

BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Waltrude of Mons

Life, prayer and novena

Feast day: April 9

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IN BRIEF

Saint Waltrude of Mons

Frankish noblewoman, wife and mother of saints, nun and foundress of the community from which the city of Mons grew.

Feast day	April 9
Born	c. 612, Cousolre, Hainaut (according to tradition)
Died	April 9, c. 688, Mons, Hainaut, Belgium
Canonized	pre-congregation (relics solemnly elevated in 1039)
Era	7th century
Patron saint of	Mons, Herentals, families

In this booklet

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Credits and sources

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LIFE

Saint Waltrude of Mons

Saint Waltrude, known in French as Sainte Waudru and in Latin as *Waldetrudis*, was a Frankish noblewoman of the 7th century: a wife and the mother of saints, who later became a nun and founded the community around which the city of Mons, in Belgium, grew up. She died around 688 and is the patron saint of Mons and of Herentals. Every year, on Trinity Sunday, her reliquary is carried through Mons on the Golden Chariot during the Ducasse festival. Her feast day is April 9.

Who was Saint Waltrude?

Waltrude belonged to one of the great families of the Merovingian nobility that gave the Church founders of monasteries and many saints. Her father Walbert and her mother Bertilia are themselves honored as saints, and her sister is *Saint Aldegund*, foundress of Maubeuge. Her husband, Madelgarius, became a monk under the name of *Saint Vincent* and founded the abbey of Soignies. All four of their children are venerated as saints.

What we know about her comes mainly from a Latin *Life* written around the 9th century, later enriched by many traditions. Today's historians carefully distinguish the historical figure, an aristocrat who became an abbess in Hainaut, from legendary embellishments. But the essentials are solid: a married woman and mother who later chose consecrated life, and whose foundation gave birth to a city.



Saint Waltrude, patron saint of Mons.

Key dates

- **Around 612**: Born, according to tradition at Cousolre in Hainaut, into a family of the high Frankish aristocracy.
- **Around 630**: Marries Madelgarius, a Frankish lord of Hainaut.
- **630s-650s**: Birth of their four children, Landry, Dentlin, Aldetrude and Madelberte.
- **Around 650**: Madelgarius withdraws to the abbey of Hautmont under the name Vincent; Waltrude consecrates herself to God.
- **After 650**: On the advice of Saint Ghislain, she settles on the hill of Mons and founds a religious community there.
- **April 9, around 688**: Dies at Mons, where she is buried.
- **1039**: Solemn elevation of her relics, which officially establishes her cult.

- **1450**: Construction of the Collegiate Church of Saint Waltrude in Mons begins.

Wife and mother

Waltrude married Madelgarius, a Frankish lord close to the royal court. The couple lived as Christians, attentive to the poor, and raised their children in the faith. Theirs is one of the most remarkable families in the history of the saints. *Landry* became a bishop and abbot of Soignies; *Dentlin* died as a child; *Aldetrude* and *Madelberte* were, one after the other, abbesses of Maubeuge, alongside their aunt Aldegund. Artists often show Waltrude sheltering her two daughters under her cloak.

Choosing consecrated life

Once their children were raised, the couple decided by mutual agreement to give themselves entirely to God. Madelgarius withdrew to the abbey of Hautmont, which he had founded, and later founded the abbey of Soignies. After a time of discernment, Waltrude left behind her life as a great lady. According to her *Life*, she faced trials, criticism and temptations to turn back, but she persevered.

Guided by Saint Ghislain, a monk who lived nearby, she settled on a hill overlooking the Haine valley, the *Castrilocus*, and had a modest house and an oratory built there. Other women joined her. She lived there in prayer and poverty, serving the poor and the sick.

The mother of Mons

Waltrude died around 688, on April 9 according to tradition. The people at once venerated her as a saint. Her cousin Aye succeeded her. The community became an abbey, then, around the 12th century, a chapter of noble canonesses. Around the monastery grew the town of Mons, which became the

capital of the County of Hainaut. In 1450 the canonesses began building the present collegiate church, one of the finest examples of Brabantine Gothic architecture.

The Ducasse and the Golden Chariot

Devotion to Saint Waltrude is inseparable from the Ducasse of Mons, celebrated every year on the weekend of Trinity Sunday. On Saturday evening her reliquary is lowered in a solemn ceremony inside the collegiate church. On Sunday morning it is placed on the *Car d'Or*, a gilded 18th-century chariot, and carried through the city in procession, accompanied by many groups in costume.

