BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Vorles

Life, prayer, novena and pilgrimage

Feast day: June 16

IN BRIEF

Saint Vorles

6th-century priest of Marcenay in Burgundy, honored at Châtillon-sur-Seine.

Feast day	June 16
Born	c. 530, Marcenay (Côte-d'Or), according to tradition
Died	June 16, 591, Marcenay (Côte-d'Or)
Canonized	immemorial cult
Era	6th century
Patron saint of	Châtillon area, invoked against epidemics

In this booklet

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Novena to Saint Vorles

Church of Saint-Vorles, Châtillon-sur-Seine

Credits and sources

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LIFE

Saint Vorles

Saint Vorles is a 6th-century priest of Burgundy, parish priest of Marcenay, in today's Côte-d'Or, born around 530 and died on June 16, 591. His memory is tied to a famous miracle: while celebrating Mass, he is said to have saved a child from a fire in a distant village. His relics, moved to Châtillon-sur-Seine in 868, gave their name to the Romanesque church that overlooks the town. His feast day is June 16.

Who was Saint Vorles?

Vorles is one of those country priests of the early Middle Ages whose memory has been kept by the devotion of a region more than by documents. His life was written around 1040 by Aganon, a canon of the abbey of Notre-Dame in Châtillon, more than four centuries after his death, and taken up again in the 17th century. This account no doubt mixes old memories with embellishments. What is certain is the attachment of the Châtillon area to its saint: two churches bear his name, he was invoked for centuries during epidemics, and the first name Vorles, like its feminine form Vorlette, can still be found there.

Key dates in the life of Vorles

- **c. 530**: Born, according to tradition, at Marcenay, in Burgundy; some claim he was related to King Guntram.
- **Second half of the 6th century**: As a priest, he exercises his ministry at Marcenay.
- **Reign of Guntram (561-592)**: According to Aganon's account, he saves from afar a child caught in a fire at Plaines, during a Mass celebrated before the king.

- **June 16, 591**: Dies at Marcenay; he is buried in the village church.
- **868**: To protect them from the Norman invasions, his relics are moved to Châtillon-sur-Seine.
- **c. 980-1016**: The bishop of Langres, Bruno of Roucy, has the church of Saint-Vorles in Châtillon built.
- **1023**: His relics are brought to the Council of Héry to add to its solemnity.
- **c. 1040**: Aganon, canon of Châtillon, writes down his life and his miracle.

A village priest

According to tradition, Vorles was born around 530 at Marcenay, in northern Burgundy, at the time when the sons of Clovis were dividing the Frankish kingdom. Some authors say he was related to King Guntram, who ruled Burgundy from 561 to 592, but nothing confirms it. Having become a priest, he exercised his ministry in his village. The sources say almost nothing about his days. We can picture, without inventing anything, what the life of a rural priest was then: celebrating Mass, baptizing, teaching the faith to people still marked by the old cults, visiting the sick and burying the dead.

The miracle of Plaines

The story that made Vorles famous takes place during a Mass at Marcenay, in the presence of the king and his retinue. In the middle of the celebration, the priest stood still and remained a long time as if absent. When he came back to himself, he explained that he had gone to save a child from a burning house at Plaines, a village about twenty-five kilometers away. The king sent men to check his words: the messengers found the child's parents, who were looking for Vorles to thank him.

This gift of bilocation, the ability to be in two places at once, is reported by tradition of a few saints. Aganon's text was written long after the events, and its details cannot be verified. But it says clearly what the faithful remembered

of Vorles: a priest whose prayer was so united to God that it reached the distress of others, even far away. This miracle has often been depicted, notably in 16th-century paintings kept at Châtillon.

Death and translation of the relics

Vorles died on June 16, 591 and was buried in the church of Marcenay. A sarcophagus discovered in a crypt beneath the choir of that church appears to be his. In 868, to shelter his relics from the Normans, they were carried to Châtillon-sur-Seine, to a church that took his name. Around the year 1000, the bishop of Langres, Bruno of Roucy, had the present Romanesque church built there. In 1023, the relics of Saint Vorles were brought to the Council of Héry, a sign of the prestige he then enjoyed.

