BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Urbicius

Life, prayer and novena

Feast day: December 15

IN BRIEF

Saint Urbicius

8th-century hermit, born in Bordeaux according to tradition, venerated at Nocito in Aragon.

Feast day	December 15
Born	c. 702, Bordeaux (according to tradition)
Died	c. 802, Nocito (Aragon, Spain)
Canonized	immemorial cult (local cult in the dioceses of Huesca and Barbastro-Monzón)
Era	9th century

In this booklet

Life

Prayer to Saint Urbicius for Rural Life and Peace of Heart

Novena to Saint Urbicius

Credits and sources

Booklet offered by Saintspedia, the directory of Catholic saints: lives of the saints, prayers, novenas and places of pilgrimage, at saintspedia.com. Texts written by Saintspedia, except traditional prayers marked as such. Original prayers and novenas are not official liturgical texts. Free booklet, to print and share for personal, family or parish use; please do not sell it.

LIFE

Saint Urbicius

Saint Urbicius, called Urbez in French and San Úrbez in Aragon, was a hermit of the 8th century. According to tradition, he was born in Bordeaux around 702, was a shepherd and then a monk, before living for many years as a hermit in the mountains of the Sierra de Guara, in Aragon. He is said to have died around 802 at Nocito, where his sanctuary still draws the faithful. His feast day is December 15.

Who was Saint Urbicius?

Urbicius is a much-loved saint in Upper Aragon, around Huesca and Barbastro, but almost unknown elsewhere. His life is known to us through a single text, the *Vita sancti Urbici*, preserved in a manuscript whose handwriting looks like Visigothic script. Some scholars date it to the 11th century; others see it as a later composition, written in the second half of the 13th century at the earliest. The details of his biography must therefore be received with caution. Urbicius was never formally canonized: like many saints of the early Middle Ages, he is venerated by virtue of an ancient cult, recognized locally by the Church in the dioceses of Huesca and Barbastro-Monzón.

Key dates in the life of Urbicius

- **c. 702**: Born in Bordeaux, according to tradition.
- **Youth**: He tends flocks, then embraces monastic life.
- **8th century**: He crosses the Pyrenees and settles in Aragon.
- **For several decades**: He lives as a hermit north of the Sierra de Guara, in a cave near the confluence of the Yesa and the Bellos, according to tradition.
- **c. 802**: Dies at Nocito, at the foot of the Sierra de Guara.

- **11th or 13th century**: The *Vita sancti Urbici* is written.
- **October 17, 1936**: During the Spanish Civil War, his body, reputed to be incorrupt, is desecrated and burned.

From the shepherd of Bordeaux to the hermit of Guara

According to his Life, Urbicius came from Bordeaux. As a young man he was a shepherd, a detail that partly explains the affection the herding people of the Aragonese mountains have for him. He then became a monk, and later chose an even more solitary life. He crossed the Pyrenees and withdrew to Upper Aragon. Tradition places his retreat in a cave north of the Sierra de Guara, near the confluence of two rivers, the Yesa and the Bellos. He is said to have lived there for several decades, in prayer and penance, far from the world.

A long old age at Nocito

Urbicius ended his days at Nocito, a small village of the Sierra de Guara, on the north side of the range. He is said to have died there around 802, nearly a hundred years old. His tomb became a place of prayer. The saint's body, which tradition held to be incorrupt, was venerated for a long time in his sanctuary. On October 17, 1936, at the beginning of the Spanish Civil War, it was desecrated and burned, like so many other relics and objects of worship destroyed in Spain at that time.

Devotion and memory

Saint Urbicius is celebrated on December 15. His cult remains centered on Nocito, where the faithful of Upper Aragon come to pray to him, and hardly goes beyond the dioceses of Huesca and Barbastro-Monzón. This ancient cult has drawn the attention of scholars: as early as 1906, the linguist Jean

Saroïhandy devoted a study to him entitled "A Saint from Bordeaux in Aragon". The link with Bordeaux makes Urbicius a bridge between Aquitaine and Aragon, on either side of the Pyrenees.

What can we learn from Saint Urbicius?

Urbicius sought God in the silence of the mountains. As a shepherd, he knew what it means to watch over a flock; as a hermit, he learned to keep watch in prayer. His figure speaks to the simple people of the countryside, to shepherds and farmers, and to all who need to find inner silence again. The destruction of his body in 1936 also recalls the sufferings of the Church in Spain during the Civil War. You can pray to him for rural life, for mountain people and for those who seek the peace of God.

