

BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Wendelin

Life, prayer and novena

Feast day: October 20

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IN BRIEF

Saint Wendelin

Sixth-century hermit and shepherd from Ireland or Scotland, venerated at St. Wendel, patron saint of farmers, shepherds and livestock.

Feast day	October 20, October 21 (some calendars)
Born	c. 554, Ireland or Scotland (according to tradition)
Died	c. 617, St. Wendel, Saarland, Germany
Canonized	Pre-congregation (immemorial cult)
Era	7th century
Patron saint of	shepherds, farmers, livestock and domestic animals, St. Wendel

In this booklet

Life

Prayer to Saint Wendelin, Patron of Farmers

Novena to Saint Wendelin

Credits and sources

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LIFE

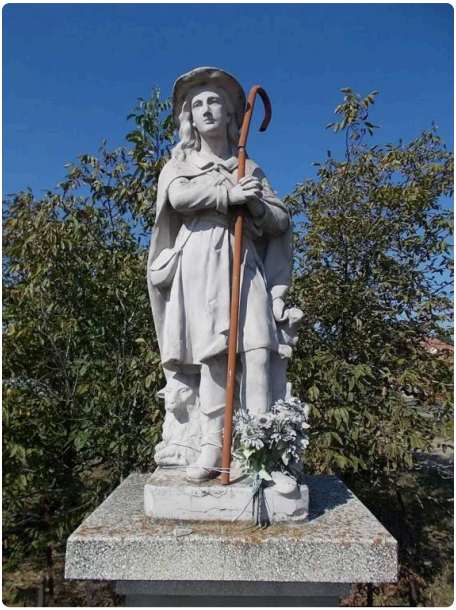
Saint Wendelin

Saint Wendelin (Latin *Wendelinus*) was a hermit and shepherd of the sixth and early seventh centuries who, according to tradition, came from Ireland or Scotland to live in poverty near Trier, in present-day Germany. His tomb gave birth to the town of St. Wendel, in the Saarland, where his basilica still draws pilgrims. Patron saint of shepherds, farmers and livestock, he is very popular in Germany, Alsace, Lorraine and Switzerland. His feast day is October 20, especially in the diocese of Trier; some calendars keep it on October 21.

Who was Saint Wendelin?

Wendelin is one of those saints whom Christian people adopted long before historians took an interest in them. His cult is ancient: the place that held his tomb took his name in the Middle Ages, and people came from far away to pray there for their herds and harvests.

His *Life*, however, was only written down late, at the end of the Middle Ages, several centuries after his death. It gathers local traditions and edifying stories whose details cannot be verified. This page presents Wendelin as tradition has handed him down, noting what remains uncertain.



Saint Wendelin as a shepherd, chapel statue.

Key dates in the life of Saint Wendelin

- **c. 554**: Born, according to tradition, into a noble or even royal family of Ireland or Scotland.
- **c. 577**: After years of study, he sets out on pilgrimage and goes to Rome, according to his *Life*.
- **Late 6th century**: He settles in the region of Trier, lives as a beggar, then becomes a shepherd in the service of a lord.
- **c. 600**: He lives as a hermit in a valley of the Westrich, on the site of present-day St. Wendel.
- **Early 7th century**: According to a late tradition, he becomes abbot of the monastery of Tholey.
- **c. 617**: Dies and is buried near his hermitage.

- **14th century**: Archbishop Baldwin of Luxembourg promotes the building of a great church over his tomb, today's basilica.

The prince who chose poverty

According to his legend, Wendelin was the son of a king. He received a solid education in a monastic school but gave up his inheritance to follow the poor Christ. He left his homeland and set out as a pilgrim for the continent, like so many Irish monks of his time, following the example of Saint Columbanus or Saint Fridolin. Tradition gives him a sister, Saint Oranna, honored in Lorraine.

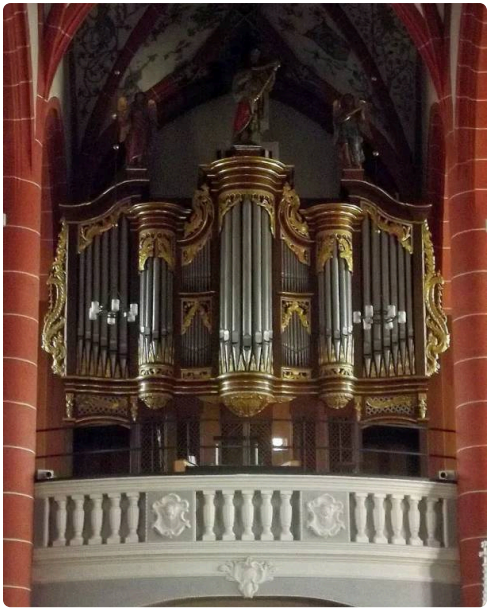
After a stay in Rome, he arrived in the region of Trier, the former imperial capital, and at first lived by begging. One day a lord rebuked him for begging when he was young and strong, and advised him to earn his bread. Wendelin humbly accepted the lesson and entered his service.

