

BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Sigebert III

Life, prayer and novena

Feast day: February 1

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IN BRIEF

Saint Sigebert III

Merovingian king of Austrasia from 639 to 656, founder of monasteries and patron saint of Nancy.

Feast day	February 1
Born	c. 630
Died	February 1, 656
Era	7th century
Patron saint of	Nancy

In this booklet

Life

Prayer to Saint Sigebert, King of Austrasia and Patron of Nancy

Novena to Saint Sigebert

Credits and sources

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LIFE

Saint Sigebert III

Saint Sigebert III, also called Saint Sigisbert, was a Merovingian king of the 7th century. The son of King Dagobert I, he became child king of Austrasia, the eastern part of the Frankish kingdom, and died at about twenty-five, in 656. A founder of monasteries, including Stavelot and Malmedy, he is remembered as a devout and generous king. He is the patron saint of the city of Nancy, in Lorraine, where relics of him are kept, and his feast day is February 1.

Who was Saint Sigebert III?

Sigebert was born around 630. He was the son of King Dagobert I and Ragnetrude, a companion of the king. His baptism, celebrated at Orléans by Bishop Amand in the presence of his father and of Eligius, the future Bishop of Noyon, left a legendary memory. According to the account, when the bishop finished the Our Father, the nine-day-old baby answered "Amen." This story, reported by hagiographical sources, above all expresses the reputation for piety that surrounded the young prince from very early on.

The kingdom of Austrasia, whose main city was Metz, covered lands that today belong to northeastern France, Belgium, Luxembourg and western Germany. It wanted a king of its own. To satisfy the Austrasian aristocracy, Dagobert installed his son there as a small child in 634, under the guardianship of Bishop Cunibert of Cologne and Duke Adalgisel. When Dagobert died in 639, Sigebert reigned over Austrasia, while his half-brother Clovis II received Neustria and Burgundy.

Key dates in the life of Saint Sigebert III

- **Around 630**: Born; baptized at Orléans by Saint Amand.
- **634**: Still a child, he is given to the Austrasians as their king.

- **639**: Dagobert I dies; Sigebert reigns alone over Austrasia.
- **640-642**: Wars against Duke Radulf of Thuringia, who eventually breaks away.
- **643**: Grimoald, son of Pepin of Landen, becomes mayor of the palace.
- **Around 650**: Still childless, he adopts Childebert, Grimoald's son.
- **Around 652**: Birth of his son Dagobert.
- **February 1, 656**: Dies of illness, at about twenty-five.

A king under guardianship

Sigebert's reign was dominated by the great nobles of the kingdom, especially by the family of Pepin of Landen. In 642, during an unsuccessful campaign against Thuringia, Grimoald saved the young king's life and became his friend. The following year he was mayor of the palace, in other words the real head of government.

Since the royal couple, Sigebert and Queen Chimnechild, had no children, Grimoald persuaded the king to adopt his own son, Childebert. Shortly afterward the queen gave birth to a son, Dagobert, and the succession became a problem. Sigebert, it is said, would not go back on his word.

The consequences were heavy. At Sigebert's death, Grimoald had the little Dagobert tonsured and sent into exile in Ireland. This son would also become king twenty years later, before being murdered: he is Saint Dagobert II.

The founder of monasteries

What Christian memory has kept of Sigebert is his generosity toward the Church. He founded or endowed several Benedictine monasteries, among them Stavelot and Malmedy, in present-day Belgium, and Cugnon, in the Ardennes. He restored the Abbey of Saint-Martin-devant-Metz, to which he was especially attached and where he was buried.

Several centuries later, around 1090, the monk Sigebert of Gembloux wrote his life, which fixed the image of a gentle, devout king, charitable toward the poor.



Nancy Cathedral, where Saint Sigisbert is especially honored.

Why is Saint Sigebert the patron saint of Nancy?

At first the object of local devotion in Metz, Sigebert was recognized as a saint about five centuries after his death. In 1552, when the Abbey of Saint-Martin was destroyed, his relics were moved to Metz and then to Nancy.

The city did not exist in his time, but the Dukes of Lorraine, who had made it their capital, honored the holy king who had reigned over these lands before them and made him the patron saint of Nancy. That is why, in Lorraine, he is still invoked as a protector of the city and its people.

What does his holiness teach us?

Saint Sigebert is not remembered as a great conqueror, but as a young and fragile king, often dominated by those around him, who wanted to place his power at the service of God and of the poor. His memory reminds us that holiness does not depend on political success. It is measured by goodness and faithfulness, even in a position where we do not control everything.

His refusal to break his word, even when it went against the interests of his own son, also speaks to us. Keeping a promise can be costly, and Sigebert paid that price.

Symbols and how to recognize Saint Sigebert in art

Saint Sigebert, or Sigisbert, is shown as a young king, wearing a crown and a royal mantle. In Nancy Cathedral, paintings in the choir depict him crowned and serving the poor, giving alms with his own hands. A statue of him decorates the facade of the cathedral. His reliquary, made of gilded wood, is topped with a royal crown, a reminder of his kingship. Gold coins struck in his name, such as a solidus minted at Marseille, are among the rare objects that survive from his reign.



Saint Sigisbert serving the poor, Nancy Cathedral.

Where to pray to Saint Sigebert

- **Nancy**: the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Annunciation, with a chapel dedicated to him and the reliquary of Saint Sigisbert. His relics were desecrated during the French Revolution; a few fragments that were saved, including a rib, are kept in a gilded wooden reliquary topped with a crown.
- **Stavelot and Malmedy** (Belgium): the former abbeys he founded.