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

Where to pray to Saint Urbicius

- **Nocito** (municipality of Nueno, province of Huesca, Spain): his sanctuary, at the foot of the Sierra de Guara.
- **Dioceses of Huesca and Barbastro-Monzón**: the parishes of Upper Aragon where his cult is alive.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Urbicius for Rural Life and Peace of Heart

Saint Urbicius, or Úrbez, born in Bordeaux according to tradition, was a shepherd, a monk and then a hermit in the Sierra de Guara, in Aragon, where he died around 802. Prayer composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. It is not an official liturgical text. It entrusts to him rural life, shepherds and all who seek the silence of God.

Prayer to Saint Urbicius

Saint Urbicius,
shepherd who became a monk,
you left your native land
to seek God in the silence of the mountains.
Teach me to keep silence
so as to hear his voice deep in my heart.

You who tended the flocks,
watch over shepherds, herders and farmers,
over their animals and their fields,
and give them their daily bread.

You whose body was desecrated in time of war,
obtain peace for divided peoples,
and keep us faithful in trial.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

When to pray to Saint Urbicius

- On his feast day, December 15.
- For shepherds, herders and rural life.
- To find inner calm and a taste for prayer again.
- For the Christians of Spain and the memory of the victims of the Civil War.
- Before a retreat or a time of solitude.

A short invocation

> *Saint Urbicius, hermit of the mountain,*
> *keep our flocks and our souls.*
> *Pray for us. Amen.*

To prepare for his feast, you can pray the novena to Saint Urbicius from December 7 to 15, and read the life of Saint Urbicius.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Urbicius

This novena is inspired by the life of Saint Urbicius, or Úrbez, hermit of the Sierra de Guara, in Aragon. Novena composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. It is not an official liturgical text. To finish it on his feast day, December 15, begin on December 7. 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 Urbicius, pray for us." The small act suggested each day helps you live the novena concretely. The episodes recalled come from a medieval Life whose historical accuracy is debated.

Day 1: A child of Bordeaux

Tradition has Urbicius born in Bordeaux, around 702. Nothing destined him for the mountains of Aragon: God often leads us far from home.

Prayer: Lord, make me ready for your calls, even when they lead me elsewhere.

Act of the day: Pray for the town or village where you were born.

Day 2: The shepherd

As a young man, Urbicius tended flocks. The shepherd knows his animals, looks for them when they stray and watches over them at night.

Prayer: Jesus, Good Shepherd, keep me in your flock and bring back those who have wandered away.

Act of the day: Pray for someone who has drifted away from the faith.

Day 3: The monk

Urbicius then embraced monastic life. He learned obedience, common prayer and work.

Prayer: Lord, bless monks and nuns, and raise up vocations.

Act of the day: Pray one of the hours of the Divine Office, or read a psalm slowly.

Day 4: Crossing the mountains

Urbicius crossed the Pyrenees to settle in Aragon. He left what was familiar to him in order to seek God.

Prayer: Lord, give me the courage to leave what keeps me from coming to you.

Act of the day: Give up some small unnecessary thing today.

Day 5: The cave

Tradition shows him living in a cave, north of the Sierra de Guara. A poor life, turned entirely toward God.

Prayer: Lord, teach me simplicity and the joy of what is essential.

Act of the day: Spend a quarter of an hour without screens, in silence.

Day 6: Decades of prayer

Urbicius persevered for many years in solitude. Faithfulness is built day after day.

Prayer: Lord, give me perseverance in prayer, even when it is dry.

Act of the day: Set a daily time for prayer and keep to it.

Day 7: Old age at Nocito

Urbicius lived to a very great age and died at Nocito around 802. Old age can be a time of grace and prayer.

Prayer: Lord, bless the elderly, and give them peace and comfort.

Act of the day: Visit or call an elderly person.

Day 8: The desecrated body

In 1936, during the Spanish Civil War, his body was burned. Hatred did not extinguish the memory of the saint.

Prayer: Lord, heal the wounds of war, and give peace to divided peoples.

Act of the day: Pray for a country at war today.

Day 9: A saint of the mountain

Twelve centuries after his death, people still pray to Saint Urbicius in Upper Aragon. His hidden life still bears fruit.

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

Act of the day: Attend Mass, or take a walk in nature while praying.

Living the novena with Saint Urbicius

Urbicius invites us to silence and simplicity. During these nine days, you can carry rural life, shepherds and herders, the elderly and peoples suffering from war. If you ever spend a day in Upper Aragon, the sanctuary of Nocito awaits you.

Closing prayer

Saint Urbicius,
shepherd, monk and hermit,
you found God in the silence of the mountains.
Present to the Lord the intention I have entrusted to you,
and obtain for me a simple and peaceful heart.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

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

Credits and sources

Texts: Saintspedia (saintspedia.com). The sources cited in each part are those of the corresponding page of the website. Biographical data partly from Wikidata (CC0). Font: EB Garamond (SIL Open Font License).

More free booklets

Lives of the saints, prayers, novenas and places of pilgrimage: find all the booklets to print at

saintspedia.com