BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Vulbas

Life, prayer, novena and pilgrimage

Feast day: May 10

IN BRIEF

Saint Vulbas

Burgundian nobleman of the 7th century, patrician in Burgundy, murdered in 642 and honored as a martyr for justice.

Feast day	May 10
Born	early 7th century, kingdom of Burgundy
Died	642, Burgundy
Canonized	immemorial cult

In this booklet

Life

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Novena to Saint Vulbas

Church of Saint-Vulbas

Credits and sources

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LIFE

Saint Vulbas

Saint Vulbas, also called Villebaud or Willebad (in Latin Vulbandus or Vibaldus), was a Burgundian nobleman of the 7th century. An officer of King Dagobert I, then patrician in Burgundy, he was murdered in 642 on the orders of the mayor of the palace Flaochad. He was venerated as a martyr, not for refusing to deny his faith, but for justice. His sarcophagus is kept in the church of the village in the Ain that bears his name, Saint-Vulbas. His feast day is May 10.

Who was Saint Vulbas?

Vulbas belongs to the world of the great lay nobles of the Merovingian age, men who served the Frankish kings in war and in government, some of whom were honored as saints after their death. The sources that speak of him are few. Chronicles of the Merovingian period mention a patrician named Willebad, caught up in the power struggles of Burgundy; the local tradition of the Bugey, collected in the 19th century by Father Jean-Irénée Depéry in his *Hagiological History of Belley*, kept the memory of his holiness and of his tomb. What can be said about his life is therefore brief, and part of it belongs to tradition rather than to certain history.

Key dates in the life of Vulbas

- **Early 7th century**: Born into a noble family of the kingdom of Burgundy.
- **Reign of Dagobert I (629-639)**: He serves in the armies of the Frankish king and, according to tradition, leads an expedition against the Gascons.
- **After this campaign**: He returns to Burgundy with the rank of patrician, one of the highest titles in the kingdom.

- **639**: Death of Dagobert I; the nobles of Burgundy seek to govern themselves without a mayor of the palace.
- **642**: Queen Nanthild nevertheless appoints Flaochad mayor of the palace of Burgundy.
- **642**: Vulbas is murdered at the instigation of Flaochad, who is jealous of his influence; Flaochad dies a few days later.
- **After his death**: The monks of the monastery of Condat (Saint-Claude) have his body moved to the church of the place that will take his name, Saint-Vulbas.
- **1920**: His Merovingian sarcophagus of white marble is listed as a historic monument.

A nobleman in the service of the Frankish kings

According to the tradition collected by Depéry, Vulbas was born into a noble family of the kingdom of Burgundy, one of the great parts of the Frankish world in the 7th century. He first made a career in the army of King Dagobert I. He is credited with commanding the royal expedition against the Gascons, a people of the southwest who resisted Frankish rule. Returning victorious, he received the title of patrician, which made him one of the leading figures of Burgundy, with military and judicial duties.

Tradition presents him as a man of integrity, respected by the nobles of his region and attentive to the weak. It reports no miracles during his lifetime. His holiness, as it was understood after him, lies in the way he exercised power and in the unjust death he suffered.

A death for justice

When Dagobert died in 639, the nobles of Burgundy wished to be governed directly from Neustria, without a mayor of the palace of their own. Queen Nanthild, Dagobert's widow and regent for her son Clovis II, nevertheless

appointed Flaochad mayor of the palace of Burgundy in 642. According to the traditional account, Flaochad saw Vulbas as a rival: the patrician's standing among the Burgundian nobles overshadowed him. He had him murdered that same year.

Tradition reports that Flaochad died in turn a few days later, in great suffering, and people of the time saw in it a judgment of God. Vulbas was then regarded as a martyr, not because he died confessing the faith before persecutors, but because he fell victim to the injustice and jealousy of the powerful. This form of holiness is found in other figures of the period, such as Saint Leger, bishop of Autun, a victim a few decades later of the mayor of the palace Ebroin.

