BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Vincentian of Rouffiac (Saint Viance)

Life, prayer, novena and pilgrimage

Feast day: January 2

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IN BRIEF

Saint Vincentian of Rouffiac (Saint Viance)

Hermit of the Limousin in the 7th century, honored at Saint-Viance (Corrèze).

Feast day	January 2
Born	c. 623 (according to tradition)
Died	c. 672-674 or c. 730 (sources differ), Rouffiac (Limousin)
Canonized	immemorial cult
Era	7th century

In this booklet

Life

Prayer to Saint Viance for Peace and Life Choices

Novena to Saint Viance (Vincentian of Rouffiac)

Church of Saint-Viance

Credits and sources

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LIFE

Saint Vincentian of Rouffiac (Saint Viance)

Saint Vincentian of Rouffiac, known in popular speech as Saint Viance, was a hermit of the Limousin, in central France, in the 7th century. Raised at the court of the dukes of Aquitaine, he gave up that life to withdraw into a forest at Rouffiac, where he died. His body was carried to the place that now bears his name, Saint-Viance, in Corrèze, where an enameled shrine of the 13th century keeps his memory. His feast day is January 2.

Who was Saint Vincentian of Rouffiac?

What we know of Vincentian comes from local tradition, handed down by an ancient Life and by the memory of the parish of Saint-Viance. The dates are uncertain: he is said to have been born around 623, and his death is placed either around 672-674 or around 730. The account of his life, and above all that of his burial, contains marvelous elements, such as the famous story of the bear yoked to the funeral cart. They should be read as edifying stories, which speak of the veneration of the faithful more than they give an exact chronicle. The cult, for its part, is well attested by the Romanesque church of Saint-Viance and the precious shrine kept there.

Key dates in the life of Vincentian

- **c. 623**: Born, according to tradition.
- **Youth**: He is raised at the court of the dukes of Aquitaine and studies, according to local tradition, at Cahors.
- **Afterward**: In the duke's service, he is put in charge of his grooms, according to the same account.

- **Later**: He leaves the court for the life of a hermit in a forest, at Rouffiac.
- **c. 672-674 or c. 730**: He dies in his hermitage; the sources differ on the date.
- **After his death**: The bishop of Limoges has his body carried to Avolca Curtis, the future Saint-Viance, where the priest Savinian builds a church for him.
- **12th century**: The Romanesque church of Saint-Viance is built.
- **13th century**: The great shrine in Limoges enamel that bears his name is made.

From the court of Aquitaine to the forest

According to tradition, Vincentian grew up at the court of the dukes of Aquitaine. He received a careful education there, spent part of his years of study at Cahors, then entered the duke's service, who entrusted him with responsibility for his grooms. A local account also shows him defending a woman threatened with violence by his master's son: he did not like violence, but he could not bear injustice. These details, handed down by the memory of the region, cannot be verified.

One day, Vincentian left this life at court. He chose solitude and withdrew into a forest at Rouffiac to live as a hermit. He spent the rest of his days there in prayer and penance, until his death, the date of which remains uncertain.

The bear and the funeral cart

After his death, the bishop of Limoges ordered his body to be carried to a place called Avolca Curtis, today Saint-Viance. The account says that the priest Savinian, a friend of Vincentian, had built a church in his honor there, and that an angel appeared to him to ask him to fetch the saint's body and bury it

there. On the way, the procession, whose cart was drawn by two oxen, was attacked by a bear that killed one of the animals. Then, says the legend, the bear itself took the ox's place under the yoke and pulled the cart to the church.

This story, which the historian Michel Pastoureau cites in his history of the bear, belongs to a family of medieval legends in which the wild beast is tamed by holiness. In its own way, it says that creation itself places itself at the service of God's friends.

