

BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Rimbert

Life, prayer and novena

Feast day: June 11

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IN BRIEF

Saint Rimbert

Archbishop of Hamburg and Bremen, disciple and biographer of Saint Ansgar, missionary to Scandinavia.

Feast day	June 11
Born	c. 830, Flanders, near Torhout
Died	June 11, 888, Bremen, Germany
Canonized	pre-congregation (immemorial cult)
Era	9th century

In this booklet

Life

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Novena to Saint Rimbert

Credits and sources

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LIFE

Saint Rimbert

Saint Rimbert, also called Rembert, was a monk from Flanders who became archbishop of Hamburg and Bremen in 865, after the death of Saint Ansgar, the "Apostle of the North," whose disciple and companion he had been. He carried on the mission to the Danes and the Swedes, with more toil than success, and left behind the *Life of Saint Ansgar*, a precious source on Scandinavia in the Viking Age. He died in Bremen on June 11, 888, and his feast day is kept on that date.

Who was Saint Rimbert?

Rimbert was born around 830 in Flanders, near the monastery of Torhout, where he was brought up. It was there that Ansgar, a monk who had come from Corbie and Corvey and was himself a missionary in Denmark and Sweden, noticed the boy and advised that he be trained. The young man became his disciple and then his faithful companion: he followed him to Hamburg and Bremen and went with him on his journeys, to synods as well as to imperial assemblies.

He lived at a time when Viking raids were striking the coasts of northern Europe, and when the Carolingian Church was trying to proclaim the Gospel to the Scandinavian peoples, who were still pagan. The mission was hard, often threatened, and its fruits remained fragile.

Key dates

- **c. 830**: Born in Flanders, near Torhout.
- **Youth**: Educated at the monastery of Torhout, on Ansgar's advice.
- **850s**: Companion of Ansgar in Hamburg and Bremen.

- **864**: Pope Saint Nicholas I confirms the union of the sees of Hamburg and Bremen.
- **February 3, 865**: On Ansgar's death, Rimbert is elected archbishop by the clergy and people.
- **868**: Takes part in the synod of Worms.
- **873**: Attends the assembly of Frankfurt.
- **Between 870 and 880**: Writes the *Life of Saint Ansgar*.
- **June 11, 888**: Dies in Bremen.

Heir of the Apostle of the North

Elected without delay when Ansgar died, Rimbert received an immense see. The archdiocese of Hamburg-Bremen was meant to serve as the base for the mission to Denmark, Sweden and the lands of the North. Rimbert traveled to Scandinavia several times, but he did not succeed in extending his master's work in a lasting way. The Christian communities that Ansgar had founded, such as the one at Birka in Sweden, remained small and under threat.

For Rimbert, succeeding Ansgar meant more than taking over an office. It meant continuing the work of a man he had known closely for years, whom he regarded as his father in the faith.

This is perhaps the most touching side of his story. Rimbert took up a great work begun by someone else, gave himself to it for more than twenty years, and saw little visible result. He did not abandon it. The conversion of Scandinavia would take place only much later, but the seeds sown by Ansgar and tended by Rimbert were part of that long history.

A bishop of the Carolingian Empire

Rimbert was also a pastor within the Carolingian Empire, involved in the life of the wider Church. He took part in the synod of Worms in 868 and in the assembly of Frankfurt in 873. In 888, shortly before his death, he obtained for Bremen the right to mint coins and to collect customs duties, which strengthened the resources of the archdiocese for a long time to come.

The *Life* written about him after his death presents him as a charitable pastor, particularly concerned for Christians who had been taken captive. In an age of raids and slave markets, this care for prisoners was a very concrete form of the Gospel.

The biographer of Saint Ansgar

Rimbert's most lasting work is a book. Between 870 and 880 he wrote the *Vita Anskarii*, the life of his master. In it he tells of Ansgar's journeys to Denmark and Sweden, his hopes, his failures, the dangers of the mission and his deep inner life.

