

BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Wolbodo of Liège

Life, prayer and novena

Feast day: April 21

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IN BRIEF

Saint Wolbodo of Liège

Prince-bishop of Liège from 1018 to 1021, the true founder of the Benedictine Abbey of Saint Lawrence.

Feast day	April 21
Died	April 21, 1021, Liège, Belgium
Era	11th century

In this booklet

Life

Prayer to Saint Wolbodo for Students and Unfinished Work

Novena to Saint Wolbodo

Credits and sources

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LIFE

Saint Wolbodo of Liège

Saint Wolbodo (Wolbodon) was a bishop of the early eleventh century, prince-bishop of Liège, in present-day Belgium, from 1018 until his death on April 21, 1021. A scholar trained at Utrecht and a chaplain of the Emperor Saint Henry II, he governed his diocese for only three years. Yet he left a lasting mark: Liège owes him the growth of the Benedictine Abbey of Saint Lawrence, on the heights above the city, where he was buried. His feast is April 21.

Who was Saint Wolbodo?

Medieval sources say he came from a noble family of the County of Flanders. The exact date of his birth is unknown. He was formed among the canons of Utrecht, the Church founded three centuries earlier by Saint Willibrord, the Anglo-Saxon missionary from Northumbria. There he became *scholasticus*, that is, head of the cathedral school, and then provost of the Church of Saint Martin.

His reputation as a scholar brought him to the court of the Emperor Henry II, who made him one of his chaplains. At that time, emperors often chose bishops from among the clerics of their chapel, men who were at once churchmen and servants of the Empire. When Bishop Baldric II died, Henry II named Wolbodo to the see of Liège, which he took possession of in 1018.

Key dates

- **Early 11th century**: Head of the school and then provost of the Church of Saint Martin in Utrecht.
- **Before 1018**: Chaplain of the Emperor Henry II.
- **1018**: He becomes prince-bishop of Liège.

- **April 21, 1021**: Dies at Liège and is buried at the Abbey of Saint Lawrence.

Liège in the age of the prince-bishops

When Wolbodo arrived in Liège, the city was flourishing. His predecessor Notger, who died in 1008, had made it both a religious and a political capital: the bishop also ruled as a prince over a vast territory. Liège became one of the great centers of learning in the West, famous for its schools.

The see already had a long history, since it descended from the ancient bishopric of Tongeren and Maastricht, made illustrious by Saint Servatius, Saint Lambert and Saint Hubert. A man of study like Wolbodo, trained in a cathedral school, was well suited to such a see.

A bishop between Church and Empire

Wolbodo belonged to a generation of bishops who served both the Church and the Empire. This could be a source of compromise, but under a devout emperor like Henry II, himself later canonized, it also produced bishops concerned with reform, learning and the life of religious communities. Wolbodo's short episcopate fits this pattern.

The true founder of Saint Lawrence

The chroniclers describe Wolbodo as a devout and reforming bishop, attentive to the discipline of the clergy and generous toward the religious houses of his diocese. His most important work concerns the Abbey of Saint Lawrence. Notger had launched the project, but the work had stopped. Wolbodo had it resumed and encouraged the settlement of a community of Benedictine monks.

For this reason, historians often regard him as the real founder of the abbey. According to medieval sources, he even left part of his property so that the building of the monastery could continue after his death. Recent research stresses his decisive role in the lasting establishment of the Rule of Saint Benedict on this site.

The abbey bears the name of Saint Lawrence, the deacon of Rome who served the poor and died a martyr in the third century. By giving monks a stable home under his patronage, Wolbodo ensured that, after his own short episcopate, prayer, work and study would continue day after day on the hill above Liège. Bishops pass; a community rooted in the Rule of Saint Benedict can remain for generations. This is the real legacy of his three years at Liège.

Death and memory

Wolbodo died on April 21, 1021, after less than three years as bishop. As he had wished, he was buried at Saint Lawrence. Hagiographic tradition reports that his tomb soon became a place of pilgrimage and that miracles were attributed to him. Today his memory is linked above all to this abbey in the history of Liège.

Why pray to Saint Wolbodo?

Wolbodo has no traditional patronage. He was neither a great preacher nor a famous author. His holiness is that of a bishop who, in a short time, managed to complete what another had begun and to give a community of prayer a place to endure.

He can be invoked by those who take up an unfinished work, by those who must carry on a project begun by someone else, and by teachers and all who pass on knowledge, in memory of his years at the school of Utrecht. His life is also a reminder that a short ministry can bear fruit for centuries when it is given to God.

Symbols and how to recognize Saint Wolbodo in art

Images of Wolbodo are rare. Like other bishops of his time, he would be shown in episcopal vestments, with miter and crosier. The coat of arms of the prince-bishopric of Liège recalls the double role, spiritual and temporal, that he exercised in the city.

Where to pray to Saint Wolbodo

His memory is tied to the former Abbey of Saint Lawrence, on the hill of Publémont in Liège, where he was buried. The city of Liège, with its churches and its long tradition of holy bishops, remains the natural place to remember him. A pilgrim there can pray to him alongside the earlier holy bishops of the see, Lambert and Hubert, asking for the grace to build on what others have begun.

To pray with him, read the prayer to Saint Wolbodo or follow the novena to Saint Wolbodo in the days before April 21.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Wolbodo for Students and Unfinished Work

Saint Wolbodo, prince-bishop of Liège from 1018 to 1021, is little known today, and no traditional prayer to him has come down to us. Here is an original prayer inspired by his life: a scholar formed at the cathedral school of Utrecht, a bishop who governed only three years, and the man who completed the Abbey of Saint Lawrence that another had begun.

