BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Wilfrid II

Life, prayer and novena

Feast day: April 29

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IN BRIEF

Saint Wilfrid II

Bishop of York in the 8th century, disciple of Saint John of Beverley, died at Ripon c. 744.

Feast day	April 29
Born	second half of the 7th century, Northumbria (place unknown)
Died	April 29, 744 or 745, Ripon (Northumbria, England)
Canonized	immemorial cult
Era	8th century

In this booklet

Life

Prayer to Saint Wilfrid II for Pastors and Those Who Serve Quietly

Novena to Saint Wilfrid II

Credits and sources

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LIFE

Saint Wilfrid II

Saint Wilfrid II, also called Wilfrid the Younger, was an Anglo-Saxon bishop of the 8th century. Trained at Whitby Abbey and a disciple of Saint John of Beverley, he succeeded him as bishop of York early in the 8th century, gave up his office around 732 and died at Ripon in 744 or 745. The sources on his life are very brief. His feast day is April 29.

Who was Saint Wilfrid II?

He is called Wilfrid II to distinguish him from his predecessor and namesake, the great Saint Wilfrid, bishop of York in the previous century. The second Wilfrid left no writings and no detailed biography. What we know of him fits in a few lines, handed down mainly by Bede the Venerable, who mentions him among the men trained at Whitby, and by the lists of the bishops of York. Modern historians note that his cult, though real, was never very developed. His figure is therefore that of a discreet pastor, whose holiness was lived in ordinary faithfulness rather than in striking deeds.

Key dates in the life of Wilfrid II

- **Second half of the 7th century**: Born in Northumbria; the exact date and place are unknown.
- **Late 7th century**: He is trained in the double monastery of Whitby, under the guidance of Abbess Saint Hilda.
- **Shortly after**: He becomes the disciple and priest of Saint John of Beverley, bishop of York.
- **c. 714-718**: John of Beverley chooses him as his successor as bishop of York, then retires to his monastery; the sources disagree on the year.
- **c. 732**: After about eighteen years as bishop, he resigns his office.

- **April 29, 744 or 745**: Dies at Ripon, in Northumbria.

A child of Whitby

At the end of the 7th century, Whitby Abbey, governed by Saint Hilda, was one of the great centers of Christian life in Northumbria. Men and women lived there in two neighboring communities, under the authority of the abbess. Bede reports that several bishops came out of this school, among them John of Beverley and Wilfrid, who would govern the Church of York. It was there that Wilfrid II learned the Scriptures, common prayer and the service of the Church. This formation explains the place he later held beside John of Beverley, another former pupil of Whitby.

Bishop of York

Having become the priest and close collaborator of John of Beverley, Wilfrid shared his pastoral life. When John, grown old, decided to retire to the monastery he had founded at Beverley, he chose Wilfrid to succeed him and consecrated him bishop of York. The dates proposed range from about 714 to 718. Wilfrid then governed this vast diocese for nearly eighteen years, at a time when the still young Church of Northumbria enjoyed great intellectual and monastic vitality: it was the age of Bede, at Jarrow.

The sources report neither miracles nor conflicts about him. Around 732, he resigned as bishop, as his master had done before him. His successor, Egbert, would soon obtain for York the rank of archbishopric. Wilfrid spent his last years at Ripon, a town linked to the memory of the first Wilfrid, and died there on April 29, 744 or 745.

Devotion and memory

Wilfrid II has been honored as a saint since the early Middle Ages and is celebrated on April 29, the day of his death. Historians note, however, that his cult remained modest, with no great pilgrimage or tale of wonders. He is venerated in the Catholic Church, and also by the Orthodox who honor the saints of the ancient West. He has no attribute of his own: he is simply shown as a bishop, with miter and crozier.

What can we learn from Saint Wilfrid II?

Wilfrid II reminds us that holiness is not measured by the noise it makes. Trained by a great abbess, disciple of a holy bishop, he received a heavy charge and carried it faithfully, then knew how to hand it over and withdraw. He can be invoked by those who succeed someone better known than themselves, by those who hold a responsibility out of the spotlight, and by all who must learn to pass the torch.

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

Where to pray to Saint Wilfrid II

- **York** (England): the city of his episcopal see, where the Gothic York Minster stands today.
- **Ripon** (North Yorkshire): the town where he died, also linked to the memory of Saint Wilfrid of York.
- **Whitby** (North Yorkshire): the ruins of the abbey where he was trained.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Wilfrid II for Pastors and Those Who Serve Quietly

Saint Wilfrid II, trained at Whitby under Saint Hilda, was the disciple of Saint John of Beverley, who entrusted him with the see of York. After eighteen years as bishop, he gave up his office and died at Ripon around 744. Prayer composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. It entrusts to him those who carry a discreet responsibility and those who must hand on their task.

