BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Rouin

Life, prayer, novena and pilgrimage

Feast day: September 17

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IN BRIEF

Saint Rouin

7th-century monk and hermit, abbot of Tholey and founder of the monastery of Beaulieu-en-Argonne according to tradition.

Feast day	September 17
Born	594 according to the Life (uncertain date)
Died	September 17, 680 according to the Petits Bollandistes, hermitage of Saint-Rouin, Beaulieu-en-Argonne (Meuse)
Canonized	immemorial cult

In this booklet

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Chapel of Saint-Rouin

Credits and sources

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LIFE

Saint Rouin

Saint Rouin (Rodingus, in Latin Chrodingus or Chraudingus) was a 7th-century monk and hermit, honored as the founder of the monastery that would become the abbey of Beaulieu-en-Argonne, in the Meuse region of eastern France. Abbot of Tholey according to the oldest texts, he is said to have brought relics of Saint Maurice to the Argonne and to have ended his days in a hermitage in the forest. His Life, written four centuries after his death, mixes memories and legends. His feast day is September 17.

Who was Saint Rouin?

The name Rouin is the popular form of a Germanic name, Chrodingus or Chraudingus, also rendered as Rodingus. He first appears in the *Deeds of the Bishops of Verdun*, written in the second half of the 9th century. He was probably a nobleman of Austrasia who became abbot of Tholey, in present-day Saarland, then founder of a monastery in the Argonne forest.

In the 11th century, Blessed Richard, abbot of Saint-Vanne in Verdun, wrote a Life of Rouin. He made him a monk from Ireland and enriched his account with many miracles. This Life follows the customs of medieval hagiography: it seeks to edify and to glorify the founder of an abbey more than to trace an exact biography. Even the dates remain uncertain. Still, one can recognize in it the figure of a real monk, whose memory has stayed alive throughout the Argonne.

Key dates in the life of Rouin

- **594**: Date of birth given by the Life, written much later.
- **7th century**: He is abbot of the monastery of Tholey, according to the *Deeds of the Bishops of Verdun*.

- **c. 648**: According to the Life, he goes to the Argonne forest with two companions, with the consent of Paul, bishop of Verdun.
- **Shortly after**: Driven out by a great landowner, Austresius, he returns at God's command and settles at Vasloge.
- **Then**: He founds a monastery dedicated to the Savior, to Saint Maurice and his companions, the future monastery of Beaulieu.
- **Later**: Journey to Rome to have his foundation approved; at Saint-Maurice d'Agaune he receives a relic of Saint Maurice.
- **End of his life**: He withdraws with one companion to a hermitage deep in the forest.
- **September 17, 680**: Dies in his hermitage, at the age of 86 according to the *Petits Bollandistes*.
- **11th century**: Richard of Saint-Vanne writes his Life.
- **1954-1961**: The chapel of Saint-Rouin is built on the site of the old hermitage.

A monk in the Argonne forest

According to the Life, Rouin left Tholey to lead a more solitary life in the Argonne. The bishop of Verdun, Paul, welcomed him into his diocese. But the forest of Vasloge belonged to a rich lord, Austresius, who lived at Autrécourt. He ordered the monks to leave; when they refused, he sent men who whipped them and drove them away. The account adds that misfortunes later struck his family.

Rouin then set out for Rome, but, according to the Life, the Holy Spirit asked him to return to the Argonne. On the way, at Resson, overcome by thirst, he planted his staff in the ground and a spring gushed out. Being poor, he found in this fountain the gold that allowed him to buy the estate and build a church there. A widow healed at Hargeville left him her inheritance. Austresius

himself finally changed his attitude: he gave back the place from which he had driven him, and his sister Bona, healed by the saint, gave him her estate of Bonne.

The founder of Beaulieu

On these lands rose a monastery dedicated to the Savior, to Saint Maurice and his companions. The Life credits it with twenty-one altars, a figure that mainly shows how important the foundation had become in the eyes of the biographer. Vocations flowed in. Rouin went to Rome again to obtain approval for his foundation. On the way back, he passed through the abbey of Saint-Maurice d'Agaune, in the Valais, where he received a bone of the martyr. The *Deeds of the Bishops of Verdun* also keep this memory: Rouin brought relics of Saint Maurice to the monastery of Vasloge, which would become the abbey of Beaulieu-en-Argonne.

The Life also reports that King Childeric took the monastery under his protection and exempted it from all obligations. Donations, according to the account, were many.

The hermit and his death

At the end of his life, Rouin left the leadership of the monastery and withdrew, with a single companion, to a hidden place in the forest, at the foot of three hills. He continued, however, to join in the Mass. Feeling his strength fail, he sent word to the monk Stephen. The brothers hurried to him, but he refused to be carried back to the monastery. He asked for viaticum, received it on his knees, raised his hands to heaven while the monks sang, and died among them, on a September 17. The *Petits Bollandistes* place this death in 680.

