the two saints.
- **Maaseik**: the church of Saint Catherine, which keeps the abbey treasury and the relics of the foundresses.
- **Ellikom** (Belgian Limburg): the church dedicated to Saints Harlindis and Relindis.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Relindis for Families and the Work of Our Hands

Saint Relindis, a Frankish nun of the 8th century, founded with her sister Harlindis the abbey of Aldeneik, on the banks of the Meuse, and later became its abbess. Prayer composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. It is not an official liturgical text. It entrusts to her families, brothers and sisters, and all who serve God through the work of their hands.

Prayer to Saint Relindis

Saint Relindis,
with your sister Harlindis
you left everything to seek God
on the banks of the Meuse, in prayer and work.
Teach me to live in peace with those close to me
and to walk with them toward the Lord.

Your hands embroidered for the altar
works that are still admired today.
Help me to offer God my daily work,
done with care, patience and love.

In your turn you received the care of your sisters,
without having sought it.
Help me to accept the responsibilities entrusted to me
and to serve with gentleness.
Watch over families, over religious communities,
and over the land where you prayed.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

When to pray to Saint Relindis

- On her feast day, February 6, or on October 12 with Saint Harlindis.
- For harmony between brothers and sisters, and for divided families.
- For embroiderers, seamstresses, craftsmen and all who work with their hands.
- When a new responsibility is entrusted to you.
- For nuns and for religious vocations.

A short invocation

> *Saints Harlindis and Relindis,*
> *sisters in faith and in service,*
> *pray for us. Amen.*

To prepare for her feast, you can pray the novena to Saint Relindis from January 29 to February 6, and read the life of Saint Relindis.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Relindis

This novena is an original composition inspired by the life of Saint Relindis, a Frankish nun of the 8th century and abbess of Aldeneik, on the banks of the Meuse. Novena composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. It is not an official liturgical text. To finish it on her feast day, February 6, begin on January 29. You can also pray it before October 12, the feast of Saints Harlindis and Relindis, beginning on October 4, or at any other time.

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 Relindis, pray for us." The act of the day helps you live the novena concretely. The episodes recalled come from the Life of the two sisters, written in the 9th century, which mixes history and tradition.

Day 1: A Christian family

Relindis was born into the family of Count Adalard. Her parents, moved by their daughters' vocation, gave them land on which to build a monastery. The faith of their children was welcomed and supported.

Prayer: Lord, bless parents who support the vocation of their children. Make our families generous toward you.

Act of the day: Pray for your parents, living or departed, and thank them for the faith you received.

Day 2: Two united sisters

Harlindis and Relindis chose together to consecrate themselves to God. Their affection as sisters became a communion in prayer.

Prayer: Lord, keep brothers and sisters united. Heal the wounded bonds in our families.

Act of the day: Reach out to a brother, a sister or a relative with whom the bond has grown loose.

Day 3: Learning from the nuns

According to tradition, the two sisters were brought up by the nuns of Valenciennes. There they learned prayer, chant and the art of embroidery.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for those who taught me to pray and to work. Give young people teachers who lead them to you.

Act of the day: Pass on a skill or a useful piece of advice to someone.

Day 4: The work of the hands

The embroideries attributed to Relindis and her sister are still kept at Maaseik. This patient work, made for the altar, was already a prayer.

Prayer: Lord, may my work today be offered to you. Give me patience and care in little things.

Act of the day: Do an ordinary task with special care, offering it to God.

Day 5: Building a place of prayer

At Aldeneik, on the banks of the Meuse, a monastery was born. Women prayed there each day for a land still young in the faith.

Prayer: Lord, bless monasteries and houses of prayer. Make my heart a place where you dwell.

Act of the day: Take ten minutes of silence to pray, alone or in a church.

Day 6: Missionary friends

Relindis and Harlindis knew Saint Willibrord and Saint Boniface, the great missionaries of their time. Their prayer supported the proclamation of the Gospel.