Written by a direct witness, this text is one of the main sources on ninth-century Scandinavia: its kings, its trading towns and its beliefs, even though it sees everything through the eyes of a churchman. Historians of the Viking Age still read it closely, and it has been translated into English.

Why pray to Saint Rimbert?

Saint Rimbert has no widely known patronage. Yet his life speaks clearly to certain situations. He is the saint of quiet faithfulness. He did not have the brilliance of his master, and the mission he received did not bear all the hoped-for fruit in his lifetime. But he held firm, kept alive the memory of the man who had formed him, and handed it on to later generations. Scandinavian Christianity owes him, in part, the knowledge of its own beginnings.

You can pray to him for successors and for anyone who takes up the work of another: a new pastor, a new head of a school or a community, a son or daughter continuing a family's work. He is also a companion for those who labor without seeing results, for missionaries in difficult lands, and for Christians held captive or persecuted.

Symbols and how to recognize Saint Rimbert in art

Images of Saint Rimbert are rare. When he is depicted, it is as an archbishop, with miter and crosier. A book in his hands can recall his *Life of Saint Ansgar*. In Bremen, he belongs to the line of the city's holy bishops, alongside Saint Willehad and Saint Ansgar.

Where to pray to Saint Rimbert

- **Bremen** (Germany): the city of his see and of his death, where he was buried.
- **Torhout** (West Flanders, Belgium): the place of his childhood and training.
- **Hamburg** (Germany): the other see of his archdiocese, cradle of the mission to the North.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Rimbert for Faithfulness

Saint Rimbert, archbishop of Hamburg and Bremen in the ninth century, spent his life continuing the mission begun by his master, Saint Ansgar, among the peoples of Scandinavia. There is no widely known traditional prayer to him. Below is an original prayer inspired by his faithfulness, his concern for captives and his care in handing on the memory of those who came before him.

Prayer to Saint Rimbert

Saint Rimbert, faithful disciple of Saint Ansgar, you received from your master a great work that you had not begun, and you carried it on with patience, without seeing the harvest you hoped for.

Obtain for me the grace of faithfulness in small things and in long efforts. When my work seems to bear no fruit, help me to keep sowing in trust, knowing that God gives the growth in his own time.

You cared for Christians taken captive: I entrust to you all who are imprisoned, persecuted or held against their will, and all who work for their freedom.

You wrote down the life of your master so that it would not be forgotten: teach me to give thanks for those who have formed me in faith and to pass on what I have received.

I entrust to you today this intention: (name it in silence).

Saint Rimbert, pray for us. Amen.

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

When to pray this prayer

Saint Rimbert's feast day is June 11, the day of his death in Bremen in 888. This prayer is especially suited:

- when you take over a task, a ministry or a responsibility from someone else;
- when you feel that your work or your witness bears little visible fruit;
- for missionaries and for Christians in places where the faith is fragile;
- for prisoners, hostages and persecuted Christians;
- on the anniversary of a teacher, mentor or spiritual father who has died.

To pray with him over nine days, follow the novena to Saint Rimbert, and read the life of Saint Rimbert to know him better.

A prayer with Saint Ansgar and Saint Rimbert

Master and disciple shared the same mission to the North. You can also pray to them together with this short invocation, an original text by Saintspedia:

> *Lord, you sent Saint Ansgar and Saint Rimbert to proclaim your name to the peoples of the North. Through their intercession, give your Church missionaries who are patient, humble and faithful, and keep alive in us the memory of those who brought us the faith. Amen.*

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Rimbert

This novena is an original composition by Saintspedia, inspired by the life of Saint Rimbert, archbishop of Hamburg and Bremen and disciple of Saint Ansgar. It is not an official liturgical text. To finish it on his feast day, June 11, begin it on June 3. It can be prayed at any time, especially when you take over the work of someone else or when your efforts seem to bear no fruit.

How to pray this novena

Each day, place your intention before God, read the short meditation, then say the prayer of the day followed by an Our Father, a Hail Mary and a Glory Be. The small act suggested for the day helps you live in Rimbert's spirit of faithfulness and service. You can pray it alone, with your family or with a group.