Devotion and memory

Saint Rouin is celebrated on September 17. The site of his hermitage, northwest of the village of Beaulieu-en-Argonne, has remained a place of pilgrimage. An oratory was built there in the 17th century; between 1954 and 1961 it was replaced by a modern chapel, listed as a historic monument in 1998, which still draws pilgrims and walkers. A Saint-Rouin fountain also recalls, in the landscape, the stories of a miraculous spring linked to the saint. No fixed iconographic attribute is associated with him in the sources consulted.

What can we learn from Saint Rouin?

Behind the miracles of the Life, Rouin appears as a man who sought God in solitude and yet founded a community. Rejected, he did not respond with violence; having left, he knew how to return where he felt called. His death says what matters most: at the moment of dying, he asks for bread for the journey and turns toward heaven. You can pray to him for those who seek silence, for religious communities, and for those who must start again after a failure.

To pray with him, see the prayer to Saint Rouin and the novena to Saint Rouin.

Where to pray to Saint Rouin

- **Chapel of Saint-Rouin**, at Beaulieu-en-Argonne (Meuse): on the site of his hermitage, in the forest.
- **Beaulieu-en-Argonne** (Meuse): the village that grew up around the abbey he founded according to tradition.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Rouin, Hermit of the Argonne

Saint Rouin, a 7th-century monk, founded according to tradition the monastery of Beaulieu-en-Argonne before ending his days as a hermit in the forest. Prayer composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. It entrusts to him those who seek silence, religious communities and all who must start again.

Prayer to Saint Rouin

Saint Rouin,
monk of Tholey and hermit of the Argonne,
you sought God in the silence of the woods
and gathered brothers there for prayer.
Teach me to keep silence
so that I may hear the voice of the Lord.

Driven out and beaten, you did not repay evil with evil;
setting out again on the road, you knew how to return
to the place where God was waiting for you.
When I am rejected or discouraged,
give me patience and trust.

At the hour of death you asked for bread for the journey
and raised your hands toward heaven.
Keep me faithful to the end,
bless monks and nuns,
and watch over the pilgrims of the Argonne.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

When to pray to Saint Rouin

- On his feast day, September 17, or during a pilgrimage to the chapel of Saint-Rouin.
- For monks, hermits and vocations to religious life.
- When you are rejected or must start everything over again.
- To ask for a holy death, prepared by the sacraments.
- Before a retreat or a time of silence.

A prayer for the road

> *Saint Rouin, you who made water spring up on the way,*
> *obtain for me the strength to keep going.*
> *Pray for us. Amen.*

To prepare for his feast, you can pray the novena to Saint Rouin from September 9 to 17, and read the life of Saint Rouin.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Rouin

Novena composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. It is inspired by the life of Saint Rouin, monk and hermit of the Argonne in the 7th century. It is not an official liturgical text. To finish it on his feast day, September 17, begin on September 9. You can also pray it at any other 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. End with: "Saint Rouin, pray for us." The act suggested each day helps you live the novena concretely. The episodes recounted come from the Life written in the 11th century by Richard of Saint-Vanne, which mixes history and legend.

Day 1: Leaving to seek God

Abbot of Tholey according to the oldest texts, Rouin left an established monastery to seek God further away, in the Argonne forest. He accepted losing a recognized position to follow an inner call.

Prayer: Lord, give me the courage to leave what keeps me far from you, and to seek you with all my heart.

Act of the day: Give up today a habit that scatters you, and take time to pray instead.

Day 2: Asking the Church's blessing

According to the Life, Rouin did not settle in the Argonne without the consent of Paul, bishop of Verdun. His desire for solitude did not separate him from the Church.

Prayer: Lord, bless our bishop and our priests. Keep me united to your Church, even in my most personal plans.

Act of the day: Pray for the bishop of your diocese by name.

Day 3: Struck without returning evil

The lord Austresius had the monks driven out with whips. Rouin did not respond with violence. He left, entrusting his cause to God.

Prayer: Jesus, you who did not return insult for insult, teach me not to answer evil with evil.

Act of the day: Pray for someone who has hurt you.

Day 4: Turning back

Having set out for Rome, Rouin heard, according to the Life, the Holy Spirit asking him to return to the Argonne. He agreed to go back to the place where he had failed.

Prayer: Holy Spirit, make me attentive to your voice, even when it asks me to take up a difficult path again.

Act of the day: Take up again a task or a relationship you set aside after a failure.