Devotion and art

Saint Viance is celebrated on January 2. His cult is centered on the village of Saint-Viance, in Corrèze, near Brive. The Romanesque church, from the 12th century, is partly protected as a historic monument. It keeps an exceptional shrine in Limoges enamel from the 13th century, one of the largest in the Limousin, listed as a historic monument since 1891. Stolen during the Revolution and later recovered, it was restored in 1930 and in 1983, and was even exhibited in the United States as a major example of Limousin enamel art. The arms of a local noble family, the Lasteyries, which appear on a soldier's shield, suggest that it was commissioned by one of its members.

In local imagery, the scene of the bear yoked to the funeral cart is the most characteristic episode of his story.

What can we learn from Saint Vincentian of Rouffiac?

Vincentian left the honors of a princely court for the poverty of a hermitage. He preferred God alone to the career that lay open to him. The legend of the bear also says that the gentleness of the saints disarms violence. You can pray to him for those who must make a life choice, for those seeking inner peace, and for the Limousin and Corrèze.

Where to pray to Saint Vincentian of Rouffiac

- **The church of Saint-Viance**, in Saint-Viance (Corrèze): the Romanesque church that keeps the saint's enameled shrine.
- **Rouffiac**: the place of his hermitage, according to tradition.
- **Limoges** (Haute-Vienne): the episcopal city on which his cult depended.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Viance for Peace and Life Choices

Saint Vincentian of Rouffiac, called Saint Viance, left the court of the dukes of Aquitaine to live as a hermit in a forest of the Limousin in the 7th century. According to legend, a bear pulled the cart carrying his body to the church of Saint-Viance, in Corrèze. Prayer composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. It entrusts to him those who seek peace and those who must make a life choice.

Prayer to Saint Vincentian

Saint Vincentian,
you grew up at the court of princes
and preferred the poverty of the forest,
to seek God alone.
Help me choose what leads to him
rather than what shines in the eyes of the world.

You who did not love violence
and who defended the weak,
calm what is violent in me and around me.
Give me the gentleness that disarms
and the courage to protect those who are threatened.

Watch over Corrèze and the Limousin,
over the parish of Saint-Viance,
and over all who come to pray near your shrine.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

When to pray to Saint Vincentian

- On January 2, his feast day.
- At the time of a life choice or discernment.
- When violence or anger takes hold of you.
- For people who are threatened or victims of violence.
- For the people of Corrèze and the Limousin.

A short invocation

> *Saint Viance, friend of God and of peace,*
> *pray for us. Amen.*

To prepare for his feast, you can pray the novena to Saint Viance from December 25 to January 2, and read the life of Saint Vincentian of Rouffiac.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Viance (Vincentian of Rouffiac)

This novena follows Saint Vincentian of Rouffiac, called Saint Viance, a hermit of the Limousin in the 7th century. Novena composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. To finish it on his feast day, January 2, begin on December 25, Christmas Day. You can also pray it at any other time of the year. The episodes of his life come from local tradition, which mixes history and legend.

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 Vincentian, pray for us." The act of the day helps you live the novena concretely.

Day 1: The child of the manger

This novena begins at Christmas. The Son of God was born poor, far from palaces. Vincentian, raised at a court, would also choose poverty.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, born in a manger, teach me simplicity and poverty of heart.

Act of the day: Take a moment of prayer before the Nativity scene.

Day 2: A youth at court

Vincentian grew up at the court of the dukes of Aquitaine. He received education and honors. Yet God was waiting for him elsewhere.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for the gifts I have received. Help me put them at your service.

Act of the day: Thank God for three talents he has given you.

Day 3: The time of study

According to tradition, he studied at Cahors. The intellect too is a path to God, when it seeks the truth.

Prayer: Lord, bless pupils, students and their teachers. Give them a love of the truth.

Act of the day: Pray for a young person who is studying.

Day 4: Serving with responsibility

In the duke's service, he directed the grooms. He learned to lead and to serve at the same time.

Prayer: Lord, help me exercise my responsibilities with justice and kindness.

Act of the day: Do today's work with special care, thinking of those it serves.

