

BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Remaclus

Life, prayer and novena

Feast day: September 3

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IN BRIEF

Saint Remaclus

Monk of Luxeuil, first abbot of Solignac and founder of the abbeys of Stavelot and Malmedy, patron saint of Spa.

Feast day	September 3
Born	c. 600, Aquitaine, France
Died	September 3, c. 673, Stavelot, Belgium
Canonized	Pre-congregation (immemorial cult)
Era	7th century
Patron saint of	Spa, Stavelot

In this booklet

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Credits and sources

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LIFE

Saint Remaclus

Saint Remaclus (Remacle in French) was a seventh-century monk and abbot, born in Aquitaine and trained at the great monastery of Luxeuil. He became the first abbot of Solignac, in the Limousin region of France, and then founded the twin abbeys of Stavelot and Malmedy in the Ardennes, in present-day Belgium. Part of the tradition also counts him among the bishops of Maastricht. He died at Stavelot around 673, is the patron saint of the town of Spa, and his feast day is September 3.

Who was Saint Remaclus?

Remaclus (Latin *Remaclus*) belongs to the great generation of monks who brought the Christian faith to northern Gaul in the seventh century. They worked in the wake of the Irish missionary Saint Columbanus, with the support of the Merovingian kings and the leading families of Austrasia, the eastern part of the Frankish kingdom.

What we know of his life comes from a biography written at Stavelot in the ninth century, together with the foundation charters of his monasteries, which allow historians to date several episodes. His name remains bound to the Ardennes: for more than a thousand years Stavelot was the great religious and political center of the region, and the abbey later became the seat of a small principality.

He is shown as an abbot or a bishop, accompanied by a wolf carrying stones, a memory of a legend from the founding of Stavelot.



The shrine of Saint Remaclus, a masterpiece of Mosan goldsmith work, at Stavelot.

Key dates in the life of Saint Remaclus

- **c. 600**: Born in Aquitaine, into a noble family.
- **620s**: Becomes a monk at Luxeuil, the monastery founded by Saint Columbanus.
- **c. 632**: At the request of Saint Eligius, becomes the first abbot of Solignac, near Limoges.
- **c. 640-645**: Called to Austrasia, he leads the monastery of Cugnon in the Ardennes, founded by King Sigebert III.
- **c. 648-651**: With the support of Sigebert III, he founds the twin abbeys of Stavelot and Malmedy.
- **c. 650**: According to part of the tradition, he holds the see of Maastricht for a time.
- **c. 673**: Dies at Stavelot, where he is buried.

- **1263-1268**: His relics are placed in a great goldsmith's shrine, still kept at Stavelot today.

From Aquitaine to Luxeuil

Born around 600 into an Aquitanian family, Remaclus received a solid Christian education. He entered the monastery of Luxeuil, in the Vosges mountains, founded by Saint Columbanus a few decades earlier.

At that time Luxeuil was a seedbed of monks, abbots and bishops who spread across the whole Frankish kingdom. Its communities combined the rule of Columbanus with the rule of Saint Benedict, a mixture that shaped many monasteries of the age.

First abbot of Solignac

Around 632, Saint Eligius (Éloi), goldsmith and counselor of King Dagobert, founded the monastery of Solignac in the Limousin, on land the king had given him. He asked Luxeuil for an abbot able to lead it, and Remaclus was chosen.

The new abbot organized the community according to the customs of Luxeuil, uniting the rules of Columbanus and Benedict. Solignac quickly became a flourishing monastery.

Founder of Stavelot and Malmedy

A few years later Remaclus was called to Austrasia. He first led the monastery of Cugnon, on the Semois river, founded by King Sigebert III. Then, with the support of the king and of Grimoald, mayor of the palace, he received a vast stretch of the Ardennes forest to found a double monastery: Malmedy and Stavelot, on two neighboring rivers. The two abbeys remained united under a single abbot for more than a thousand years.

The legend of the wolf

Legend says that while Stavelot was being built, a wolf devoured the donkey that carried the stones. Remaclus ordered the wolf to take the donkey's place, and the animal obeyed meekly. This wolf loaded with stones still appears today in the coat of arms of Stavelot.



The former abbey of Stavelot, founded by Saint Remaclus.

Was Saint Remaclus a bishop of Maastricht?

Part of the tradition makes Remaclus the successor of Saint Amand in the see of Tongeren-Maastricht around 650, before he withdrew to Stavelot and made way for Saint Theodard. Historians remain cautious. The title of bishop given to him might also reflect the role of an abbot-bishop, fairly common at the time in these missionary regions.

Remaclus died at Stavelot around 673 and was buried there.

Why is Saint Remaclus the patron saint of Spa?