On the way back, the chariot must climb the cobbled slope leading to the church, pushed by the crowd. According to popular tradition, if it failed to make it in a single push, misfortune would fall on the city. In the afternoon comes the Lumeçon, the combat in which Saint George faces the dragon. These festivities belong to the processional giants and dragons recognized by UNESCO as Intangible Cultural Heritage.



The Golden Chariot carries the reliquary of Saint Waltrude during the Ducasse of Mons.

Why is Saint Waltrude the patron saint of Mons and of families?

Mons was born around her monastery, so the city has always seen her as its mother and protector. Herentals, in the province of Antwerp, also took her as patron. Because she lived holiness as a wife, a mother and then a consecrated woman, and because her husband, children, parents and sister are all honored as saints, she is invoked for couples and families, for mothers and for anyone going through a major change in life.

Symbols and how to recognize Saint Waltrude in art

- She is usually shown as an abbess, sometimes crowned, holding a book.
- She often shelters her two daughters, Aldetrude and Madelberte, under her cloak.

- She is sometimes depicted with her husband, Saint Vincent, and their four children as a family of saints.

What can we learn from Saint Waltrude?

Waltrude shows that holiness can be lived at every stage of life: as a wife, as a mother, and then in consecrated life. Her whole family became a family of saints. Her foundation gave birth to a city that, thirteen centuries later, still carries its patron through the streets. You can pray to her for couples and families, for mothers, for those facing a change in life, and for the city of Mons and the region of Hainaut.

To pray with her, use the Prayer to Saint Waltrude or follow the Novena to Saint Waltrude, prayed from April 1 to her feast on April 9.

Where to pray to Saint Waltrude

- **Mons, Belgium**: the Collegiate Church of Saint Waltrude (Collégiale Sainte-Waudru), which keeps her reliquary and the reliquary of her head.
- **Herentals, Belgium** (province of Antwerp): the great church of Saint Waltrude, of which she is patron.
- **Maubeuge, France**: the town of her sister Saint Aldegund and of her daughters.
- **Soignies, Belgium**: the collegiate church of Saint Vincent, founded by her husband.
- **Hautmont, France**: the site of the abbey where Saint Vincent withdrew.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Waltrude for Families

Saint Waltrude (Sainte Waudru), patron saint of Mons in Belgium, was a wife, the mother of four children honored as saints, and later a nun and foundress. She is invoked for families, for mothers, for those going through a change in life and for the city of Mons. This page offers an original prayer by Saintspedia and a short invocation for families.

Prayer to Saint Waltrude for Families

Saint Waltrude, faithful wife and attentive mother,
you raised your children in the love of God:
watch over our families.
Keep married couples faithful, parents patient,
and children strong in faith.

At every stage of your life you answered the Lord's call.
Help me to recognize his will in the changes I am living through,
and to move forward without fear.

You left honors behind to serve the poor on the hill of Mons:
teach me simplicity and practical charity.

Mother of the city of Mons, protect its people,
the region of Hainaut and all who call upon you.
I entrust to you my intention: (name it in silence).

Through your intercession, may the Lord make our homes
places of peace, prayer and welcome.
Amen.

This prayer is an original text by Saintspedia, free to use for personal and community prayer.

Invocation for families

> *Saint Waltrude, whose husband, children, parents and sister all became saints, pray for our family. May we help one another on the way to God. Amen.*

(Original text by Saintspedia.)

Intentions to entrust to Saint Waltrude

- Couples and families, especially those going through difficulties.
- Mothers, and women who are expecting a child.
- Widows, and people beginning a new stage of life.
- The city of Mons, Herentals and the region of Hainaut.

When to pray this prayer

Saint Waltrude's feast day is April 9. In Mons, devotion to her reaches its high point at the Ducasse, on the weekend of Trinity Sunday, when her reliquary is carried through the city on the Golden Chariot. You can also pray it at a wedding anniversary, a birth, a bereavement or any turning point in family life. For a longer time of prayer, follow the Novena to Saint Waltrude, and read the life of Saint Waltrude.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Waltrude

This novena is an original composition by Saintspedia, inspired by the life of Saint Waltrude (Sainte Waudru), wife, mother and foundress of Mons. It is not an official liturgical text. To end on her feast day, April 9, begin on April 1. In Mons, many people also pray it before the Ducasse, finishing on the eve of Trinity Sunday. Each day follows a stage of her life, from her childhood in a Christian family to the foundation that gave birth to a city.

