BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Scariberga

Life, prayer, novena and pilgrimage

Feast day: October 2

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IN BRIEF

Saint Scariberga

6th-century Frankish woman, wife of Saint Arnulf and niece of Clovis according to tradition, venerated in the Yvelines.

Feast day	October 2
Born	6th century, Frankish kingdom (unknown)
Died	6th century (date unknown)
Canonized	immemorial cult (local cult)

In this booklet

Life

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Novena to Saint Scariberga

Church of Saint-Nicolas, Saint-Arnoult-en-Yvelines

Credits and sources

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LIFE

Saint Scariberga

Saint Scariberga (Scariberge in French) was a 6th-century Frankish woman, honored as the wife of Saint Arnulf (Arnoult), with whom she is said to have taken a vow of chastity. According to tradition, she was a niece of King Clovis. After her husband's murder at Reims, she is said to have buried him in the forest of Yveline, at the place that became Saint-Arnoult-en-Yvelines, before living a withdrawn life of prayer. Her life is known only through late and legendary accounts. Depending on the calendar, her feast is celebrated on October 2, October 12 or July 18.

Who was Saint Scariberga?

Scariberga belongs to the small group of women saints of the Merovingian period whose memory has been kept mainly by local tradition. Her name is inseparable from that of Arnulf, known as Saint Arnoult, honored at Saint-Arnoult-en-Yvelines as bishop, pilgrim and martyr. The accounts concerning them were written long after their deaths and contain many legendary elements. Historians therefore remain very cautious about the details of their lives, and the versions differ on several points.

What is certain is the continuity of a local cult: her relics are venerated at Saint-Arnoult-en-Yvelines, a chapel bears her name at Bullion, and an old register of the diocese of Versailles mentions her feast.

Key dates in the life of Scariberga

- **6th century**: Born into the Frankish royal circle; tradition calls her a daughter of Landehilde, sister of Clovis.
- **Early 6th century**: Married to Arnulf, she takes a vow of chastity with him, and the spouses separate, each to follow God's call.

- **Then**: She receives the veil of consecrated virgins and enters religious life.
- **c. 535**: Arnulf is murdered at Reims; according to tradition, Scariberga buries him in the forest of Yveline, on the site of Saint-Arnoult-en-Yvelines.
- **After Arnulf's death**: She has an oratory built in honor of Saint Remigius and withdraws to a nearby cell.
- **1262**: A Benedictine priory is recorded at Bullion, where the chapel of Sainte-Anne-Sainte-Scariberge stands today.
- **May 6, 1967**: Her relics are united with those of Saint Arnulf in a reliquary in the church of Saint-Arnoult-en-Yvelines.

A niece of Clovis

According to tradition, Scariberga was the daughter of Landehilde, a sister of King Clovis, which would make her the niece of the first Christian king of the Franks. She thus grew up in the world of the Frankish court, at the moment when it embraced the Catholic faith following Clovis's baptism by Saint Remigius at Reims. Clovis is said to have given her in marriage to Arnulf, a young Frankish nobleman raised at the court of Reims and noticed by Saint Remigius.

A marriage consecrated to God

The accounts report that the two spouses decided to live in chastity and to separate so that each could be consecrated to God. Arnulf took to the roads as a pilgrim and missionary, while Scariberga entered religious life. One version says that Arnulf, back in Reims at the time of Saint Remigius's death, himself gave her the veil of consecrated virgins. This choice of a marriage lived in continence, rare and demanding, struck the imagination of medieval hagiographers.

Arnulf's death and the tomb in Yveline

Arnulf was murdered at Reims, in the rue du Barbâtre. According to one version, the killers were former servants of Scariberga, dismissed when she had entered a convent; according to another, relatives of his wife. The rest of the story also varies. According to some versions, Scariberga wished to take her husband's body to Tours, as he had requested. But while crossing the forest of Yveline, the convoy could go no further: the cart refused to move. Scariberga saw this as a sign and had a tomb built at that spot, which became the village of Saint-Arnoult-en-Yvelines. Other accounts say she herself found her husband's remains before burying them. This tomb may correspond to the crypt of the church of Saint-Nicolas.

A life of prayer and pilgrimage

After Arnulf's death, Scariberga is said to have built, not far away, an oratory dedicated to Saint Remigius, later known as Saint-Remi-des-Landes, as well as a cell to which she withdrew. Tradition reports that she regularly walked to her husband's tomb at Saint-Arnoult. The date and place of her death are unknown.

