

BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Romuald

Life, prayer, novena and pilgrimage

Feast day: June 19

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IN BRIEF

Saint Romuald

Monk and hermit from Ravenna, reformer of monasteries and founder of the Camaldolese Order.

Feast day	June 19
Born	c. 951, Ravenna, Italy
Died	June 19, 1027, Val di Castro, near Fabriano, Italy
Canonized	1595, by Pope Clement VIII
Era	11th century

In this booklet

Life

Prayer to Saint Romuald for Inner Peace

Novena to Saint Romuald

Hermitage and Monastery of Camaldoli, Founded by Saint Romuald

Credits and sources

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LIFE

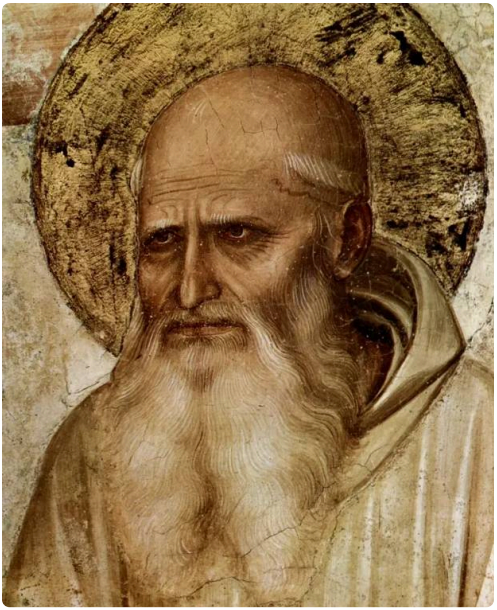
Saint Romuald

Saint Romuald of Ravenna was an Italian monk of the tenth and eleventh centuries and the founder of the Camaldolese, a branch of the Benedictine family that unites the solitary life of hermits with the common life of monks. Born into a ducal family and shaken by a killing committed by his father, he spent his long life seeking God in silence and reforming monasteries across Europe. He has been called the last of the Desert Fathers. He died in 1027, was canonized in 1595 and is celebrated on June 19.

Who was Saint Romuald?

Romuald was born around 951 in Ravenna, into the Onesti family, who held the rank of dukes in the city. He grew up amid the comfort and pleasures of the aristocracy. Then a tragedy changed his life: his father killed a relative, Duke Sergius of Ravenna, in a duel. Deeply troubled, the young man withdrew to the monastery of Sant'Apollinare in Classe, near Ravenna, to do penance in his father's place. There he took the Benedictine habit.

He stayed about three years. His fervor disturbed some of the monks, who, according to his biographers, went so far as to plot against his life. Warned in time, he left the monastery and placed himself under the guidance of a hermit named Marinus, in the lagoon near Venice. So began a life turned almost entirely toward solitude, which would nevertheless, paradoxically, keep bringing him into contact with the powerful men of his time.



Saint Romuald by Fra Angelico, convent of San Marco, Florence.

For his early years, the ancient sources give lengths of time rather than dates: three years at Classe, three years with Marinus, then nearly ten years at Cuxa.

Key dates in the life of Romuald

- **c. 951**: Born in Ravenna, into the ducal Onesti family.
- **Youth**: After the killing committed by his father, he enters Sant'Apollinare in Classe, then becomes a disciple of the hermit Marinus near Venice.
- **978**: He accompanies Doge Pietro Orseolo, who has become a monk, to the abbey of Saint-Michel-de-Cuxa in the Pyrenees.
- **About ten years later**: He returns to Italy and begins a long career as a reformer.
- **1012**: Traditional date of the founding of Camaldoli, in Tuscany.
- **June 19, 1027**: Dies at the monastery of Val di Castro, near Fabriano.

- **c. 1042**: Saint Peter Damian writes his *Life*.
- **February 7, 1481**: Translation of his relics to Fabriano.
- **1595**: Canonized by Pope Clement VIII.

Cuxa: the school of the Desert Fathers

In 978, Romuald and Marinus traveled to Catalonia with Pietro Orseolo, Doge of Venice, who was leaving power to become a monk. They settled near the abbey of Saint-Michel-de-Cuxa, at the foot of Mount Canigou. Romuald lived there as a hermit for almost ten years and read deeply in the writings of the Eastern monks, the Desert Fathers. It was there that his project took shape: to recover the radical spirit of early monasticism without cutting the hermit off from the Church or from obedience.