Prayer: Lord, support those who proclaim your Gospel today. Through my prayer, make me a friend of missionaries.

Act of the day: Pray for a missionary or support a missionary work.

Day 7: Second, then first

Relindis lived for a long time at the side of her sister the abbess. She did not seek the first place, but accepted it when it was entrusted to her.

Prayer: Lord, teach me the humility of serving in the background, and the courage to accept a task when you entrust it to me.

Act of the day: Do a discreet service without seeking to be noticed.

Day 8: Carrying on

At the death of Harlindis, Relindis continued the work that had been begun. She remained faithful to what had been sown before her.

Prayer: Lord, help me to be faithful to what I have received, and to hand it on to those who come after me.

Act of the day: Pray for someone who went before you in a mission or a commitment.

Day 9: Toward the Father's house

Relindis died around the middle of the 8th century at Aldeneik. The two sisters, united in life, have remained united in the memory of the Church.

Prayer: Lord, gather one day in your house those who loved one another on earth. Through the intercession of Saint Relindis, grant me the grace I ask in this novena, if it is your will.

Act of the day: Pray for the departed members of your family and, if possible, attend Mass.

Closing prayer

> *Saint Relindis,*
> *faithful sister and abbess of Aldeneik,*
> *you served God in prayer and work.*
> *Present to the Lord the intention I have entrusted to you.*
> *Keep our families united*
> *and teach us to serve with gentleness.*
> *Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

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

PILGRIMAGE

Former Abbey of Aldeneik

The former abbey of Aldeneik stood on the banks of the Meuse, in what is now the municipality of Maaseik, in Belgian Limburg, close to the Dutch border. It was here that, around 728-730, Saints Harlindis and Relindis founded a monastery of nuns, of which they were abbesses one after the other. Of the abbey, only the church has come down through the centuries; the monastery's treasury and the relics of the two sisters are now kept in the church of Saint Catherine in Maaseik, a few kilometers away.

Twelve centuries of history

According to the Life written in the 9th century, Count Adalard had a monastery built for his two daughters on his lands at Aldeneik. Harlindis was its first abbess, with the support of Saint Willibrord; Relindis succeeded her, at the request of Saint Boniface. The nuns probably followed the Rule of Saint Benedict.

In the 9th and 10th centuries, Viking raids devastated the monastery. It was later given to Bishop Richer of Liège, who settled Augustinian canons there, led by an abbot from 952. In 1570, during the wars of religion, the canons took their treasury for safety to the nearby town of Maaseik, where it has remained. The abbey was finally suppressed in 1797. Its church, dedicated to Saint Anne in the 18th century, became the parish church of Aldeneik.

What you can see

At Aldeneik, the former abbey church recalls by its architecture the age of the place. A chapel dedicated to Saints Harlindis and Relindis is also found at Aldeneik. In Maaseik, the church of Saint Catherine houses, in a museum set up in its basement, the treasury of the former abbey: 8th-century Anglo-Saxon

embroideries and liturgical vestments, which tradition attributes to the two sisters; the *Codex Eyckensis*, a manuscript of the same period considered the oldest book in Belgium; and the relics of the foundresses, along with liturgical objects from the late Middle Ages.

Praying on site

Before you come, you can read the life of Saint Relindis. At Aldeneik, in the calm of the Meuse, entrust your family and those with whom you share your life to the two sisters. Before their relics in Maaseik, you can say the prayer to Saint Relindis and give thanks for all who serve God through the work of their hands. These suggestions are offered by Saintspedia.

Practical information

Maaseik lies in the province of Limburg, in Belgium, on the Meuse; Aldeneik is set apart from the town center, by the river. The two sites are easy to reach from each other by car or by bicycle. Churches are places of prayer: modest dress and silence are expected. Opening hours of the churches and of the treasury museum, as well as visiting conditions, may vary: check with the parish or the Maaseik tourist office before you come.

Credits and sources

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