Day 1: A child entrusted to God

Rimbert was brought up near the monastery of Torhout, in Flanders. His vocation grew in a place of prayer and study, long before he knew where it would lead him. We give thanks for the places and people where our own faith was born.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for the places where I first learned to know you. Bless the schools, parishes and monasteries that form young people today.

Today: Pray for a teacher or a school that shaped you.

Day 2: Noticed and called

Ansgar noticed the young Rimbert and asked that he be trained. Many vocations begin with someone who sees what we cannot yet see in ourselves. We pray for those who discern and encourage the gifts of others.

Prayer: Lord, give your Church mentors who know how to recognize and encourage the gifts of the young.

Today: Encourage someone younger by naming a gift you see in them.

Day 3: A faithful companion

Rimbert followed Ansgar to Hamburg and Bremen and on his journeys. He learned the mission by sharing his master's life. Discipleship is learned by walking beside someone, day after day.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, teach me to follow you closely, as Rimbert followed his master, in good days and in hard ones.

Today: Spend a few minutes reading a Gospel passage about the disciples walking with Jesus.

Day 4: Taking up another's work

When Ansgar died in 865, Rimbert was elected to succeed him. He received an immense task he had not chosen. We pray for all who take over a responsibility from someone else, in the Church, at work or in the family.

Prayer: Lord, give strength and humility to those who continue the work of others. Let them build without fear on what they have received.

Today: Pray for a new pastor, leader or colleague who has recently taken up a role.

Day 5: Sowing without seeing the harvest

Rimbert traveled to Scandinavia several times, but the mission did not grow as he had hoped, and the young communities remained fragile. He kept going. God often asks us to sow what others will reap.

Prayer: Lord, when my efforts seem useless, keep me faithful. I trust that nothing given to you is lost.

Today: Continue with patience one effort you were tempted to abandon.

Day 6: For the persecuted and captive

Rimbert lived in the age of Viking raids and was remembered as a pastor concerned for Christians taken captive. Today too, many are imprisoned, kidnapped or persecuted for their faith. We carry them in our prayer.

Prayer: Lord, set free those who are held captive, comfort the persecuted, and give courage to all who defend them.

Today: Learn about a persecuted Christian community and pray for it by name.

Day 7: A pastor of the whole Church

Rimbert took part in the synod of Worms and the assembly of Frankfurt. He did not live his mission alone but in communion with the wider Church. We pray for unity among bishops, priests and all the faithful.

Prayer: Lord, keep your Church united. Help me to live my faith in communion with others and not alone.

Today: Pray for your bishop by name.

Day 8: Keeping memory alive

Rimbert wrote the *Life of Saint Ansgar* so that his master's witness would not be forgotten. Thanks to him, we still know the story of the first mission to the North. We give thanks for those who pass on the memory of faith.

Prayer: Lord, help me to remember with gratitude those who brought me the faith, and to pass on their witness.

Today: Tell someone the story of a person who helped you believe.

Day 9: Faithful to the end

Rimbert died in Bremen on June 11, 888, after more than twenty years as archbishop. He had not seen the conversion of the North, but he had been faithful. On this last day, we entrust our intentions to his prayer and ask for the grace of perseverance.

Prayer: Lord, through the intercession of Saint Rimbert, give me the grace to remain faithful until the end, whatever the visible results.

Today: Renew one promise or commitment you have made to God or to others.

Closing prayer

Saint Rimbert, disciple of Saint Ansgar and pastor of the Church of the North, you carried a heavy mission with patience and kept alive the memory of your master. Present to the Lord the intention I have carried during these nine days. Obtain for me faithfulness in small things, courage in long efforts and trust when I do not see the fruit. Pray for missionaries, for the persecuted and for all who continue the work of others. Saint Rimbert, pray for us. Amen.

For a shorter prayer, see the prayer to Saint Rimbert.

Credits and sources

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