BOOKLET TO PRINT

# Saint Tenenan

*Life, prayer and novena*

Feast day: July 16

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IN BRIEF

## Saint Tenenan

*Monk and bishop of Léon in the 7th century according to tradition, honored at La Forest-Landerneau and Plabennec.*

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| **Feast day** | July 16 |
| **Born** | 6th century, island of Britain |
| **Died** | July 16, 635 (probable date), Léon (Saint-Pol-de-Léon?) |
| **Canonized** | immemorial local cult in Brittany (not listed in the Roman Martyrology) |
| **Era** | 7th century |

## In this booklet


Life

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Novena to Saint Tenenan

Credits and sources



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LIFE

# Saint Tenenan

Saint Tenenan (Ténénan or Thénénan) was a Breton monk and bishop of the 7th century who came from the island of Britain. According to tradition, he settled on the banks of the Élorn, near present-day Landerneau, founded churches in Léon and became bishop of Léon after Saint Goulven; he is said to have died around 635. His feast day is July 16.

## Who was Saint Tenenan?

Tenenan is one of the founding saints of Brittany whose history is very poorly known. He is not listed in the Roman Martyrology, but in Léon he receives an ancient Catholic cult: several churches bear his name. His life has come down to us mainly through the Dominican Albert Le Grand, in the 17th century, who himself acknowledged the confusion of the sources: he thought that at least three saints of the same name had been mixed up. Some historians identify him with Saint Tudon, father of Saint Gouesnou, others link him with Saint Arnoc; nothing is certain. The dates in his account do not agree with one another, and it should be read as a pious tradition rather than a biography.

## Key dates in the life of Tenenan

- **6th century**: Born on the island of Britain; Albert Le Grand calls him the son of Tinidor and nephew of Saint Jaoua.
- **Youth**: To keep his chastity, he asks God to make him repulsive and is covered with leprosy, according to legend.
- **Then**: He enters the monastery of Saint Carantec, in Ireland, who heals him and sends him to preach in Armorica.

- **Arrival in Armorica**: He sails up the Élorn and founds a hermitage near present-day Landerneau, at Plouédern.
- **Following years**: He has a church built in the forest, near La Forest-Landerneau, and another at Plabennec.
- **615**: On the death of Saint Goulven, he is elected bishop of Léon and consecrated at Dol.
- **July 16, 635 (probable date)**: Dies in his episcopal residence in Léon.
- **Early 18th century**: According to Dom Lobineau, only one of his relics remains, at Trégarantec.

## A young man who chose God

According to Albert Le Grand, Tenenan was in his youth a brilliant and very handsome young man, sought after in noble courts. A countess's daughter wanted to marry him. Determined to consecrate himself to God, he prayed to become so ugly that no one would want him, and the legend says he was at once covered with leprosy. He then entered the monastery of Saint Carantec, in Ireland, who healed him, it is said, by plunging him into a bath he had prepared. This account, full of wonders, expresses a conviction: nothing matters more than belonging to God.

## On the banks of the Élorn

An angel, according to the account, invited Tenenan to cross the sea to govern the flock that Saint Paul Aurelian had led. His boat passed through the Goulet de Brest and sailed up the Élorn. On the right bank, he founded a small hermitage, a "lann," whose name is said to lie behind that of Landerneau. The area was covered with forests. Tradition reports that raiders from the sea, whom the account calls the Danes, were then ravaging Léon, and that the people sheltering in the forest welcomed the saint with joy; this is the legendary origin of the name Joyeuse Garde, at La Forest-Landerneau. Tenenan had a

church built deep in the forest, which today bears his name, and another at Plabennec, dedicated to Saint Peter. He advised the people of Plabennec to build a small tower to protect their church's goods, and, according to the account, his prayers drove the raiders away.

## Bishop of Léon

On the death of Saint Goulven, in 615, Tenenan was chosen to succeed him as bishop of Léon. He protested that he felt too weak for such a burden, then accepted and was consecrated at Dol. He governed the diocese for a few years and died, probably on July 16, 635. The place of his burial is debated: some think he was buried in his cathedral, others, like the historian Dom Lobineau, at Plabennec. His relics are said to have been hidden during wars, then lost.

## Devotion and art

Saint Tenenan is celebrated on July 16. Several churches are dedicated to him: the church of Saint-Ténénan at La Forest-Landerneau, the church of Saint-Thénénan at Plabennec, which has a statue of the saint, and the church of Saint-Ténénan at Guerlesquin. The name of the commune of Saint-Thonan probably comes from his. He is also honored at Lannilis and Trégarantec, and his statue stands on the calvary of Plourin, beside Saint Paul and Saint Corentin. He is said to have been the first patron of Landerneau, before Saint Houardon. He is shown as a bishop, with miter and crozier.