Day 5: The spring on the way

At Resson, worn out by thirst, Rouin planted his staff in the ground and a spring gushed out, the Life says. God gives water to the one who walks in trust.

Prayer: Lord, spring of living water, quench my thirst and renew my strength on the road.

Act of the day: Offer a glass of water or a simple service to someone in need.

Day 6: Healing and reconciling

The account tells of the healing of a widow and of Bona, the sister of Austresius. The former opponent became a benefactor. Kindness disarms hostility.

Prayer: Lord, heal the sick I entrust to you and make me a builder of reconciliation.

Act of the day: Take a first step toward someone with whom you are on bad terms.

Day 7: Building a house for God

Rouin built a monastery dedicated to the Savior and to Saint Maurice. Brothers joined him to pray together. This place would become the abbey of Beaulieu.

Prayer: Lord, bless religious communities and make our parishes houses of prayer.

Act of the day: Pray for a monastery or a community you know.

Day 8: The witness of the martyrs

At Agaune, Rouin received a relic of Saint Maurice and brought it back to the Argonne. He entrusted his foundation to those who gave their lives for Christ.

Prayer: Lord, through the example of the martyrs, strengthen my faith and support Christians who are persecuted today.

Act of the day: Pray for Christians who suffer for their faith.

Day 9: Dying with raised hands

Withdrawn to his hermitage, Rouin refused to be carried back to the monastery. He asked for viaticum, received it on his knees and died with his hands raised to heaven, among his brothers.

Prayer: Lord, grant me to live and die in your peace. Through the intercession of Saint Rouin, grant me the grace I ask in this novena, if it is your will.

Act of the day: Pray for the dying and, if possible, attend Mass.

Living the novena with Saint Rouin

The life of Saint Rouin, handed down in an account full of wonders, keeps a simple lesson: seek God in silence, do not lose heart in the face of hostility, and return to where you are called. During these nine days, you can carry those going through a failure, religious communities and the sick. If you can, visit the chapel of Saint-Rouin, in the Argonne forest.

Closing prayer

Saint Rouin,
hermit of the Argonne and father of monks,
you sought God in the silence of the woods
and forgave those who drove you away.
Present to the Lord the intention I have entrusted to you.
Keep me faithful on the road
and prepare me to meet God.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

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

PILGRIMAGE

Chapel of Saint-Rouin

The chapel of Saint-Rouin stands in the commune of Beaulieu-en-Argonne, in the Meuse department of eastern France, in the heart of the Argonne forest, northwest of the village. It rises on the site of the hermitage where, according to tradition, Saint Rouin spent the end of his life and died in the 7th century. This place of pilgrimage is also a remarkable work of 20th-century religious architecture.

A hermitage that became a place of pilgrimage

Saint Rouin, abbot of Tholey according to the oldest texts, is honored as the founder of the monastery that would become the abbey of Beaulieu-en-Argonne. According to the Life written in the 11th century by Richard of Saint-Vanne, at the end of his life he withdrew with one companion to a hidden place in the forest, at the foot of three hills. There he received viaticum and died, on a September 17.

The memory of this hermitage was never lost. An oratory was built there in the 17th century. Between 1954 and 1961, a new chapel was built in its place. It was listed as a historic monument on November 20, 1998.

What you can see

The chapel is a trapezoid-shaped building raised on concrete pillars, with a flat roof crowned by a spire and an aluminum cross seven meters high. Its plans are the work of a Dominican friar, the architect Louis-Bertrand Rayssiguier, a student of Le Corbusier.

The leaded stained-glass windows, installed in 1959, were made from drawings by Kimié Bando, then ten years old, daughter of the Japanese painter Toshio Bando. Their simple shapes, round, square or triangular, give the light great

softness. The sculptor Pierre Székely designed the interior furnishings: the altar, the door, the cross, the confessional, the floor and the holy water font. Around the chapel, the forest invites silence, as in the time of the hermit.

Praying on site

Before you come, you can read the life of Saint Rouin. On site, take a moment of silence, then entrust to him those who seek God, religious communities and those who must start again after a failure. You can say the prayer to Saint Rouin. These suggestions are offered by Saintspedia.

Other places of Saint Rouin

- **Beaulieu-en-Argonne** (Meuse): the village that grew up around the abbey born of his foundation.
- **The Saint-Rouin fountain**: a spring that recalls the stories of the Life.

Practical information

The chapel stands deep in the forest, northwest of the village of Beaulieu-en-Argonne; a sign points to the hermitage from the road. It is a place of prayer: quiet and modest dress are requested. Opening conditions and the dates of celebrations, especially around the feast of September 17, may vary: check with the parish, the diocese of Verdun or the tourist office before you come.

Credits and sources

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