Devotion and memory

The cult of Saint Scariberga has remained local, in the south of the Yvelines department. On May 6, 1967, her relics were united with those of Saint Arnulf in a single reliquary, in the church of Saint-Nicolas at Saint-Arnoult-en-Yvelines, which also keeps a polychrome wooden statue of her. At Bullion, the chapel of Sainte-Anne-Sainte-Scariberge is what remains of a Benedictine priory recorded as early as 1262. A street in Saint-Arnoult bears her name. Her feast day varies according to the sources: October 2 for the Nominis website, October 12 in an old register of the diocese of Versailles, and sometimes July 18, together with Saint Arnulf.

What can we learn from Saint Scariberga?

Behind the uncertainties of the accounts, Scariberga appears as a woman who preferred God above all, without ceasing to love her husband. She let him leave for his mission, she mourned him, she watched over his tomb. Her life unites the gift of self to God and faithfulness of heart. You can pray to her for couples, for widows, for consecrated persons and for those who are grieving.

To pray with her, see the prayer to Saint Scariberga and the novena to Saint Scariberga.

Where to pray to Saint Scariberga

- **Saint-Arnoult-en-Yvelines** (Yvelines): the church of Saint-Nicolas, which keeps her relics and those of Saint Arnulf.
- **Bullion** (Yvelines): the chapel of Sainte-Anne-Sainte-Scariberge.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Scariberga for Couples and Families

Saint Scariberga, a niece of Clovis according to tradition, lived with her husband Saint Arnulf a marriage consecrated to God, then watched over his tomb in the forest of Yveline. Prayer composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. It entrusts to her couples, widows, consecrated persons and those who are grieving.

Prayer to Saint Scariberga

Saint Scariberga,
born close to the kings of the earth,
you chose to serve the King of heaven.
With your husband you gave your life to God
and let him go on his mission.
Teach us to love without holding on.

When Arnulf fell under the blows,
you took care of his body
and entrusted it to the earth of Yveline.
Comfort those who mourn a loved one,
and keep them in the hope of the resurrection.

You who lived in prayer and silence,
bless couples and families,
widows and consecrated persons.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

When to pray to Saint Scariberga

- On her feast day, October 2 (or October 12, or July 18 with Saint Arnulf, depending on the calendar).
- For spouses, and especially for couples going through a separation.
- For widows and all who are grieving.
- For consecrated virgins and women religious.
- During a pilgrimage to Saint-Arnoult-en-Yvelines or Bullion.

A short invocation

> *Saint Scariberga and Saint Arnulf,*
> *united in the love of God,*
> *pray for our families. Amen.*

To prepare for her feast, you can pray the novena to Saint Scariberga from September 24 to October 2, and read the life of Saint Scariberga.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Scariberga

Novena composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. It is inspired by the life of Saint Scariberga, a 6th-century Frankish woman and wife of Saint Arnulf. It is not an official liturgical text. To finish it on October 2, her feast day in the most common calendar, begin on September 24. 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 Scariberga, pray for us." The act suggested each day helps you live the novena concretely. The episodes recounted come from late accounts, which mix history and legend.

Day 1: Born close to kings

According to tradition, Scariberga was the niece of Clovis. She knew the honors of the court, at the moment when the Frankish people were welcoming the faith.

Prayer: Lord, teach me not to set my heart on honors, but on you alone.

Act of the day: Give up a small vanity today.

Day 2: The baptism of a people

Scariberga grew up in a world that the baptism of Clovis by Saint Remigius had just transformed. She received the faith as a new treasure.

Prayer: Lord, renew in me the grace of my baptism, and bless our country.

Act of the day: Find out the date of your baptism and give thanks for it.

Day 3: A marriage given to God

Married to Arnulf, Scariberga took a vow of chastity with him. The two spouses placed God above everything, together.

Prayer: Lord, bless couples, and teach them to place you at the center of their love.

Act of the day: Pray for a couple you know.

Day 4: Letting go

Arnulf took to the roads as a pilgrim and missionary. Scariberga let him go. To love sometimes means consenting to separation.

Prayer: Lord, teach me to love without possessing, and to entrust to your keeping those I love.

Act of the day: Pray for a loved one who lives far from you.

Day 5: The veil of virgins

Scariberga received the veil of consecrated virgins. She gave herself entirely to prayer and to the service of God.