What his life teaches us

Wolbodo did not start from nothing. His predecessor Notger had launched the building of Saint Lawrence, but the work had stopped. Wolbodo took it up again, brought in Benedictine monks and even left part of his property so the monastery could be finished after his death. His holiness is that of faithful continuation: receiving a task from others and handing it on, completed, to those who come after.

Prayer to Saint Wolbodo

Saint Wolbodo, you who loved study and served the school of Utrecht, bless teachers, students and all who seek the truth. Help them to see knowledge as a path toward God.

You who took up a work that another had left unfinished, give me the humility and the perseverance to carry on what I have received, without seeking my own glory.

You who had only a few years to serve your Church, teach me to use well the time God gives me, knowing that a short life offered to him can bear fruit for centuries.

You who gave a home to monks so that prayer might never cease, intercede for all religious communities and for the Church in Liège, in Belgium and throughout the world.

I entrust to you my intention today: (name it in silence). Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

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

When to pray this prayer

- On his feast day, **April 21**, the day of his death in 1021.
- When you take over a project, a job or a responsibility begun by someone else.
- At the beginning of a school year or a course of study.
- For bishops and for all who carry both spiritual and practical responsibilities.

A short invocation

> *Saint Wolbodo, faithful builder, help me to finish well what God has placed in my hands. Amen.*

To know him better, read the life of Saint Wolbodo, or pray the novena to Saint Wolbodo.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Wolbodo

This novena to Saint Wolbodo is an original composition by Saintspedia, inspired by what the sources tell us of his life. It is not an official liturgical text. To end on his feast day, April 21, begin it on **April 13**. Because his feast often falls in the Easter season, it can be prayed in the joy of the Resurrection. It is also well suited to anyone taking up a work begun by another, or beginning a time of study.

How to pray this novena

Each day, choose a quiet moment and make the sign of the cross. Name your intention, read the short meditation and say the prayer of the day, followed by an Our Father, a Hail Mary and a Glory Be. Then carry out the small act suggested. The novena follows the few facts we know of Wolbodo's life, from the school of Utrecht to his tomb at Saint Lawrence in Liège.

Day 1: A son of Flanders

Medieval sources say Wolbodo came from a noble family of Flanders. We do not even know the date of his birth. God knows each of us by name, even when history forgets the details.

Prayer: Lord, you know me better than I know myself. Through the intercession of Saint Wolbodo, help me to trust that my life matters to you, even when it seems small. Amen.

Today: Thank God for three people who have shaped your life.

Day 2: The school of Utrecht

Wolbodo was formed among the canons of Utrecht, the Church founded by Saint Willibrord, and became head of the cathedral school. He loved learning and handed it on to others.

Prayer: Saint Wolbodo, bless students and teachers. May their study lead them to truth and to the One who is the Truth. Amen.

Today: Spend fifteen minutes reading something that nourishes your faith.

Day 3: Serving at court

Wolbodo became a chaplain of the Emperor Henry II, himself a saint. At court, he had to remain a man of God amid power and politics. Faith can be lived in every setting.

Prayer: Lord, help Christians who work in government, business and public life to remain honest and faithful to you. Amen.

Today: Pray for a political leader, whether you agree with them or not.

Day 4: Called to Liège

In 1018, Henry II named Wolbodo bishop of Liège. He accepted a responsibility he had not sought, in a city rich in history and learning. Sometimes God calls us through the requests of others.

Prayer: Saint Wolbodo, help me to say yes to the responsibilities God places before me, trusting in his grace rather than in my own strength. Amen.

Today: Accept, with good grace, a service someone asks of you.

Day 5: Heir of the holy bishops

The see of Liège descended from the ancient bishopric of Tongeren and Maastricht, made illustrious by Saint Servatius, Saint Lambert and Saint Hubert. Wolbodo walked in the footsteps of holy predecessors.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for those who have gone before us in faith. Make us worthy heirs of the saints. Amen.

Today: Pray for the bishop of your diocese and for the priests who serve you.

Day 6: Completing what another began

Notger had begun the Abbey of Saint Lawrence, but the work had stopped. Wolbodo took it up again. He did not need to be the first; he was content to be faithful.

Prayer: Saint Wolbodo, teach me to continue humbly what others have begun, without envy and without seeking credit. Amen.

Today: Finish a task you have left unfinished.

Day 7: A home for prayer

Wolbodo encouraged Benedictine monks to settle at Saint Lawrence, so that prayer, work and study might continue there day after day. He knew that the Church needs places where God is praised without ceasing.

Prayer: Lord, bless monasteries and all communities of prayer. Through Saint Wolbodo, send them new vocations. Amen.

Today: Pray one of the hours of the Liturgy of the Hours, or a psalm, in union with monks around the world.

Day 8: Giving beyond one's life

According to medieval sources, Wolbodo left part of his property so that the monastery could be completed after his death. His generosity looked beyond his own lifetime.

Prayer: Lord, free me from attachment to what I own, and help me to give generously for the good of those who will come after me. Amen.

Today: Make a gift, however small, to a work of the Church.

Day 9: A short life, a lasting fruit

Wolbodo died on April 21, 1021, after less than three years as bishop, and was buried at Saint Lawrence. Tradition says his tomb became a place of pilgrimage. A short ministry given to God can bear fruit for centuries.

Prayer: Saint Wolbodo, I entrust to you the intention of this novena. Help me to use well the time God gives me. Amen.

Today: Pray for the dying and for those who have died recently.

Closing prayer

Lord our God, you gave your Church in Liège a bishop who loved learning and completed the work of others with humility. Through the intercession of Saint Wolbodo, help us to receive faithfully what we have been given, to build patiently for those who come after us, and to give our days to you without counting. Grant the grace I have asked during these nine days, if it is according to your will. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Saint Wolbodo, pray for us.

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