

BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Riquier

Life, prayer, novena and pilgrimage

Feast day: April 26

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IN BRIEF

Saint Riquier

7th-century priest and monk of Picardy, founder of the monastery of Centula (Saint-Riquier).

Feast day	April 26
Born	late 6th century, Centula (Saint-Riquier, Somme, France)
Died	April 26, c. 645, Forest-Montiers, Crécy forest (Somme, France)
Canonized	time-immemorial veneration
Era	7th century

In this booklet

Life

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Novena to Saint Riquier

Abbey Church of Saint-Riquier

Credits and sources

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LIFE

Saint Riquier

Saint Riquier, Richarius in Latin, was a priest and monk of Picardy in the 7th century. Converted by monks who came from the British Isles, he became a preacher, cared for lepers, ransomed captives and founded at Centula, in Ponthieu, the monastery that would grow into the great abbey of Saint-Riquier. He ended his life as a hermit in Crécy forest and died around 645. His feast day is April 26.

Who was Saint Riquier?

We know Riquier from a first Life written shortly after his death, then from a second one written at the end of the 8th century by Alcuin, the great scholar of Charlemagne's court, in more elegant Latin. Later, in the 11th century, the monk Hariulf gathered the history of the abbey into a chronicle. These texts give a consistent picture of his life, even if some details, such as the date the monastery was founded, remain uncertain.

Riquier was a native of Centula, in Ponthieu, in the north of the present-day department of the Somme. He belonged to a family of landowners who were still pagan or only barely Christian.

Key dates

- **Late 6th century**: Born in Centula, in Ponthieu.
- **Early 7th century**: He protects two missionary monks, Caidoc and Fricor, who are threatened by the townspeople, and is converted through them.
- **Afterwards**: Ordained a priest, he preaches in the region, cares for lepers and ransoms prisoners. He also travels to Britain.
- **c. 625**: According to one tradition, he founds a monastery at Centula.

- **Last years**: He withdraws as a hermit to Crécy forest, at Forest-Montiers, with his disciple Sigobard.
- **April 26, c. 645**: Dies in his hermitage, and his body is brought back to Centula.
- **800**: Charlemagne comes to celebrate Easter at Saint-Riquier, and Alcuin writes a new Life of the saint.

From hospitality to conversion

According to the Life, two monks from across the Channel, Caidoc and Fricor, were preaching in Ponthieu. The people of Centula were hostile and wanted to drive them out by force. Riquier took up their defense and welcomed them into his home. These guests spoke to him of Christ, and Riquier was converted. Faith entered his life through an act of hospitality.

Once converted, Riquier changed his life. He began to fast, to pray and to serve the poorest. He was ordained a priest and began to preach. The accounts stress his charity: he cared for lepers, whom everyone rejected, and devoted his wealth to ransoming prisoners and captives.

A preacher and a founder

Riquier's preaching drew people. It is reported that he crossed the sea to proclaim the Gospel in Britain, giving back, in a way, what he had received from the monks who came from there. A community formed around him. At Centula he founded a monastery that probably followed the rule of Saint Columbanus at first, as many foundations of the time did. Historians debate how important this first foundation was: the great abbey only took off at the end of the 8th century, under Abbot Angilbert, son-in-law of Charlemagne.

The hermit of Crécy forest

Late in life, Riquier left Centula for solitude. With his disciple Sigobard, he settled in Crécy forest, at the place now called Forest-Montiers, and built an oratory there. He hoped to live hidden. But the poor, the sick and even the powerful came to find him there, asking for prayer and advice. He died there around 645. His body was brought back to Centula, which then took the name Saint-Riquier.

Veneration and iconography

The Roman Martyrology commemorates Riquier on April 26, as a priest, at the monastery of Centula. His tomb made the abbey famous, and in the Carolingian era it became one of the most powerful in the kingdom. Charlemagne spent the Easter feast there in 800. Devastated by the Vikings in 845 and 881 and burned several times, the abbey was always rebuilt. The present Gothic abbey church became a parish church at the French Revolution. The saint's name has remained with the town and with several villages of Picardy and Normandy. He is shown as a monk or an abbot, with a crosier.

What to remember about Saint Riquier

Riquier's conversion began with a simple act: defending and welcoming threatened strangers. He then gave everything to lepers, captives and the poor, and finally chose solitude in order to belong wholly to God. He reminds us that hospitality opens the door to grace, and that charity and prayer go together. You can pray to him for migrants and those who welcome them, for prisoners and for the sick.