Prayer to Saint Wilfrid II

Saint Wilfrid,
you who learned at Whitby
to love the Scriptures and common prayer,
give me a taste for the word of God
and the joy of praying with the Church.

Faithful disciple of Saint John of Beverley,
you received from him the charge of shepherd
and carried it quietly, for many years.
Help me to serve where I have been placed,
even if no one notices.

You who knew how to lay down your charge
and end your days in peace,
teach me to hand on what I have received
and to leave to others the place that is theirs.
Bless the pastors of the Church and those who will come after them.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

When to pray to Saint Wilfrid II

- On his feast day, April 29.
- For bishops, priests and all who hold a charge in the Church.
- When you succeed someone in a position of responsibility.
- When you retire or hand on a mission.
- For those who form young people in the faith.

A short invocation

> *Saint Wilfrid, faithful and humble shepherd,*
> *help me to serve without seeking to be seen.*
> *Pray for us. Amen.*

To prepare for his feast, you can pray the novena to Saint Wilfrid II from April 21 to 29, and read the life of Saint Wilfrid II.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Wilfrid II

This novena offers nine days of prayer with Saint Wilfrid II, bishop of York 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, April 29, begin on April 21. 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 Wilfrid, pray for us." The act of the day helps you live the novena concretely. Since the sources on his life are very brief, the meditations rely on the little that is known for certain.

Day 1: A hidden life

We know very little about Wilfrid II. This very discretion is a message: God knows those whom history forgets.

Prayer: Lord, you who see in secret, teach me to live under your gaze more than under the gaze of others.

Act of the day: Do someone a service without letting it be known.

Day 2: At the school of Whitby

Wilfrid was trained at Whitby, in the community guided by Saint Hilda. There he learned the Scriptures and common prayer.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for those who passed on the faith to me. Bless teachers and catechists.

Act of the day: Read a passage of the Gospel slowly.

Day 3: Disciple of a saint

He became the disciple and priest of Saint John of Beverley. We grow in faith by walking with others.

Prayer: Lord, put on my path witnesses who lead me to you, and make me open to their advice.

Act of the day: Thank someone who helped you grow in faith.

Day 4: Receiving a charge

John of Beverley chose him to succeed him at York. Wilfrid accepted a responsibility he had not sought.

Prayer: Lord, when you entrust me with a task, give me the strength to accept it and the grace to carry it out.

Act of the day: Carry out carefully a task that has been entrusted to you.

Day 5: Succeeding someone greater

He bore the name of the first Wilfrid and held the see of John of Beverley. He did not try to equal them, but to serve.

Prayer: Lord, free me from comparisons. Let me simply be faithful to what you expect of me.

Act of the day: Let go of a comparison that saddens you.

Day 6: Eighteen years of faithfulness

For nearly eighteen years, he governed the Church of York. Faithfulness is lived day after day, often without glory.

Prayer: Lord, give me perseverance in ordinary tasks and the joy of doing them for you.

Act of the day: Patiently take up again a duty you had been putting aside.

Day 7: Praying for pastors

As bishop, Wilfrid carried the care of a whole people. Pastors need the prayer of the faithful.

Prayer: Lord, support our bishop and our priests. Give them a shepherd's heart and keep them in your peace.

Act of the day: Pray by name for your bishop and your parish priest.

Day 8: Knowing when to step aside

Around 732, Wilfrid gave up his office. It takes humility to recognize that the time has come to make room for others.

Prayer: Lord, teach me to hand on without regret what I have received, and to trust those who come after me.

Act of the day: Encourage a younger person in what they are undertaking.

Day 9: A peaceful end

Wilfrid died at Ripon on April 29, 744 or 745, after years of retirement. He gave his life back to God as he had given back his charge.

Prayer: Lord, grant me to live and die in your peace. Through the intercession of Saint Wilfrid, grant me the grace I ask in this novena, if it is your will.

Act of the day: Pray for the elderly people around you and, if possible, visit one of them.

Closing prayer

Saint Wilfrid,
faithful disciple and humble shepherd,
you served the Church of York without seeking glory
and laid down your charge in peace.
Present to the Lord the intention I have entrusted to you.
Keep me faithful in little things.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

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

Credits and sources

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