Devotion to Saint Remaclus is very much alive in the Belgian Ardennes, in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, in the German Eifel and in the French Ardennes, where many churches are dedicated to him. He is the patron of the town of Spa, whose main church bears his name together with that of Our Lady.

Near Spa, a stone marked with a footprint and known as the "foot of Saint Remaclus" is linked to an old popular devotion. The Benedictine monastery of Saint-Remacle at Wavreumont, near Stavelot, carries his name into monastic life today. Because he gave the region its first great monastic centers, he is naturally invoked as the patron of Stavelot as well.

Symbols and how to recognize Saint Remaclus in art

- **The wolf carrying stones**: his most distinctive attribute, taken from the legend of the building of Stavelot.
- **The crosier**: the staff of an abbot, or of a bishop in images that follow the Maastricht tradition.
- **Monastic habit or episcopal vestments**: he is shown either as an abbot or as a bishop.
- **The shrine of Stavelot**: the great reliquary itself has become an image of his memory.

What can we learn from Saint Remaclus?

Remaclus was a builder of monasteries, a monk who accepted being sent from one end of the kingdom to the other to serve wherever the Church needed him. The legend of the wolf says something of his gentleness and his strength: even what is wild can be tamed and put at the service of good.

He can be invoked for monks and nuns, for rural and forest regions, for people who must change place or mission, and for the town of Spa. You can pray with him using the prayer to Saint Remaclus or the novena to Saint Remaclus.

Where to pray to Saint Remaclus

His relics rest in a great shrine of Mosan goldsmith work completed between 1263 and 1268, one of the masterpieces of that art. After the abbey was suppressed during the French Revolution, the shrine was moved to the parish church of Saint Sebastian in Stavelot, where it can be seen today.

- **Stavelot** (province of Liège, Belgium): the church of Saint Sebastian, which holds his shrine, and the site of the former abbey.
- **Malmedy**: the cathedral, once the abbey church of the other monastery he founded.
- **Spa**: the church of Our Lady and Saint Remaclus, dedicated to its patron.
- **Wavreumont** (Stavelot): the Benedictine monastery of Saint-Remacle.
- **Solignac** (Haute-Vienne, France): the Romanesque abbey church, on the site of the monastery where he was the first abbot.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Remaclus for New Beginnings

Saint Remaclus, founder of the abbeys of Stavelot and Malmedy, has been prayed to in the Ardennes for more than a thousand years. Patron of Spa, he is a friend of monks, of forest people and of the countryside. The legend of the wolf he tamed to build his monastery also makes him an intercessor for anyone who has to face their own "wolves." Here is an original prayer by Saintspedia.

Prayer to Saint Remaclus

Saint Remaclus, monk of Luxeuil and builder of monasteries, you left your homeland of Aquitaine to serve wherever the Church called you. Teach me readiness and trust when my road changes.

You made the forest of the Ardennes a place of prayer and work: bless our countryside, our forests, our villages and all who live and work in them.

According to tradition, you tamed the wolf and set it to work building your monastery. Help me master what is violent in me, and turn my strength into service.

Watch over the town of Spa, over Stavelot and Malmedy, over monks and nuns, and over all who seek God in silence. I entrust to you my intention: (name it in silence). Amen.

This prayer is an original text by Saintspedia, free to use for personal and community prayer.

Intentions to entrust to Saint Remaclus

- Monks and nuns, especially those of the Ardennes.
- The people of Spa, Stavelot, Malmedy and the villages of the Ardennes.
- Foresters, farmers and all who live from the land.
- People who must move to a new home or take on a new mission.
- Those who struggle with anger or violence.

Short invocation

> *Saint Remaclus, father of the monks of the Ardennes, pray for us. Amen.*

Original invocation by Saintspedia.

When to pray this prayer

Saint Remaclus is celebrated on September 3. In several dioceses, such as Liège, his memorial is often kept on September 4, since September 3 is the feast of Saint Gregory the Great. You can also pray to him during a walk in the forest, before a move or at the start of a new chapter of life.

To go further, read the life of Saint Remaclus or pray the novena to Saint Remaclus, and if you travel to Belgium, visit the church of Saint Sebastian in Stavelot, where his shrine is kept.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Remaclus

This novena to Saint Remaclus is an original composition by Saintspedia. Over nine days it follows the path of the monk who left Aquitaine for Luxeuil, led the abbey of Solignac and founded Stavelot and Malmedy in the forest of the Ardennes. To end on his feast day, September 3, begin on August 26. You can of course pray it at any time of year, for example before a move, a new job or any change of direction.