To pray with him, discover the prayer to Saint Riquier and plan your visit to the abbey church of Saint-Riquier.

Where to pray to Saint Riquier

- **Saint-Riquier** (Somme): the abbey church, built on the site of his monastery and tomb.
- **Forest-Montiers** (Somme): the village in Crécy forest where he lived as a hermit and died.
- **Abbeville** (Somme): the neighboring town, which grew out of an estate of the abbey.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Riquier for Hospitality and Charity

Saint Riquier, a native of Ponthieu in the 7th century, was converted after protecting two threatened missionary monks. Having become a priest, he cared for lepers, ransomed captives, founded the monastery of Centula and ended his life as a hermit in Crécy forest. This prayer is an original composition inspired by his life, not an official liturgical text. It asks for a hospitable and charitable heart.

Prayer to Saint Riquier

Saint Riquier,
you opened your door to threatened strangers,
and through them Christ entered your house.
Teach us to welcome,
to defend those who are rejected,
and to recognize God in the unexpected guest.

You cared for the lepers whom no one would touch,
you gave your wealth to free the captives.
Make our hands generous
toward the sick, the prisoners and the poor.

You proclaimed the Gospel with zeal,
then you sought God in the silence of the forest.
Help us to join action and prayer,
and to keep, in our busy days,
an inner place for God alone.

Watch over Picardy and over all who call upon you.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

When to pray to Saint Riquier

- On his feast day, April 26.
- When you welcome a stranger, a migrant or a passing visitor.
- For the contagiously ill or the isolated, and for those who care for them.
- For prisoners and people deprived of their freedom.
- When you need to find silence and prayer again.

A prayer of welcome

Before receiving someone in your home, you can say this short prayer:

> *Lord, bless the one I am about to welcome.*
> *May it be you whom I receive through him.*
> *Saint Riquier, pray for us. Amen.*

To prepare for his feast, you can pray the novena to Saint Riquier from April 18 to April 26, and read the life of Saint Riquier.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Riquier

This novena is an original composition by Saintspedia, inspired by the life of Saint Riquier, priest and monk of Ponthieu in the 7th century, founder of the monastery of Centula. It is not an official liturgical text. To finish it on his feast day, April 26, begin on April 18. It is meant for all who want to grow in welcome, charity and prayer. You can pray it at any 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. Finish with: "Saint Riquier, pray for us." The act of the day helps you live the novena in a concrete way.

Day 1: Defending the stranger

When the people of Centula want to drive out two monks from far away, Riquier takes up their defense. He does not know them yet, but he refuses injustice. The first step of his holiness is an act of courage.

Prayer: Lord, give me the courage to defend those who are rejected.

Today: Speak up for someone who is being criticized or excluded.

Day 2: Opening your door

Riquier receives the two monks in his home. By welcoming these strangers, he unknowingly welcomes the Christ whom they proclaim. "I was a stranger, and you welcomed me."

Prayer: Lord, open my door and my heart. May I recognize you in those I receive.

Today: Invite someone who is alone to share a meal or a coffee.

Day 3: Conversion

Through contact with his guests, Riquier discovers Christ and changes his life. Conversion is not a single moment: it is a path on which we let ourselves be transformed day after day.

Prayer: Lord, convert me again. Show me what needs to change in my life.

Today: Go to Confession, or prepare for your next one.

Day 4: Touching the lepers

Riquier cares for lepers, whom everyone flees for fear of contagion. Like Jesus, he touches those whom no one touches. Charity conquers fear.

Prayer: Lord, bless the isolated sick and those who care for them. Free me from the fear of others.

Today: Visit a sick person, or pray for health care workers.

Day 5: Freeing the captives

Riquier gives his wealth to ransom prisoners. He believes that every person is worth more than money. Even today, men and women are enslaved or deprived of their freedom.

Prayer: Lord, free the captives, the victims of trafficking and slavery. Bless those who visit prisoners.

Today: Support an organization that helps prisoners or fights human trafficking.

Day 6: Proclaiming the Word

Riquier becomes a priest and a preacher. He even crosses the sea to proclaim the Gospel in Britain, giving back what he received from monks who came from there. Faith received becomes faith given.

Prayer: Lord, make me a witness to your Word, wherever I live.

Today: Share a Gospel passage with someone close to you.

Day 7: Building a community

At Centula, Riquier gathers brothers and founds a monastery. From this small beginning a great abbey and a town will be born. God makes grow what we sow in humility.