## What can we learn from Saint Tenenan?

Behind the legends, the figure of Tenenan is that of a builder of the Church. He left his country, settled in a troubled region, built churches and protected an anxious people, before accepting, despite his fears, the office of bishop. You can pray to him for the land of Léon, for those who live in insecurity, and for those who hesitate before a responsibility.

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

## Where to pray to Saint Tenenan

- **La Forest-Landerneau** (Finistère): the church of Saint-Ténénan.
- **Plabennec** (Finistère): the church of Saint-Thénénan and its statue of the saint.
- **Guerlesquin** (Finistère): the church of Saint-Ténénan.
- **Plourin** (Finistère): the calvary where his statue stands.

PRAYER

# Prayer to Saint Tenenan for Léon and Those Who Are Afraid

Saint Tenenan, who came from the island of Britain, built churches by the Élorn according to tradition and became bishop of Léon in the 7th century. Prayer composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. It entrusts to him the land of Léon, those who live in insecurity and those who hesitate before a responsibility.

## Prayer to Saint Tenenan

*Saint Tenenan,*
*you preferred God to beauty and honors,*
*and you crossed the sea to proclaim Christ.*
*Give me a free heart*
*to follow the Lord's call.*

*You who built churches in the midst of forests*
*and protected a threatened people,*
*watch over those who live in fear and insecurity.*
*You accepted the office of bishop despite your weakness:*
*help those who receive a responsibility*
*to lean on the strength of God.*
*Keep Léon and all Brittany in the faith.*
*Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

## When to pray to Saint Tenenan

- On his feast day, July 16.

- For the parishes of La Forest-Landerneau, Plabennec and Léon.
- In times of insecurity or violence.
- When you hesitate before a responsibility.
- For young people who want to keep a pure heart.

To prepare for his feast, you can pray the novena to Saint Tenenan from July 8 to 16, and read the life of Saint Tenenan.

NOVENA

# Novena to Saint Tenenan

This novena follows the life of Saint Tenenan as Breton tradition tells it, as recorded by Albert Le Grand. Novena composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. To finish it on his feast day, July 16, begin on July 8. The episodes are largely legendary.

## How to pray this novena

Each day, make 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 Tenenan, pray for us."

## Day 1: A sought-after young man

Tenenan was handsome and admired. But he knew his life was made for God.

**Prayer:** Lord, keep me from seeking first the admiration of others.

**Act of the day:** Give someone a sincere compliment, rather than waiting for one.

## Day 2: A pure heart

According to legend, he preferred to become repulsive rather than give up his consecration. His story speaks of the price of faithfulness.

**Prayer:** Lord, give me a pure and faithful heart.

**Act of the day:** Pray for young people trying to live chastity.

## Day 3: Healed at the monastery

The holy abbot Carantec healed and formed him. God raises up those who trust in him.

**Prayer:** Lord, heal what is wounded in me.

**Act of the day:** Pray for a sick person around you.

## Day 4: Crossing the sea

Sent to Armorica, he crossed the sea and sailed up the Élorn. He left without knowing what awaited him.

**Prayer:** Lord, let me go where you send me.

**Act of the day:** Pray for missionaries who have gone far from home.

## Day 5: A hermitage in the forest

On the banks of the Élorn, he founded a small hermitage. Prayer is the first foundation of every work.

**Prayer:** Lord, may everything I do begin with prayer.

**Act of the day:** Begin the day with five minutes of prayer.

## Day 6: The joy of a people

The people sheltering in the forest welcomed the saint with joy. His presence gave them hope again.

**Prayer:** Lord, make me a source of hope for those who are afraid.

**Act of the day:** Visit someone who is anxious or discouraged.

## Day 7: Building churches

Tenenan had churches built at La Forest-Landerneau and Plabennec. He gave the people places to pray.

**Prayer:** Lord, bless our churches and those who care for them.

**Act of the day:** Do a service for your parish.

## Day 8: Accepting the office

Elected bishop, he said he was too weak, then accepted. God chooses the humble to strengthen them.

**Prayer:** Lord, when I feel incapable, remind me that your grace is enough for me.

**Act of the day:** Say yes to a service you are asked to do.

## Day 9: The shepherd of Léon

Bishop of Léon, he died around 635. Léon keeps his memory in its churches and calvaries.

**Prayer:** Lord, through the intercession of Saint Tenenan, grant me the grace I ask in this novena, if it is your will.

**Act of the day:** Attend Mass, if possible in a church dedicated to a Breton saint.

## Closing prayer

*Saint Tenenan,*
*builder of churches and shepherd of Léon,*
*present to the Lord the intention I have entrusted to you,*
*and keep us in peace and faith.*
*Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

You can also pray the prayer to Saint Tenenan, and read the life of Saint Tenenan.

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