Day 5: Defending the weak

A local account shows him defending a woman threatened with violence. Gentleness is not cowardice: it protects those in danger.

Prayer: Lord, give me the courage to stand up for those who are mistreated.

Act of the day: Pray for victims of violence, or support an association that helps them.

Day 6: Leaving the court

Vincentian gave up honors and withdrew into the forest of Rouffiac. He chose God alone.

Prayer: Lord, free me from seeking honors, and let me prefer you to everything.

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

Day 7: The hermit's life

In the forest, he prayed, fasted and lived poorly. Silence became the place of his meeting with God.

Prayer: Lord, teach me to keep silence so that I may listen to you.

Act of the day: Take a quarter of an hour of silence and prayer.

Day 8: The bear under the yoke

The legend tells that a bear, after killing an ox, took its place to pull the saint's funeral cart. Violence is tamed by holiness.

Prayer: Lord, tame what is wild in me, my anger and my impatience, and make me a servant of peace.

Act of the day: Answer a hurtful word with gentleness.

Day 9: A church for a friend of God

The priest Savinian welcomed his body into the church he had built. For centuries, the faithful have come to pray to Saint Viance in the village that bears his name.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for the friendship of the saints. Through the intercession of Saint Vincentian, grant me the grace I ask in this novena, if it is your will.

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

Closing prayer

> *Saint Vincentian,*
> *you who left the court for the forest*
> *and whom even the beasts served,*
> *present to the Lord the intention I have entrusted to you.*
> *Teach me to choose God above all,*
> *to defend the weak and to live in peace.*
> *Watch over your land of the Limousin.*
> *Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

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

PILGRIMAGE

Church of Saint-Viance

The church of Saint-Viance stands on the bank of the Vézère, in the village of Saint-Viance, in Corrèze, not far from Brive-la-Gaillarde. According to tradition, it was here that the body of Saint Vincentian was brought, the 7th-century hermit known in popular speech as Saint Viance. The Romanesque building of the 12th century holds an exceptional treasure: the great shrine in Limoges enamel that bears the saint's name.

A church born of a legend

According to the traditional account, the bishop of Limoges ordered the body of Vincentian, who had died in his hermitage at Rouffiac, to be carried to a place then called Avolca Curtis. The priest Savinian, his friend, had a church built there in his honor. The legend adds that during the journey a bear killed one of the oxen pulling the funeral cart, then took its place under the yoke itself. The village later took the saint's name. Under the Merovingians, according to local tradition, the church was dedicated to Sainte-Souveraine, that is, to the Virgin Mary.

The present building dates mainly from the 12th century, with alterations up to the 18th century. Its Romanesque apse and choir have been listed as historic monuments since 1972. The church, owned by the municipality, has remained a parish church.

The shrine of Saint Viance

The jewel of the church is the shrine of Saint Viance, a large reliquary in Limoges enamel made in the 13th century. It is one of the largest shrines in the Limousin, along with those of Ambazac and Chamberet. It has been listed as a

historic monument since 1891. The arms of the Lasteyrie family, which appear on the shield of a soldier depicted on the shrine, suggest that it was commissioned by a lord of that family.

Its history is eventful: stolen at the time of the sale of Church property during the Revolution, it was later recovered. It was restored in 1930 and again in 1983, and traveled as far as the United States, where it was exhibited as one of the great examples of Limousin enamel art.

Praying on site

Before you come, you can read the life of Saint Vincentian of Rouffiac. In the church, before the shrine, entrust to him those who must make a life choice, people who are victims of violence and peace in your families, then say the prayer to Saint Viance. January 2, his feast day, is a special time to come and pray. These suggestions are offered by Saintspedia.

Practical information

Saint-Viance is in Corrèze, north of Brive-la-Gaillarde, on the bank of the Vézère. The church is a place of worship: modest dress and silence are requested, especially during services. Access to the church and to the shrine, as well as Mass times, may vary: check with the parish or the town hall before you come.

Credits and sources

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