Prayer: Lord, bless our Christian communities. Make them grow in prayer and fellowship.

Today: Take part in a time of prayer or service in your parish.

Day 8: The forest of silence

Late in life, Riquier withdraws into Crécy forest. He wants to be alone with God. Yet the poor and the sick find him there, and he receives them. Silence did not close him to others.

Prayer: Lord, give me a taste for silence, without ever closing me to those who knock at my door.

Today: Take a silent walk, in nature if possible, praying as you go.

Day 9: Coming home

Riquier dies in his hermitage, around 645, and his body is brought back to Centula. His life ends where his conversion began. For the believer, death is a return to the Father's house.

Prayer: Lord, welcome me one day into your house. Through the intercession of Saint Riquier, grant me the grace I ask in this novena, if it is your will.

Today: Give thanks for the path you have walked since your baptism.

Living the novena with Saint Riquier

Saint Riquier shows us a complete path: welcome, conversion, charity, proclamation, community, then silence. During these nine days, you can ask yourself where you stand on this path. Entrust to him especially migrants and those who welcome them, the sick and prisoners. If you live in Picardy, pray also for your region, which still bears his name.

Closing prayer

> *Saint Riquier,*
> *you received Christ by welcoming strangers,*
> *you served the lepers, the captives and the poor,*
> *present to God the intention I have carried during these nine days.*
> *Obtain for me an open and generous heart,*
> *and the peace of those who seek God in silence.*
> *Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

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

PILGRIMAGE

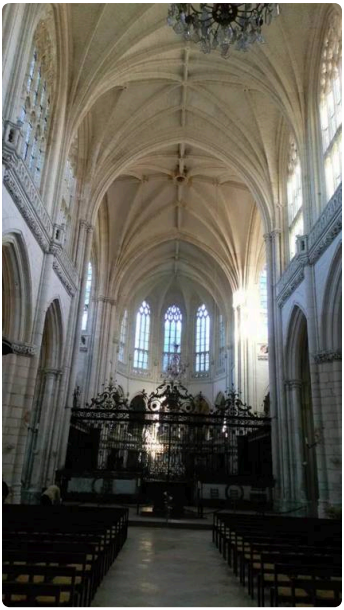
Abbey Church of Saint-Riquier

The abbey church of Saint-Riquier, in the Somme, stands on the site of the monastery of Centula, founded according to tradition by Saint Riquier in the 7th century, and where his body was brought back after his death. A large Gothic church with a Flamboyant facade, it is today the parish church of the town that bears the saint's name.

From a Merovingian monastery to an imperial abbey

After Riquier's death, around 645, his tomb drew the faithful to Centula. At the end of the 8th century, Abbot Angilbert, son-in-law of Charlemagne, had an immense abbey built there, financed by the emperor, with three churches. Charlemagne celebrated Easter there in the year 800, and the scholar Alcuin composed a new Life of the saint at that time.

Ravaged by the Vikings in 845 and 881 and burned several times in the Middle Ages and the modern era, the abbey was always rebuilt. The present abbey church was raised between the 13th and 16th centuries. At the French Revolution, the monks were dispersed, but the church, which had become a parish church, was kept along with part of its furnishings.



The nave of the abbey church of Saint-Riquier.

Visiting the abbey church

Nearly a hundred meters long, the abbey church is striking for its 15th-century Flamboyant Gothic facade. Inside, the 17th-century classical decor (woodwork, wrought-iron screens, marble) bears witness to the restoration led by Abbot Charles d'Aligre. You can see paintings by artists of that period, a Christ attributed to Girardon, and a treasury room. The neighboring conventual buildings now house a departmental cultural center, which organizes a music festival in the summer, among other events.

Praying on site

Before your visit, you can read the life of Saint Riquier. In the abbey church, entrust to him strangers and those who welcome them, the sick and prisoners, then recite the prayer to Saint Riquier. These suggestions are offered by

Saintspedia.

Other places of Saint Riquier

- **Forest-Montiers** (Somme): the village in Crécy forest where his hermitage stood, and where an abbey was later founded.
- **Crécy forest**: the setting of his last years of solitude.
- **Abbeville**: the neighboring town, which grew out of an estate of the abbey.

Practical information

Saint-Riquier is about six miles east of Abbeville, not far from the Bay of the Somme. The abbey church is a working parish church: modest dress and silence are requested during services. Opening hours, Mass times and visiting hours for the Treasury may vary: check with the parish or the tourist office before you come.

CREDITS

Credits and sources

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