How to pray this novena

Each day, find a quiet moment of about ten minutes. Begin with the Sign of the Cross, read the short meditation, then say the prayer of the day slowly. Add an Our Father, a Hail Mary and a Glory Be, and end with the closing prayer. Each day also suggests a small concrete act, so that prayer turns into everyday life. Bring one intention to the whole novena and name it each day.

Day 1: Leaving home

Remaclus was born around 600 in Aquitaine, into a noble family, and did not stay there. He left his land to become a monk far away, at Luxeuil. Every vocation begins with a departure, small or great. Today, think of what God may be asking you to leave behind in order to follow him more freely.

Prayer: Saint Remaclus, you left your homeland to seek God, help me let go of what holds me back and walk where the Lord leads me. Amen.

Today: Give away or set aside one thing you cling to more than you should.

Day 2: The school of Luxeuil

At Luxeuil, the monastery founded by Saint Columbanus, Remaclus learned the monastic life alongside many future abbots and bishops. A Christian life is not built alone: we are formed by communities, teachers and companions. Today, give thanks for those who taught you the faith.

Prayer: Saint Remaclus, disciple of Luxeuil, make me humble and teachable, and bless all who helped me know God. Amen.

Today: Thank, by message or in prayer, a person who passed on the faith to you.

Day 3: Called by Saint Eligius

Around 632, Saint Eligius asked Luxeuil for an abbot for his new monastery of Solignac, and Remaclus was chosen. He accepted a responsibility he had not sought. Today, pray for the grace to say yes when others need you, even when the task feels larger than you are.

Prayer: Saint Remaclus, you answered the call to lead Solignac, give me courage to accept the responsibilities God places before me. Amen.

Today: Say yes to a service you have been putting off.

Day 4: Order and peace

At Solignac, Remaclus organized the community according to the rules of Columbanus and Benedict, and the monastery flourished. A good rule of life does not imprison: it protects time for God and for others. Today, look at the rhythm of your days.

Prayer: Saint Remaclus, wise abbot, help me give my days a simple order where prayer, work and rest each find their place. Amen.

Today: Set a fixed time for a few minutes of prayer and keep it.

Day 5: Sent again

Just when Solignac was thriving, Remaclus was called to Austrasia, first to Cugnon in the Ardennes. He did not hold on to his success. Being available means accepting that our plans are not the last word. Today, entrust to God a change you fear or did not choose.

Prayer: Saint Remaclus, ready to go wherever the Church sent you, give me peace in times of change and trust in the One who guides me. Amen.

Today: Pray for someone who is facing a move, a new job or an uncertain future.

Day 6: In the heart of the forest

With the support of King Sigebert III, Remaclus founded Stavelot and Malmedy in the forest of the Ardennes. Where there had been wilderness, he made a place of prayer, work and welcome. Today, give thanks for creation and for those who care for the land.

Prayer: Saint Remaclus, you made the forest a place of praise, bless our fields, woods and villages, and those who work them. Amen.

Today: Take a walk outdoors in silence and thank God for what you see.

Day 7: The tamed wolf

Legend says a wolf killed the donkey carrying stones for Stavelot, and Remaclus made the wolf carry them instead. Each of us has inner "wolves": anger, fear, impatience. The Gospel does not ask us to destroy our strength, but to place it at the service of good.

Prayer: Saint Remaclus, tamer of the wolf, help me master what is violent in me and turn it into patient, generous service. Amen.

Today: When irritation rises, pause, breathe and answer gently.

Day 8: Shepherd of the people

Part of the tradition says that Remaclus served for a time as bishop of Maastricht before returning to Stavelot. Whatever his title, he was a shepherd for the people of a missionary land. Today, pray for bishops, priests and all who lead communities.

Prayer: Saint Remaclus, faithful shepherd, intercede for our bishops and priests, and for all who carry the care of others. Amen.

Today: Pray by name for your parish priest or the leader of your community.

Day 9: A home in God

Remaclus died at Stavelot around 673, among the monks he had gathered. For centuries his relics have been honored in the Ardennes, today in the great shrine of Stavelot. A life given to God bears fruit long after us. On his feast day, entrust your intention to him one last time.

Prayer: Saint Remaclus, father of the monks of the Ardennes, present my intention to the Lord and help me remain faithful to the end. Amen.

Today: If you can, attend Mass and offer it for your intention and for the people of the Ardennes.

Closing prayer

Lord our God, you called Saint Remaclus to leave his homeland and build houses of prayer in the forest. Through his intercession, make us ready to go where you send us, gentle with what is wild in us and faithful in our daily work. Bless monks and nuns, the people of the countryside, and all who are facing a new beginning. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Saint Remaclus, pray for us.

CREDITS

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