A story handed down by tradition shows the reputation he had gained. When the locals learned that he wanted to return to Italy to support his father, who was tempted to abandon religious life, some of them are said to have planned to kill him so as to keep his body as a relic. Romuald then pretended to be mad so that they would let him go.

A reformer without a title

Back in Italy, Romuald never stopped founding and reforming hermitages and monasteries, above all in Italy, but also, according to tradition, in France, Hungary and Poland. Kings, nobles and even Emperor Otto III came to consult him. He consistently refused honors, even feigning madness to escape them, and always returned to solitude.

His vision took shape around 1012 at Camaldoli, in the forests of the Tuscan Apennines. There he established a hermitage where each monk lived in his own cell, but where all gathered for the Divine Office, with a house lower down for hospitality and common life. His disciples gave up the black habit for

a white one. This model gave rise to the Camaldolese Order, which follows the Rule of Saint Benedict, completed by a short series of maxims attributed to Romuald and handed down by his disciple Bruno of Querfurt.

The gift of tears and kindness

The sources insist on his inner life. He had, they say, the gift of tears: he could not celebrate Mass without weeping. His advice, simple and discreet, brought peace. Camaldolese tradition also remembers his kindness to the poor and to animals, which he cared for in his cell as he cared for people. This exclamation is attributed to him: "O dear Jesus, my beloved, my sweet honey, my unspeakable desire!"

Romuald died on June 19, 1027, at the monastery of Val di Castro, near Fabriano, as he is said to have foretold to his brothers years earlier. Pilgrims flocked to his tomb. Fifteen years later, Saint Peter Damian, himself a hermit formed in his school, wrote his *Life*, the main source on his life.

Why do Catholics pray to Saint Romuald?

Romuald showed that solitude is not an escape. He sought God in silence, yet he kept coming back to others to advise them, reconcile them and reform them. His life, which began with a family tragedy, is also a story of reparation: he chose to do penance for a crime that was not his own. He is invoked for inner peace, for those who seek silence and, according to an old tradition, for people suffering from mental illness. Camaldolese monks and nuns, present today in Italy, the United States and elsewhere, keep his spirit alive.

To pray with him, see the prayer to Saint Romuald and the novena to Saint Romuald, prayed from June 10 to 18.

Symbols and how to recognize Saint Romuald in art

Romuald is usually shown as an old man with a long white beard, wearing the white habit of the Camaldolese, often holding a book or a staff. Andrea Sacchi's famous painting (1631) shows him seated among his white-robed monks, pointing to a vision of a ladder rising to heaven, on which monks in white climb toward God. Fra Angelico included him among the saints at the convent of San Marco in Florence.

Where to pray to Saint Romuald

- **Camaldoli** (Tuscany): the hermitage and monastery of Camaldoli, heart of the order he founded.
- **Fabriano** (Marche): the church of San Romualdo, where his sarcophagus has been visible since the translation of 1481.
- **Ravenna**: the basilica of Sant'Apollinare in Classe, where he began his monastic life.
- **Codalet** (southern France): the abbey of Saint-Michel-de-Cuxa, where he lived for nearly ten years.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Romuald for Inner Peace

Saint Romuald left no liturgical prayer that became universal, but Camaldolese tradition has kept a few of his maxims and a cry of love. You will find them below with their source, followed by an original prayer by Saintspedia for inner peace.

Two sayings of Saint Romuald to meditate on

> *"Sit in your cell as in paradise. Put the whole world out of your memory, and watch your thoughts as a good fisherman watches for fish."*

Source: the *Brief Rule* of Saint Romuald, handed down by his disciple Saint Bruno of Querfurt in the *Life of the Five Brothers* (early eleventh century); free translation of the extract.

> *"O dear Jesus, my beloved, my sweet honey, my unspeakable desire, sweetness of the saints, delight of the angels!"*

Source: exclamation attributed to Saint Romuald by Camaldolese hagiographical tradition.



The Vision of Saint Romuald, by Andrea Sacchi (1631).

Prayer to Saint Romuald for inner peace

Saint Romuald, you sought God in the silence of forests and cells: teach me to make silence within me, so that I may hear his voice in the midst of the noise.

You did penance for your father's sin: pray for families wounded by violence, and obtain for them the path of reconciliation.

You wept with love as you celebrated the Eucharist: make my heart sensitive to the presence of Christ.

You brought peace to those who came to consult you: I entrust to you all who are troubled in mind, anxious or exhausted, and my own intention: (name it in silence).

Teach me to keep watch over my thoughts and to rest in God as in paradise. Amen.