The tomb at Saint-Vulbas

The monks of the monastery of Condat, today the abbey of Saint-Claude in the Jura, are said to have honored their benefactor by moving his body to a church in the Bugey, on the banks of the Rhône. The village took the saint's name: Saint-Vulbas, also found as Saint Villebaud or Saint Bourbas. The church, mentioned as early as the 9th century, still houses a white marble sarcophagus from the Merovingian period, known as the sarcophagus of Saint Vulbas, listed as a historic object since 1920. The villagers are still called Villibadois today.

Cult and memory

Saint Vulbas is celebrated on May 10. His memory has been kept above all in the Bugey, where the Church of Belley preserved the remembrance of its saints. His cult has remained local and discreet. He has no fixed iconography: when he is depicted, it is as a nobleman or a man at arms, in the manner of the lay saints of the early Middle Ages. Yet his tomb, his name given to a village and the memory kept in the Bugey are enough to show that a man of power could be recognized as a just man.

What can we learn from Saint Vulbas?

Saint Vulbas reminds us that one can serve God in public responsibilities. A soldier, then a high dignitary, he kept, according to tradition, the esteem of those he governed, and he paid with his life for refusing to be a tool of court rivalries. We can pray to him for those who hold authority, for victims of jealousy or unjust violence, and for all who try to remain upright in a world of power.

Where to pray to Saint Vulbas

- **Saint-Vulbas** (Ain): the village church, where his Merovingian sarcophagus is kept.
- **Saint-Claude** (Jura): the former abbey of Condat, whose monks had his body moved, according to tradition.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Vulbas for Justice and for Those Who Govern

Saint Vulbas, a Burgundian nobleman of the 7th century, served the Frankish kings before being murdered out of jealousy in 642. Tradition honored him as a martyr for justice, and his sarcophagus still rests in the church of Saint-Vulbas, in the Ain. Prayer composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. It is not an official liturgical text. It entrusts to him those who hold authority and those who suffer injustice.

Prayer to Saint Vulbas

Saint Vulbas,
you served your king and your country
with courage and loyalty;
teach me to fulfill my duties
with uprightness and without seeking my own glory.

You were esteemed by those you governed,
and the jealousy of the powerful cost you your life.
Keep me from the envy that divides and kills,
and help me rejoice in the good of others.

Watch over those who hold authority,
that they may serve justice and the common good.
Support those who suffer injustice,
and obtain for them peace and the strength to forgive.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

When to pray to Saint Vulbas

- On his feast day, May 10.
- For public officials, elected leaders and soldiers.
- When you are the victim of injustice, rivalry or slander.
- When jealousy takes hold of your heart or of those around you.
- For the people of the Ain and the Bugey.

An invocation for justice

> *Lord, you who love right and justice,*
> *make our hearts and our decisions upright.*
> *Saint Vulbas, pray for us. Amen.*

To prepare for his feast, you can pray the novena to Saint Vulbas from May 2 to May 10, and discover the life of Saint Vulbas.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Vulbas

This novena is an original composition inspired by the life of Saint Vulbas, a Burgundian nobleman murdered in 642 and honored as a martyr for justice. Novena composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. It is not an official liturgical text. To finish it on his feast day, May 10, begin on May 2. 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 Vulbas, pray for us." The act suggested each day helps you live the novena concretely. The details of his life come from the local tradition of the Bugey; ancient sources are scarce.

Day 1: A family and a land

Vulbas was born into a noble family of Burgundy. From his parents he received a rank, duties and a land to serve. Each of us also receives an inheritance to make fruitful.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for what I have received from my family and my country. Teach me to make it grow for the good of all.

Act of the day: Thank a parent or an elder for what they have handed on to you.

Day 2: Serving with loyalty

In the service of Dagobert I, Vulbas proved a brave and faithful officer. Loyalty to those we serve is a form of charity.

Prayer: Lord, make me faithful in my work and in my commitments, even when no one sees me.

Act of the day: Carefully complete a task you have been putting off.

Day 3: Courage in trials

Tradition entrusts him with leading a difficult expedition against the Gascons. Courage is not the absence of fear, but the decision to move forward despite it.

Prayer: Lord, give me the courage to face what frightens me, leaning on you.

Act of the day: Take today a step that fear had made you postpone.

Day 4: Authority as service

As patrician, Vulbas held great power in Burgundy. Tradition remembers that he was respected by the nobles of his region. Power received from God is meant for service.

