BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Widrad

Life, prayer, novena and pilgrimage

Feast day: October 3

Saintspedia · saintspedia.com

IN BRIEF

Saint Widrad

8th-century Burgundian lord, founder and abbot of the Benedictine abbey of Flavigny, died 747.

Feast day	October 3
Born	date unknown, Burgundy
Died	October 3, 747, away from the abbey of Flavigny (place not recorded)
Canonized	immemorial cult (proper cult of the abbey of Flavigny)
Era	8th century
Patron saint of	abbey of Flavigny

In this booklet

Life

Prayer to Saint Widrad for the Right Use of Possessions and for Families

Novena to Saint Widrad, Founder of Flavigny

Abbey of Saint-Pierre de Flavigny

Credits and sources

Booklet offered by Saintspedia, the directory of Catholic saints: lives of the saints, prayers, novenas and places of pilgrimage, at saintspedia.com. Texts written by Saintspedia, except traditional prayers marked as such. Original prayers and novenas are not official liturgical texts. Free booklet, to print and share for personal, family or parish use; please do not sell it.

LIFE

Saint Widrad

Saint Widrad (also called Waré, Guiré or Wideradus) was a powerful Burgundian lord of the 8th century who founded the Benedictine abbey of Flavigny, in Burgundy, in 719, and later became its abbot. He died on October 3, 747 and was buried in his abbey, where the monks honored him as a saint. His feast day is October 3.

Who was Saint Widrad?

Widrad is known above all through his wills, legal documents that are rare and precious for the Merovingian period, in which he gives his lands to monasteries. They reveal a great landowner of Burgundy, the son of a certain Corbo, who devoted his fortune to founding and endowing houses of prayer. Beyond that, almost nothing is known of his personal life. Historians even debate his status: some regard him as a lay abbot, that is, a lord administering the property of a monastery, others, like the Benedictine scholar Mabillon, as a true regular abbot. What is certain is that the monks of Flavigny venerated him as their holy founder and celebrated his feast on the day of his death.

Key dates in the life of Widrad

- **Date unknown**: Born into a powerful Burgundian family; he is the son of Corbo.
- **719**: At his own expense, he founds the monastery of Flavigny, which he entrusts to Abbot Magnoald and his monks.
- **January 18, 722**: At Semur-en-Auxois, he draws up a first will in favor of his foundations.
- **722**: According to tradition, he founds the abbey of Notre-Dame at Faverney for one of his sisters; another foundation, at Saulieu, is intended

for his sister Decia.

- **745**: On the death of Abbot Magnoald, he becomes abbot of Flavigny; the foundation charter is approved at the council of Autun.
- **746 or 747**: He draws up a second will at Autun.
- **October 3, 747**: He dies away from the abbey; his body is brought back to Flavigny and buried there.
- **1379**: A document recalls that October 3 is the feast of the holy founder of Flavigny.

A lord who gave his property to God

At the beginning of the 8th century, Frankish Gaul saw a flowering of monastic foundations. By giving land to monks, the great families secured prayer for their dead and the growth of Christian life in the countryside. Widrad took part in this movement with remarkable generosity. In his will, he declares that he built a monastery "with his own funds and at his own expense" at the place called Flavigny, and handed it over according to the rule to Abbot Magnoald and his monks, for them to possess forever. The monks of Flavigny followed the Rule of Saint Benedict.

The same will shows the extent of his gifts. Widrad also presents himself as abbot of the monastery of Saint Reine at Alise, the place where the young Burgundian saint was martyred, and leaves it many estates, such as Chichée, Ancy-le-Franc, Ravières and Savoisy. He gave the basilica of Saint-Andoche at Saulieu lands in the Auxois, the Avallonnais and the Nivernais: in gratitude, the monks of Saulieu regarded him as their founder.

A caring brother

Tradition says that Widrad founded two monasteries for his sisters: Saint-Andoche at Saulieu for one of them, named Decia, and Notre-Dame at Faverney, in 722, for the other, whose name history has not kept. These

foundations say something about the man: his faith was not only a matter of property, but also of family. He wanted to offer his own a place where they could consecrate their lives to God.

The abbot of Flavigny

In 745, on the death of the first abbot, Magnoald, Widrad himself took charge of the abbey. That same year, the foundation charter of Flavigny was approved at the council of Autun. He drew up a second will at Autun, in 746 or 747. He died on October 3, 747, away from his monastery; his body was brought back to Flavigny and buried in the abbey he had founded.