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

When to pray this prayer

Saint Romuald is celebrated on June 19, the day of his death in 1027. Before the reform of the calendar in 1969, his feast was kept on February 7, the anniversary of the translation of his relics. You can turn to him at any time: before a retreat, when you need silence, in a period of anxiety or inner turmoil, or when praying for someone who suffers from mental illness. He is also a good companion for those who want to begin a habit of silent prayer, even for a few minutes a day.

For a longer time of prayer, follow the novena to Saint Romuald, and discover the life of Saint Romuald.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Romuald

This novena is an original composition by Saintspedia, inspired by the life of Saint Romuald, founder of the Camaldolese. It is not an official liturgical text. To finish it on the eve of his feast day, June 19, begin it on June 10. You can also pray it at any other time, especially during a retreat, in a season of inner turmoil or when you feel the need for silence.

How to pray this novena

Each day, entrust your intention to God, read the meditation, say the prayer of the day and then an Our Father. If possible, begin with a few minutes of silence, in the manner of the hermits of Camaldoli: sit still, breathe calmly and let the noise of the day settle. The small act proposed for the day helps carry the prayer into daily life. If you miss a day, simply continue the next day.

Romuald's life moves from a family tragedy to a deep peace. Over these nine days, we follow that path: from wounds and reparation, through silence and watchfulness, to the joy of a heart that rests in God. You may entrust to him a personal intention, a family in conflict, or someone you know who is struggling with anxiety or depression.

Day 1: A wound that becomes a call

The killing committed by his father shook the young Romuald. Instead of shutting himself up in shame, he turned to God. A wound can become the starting point of a conversion.

Prayer: Lord, turn my wounds into a path toward you. Saint Romuald, pray for us. Amen.

Today: Entrust an old wound to God, in writing or in silence.

Day 2: Making amends for another

Romuald entered the monastery to do penance in his father's place. To pray and offer sacrifices for those who have done wrong is already to love them.

Prayer: Lord, I entrust to you those who have hurt me; give them your peace. Saint Romuald, pray for us. Amen.

Today: Pray for someone with whom you are in conflict.

Day 3: Becoming a disciple

Romuald chose a humble hermit, Marinus, as his teacher. Before guiding others, he wanted to learn. Even the founder of an order began as a beginner. Later, at Cuxa, he went on learning from the writings of the Desert Fathers.

Prayer: Holy Spirit, give me the humility to let myself be taught. Saint Romuald, pray for us. Amen.

Today: Ask a wise person for advice.

Day 4: Silence

In his cell, the hermit learns to quiet the noise within. Silence is not empty: it makes room for God. In a world full of screens and notifications, Romuald's cell can be a corner of our room or a few minutes in a church.

Prayer: Lord, teach me to be still so that I can listen to you. Saint Romuald, pray for us. Amen.

Today: Spend fifteen minutes without screens or noise.

Day 5: Keeping watch over your thoughts

Romuald's Brief Rule invites us to watch our thoughts as a fisherman watches for fish. We do not always choose what rises within us, but we can choose what we keep.

Prayer: Lord, guard my mind and purify my thoughts. Saint Romuald, pray for us. Amen.

Today: Notice a thought that keeps coming back, and entrust it to God.

Day 6: Refusing honors

Romuald fled titles, even pretending to be mad to escape them. Emperors came to consult him, yet he always went back to his cell. He knew that vanity draws us away from God.

Prayer: Lord, free me from the need to be admired. Saint Romuald, pray for us. Amen.

Today: Do a good deed without telling anyone.

Day 7: The gift of tears

Romuald could not celebrate Mass without weeping. His tears were those of a heart touched by the love of God, not tears of sadness but of wonder. His disciples remembered that his advice brought peace to those who came to him in distress.

Prayer: Lord, soften my heart and make it more sensitive to your love. Saint Romuald, pray for us. Amen.

Today: Attend Mass or spend some time before the Blessed Sacrament.

Day 8: Kindness to every creature

Camaldolese tradition tells that he cared for wounded animals as he cared for people. The love of God extends to all of his creation.

Prayer: God our Creator, teach me to respect and protect what you have made. Saint Romuald, pray for us. Amen.

Today: Take a concrete step to care for nature or for an animal.

Day 9: Alone and together

At Camaldoli, each monk lives in his own cell, but all pray together. Romuald united solitude and communion. We need both: time alone with God, and the support of brothers and sisters in faith.

