

BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Wulfram of Sens

Life, prayer and novena

Feast day: March 20

Saintspedia · saintspedia.com

IN BRIEF

Saint Wulfram of Sens

Archbishop of Sens, missionary to the Frisians and monk of Fontenelle, patron saint of Abbeville and Grantham.

Feast day	March 20
Born	c. 640, Milly-la-Forêt (Essonne), France
Died	March 20, 703 (traditional date), Abbey of Fontenelle (Saint-Wandrille), Normandy, France
Canonized	Pre-Congregation (immemorial cult)
Era	8th century
Patron saint of	Abbeville, Grantham

In this booklet

Life

Prayer to Saint Wulfram, Apostle of the Frisians

Novena to Saint Wulfram of Sens

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 Wulfram of Sens

Saint Wulfram of Sens, called Wulfran or Vulfran in French, was a Frankish bishop of the seventh century. Archbishop of Sens, he gave up his see to bring the Gospel to the Frisians, on the coast of what is now the Netherlands. He ended his life as a monk at the Abbey of Fontenelle, in Normandy, where he died around 703. His relics are venerated at Abbeville, in the collegiate church that bears his name, and the great church of Grantham in England is dedicated to him. His feast day is March 20.

Who was Saint Wulfram?

Wulfram was one of the first missionaries to Frisia, at a time when this North Sea people was still pagan. Before the great Anglo-Saxon apostles Saint Willibrord and Saint Boniface, he tried to win King Radbod and his people for Christ. He also belonged to the great monastic family of Fontenelle, the abbey founded by Saint Wandrille in the Seine valley, one of the spiritual centers of Merovingian Gaul.

His life is known from a *Life of Saint Wulfram* that presents itself as the work of a monk of Fontenelle named Jonas. Historians think it was written later, in the eighth century, and that it mixes authentic memories with edifying material. Even the date of his death is debated: tradition keeps 703, but some authors have proposed 720 or even 740.



The reliquary bust of Saint Wulfram, Collegiate Church of Saint-Vulfran, Abbeville.

Key dates in the life of Saint Wulfram

- **c. 640**: Born at Maurilly, today Milly-la-Forêt, the son of an officer of the Merovingian kings.
- **660s**: Educated at the Frankish royal court, he chooses the clerical state.
- **c. 690**: Becomes archbishop of Sens.
- **690s**: Leaves his see and sets out to evangelize Frisia with monks of Fontenelle.
- **c. 700**: Returns to the Abbey of Fontenelle, where he lives as a simple monk.
- **March 20, 703**: Dies at Fontenelle, according to the traditional date.
- **Early twelfth century**: His relics are moved to Abbeville; the translation is celebrated on October 15.

From the royal court to the see of Sens

Wulfram was born around 640 at Maurilly, in the Gâtinais region south of Paris, today Milly-la-Forêt. His father, Nutbert, served as an officer in the army of Kings Dagobert I and Clovis II. The boy was raised at court, where he showed great gifts for study. But he preferred recollection to a military or political career and entered the clergy.

His qualities were noticed, and around 690 he was called to the archiepiscopal see of Sens, one of the most important in Gaul. He governed his diocese for only a few years. According to his *Life*, he learned that the Frisians, a pagan people of the North Sea coast, had not yet received the Gospel, and he felt called to bring it to them. He entrusted his Church to a successor and withdrew to the Abbey of Fontenelle, from which he set out on mission with a few monks.

Missionary to the Frisians

In Frisia, Wulfram came up against King Radbod, a pagan ruler and an enemy of the Franks. He preached, baptized and won many converts, including one of the king's sons. His *Life* tells that he opposed the human sacrifices practiced by the Frisians and managed to save young people destined to be offered to the gods. One of them, Ovon, later became a monk at Fontenelle.

King Radbod at the font

The most famous episode concerns Radbod himself. The king is said to have agreed to be baptized. As he was about to step into the baptismal font, he asked where his ancestors were. Wulfram answered that they had not received baptism and did not share in salvation. Radbod then drew his foot back out of the water, declaring that he preferred to join his ancestors rather than live in heaven with a handful of people. This story, retold by many writers, shows how hard it was to evangelize a people deeply attached to its traditions.



The Collegiate Church of Saint-Vulfran, Abbeville, which keeps the saint's relics.

Return to Fontenelle

After several stays in Frisia, Wulfram came back to end his days at Fontenelle. He lived there as a simple monk, in obedience and prayer, under the guidance of the abbot. He left his lands at Maurilly to the abbey. He died on a March 20, by tradition in 703, and was first buried in a chapel of the abbey before being moved to the main church.

Relics and devotion in France and England

In the early twelfth century, a large part of his relics was moved to Abbeville, to the church of Notre-Dame, which then took his name and became the Collegiate Church of Saint-Vulfran. Abbeville kept his relics safe through the French Revolution, and the saint became its patron.

An arm of the saint was taken to England, to Crowland Abbey in Lincolnshire, and his cult took root in that region. The great parish church of Grantham, famous for its tall spire, is dedicated to Saint Wulfram. The Church of Sens received a few relics in 1641. In France, other places keep his memory, such as a devotional spring near Gaillon, in the Eure, and a cross at Villemaréchal, in Seine-et-Marne.

Why is Saint Wulfram the patron saint of Abbeville and Grantham?

Abbeville took Wulfram as its patron because it received his relics in the twelfth century and has honored them ever since in the church named after him. Grantham's devotion comes from the relic brought to nearby Crowland, which spread his cult in Lincolnshire; the town's great church still bears his name.