Devotion and memory

The monks of Flavigny kept alive the memory of their founder. The old martyrology of the abbey records on October 3 the burial of "the blessed Widrard, abbot and founder of this place", and the calendar reported in the chronicle of Abbot Hugh of Flavigny names him "Saint Widrard, abbot of Flavigny". His office was celebrated as a feast of the abbey on the day of his death. In 1379, a document still obliged the abbot to give his monks a festive meal on October 3, the feast of their holy founder. The French calendar site Nominis also lists him on that date.

The abbey he founded went on to have a great history: in the 9th century it received the relics of Saint Reine, and Pope John VIII consecrated its church in 878. Sold during the Revolution, it now houses an aniseed sweet factory, but its Carolingian crypt can still be visited.

What can we learn from Saint Widrad?

Widrad left neither spiritual writings nor accounts of miracles. He left foundations. Rich and powerful, he understood that his property could serve something more lasting than his own glory: communities that would pray for

centuries. You can pray to him to learn the Christian use of money, for the benefactors of the Church, and for families who pass on the faith.

To pray with him, see the prayer to Saint Widrad and the novena to Saint Widrad.

Where to pray to Saint Widrad

- **Flavigny-sur-Ozerain** (Côte-d'Or): the crypt of the abbey of Saint-Pierre, which he founded and where he was buried.
- **Saulieu** (Côte-d'Or): the basilica of Saint-Andoche, whose monks regarded him as their founder.
- **Alise-Sainte-Reine** (Côte-d'Or): the site of the monastery of Saint Reine, which he endowed with his lands.
- **Faverney** (Haute-Saône): the former abbey of Notre-Dame, founded according to tradition for one of his sisters.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Widrad for the Right Use of Possessions and for Families

Saint Widrad, a Burgundian lord of the 8th century, gave his property to found the abbey of Flavigny and to endow other monasteries in Burgundy, before becoming its abbot; he died on October 3, 747. Prayer composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. It entrusts to him the right use of possessions, the benefactors of the Church and families.

Prayer to Saint Widrad

Saint Widrad,
you who owned great estates,
you understood that everything comes from God
and you gave them to those who pray to him.
Free my heart from attachment to riches
and teach me to share.

At Flavigny you built a house of prayer
and you watched over your sisters
by offering them a place to serve God.
Bless our families,
monasteries and those who support them.

You who ended your life among the monks,
faithful to the Rule of Saint Benedict,
help me to prefer nothing to the love of Christ.
Present my prayer to the Lord
and those I entrust to him.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

When to pray to Saint Widrad

- On his feast day, October 3.
- Before an important decision about money, an inheritance or a will.
- For the benefactors of churches, monasteries and charities.
- For brothers and sisters of the same family.
- For Benedictine monks and nuns.

A short invocation

> *Lord, may my possessions serve your glory and the good of my brothers and sisters.*
> *Saint Widrad, pray for us. Amen.*

To prepare for his feast, you can pray the novena to Saint Widrad from September 25 to October 3, and read the life of Saint Widrad.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Widrad, Founder of Flavigny

This novena is inspired by the life of Saint Widrad, a Burgundian lord who became founder and abbot of Flavigny in the 8th century. Novena composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. It is not an official liturgical text. To finish it on his feast day, October 3, begin on September 25. 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 Widrad, pray for us." The act of the day helps you live the novena concretely. What we know of Widrad comes mainly from his wills and from the documents of the abbey of Flavigny.

Day 1: Everything comes from God

Widrad was a great lord, rich in many estates. He recognized that his possessions were a gift from God, to be made fruitful for him.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for all I have received. Teach me to receive it as a gift.

Act of the day: List three gifts you have received from God and thank him for them.

Day 2: Building at his own expense

Widrad built Flavigny "with his own funds and at his own expense". He did not give from his surplus: he committed his property to God.

Prayer: Lord, give me a generous heart that does not bargain with you.

Act of the day: Make a gift to your parish or to a religious community.

Day 3: Entrusting one's work

Widrad handed his monastery over to Abbot Magnoald and his monks. A founder knows how to step back and trust others.

Prayer: Lord, teach me to trust and not to want to control everything.

Act of the day: Entrust a task to someone and let them do it.

Day 4: Caring for one's own

According to tradition, Widrad founded monasteries for his two sisters, at Saulieu and at Faverney. His faith also showed in his love for his family.

Prayer: Lord, bless my brothers and sisters, and keep our family united in your love.

Act of the day: Get in touch with a brother, a sister or a cousin.

Day 5: Honoring the martyrs

Widrad endowed the monastery of Saint Reine at Alise, where the young saint was martyred. He knew that the Church is built on the witness of the martyrs.

Prayer: Lord, give me the courage to bear witness to you, after the example of Saint Reine.

Act of the day: Pray for Christians who are persecuted today.