God's shepherd

He first tended pigs, then cattle and sheep. Under his care the herds prospered. But he led them far into the hills so that he could pray in solitude, and jealous servants denounced him.

The legend says that his master rode out to check on him and found Wendelin already home with his animals, although he was on foot and had been very far away. It also tells that he made a spring gush out to water the flock, and that the animals in his care never fell sick. Moved, the lord was converted and gave him a secluded place to live as a hermit.

This is the image that has crossed the centuries: Wendelin, the shepherd praying among his animals, with his staff, his bag and sometimes, at his feet, the crown he renounced.



The Basilica of Saint Wendelin in St. Wendel, Saarland.

Hermit, then abbot of Tholey?

A later tradition says that the bishop of Trier, or the monks themselves, came to find Wendelin in his solitude to entrust him with the nearby abbey of Tholey. He is said to have accepted despite his humility and governed the monastery for about twenty years. Historians remain cautious on this point, which early sources do not confirm. He died around 617, according to the traditional date.

Legend tells that after his death his body was found several times outside its tomb. The monks then placed it on a cart drawn by oxen left to wander freely, and the oxen stopped near his former hermitage. There he was buried, and there the town of St. Wendel was born.

Why is Saint Wendelin the patron saint of farmers and shepherds?

Wendelin's whole legend is that of a shepherd: he tended pigs, cattle and sheep, watered his flock from a spring and kept his animals healthy. Country people naturally turned to him. He is invoked for herds, against livestock epidemics and for harvests, and animals are blessed in his name.

His cult spread throughout the Rhine valley, Lorraine and Alsace, where dozens of churches and chapels are dedicated to him, and into Switzerland and Austria. Nineteenth-century emigrants from the Rhineland carried his devotion to the United States, where several parishes bear his name. The family names Wendel and Wendling come from his.

Symbols and how to recognize Saint Wendelin in art

- **The shepherd's staff and bag**: his most common attributes.
- **Sheep, cattle or pigs**: the animals he tended, often at his feet.
- **A crown at his feet**: the royal inheritance he gave up.
- **A shepherd's hat**: worn in some statues, such as the one in the chapel of Bremenried in Bavaria.
- **Kneeling in prayer while angels guard his flock**: a scene found in some paintings.

The cult at St. Wendel

In the fourteenth century, Archbishop Baldwin of Luxembourg of Trier took an interest in the site and promoted the building of a great Gothic church over the saint's tomb, the future basilica. In the fifteenth century, Cardinal Nicholas of Cusa, parish priest of the town, contributed to its embellishment. The

pilgrimage became one of the most frequented in the region. The relics are displayed during great celebrations, as in 2017 for the 1400th anniversary of his death.

Wendelin is the saint of humble work and of prayer in the heart of daily life. He gave up a crown to keep sheep and made that work a place of encounter with God. You can pray with him using the prayer to Saint Wendelin or the novena to Saint Wendelin, from October 12 to his feast on October 20.

Where to pray to Saint Wendelin

- **St. Wendel** (Saarland, Germany): the Basilica of Saint Wendelin, which holds his tomb, and the Wendelin chapel with its spring, outside the town.
- **Tholey** (Saarland): the Benedictine abbey of Saint Maurice, where tradition makes him abbot.
- **Alsace** (France): many chapels, such as at Niedermorschwihr, where a procession is held in his honor, or at Hohengœft, where animals are blessed.
- **Sourbrodt** (Belgium): the church of Saint Wendelin.
- **United States**: several parishes founded by German immigrants bear his name.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Wendelin, Patron of Farmers

For centuries Saint Wendelin has been invoked in Germany, Alsace, Lorraine and Switzerland for herds, harvests and all who work the land. Many popular prayers are addressed to him in the countryside, in various forms. Saintspedia offers here an original prayer, followed by a blessing for animals and for the work of the fields.

Prayer to Saint Wendelin

Saint Wendelin, you left a crown to follow the poor Christ. Teach me not to seek honors, but to love simplicity.

You agreed to work with your hands when you were asked. Give me the humility to receive advice and the courage for everyday work.

You prayed among your flocks, in the silence of the hills. Help me find God in the midst of my tasks, in the small things of each day.

Protect farmers, ranchers and shepherds. Watch over their animals and keep sickness far from them; bless the fields, the pastures and the harvests. Support those who are going through hard times in their work, and give them hope.

You came from far away, a pilgrim of God, and found a homeland in the service of others: watch over all who have left their own country. I entrust to you my intention: (name it in silence). Amen.

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

Blessing for animals and fields

> *Lord, creator of all life, through the intercession of Saint Wendelin, bless the animals that share our lives and our work. Keep them healthy, and help us treat them with respect, as creatures you entrust to us. Bless also the earth, the rain and the sun, the work of sowing and harvest, so that all may have bread. Amen.*

Original prayer by Saintspedia.