Prayer: Lord, I place in your hands the intention of this novena. Through the intercession of Saint Romuald, give me peace of heart and the joy of praying with my brothers and sisters. Amen.

Today: Pray for a monastic community.

Closing prayer

Saint Romuald, at the end of these nine days, I entrust to you the intention I have brought before you. Pray for those who seek silence and inner peace, for those troubled in mind and for divided families. Obtain for us the grace to dwell in God as in paradise. Amen.

To go further: the life of Saint Romuald and the prayer to Saint Romuald.

PILGRIMAGE

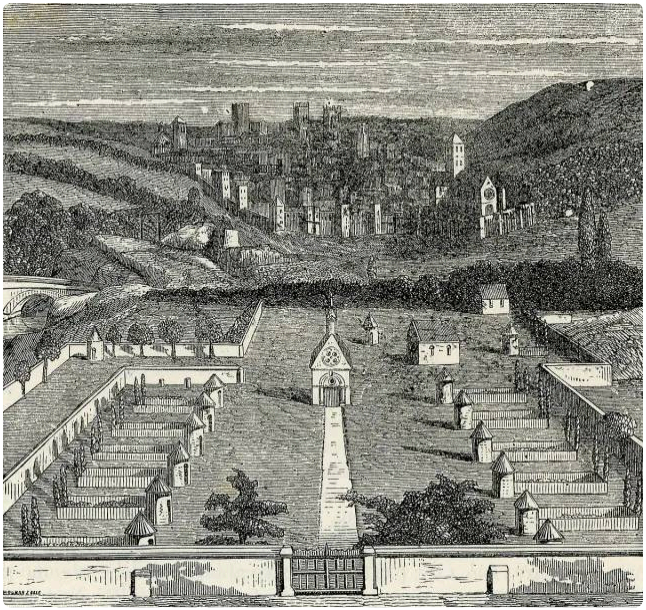
Hermitage and Monastery of Camaldoli, Founded by Saint Romuald

Camaldoli, in the forests of the Tuscan Apennines, is the place where Saint Romuald gave his monastic ideal its definitive form, in the early 11th century. It has two houses: above, the hermitage, the Sacro Eremo, with its hermits' cells; lower down, the monastery, a place of welcome and community life. The site still belongs to the Camaldolese monks, who live and pray there.

A hermitage in the forest

According to tradition, Romuald founded Camaldoli around 1012 on land given by a local lord. He established a new model there: each monk lives alone in a small house with his garden, but all gather in the church for the Divine Office. Lower in the valley, a house receives travelers, the sick, and novices. This arrangement, halfway between the hermit's life and community life, gave its name to the Camaldolese order.

The setting has remained remarkably well preserved. The hermitage is surrounded by a fir forest that the monks tended for centuries, now part of the Foreste Casentinesi National Park.



The hermitage of Camaldoli, in the Casentino forest.

Visiting Camaldoli

Visitors first discover the monastery, in the lower part, and can then go up to the hermitage, a few miles away, by road or by a forest path. At the hermitage, you can see the church and, through a grille, the row of cells where the monks, who keep the enclosure, live. Tradition shows visitors a cell preserved in memory of Saint Romuald. At the monastery, the monks' old pharmacy recalls their centuries-long role in caring for the sick.

The body of Saint Romuald does not rest at Camaldoli: his sarcophagus is in Fabriano, in the Marche, where he died in 1027.

Praying on site

Before your visit, you can read the life of Saint Romuald. Camaldoli is a place of silence: it is good to give yourself a time without words, for example in the hermitage church, then pray the prayer to Saint Romuald. Taking part in a service with the monks lets you taste the balance between solitude and common prayer that the founder intended. These suggestions are offered by Saintspedia.

Other places of Saint Romuald

- **Fabriano** (Marche): the Church of San Romualdo, where his sarcophagus has been since the translation of 1481.
- **Val di Castro**, near Fabriano: the monastery where he died on June 19, 1027.
- **Ravenna**: the Basilica of Sant'Apollinare in Classe, where he became a monk.
- **Codalet** (Pyrénées-Orientales): the Abbey of Saint-Michel de Cuxa, where he lived nearly ten years as a hermit.

Practical information

Camaldoli is in the province of Arezzo, in Tuscany, in the municipality of Poppi, in a wooded mountain area. A car is almost essential, and the roads can be difficult in winter. The monastery offers lodging for retreats. Times for services and visits, as well as lodging conditions, should be checked on the Camaldolese community's official website before you come. Modest dress and respect for silence are requested.

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