Prayer: Lord, bless consecrated persons, and raise up vocations in your Church.

Act of the day: Pray for a religious sister or brother you know.

Day 6: Violence and grief

Arnulf was murdered at Reims. Scariberga knew the pain of a brutal and unjust death.

Prayer: Lord, comfort those who mourn, and give them the strength not to be overcome by hatred.

Act of the day: Pray for someone who is grieving, or visit them.

Day 7: The cart that stopped

According to the story, the convoy carrying Arnulf's body toward Tours stopped in the forest of Yveline. Scariberga recognized God's will there and had a tomb built.

Prayer: Lord, when my plans come to a halt, help me to recognize your will and to surrender to it.

Act of the day: Accept a setback peacefully.

Day 8: A cell of prayer

Scariberga had an oratory built in honor of Saint Remigius and lived in a nearby cell, in silence and prayer.

Prayer: Lord, give me a taste for silence and prayer in the midst of my activities.

Act of the day: Spend ten minutes in silence before God.

Day 9: The road to the tomb

Tradition says that she regularly walked to Arnulf's tomb. Today their relics rest together at Saint-Arnoult-en-Yvelines.

Prayer: Lord, keep me faithful to the end. Through the intercession of Saint Scariberga, grant me the grace I ask in this novena, if it is your will.

Act of the day: Pray for your departed and, if possible, visit their grave.

Living the novena with Saint Scariberga

The life of Saint Scariberga, handed down in accounts full of wonders, speaks of a human love entirely given to God. During these nine days, you can carry couples, widows, consecrated persons and those who are grieving. If you can, visit Saint-Arnoult-en-Yvelines or the chapel at Bullion.

Closing prayer

> *Saint Scariberga,*
> *wife of Saint Arnulf and servant of God,*
> *you placed everything in the hands of the Lord*
> *and faithfully watched over the one you loved.*
> *Present to the Lord the intention I have entrusted to you.*
> *Keep our families in love and in faith.*
> *Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

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

PILGRIMAGE

Church of Saint-Nicolas, Saint-Arnoult-en-Yvelines

The church of Saint-Nicolas stands in the heart of Saint-Arnoult-en-Yvelines, in the south of the Yvelines department, on the edge of the forest of Rambouillet, the old forest of Yveline. According to tradition, this is where Saint Scariberga buried her husband, Saint Arnulf, in the 6th century. Today the church keeps their relics, united in a single reliquary, and a statue of the saint.

A tomb at the origin of a village

According to the accounts, Scariberga wished to take the body of Arnulf, murdered at Reims, to Tours. While crossing the forest of Yveline, the convoy stopped and could not set off again. Scariberga saw this as a sign from God and had a tomb built at that spot. Around this tomb grew the village that bears the saint's name. The crypt of the church, dated to the 9th or 10th century, may correspond to this burial place.

A first church was built in the 12th century, and the building was reworked in the 15th century. The church of Saint-Nicolas has been listed as a historic monument since 1993.

What you can see

The crypt is the oldest witness to the cult of Saint Arnulf. Since May 6, 1967, the relics of Saint Scariberga and those of her husband have been gathered in a single reliquary: the two spouses, separated in their earthly life to follow God's call each in their own way, now rest together.

In the south aisle, a polychrome wooden statue represents Saint Scariberga. The church also keeps a remarkable baptismal font and old wall paintings linked to the cult of Saint Arnulf. A street in the town bears the name of Saint Scariberga.

Praying on site

Before you come, you can read the life of Saint Scariberga. Before the reliquary, entrust to the two spouses couples and families, widows and those who are grieving, then say the prayer to Saint Scariberga. These suggestions are offered by Saintspedia.

Other places of Saint Scariberga

- **Bullion** (Yvelines): the chapel of Sainte-Anne-Sainte-Scariberge, what remains of a Benedictine priory recorded as early as 1262.
- **Reims** (Marne): the city of the Frankish court, where Saint Arnulf was murdered, in the rue du Barbâtre.
- **Clairefontaine-en-Yvelines** (Yvelines): the site of the former abbey of Saint-Remi-des-Landes, linked by tradition to the oratory she had built.

Practical information

The church of Saint-Nicolas is a parish church, part of the parish group of Saint-Arnoult-en-Yvelines. It is a place of worship: silence and modest dress are requested during services. Mass times and the conditions for visiting the crypt may vary: check with the parish or the tourist office before you come.

Credits and sources

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