When to pray this prayer

Saint Wendelin is celebrated on October 20, especially at St. Wendel and in the diocese of Trier; some calendars keep his memory on October 21. You can pray to him when sickness strikes a herd, before sowing or harvest, at a blessing of animals, or for a farmer going through a difficult time.

For a longer time of prayer, follow the novena to Saint Wendelin, and read the life of Saint Wendelin.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Wendelin

This novena is an original composition by Saintspedia, inspired by the life and legend of Saint Wendelin, hermit and shepherd, patron of farmers and livestock. It is not an official liturgical text. To end on his feast day, October 20, begin on October 12. It can also be prayed at any time for farmers, for sick animals or for a good harvest.

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 suggested act helps you carry the prayer through the day. Finish with the closing prayer. Farm families can pray it together in the evening, after the day's work.

Day 1: Giving up a crown

According to his legend, Wendelin was the son of a king. He left his inheritance to follow the poor Christ. The true treasure is not what we own, but the One we love. Today, look honestly at what you hold on to most tightly, and offer it to God.

Prayer: Lord, free my heart from what weighs it down, and be my only treasure. Amen.

Today: Give an object or a sum of money to someone in need.

Day 2: Setting out as a pilgrim

Wendelin left his homeland to live as a stranger, like the Irish monks of his time. A Christian knows that he or she is on the way to the homeland of heaven. Every departure, chosen or endured, can become a step toward God.

Prayer: Lord, keep me walking toward you, and teach me to welcome the stranger. Amen.

Today: Pray for migrants, or greet kindly someone who has come from elsewhere.

Day 3: Accepting a lesson

When a lord rebuked him for begging while young and strong, Wendelin did not take offense: he listened and went to work. Humility knows how to receive a true word. Pride closes the door to growth; a listening heart lets God correct and guide it.

Prayer: Lord, give me a teachable heart, able to hear criticism without pride. Amen.

Today: Accept a remark someone makes to you without justifying yourself.

Day 4: Humble work

Wendelin tended pigs, then cattle and sheep. No work is unworthy when it is done for God and for others. Today, think of the people whose hidden labor feeds you: those who raise animals, plow fields and bring in the harvest.

Prayer: Lord, I offer you my work today, even the humblest; may it serve your glory. Amen.

Today: Do a thankless task with care, without expecting recognition.

Day 5: Praying among the flocks

Wendelin led his animals far into the hills to pray in peace. God lets himself be found in nature, in silence and in daily work. Prayer does not always need words: a quiet attention to God's presence is already prayer.

Prayer: Lord, teach me to meet you in the midst of my occupations. Amen.

Today: Spend ten minutes in silence outdoors, or in front of an open window.



The Wendelin chapel and its spring, near St. Wendel.

Day 6: The spring for the flock

The legend says Wendelin made a spring gush out to water his animals. God cares for all his creation and entrusts it to our keeping. Water, soil and animals are gifts, not mere resources.

Prayer: Lord, teach me to respect the earth, the water and the animals you entrust to us. Amen.

Today: Do something concrete for creation: save water, care for an animal, pick up litter.

Day 7: The witness who converts

Through his faithfulness and goodness, Wendelin brought his master to faith. The way we work and live can be a stronger witness than any speech. Patience, honesty and kindness in ordinary tasks often open hearts that arguments cannot reach.

Prayer: Lord, may my life speak of you to those around me. Amen.

Today: Do a discreet favor for a coworker or a neighbor.

Day 8: Serving without seeking it

According to tradition, Wendelin was sought out in his solitude and entrusted with an abbey. He accepted out of obedience, not ambition. Responsibilities are received as a service. Whatever authority we hold, at home, at work or in the Church, is given to us for the good of others.

Prayer: Lord, help those who hold authority to serve with humility, and help me fulfill my own responsibilities faithfully. Amen.

Today: Pray for the leaders of your country, your town or your Church.

Day 9: A saint for those who work the land

For centuries farmers have entrusted their animals and their harvests to Wendelin. Their work is hard and often fragile, but God does not forget them. On his feast day, bring your intention to him one last time.

Prayer: Lord, at the end of this novena I place my intention in your hands. Through the intercession of Saint Wendelin, bless farmers and ranchers, protect their herds, grant them abundant harvests and hope in their trials. Amen.

Today: Buy food from a local farmer, or pray for a farmer you know.

Closing prayer

Saint Wendelin, shepherd of God, I entrust to you the intention of these nine days. Pray for farmers, ranchers and shepherds, for animals and for the land. Obtain for us a simple heart, faithful work and constant prayer, so that one day we may join the Good Shepherd in his Kingdom. Amen.

To go further, read the life of Saint Wendelin and the prayer to Saint Wendelin.

Credits and sources

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