How to pray this novena

Each day, entrust your intention to God, read the meditation, say the prayer of the day, then an Our Father and a Hail Mary. The small act suggested for the day helps carry the prayer into daily life, often with your family. If you miss a day, simply pick up where you left off and finish the nine days.

Opening prayer for each day

> *Lord God, you called Saint Waltrude to serve you as a wife, as a mother and as a consecrated woman. As I begin this day of the novena, I place before you my family, my home and the intention I carry. Through her prayers, help me to listen to your voice and to answer it with a generous heart. Amen.*

Day 1: A believing family

Waltrude grew up with Christian parents, Walbert and Bertilia, who are also honored as saints. Faith is passed on first by the example of those who love us. Before she ever founded anything, she received the Gospel at home.

Prayer: Lord, I thank you for those who handed on the faith to me. Through the prayers of Saint Waltrude, bless them and reward them. Amen.

Today: Pray for your parents, living or deceased, by name.

Day 2: Married love

Waltrude and Madelgarius lived their marriage as a road to God. Their love opened outward, toward the poor and toward their children. Their home was a place where faith was lived, not only spoken.

Prayer: Lord, bless married couples, and keep them in faithfulness and tenderness. Saint Waltrude, pray for every husband and wife. Amen.

Today: Make a thoughtful gesture toward your spouse or someone close to you.

Day 3: Raising children

All four of Waltrude's children became saints. She sowed the love of God in them with patience, day after day, through ordinary words and examples.

Prayer: Lord, help parents in their task, and watch over the children of the world. Saint Waltrude, pray for the young people entrusted to us. Amen.

Today: Bless a child, or pray for a child in your care.

Day 4: Grief and separation

Waltrude lost her young son Dentlin, and later saw her husband leave for the monastery. She entrusted her losses and separations to God, and did not let sorrow close her heart.

Prayer: Lord, comfort those who mourn a child or a loved one. Saint Waltrude, stay close to grieving parents. Amen.

Today: Visit or call someone who is grieving.

Day 5: Leaving everything for God

Once her children were raised, Waltrude left her life as a great lady to live in poverty. There is a time for every call, and she recognized the new season God was opening for her.

Prayer: Lord, make me free with regard to possessions and honors. Through Saint Waltrude's prayers, help me to hold lightly what passes away. Amen.

Today: Give an object or some money to a charity that serves the poor.

Day 6: Persevering in trials

Her *Life* tells of the criticism and temptations that assailed her at the beginning of her consecrated life. She held firm, supported by prayer.

Prayer: Lord, give me perseverance when I am tempted to give up. Saint Waltrude, help me to stay faithful to what I have promised. Amen.

Today: Take up again a good resolution you had abandoned.

Day 7: Accepting counsel

Waltrude listened to the advice of Saint Ghislain. Saints do not walk alone: they accept being guided, and they look for wise companions on the road.

Prayer: Holy Spirit, place on my path people who can help me discern your will. Saint Waltrude, pray for all who must make an important decision. Amen.

Today: Ask a trusted person for advice about a decision you face.

Day 8: Serving the poor

On the hill of Mons, Waltrude welcomed the poor and the sick. Her prayer continued in charity, and her small community became a place of welcome.

Prayer: Lord, open my eyes and my hands to the poor around me. Saint Waltrude, teach me practical love. Amen.

Today: Do a service for someone who is lonely or sick.

Day 9: A city entrusted to God

From Waltrude's small community grew the city of Mons, which still carries her in procession. A life given to God bears fruit far beyond itself, for generations.

Prayer: Lord, at the end of this novena, I place my intention in your hands. Through the intercession of Saint Waltrude, bless my family, my city and all those I love. Amen.

Today: Pray together as a family, or light a candle for families in difficulty.

Closing prayer

Saint Waltrude, wife, mother and servant of God,
I entrust to you the intention of these nine days.
Pray for families, for mothers,
for those whose lives are changing,
and for the city of Mons.
Obtain for us the grace to answer the Lord's call
at every stage of our lives.
Amen.

To go further, read the life of Saint Waltrude and pray the Prayer to Saint Waltrude.

Credits and sources

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