Cult and iconography

Saint Vorles is celebrated on June 16, especially in the Châtillon area. Over the centuries he was invoked against plague and cholera, to prevent infirmities and famine, and for many other needs. Two churches are dedicated to him, at Châtillon-sur-Seine and at Marcenay. He is also secondary patron of the church of Javernant, in the Aube, where a confraternity of Saint Vorles existed in the 19th century, and a chapel is dedicated to him at Plaines-Saint-Lange, the village of the miracle. He is depicted as a priest in liturgical vestments, often in the scene of the Mass or the fire.

What can we learn from Saint Vorles?

Saint Vorles is a saint for parish priests and for all who serve in a modest place. He founded no order and wrote no treatises: he was the priest of a village. The legend of Plaines expresses the heart of his holiness: at the altar he carried the whole world in his prayer, and his prayer was effective. We can pray to him for priests, for children in danger, for victims of fires and for the sick.

Where to pray to Saint Vorles

- **Châtillon-sur-Seine** (Côte-d'Or): the church of Saint-Vorles, which received his relics in 868.
- **Marcenay** (Côte-d'Or): the church of Saint-Vorles, where he was priest and was buried.
- **Plaines-Saint-Lange** (Aube): the chapel of Saint-Vorles, in the village of the miracle.
- **Javernant** (Aube): the church of the Assumption, which honors him as secondary patron.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Vorles for Priests and Children

Saint Vorles, priest of Marcenay in Burgundy in the 6th century, is known for a miracle reported by tradition: while celebrating Mass, he is said to have saved a child from a fire in a distant village. The Châtillon area long invoked him in epidemics and misfortunes. Prayer composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. It is not an official liturgical text.

Prayer to Saint Vorles

Saint Vorles,
village priest and friend of God,
you served your people at the altar
and in the humble tasks of every day.
Bless our priests and our parishes,
and make us faithful in prayer.

It is told that in the middle of Mass
your prayer reached a child in the flames.
Watch over our children,
protect homes from fire and danger,
and be near those who call for help.

You whom our forebears invoked
in plague, sickness and hunger,
keep us in our trials,
and teach us to carry in our prayer
those who suffer, even far from us.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

When to pray to Saint Vorles

- On his feast day, June 16.
- For parish priests, especially in the countryside.
- For a child in danger or who is sick.
- In a fire, an epidemic or a disaster.
- For the people of the Châtillon area and of Burgundy.

An invocation for children

> *Lord, keep our children from all danger,*
> *and send them your help in the hour of trial.*
> *Saint Vorles, pray for them. Amen.*

To prepare for his feast, you can pray the novena to Saint Vorles from June 8 to 16, and discover the life of Saint Vorles.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Vorles

This novena is an original composition inspired by the life of Saint Vorles, priest of Marcenay in Burgundy, who died in 591. Novena composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. It is not an official liturgical text. To finish it on his feast day, June 16, begin on June 8. 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 Vorles, pray for us." The act suggested each day helps you live the novena concretely. The episodes recounted come from an account written around 1040, which mixes history and legend.

Day 1: Rooted in his village

Vorles was born at Marcenay and served there as a priest. He did not seek to go far away: he gave his life where he had grown up.

Prayer: Lord, teach me to love and serve the place where you have put me.

Act of the day: Do a practical service for a neighbor.

Day 2: The priest as servant

A country priest in the 6th century baptized, celebrated, taught and visited the sick. Vorles lived this humble daily service.

Prayer: Lord, bless the priests of our parishes. Keep them in joy and faithfulness.

Act of the day: Pray for the priest of your parish and, if possible, thank him.

Day 3: At the heart of the Mass

It was during Mass that the miracle of Plaines took place. The Eucharist is the heart of the priest's life and of the whole Church.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, make every Mass I take part in a true encounter with you.

Act of the day: Attend a weekday Mass, or spend time in adoration.

Day 4: A prayer that reaches far

According to legend, the prayer of Vorles reached a child twenty-five kilometers away. Our prayer too can reach those we cannot help with our hands.

Prayer: Lord, I entrust to you those I love who are far away. Be their help yourself.

Act of the day: Pray by name for someone far away, then send them a message.

Day 5: Saved from the flames

A child was saved from a burning house. God cares for the little ones and hears the cry of anxious parents.