You can pray to him with the prayer to Saint Sigebert or the novena to Saint Sigebert.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Sigebert, King of Austrasia and Patron of Nancy

No ancient prayer to Saint Sigebert, or Saint Sigisbert, has come down to us, and he left no writings. His cult, still very much alive in Nancy, honors a young king who was generous to the poor and to monasteries. Here is an original prayer inspired by his life.

Prayer to Saint Sigebert

Saint Sigebert, you were a king from childhood and carried the weight of a kingdom too young: pray for those who receive responsibilities that are beyond them.

You founded monasteries so that God might be praised there day and night: help us to give prayer the first place in our lives.

You are remembered as a king who served the poor: make us generous toward those who lack everything.

Protect the city of Nancy and the land of Lorraine, watch over families and children, and receive my intention: (name it in silence).

Teach me to remain faithful to my word and kind to everyone, even when I do not control everything. Amen.

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

When to pray this prayer

Saint Sigebert III is celebrated on February 1, the day of his death in 656, especially in Nancy, of which he is the patron saint. This prayer is particularly suited:

- for young people who take on heavy responsibilities early in life;
- for leaders, managers and all who govern, so that they serve the common good;
- when you are tempted to break a promise that has become costly;
- for the city of Nancy and the people of Lorraine;
- for monasteries and for the poor.

A short prayer for those in authority

> *Lord, through the intercession of Saint Sigebert, the young king who loved the poor, give to all who hold power a heart that is humble, honest and generous. May they seek not their own glory but the good of those entrusted to them. Amen.*

To learn his story, read the life of Saint Sigebert III, or pray the novena to Saint Sigebert.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Sigebert

This novena to Saint Sigebert III, also known as Saint Sigisbert, is an original composition by Saintspedia. It follows the life of the young Merovingian king who loved the poor, founded monasteries and kept his word at great cost. To end on his feast day, February 1, begin it on January 24. It can be prayed at any time of the year, especially by young people, by those in positions of responsibility, and by the people of Nancy and Lorraine.

How to pray this novena

Each day, begin with the Sign of the Cross and entrust your intention to God. Read the short meditation, say the prayer of the day, then an Our Father, a Hail Mary and a Glory Be. Finish with the small act proposed. If you miss a day, simply continue the next day.

Day 1: Amen from the cradle

According to the story of his baptism at Orléans, the baby Sigebert answered "Amen" at the end of the Our Father. Whatever its historical value, the story invites us to make our whole life a yes to God.

Prayer: Saint Sigebert, help me to say "Amen" to God's will each day, with trust and joy. Amen.

Today: Pray the Our Father slowly, and say the final Amen with all your heart.

Day 2: A child king

Sigebert became king of Austrasia as a small child, in 634. He carried a burden he had not chosen and could not yet understand. Many young people today also carry burdens beyond their years.

Prayer: Saint Sigebert, protect children and young people who must grow up too fast, and give them adults worthy of trust. Amen.

Today: Pray for a young person you know who is going through a hard time.

Day 3: Guided by others

The young king was placed under the guardianship of Bishop Cunibert of Cologne and Duke Adalgisel. No one grows alone. We all need guides, and we are all called to guide others.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for those who have guided me. Make me in turn a good guide for those you entrust to me. Amen.

Today: Thank, in person or in prayer, someone who helped you grow.

Day 4: Weakness and trust

Sigebert's reign was dominated by powerful nobles. He did not control everything, and his military campaigns were not always successful. Yet holiness does not depend on success, but on faithfulness.

Prayer: Saint Sigebert, when I feel weak or powerless, help me to trust in God and to do the good that is within my reach. Amen.

Today: Offer to God a situation in your life that you cannot control.

Day 5: Keeping one's word

Sigebert had promised to make Grimoald's son his heir. When his own son was born, he did not go back on his word. Faithfulness to a promise is a form of love for the truth.

Prayer: Saint Sigebert, teach me to keep my promises, even when it costs me. Amen.

Today: Keep a promise you have been putting off.

Day 6: Houses of prayer

Sigebert founded or endowed monasteries such as Stavelot and Malmedy, so that God would be praised there day and night. He understood that a kingdom needs prayer as much as armies. Our families, our parishes and our cities need it too.

Prayer: Lord, bless monks and nuns throughout the world, and give me a place of prayer in my own life. Amen.

Today: Set aside fifteen minutes of silent prayer, or visit a church.

Day 7: A king who served the poor

Christian memory has kept the image of a king who served the poor with his own hands, as the paintings in Nancy Cathedral show. Power is truly royal when it serves.

Prayer: Saint Sigebert, open my eyes to the poor around me and my hands to help them. Amen.

Today: Do a concrete act of charity: a gift, a meal, a visit.

Day 8: A father in exile

After Sigebert's death, his son Dagobert was sent into exile in Ireland. He later became king and is honored as Saint Dagobert II. Sigebert reminds us to entrust our children to God, who watches over them even when we cannot.

Prayer: Lord, I entrust to you my children, my family and all children separated from their parents. Amen.

Today: Pray for families separated by exile, migration or conflict.

Day 9: A short life, a lasting memory

Sigebert died at about twenty-five, on February 1, 656. His life was short, but the good he did still bears fruit centuries later, in Lorraine and beyond. What matters is not the length of a life but the love that fills it. Each day we live is a gift we can offer back to God.

Prayer: Saint Sigebert, help me to use well the time God gives me, and to fill it with love. Amen.

Today: Ask yourself what good you would like to leave behind you, and take one step toward it.

Closing prayer

> *Lord our God, you gave Saint Sigebert, a young king, a heart generous toward the poor and faithful to his word. Through his intercession, protect the city of Nancy and the land of Lorraine, give wisdom to those who govern, and help us to serve you with simplicity. I entrust to you my intention for this novena: (name it in silence). Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Read also the life of Saint Sigebert III and the prayer to Saint Sigebert.

CREDITS

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