Prayer: Lord, bless those who govern us. Give them a just heart and care for the weakest.

Act of the day: Pray by name for a leader of your town, your country or your Church.

Day 5: The poison of jealousy

Flaochad, appointed mayor of the palace, could not bear Vulbas's influence. Jealousy, when allowed to grow, can lead to murder, as with Cain.

Prayer: Lord, heal me of all jealousy. Teach me to rejoice in the gifts you give to others.

Act of the day: Say a sincere word of encouragement to someone whose success weighs on you.

Day 6: Victim of injustice

In 642, Vulbas was murdered. He did not seek death, but he received it for remaining himself. Christ too was handed over out of jealousy.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, unjustly handed over, be close to all who suffer injustice today.

Act of the day: Support, with a prayer or a deed, someone who has been treated unjustly.

Day 7: The judgment of God

Tradition reports that Flaochad died soon afterwards. People of that time saw in it the hand of God. We know that God alone judges, and that he desires the conversion of the sinner.

Prayer: Lord, I entrust to you those who have wronged me. Grant them conversion, and grant me to forgive.

Act of the day: Pray for someone against whom you hold a grudge.

Day 8: An honored tomb

The monks of Condat had his body moved to the church that would become Saint-Vulbas. His sarcophagus is still there. The memory of the just crosses the centuries.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for the saints who have marked our villages. Keep alive in our parishes the memory of those who served you.

Act of the day: Visit a church near your home and pray there for a few minutes.

Day 9: The crown of the just

Vulbas was honored as a martyr for justice. "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

Prayer: Lord, make me a worker for justice and peace. Through the intercession of Saint Vulbas, grant me the grace I ask of you in this novena, if it is your will.

Act of the day: Attend Mass if possible, or read the Beatitudes again (Matthew 5:1-12).

Closing prayer

> *Saint Vulbas,*
> *loyal servant and just man,*
> *you fell victim to the jealousy of the powerful.*
> *Present to the Lord the intention I have entrusted to you.*
> *Keep me upright in my duties,*
> *free from envy and quick to forgive.*
> *Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

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

PILGRIMAGE

Church of Saint-Vulbas

The church of Saint-Vulbas stands in the department of the Ain, in the plain of the Ain, on the right bank of the Rhône, about forty kilometers northeast of Lyon. The whole village bears the name of the saint who rests there: Vulbas, or Villebaud, a Burgundian nobleman murdered in 642 and honored as a martyr for justice. The church keeps his sarcophagus, a rare witness of the Merovingian age.

A church born around a tomb

According to the tradition recorded by Father Jean-Irénée Depéry in the 19th century, it was the monks of the monastery of Condat, today Saint-Claude in the Jura, who had the body of Vulbas moved to the church of this place, in gratitude for the kindness they had received from him. The sanctuary is mentioned as early as the 9th century. Little by little, the saint's name was given to the village, which old documents also call Saint Villebaud or Saint Bourbas. The inhabitants are still called Villibadois.

What you can see

The main treasure of the church is the sarcophagus known as that of Saint Vulbas, carved in white marble and dated to the Merovingian period. It has been listed as a historic object since 1920. Before this stone more than thirteen centuries old, the visitor is as close as possible to the saint and to his age, that of kings Dagobert I and Clovis II.

Within the village territory there is also the Romanesque chapel of Marcilleux, from the 12th century, listed as a historic monument. The contrast with the nearby industrial landscape is striking: the town hosts a large business park and

a nuclear power plant. The tomb of a saint at the heart of this modern landscape reminds us that faith took root here long before our own time.

Praying there

Before coming, you can read the life of Saint Vulbas. Before his sarcophagus, entrust to him those who hold authority, victims of injustice and those consumed by jealousy, then say the prayer to Saint Vulbas. May 10, his feast day, is a fitting moment for this visit. These suggestions are offered by Saintspedia.

Practical information

Saint-Vulbas lies about 20 kilometers from Ambérieu-en-Bugey and 18 kilometers from Meximieux, and is reached by car. The church is a place of worship: modest dress and silence are requested. Opening hours and Mass times may vary: check with the parish or the town hall before your visit.

Credits and sources

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