Prayer: Lord, protect our children. Comfort families struck by a fire or an accident.

Act of the day: Pray for a family in trial, or support an organization that helps disaster victims.

Day 6: The truth checked

The king sent men to check the words of Vorles, and the parents confirmed them. Faith does not fear the truth.

Prayer: Lord, give me an upright mind that loves the truth and is not easily deceived.

Act of the day: Avoid any exaggeration in your words today.

Day 7: Gratitude

The child's parents were looking for Vorles to thank him. Knowing how to say thank you means recognizing that we have received everything.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for all the graces I have received without even noticing.

Act of the day: Write down three reasons for gratitude and thank God for them.

Day 8: A refuge in trials

For centuries, Saint Vorles was invoked against plague, cholera and famine. The faithful knew that everything can be entrusted to God through his saints.

Prayer: Lord, keep us in epidemics and disasters. Support caregivers and those who fight hunger.

Act of the day: Give to a charity that heals or feeds people.

Day 9: A living memory

Having died in 591, Vorles is still honored at Marcenay and Châtillon. His relics have come through centuries and invasions. The saints remain present to those who pray to them.

Prayer: Lord, make me a faithful witness where I live. Through the intercession of Saint Vorles, grant me the grace I ask of you in this novena, if it is your will.

Act of the day: Attend Mass if possible, and pray for priestly vocations.

Closing prayer

Saint Vorles,
faithful priest of Marcenay,
your prayer reached those who were in danger.
Present to the Lord the intention I have entrusted to you.
Watch over our children and our priests,
and keep us in our trials.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

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

PILGRIMAGE

Church of Saint-Vorles, Châtillon-sur-Seine

The church of Saint-Vorles overlooks Châtillon-sur-Seine, in the Côte-d'Or, from a promontory on the east side of the town. A Romanesque building from around the year 1000, it bears the name of Saint Vorles, priest of Marcenay who died in 591, whose relics were brought there in 868. It is one of the oldest monuments in Burgundy and a place rich in Christian memory, where Saint Bernard of Clairvaux also came to pray.

History

Before the 10th century, a first church already stood here. In 868, to protect them from the Norman invasions, the relics of Saint Vorles, until then kept in the church of Marcenay, were brought here. The present church was built mainly at the initiative of Bruno of Roucy, bishop of Langres from 980 to 1016, within the fortified enclosure of Châtillon. In 1023, the saint's relics were carried to the Council of Héry to add to its solemnity.

First a collegiate church, it served as a parish church until 1807. At the beginning of the 17th century, the chapel of the Rosary was built and the crypt was turned into the chapel of Saint Bernard. Restored several times in the 20th century, it no longer hosts regular services, but it is reopened for baptisms, weddings and special events.

What you can see

The exterior is decorated with Lombard bands, typical of the first Romanesque art, and the entrance is preceded by a westwork topped by a bell tower. Inside, a tall Romanesque nave leads to a double transept and a deep

choir, flanked by two small chapels of the 14th and 15th centuries. The church keeps an Entombment of 1527, medieval wall paintings, a 16th-century diptych showing the translation of the relics of Saint Vorles from Marcenay to Châtillon, and paintings of the same period telling his life, all listed as historic monuments.

In the crypt, the chapel of Saint Bernard houses a statue of the Virgin and Child, venerated as Our Lady of All Graces. Tradition says that Saint Bernard of Clairvaux, who spent part of his youth at Châtillon, came there to pray to the Virgin.

Praying there

Before coming, you can read the life of Saint Vorles. Before the diptych of the translation or the paintings of his life, entrust to him priests, children and the sick, then say the prayer to Saint Vorles. In the crypt, you can end with a Hail Mary before Our Lady of All Graces. These suggestions are offered by Saintspedia.

Practical information

The church stands on the hill overlooking the east of Châtillon-sur-Seine, near the ruins of the castle of the dukes of Burgundy, and can be reached on foot from the town center. Since it no longer hosts regular services, opening and visiting conditions may vary: check with the Châtillon tourist office or the parish before your visit. To pray to Saint Vorles where he lived, the church of Saint-Vorles in Marcenay is not far away, in the same area.

Credits and sources

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