Day 6: Preparing for death

Through his wills, Widrad put his affairs in order before God. Thinking of one's death is not morbid: it is living in truth.

Prayer: Lord, help me to live each day as if I had to give you an account this evening.

Act of the day: Settle an unfinished matter, or ask someone's forgiveness.

Day 7: Becoming a monk

In 745, Widrad took charge of the abbey. The lord became the father of a community living under the Rule of Saint Benedict.

Prayer: Lord, may I prefer nothing to your love, and may I know how to serve those entrusted to me.

Act of the day: Pray one of the hours of the Divine Office, for example Vespers, with the Church.

Day 8: A house that lasts

The abbey of Flavigny prayed for more than a thousand years. What we give to God bears fruit far beyond our own lives.

Prayer: Lord, bless all who built our churches, and make fruitful what I do for you.

Act of the day: Pray for the departed benefactors of your parish.

Day 9: The return to Flavigny

Widrad died away from his abbey, on October 3, 747, but his body was brought back among his monks. The brothers honored him as their holy founder.

Prayer: Lord, gather us one day in your house. Through the intercession of Saint Widrad, grant me the grace I ask in this novena, if it is your will.

Act of the day: Attend Mass and pray for your departed.

Living the novena with Saint Widrad

Widrad left neither miracles nor speeches, but houses of prayer. During these nine days, you can carry the benefactors of the Church, families, monks and nuns, and all who must decide how to use their possessions. If you can, visit Flavigny-sur-Ozerain to pray in the crypt of his abbey.

Closing prayer

> *Saint Widrad,*
> *founder and father of Flavigny,*
> *you gave your possessions to God*
> *and built houses of prayer for him.*
> *Present to the Lord the intention I have entrusted to you.*
> *Teach me to share and to trust,*
> *and keep our families in the faith.*
> *Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

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

PILGRIMAGE

Abbey of Saint-Pierre de Flavigny

The abbey of Saint-Pierre de Flavigny stands at Flavigny-sur-Ozerain, in the Côte-d'Or, in the heart of the Auxois region of Burgundy. Founded in 719 by Saint Widrad, who became its abbot and was buried there in 747, it was for centuries a great Benedictine monastery and a place of pilgrimage. What remains today is a remarkable Carolingian crypt, a listed historic monument, which can be visited.

More than a thousand years of history

In his will, Widrad declares that he built the monastery of Flavigny at his own expense and handed it over to Abbot Magnoald and his monks. The monks followed the Rule of Saint Benedict, and the foundation charter was approved at the council of Autun in 745. Under the Carolingians, the abbey prospered and had an important scriptorium. Abbot Manasses brought there the relics of Saint Praejectus (Prix), bishop of Clermont, and in the 9th century Abbot Egil had those of Saint Reine transferred from Alise: the crypt was built to receive them. Pope John VIII consecrated the abbey church on October 28, 878, under the patronage of Saint Peter.

The abbey later suffered from the Norman invasions, the Hundred Years' War and the Wars of Religion. In the 17th century, the Benedictines of the Congregation of Saint-Maur restored it. Sold as national property in 1791, it was taken over by an aniseed sweet factory, and most of the abbey church was destroyed in the early 19th century.

What you can see

The Carolingian crypt, known as the crypt of Saint Reine, is the main witness of the medieval abbey. Cleared in the 19th century, it keeps pillars and carvings showing Italian influence, a hexagonal chapel and an adjoining oratory. The abbey buildings now house the workshop of the famous Anis de Flavigny sweets, and a visit to it can be combined with a visit to the crypt. The medieval village, perched on its spur, keeps the memory of its monastic past.

Praying on site

Before you come, you can read the life of Saint Widrad. In the crypt, remember the founder who gave his property so that monks might pray there, and entrust your intentions to him with the prayer to Saint Widrad. You can also pray there to Saint Reine, whose relics were long venerated in this place. October 3, his feast day, is a particularly fitting day for this visit. These suggestions are offered by Saintspedia.

Practical information

Flavigny-sur-Ozerain is in the Côte-d'Or, not far from Alise-Sainte-Reine and Semur-en-Auxois. The crypt is visited together with the aniseed factory site: opening times and visiting conditions vary by season, so check before you come. The village parish church, distinct from the former abbey church, is also a place of prayer.

Credits and sources

Texts: Saintspedia (saintspedia.com). The sources cited in each part are those of the corresponding page of the website. Biographical data partly from Wikidata (CC0). Font: EB Garamond (SIL Open Font License).



More free booklets

Lives of the saints, prayers, novenas and places of pilgrimage: find all the booklets to print at

saintspedia.com