Wulfram left the security of a great see to go to a distant and hostile people. He did not obtain all he hoped for: Radbod remained pagan. But he sowed, and others reaped after him. He also knew how to return to the humble life of a monk without seeking honors. He can be invoked for missionaries, for those who preach the Gospel without seeing immediate fruit, for children in danger, and for the people of Abbeville and Grantham.

Symbols and how to recognize Saint Wulfram in art

Saint Wulfram is shown as a bishop with miter and crozier. He is often depicted baptizing a child, the son of King Radbod, or landing with monks on the coast of Frisia. In Abbeville a gilded reliquary bust presents him as a mitered bishop, and a statue in Grantham church shows him with miter and crozier.

Where to pray to Saint Wulfram

- **Abbeville** (Somme, France): the Collegiate Church of Saint-Vulfran, which keeps his relics.
- **Saint-Wandrille-Rançon** (Seine-Maritime, France): the Abbey of Fontenelle, where he lived and died, still home to Benedictine monks.
- **Grantham** (Lincolnshire, England): the great church of Saint Wulfram.
- **Milly-la-Forêt** (Essonne, France): his birthplace.

To pray with him, use the prayer to Saint Wulfram or the novena to Saint Wulfram, prayed from March 12 to March 20.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Wulfram, Apostle of the Frisians

Saint Wulfram, archbishop of Sens who became a missionary to the Frisians and then a monk at Fontenelle, is the patron of Abbeville, where his relics are venerated, and of the great church of Grantham in Lincolnshire. To our knowledge there is no widely used traditional prayer in his honor. This page offers an original prayer by Saintspedia, for missionaries, children in danger and all who sow without seeing the harvest.

Prayer to Saint Wulfram

Saint Wulfram, you left the see of Sens to carry the Gospel to the people of Frisia: give me a missionary heart, ready to leave my comfort to proclaim Christ.

You snatched young people from death and welcomed children under threat: watch over children in danger, those who are exploited or abandoned, and all who protect them.

You preached to King Radbod without winning his conversion: support those who proclaim the Gospel without seeing fruit, parents who pray for a child who has drifted from the faith, and discouraged missionaries. Teach us to sow with confidence and to leave the time of harvest to God.

You came back to live as a simple monk at Fontenelle: teach me humility and the joy of a life hidden in God. Protect the people of Abbeville and Grantham and all who call on you. I entrust to you my intention: (name it in silence).

Through your intercession, may the Lord make me a faithful witness to his love. Amen.

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

Intentions to entrust to Saint Wulfram

- For missionaries and the spread of the Gospel.
- For children who are threatened or mistreated.
- For parents praying for the faith of their children.
- For Abbeville, Grantham and the dioceses of Sens and Amiens.

When to pray this prayer

Saint Wulfram's feast day is March 20, and the translation of his relics to Abbeville is commemorated on October 15. You can pray to him before leaving on a mission trip, for a child in difficulty, or to find courage in a ministry that seems thankless. To get to know him better, read the life of Saint Wulfram or pray the novena to Saint Wulfram.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Wulfram of Sens

This novena is an original composition by Saintspedia, inspired by the life of Saint Wulfram of Sens, archbishop, missionary to the Frisians and monk of Fontenelle. It is not an official liturgical text. To end on his feast day, begin on March 12: the ninth day then falls on March 20, the traditional anniversary of his death. Since it falls during Lent, it fits well with the season's call to conversion and generosity.

The story of Wulfram comes mainly from a *Life* written in the eighth century, which mixes memories with edifying details. The meditations follow that tradition simply. You can pray this novena for missionaries, for children at risk, for a loved one far from the faith, or for any intention close to your heart.

How to pray this novena

Each day, place your intention before God, read the short meditation, say the prayer of the day, then pray an Our Father, a Hail Mary and a Glory Be. The suggested act helps you live the prayer during the day.

You may begin each day with this opening prayer: *Lord God, you called Saint Wulfram to leave everything to announce your Son to those who did not know him. Through his intercession, hear the prayer I bring you today and give me a heart ready to serve. Amen.*

If you miss a day, simply pick up where you left off.

Day 1: Gifts received

Raised at the royal court, Wulfram showed great gifts for study. He could have made a brilliant career. Instead, he offered his talents to God and entered the clergy.

Prayer: Lord, every gift I have comes from you. Through Saint Wulfram, help me to use my talents for your glory and the good of others. Amen.

Today: Use one of your skills to help someone, without being asked.

Day 2: Choosing the quiet way

At court, Wulfram preferred recollection to the career of arms or politics. Even in a busy world, he kept a space for God within.

Prayer: Holy Spirit, in the noise of my days, keep a quiet place in my heart where I can listen to you. Amen.

Today: Turn off your phone for fifteen minutes and pray in silence.

Day 3: A shepherd of Sens

Around 690, Wulfram became archbishop of Sens, one of the great sees of Gaul. He accepted responsibility for a large Church and its people.

Prayer: Good Shepherd, bless our bishops and priests. Give them wisdom and courage in their service. Amen.

Today: Pray for your bishop and your parish priest by name.

Day 4: Hearing a new call

Learning that the Frisians had never heard the Gospel, Wulfram felt called to go to them. He let God unsettle his plans, even at the height of his responsibilities.

Prayer: Lord, make me attentive to your voice when it asks me to change direction. Give me the freedom to follow you. Amen.

Today: Ask God in prayer: what are you asking of me now?

Day 5: Letting go of honors

Wulfram entrusted his see to a successor and withdrew to Fontenelle before setting out. He chose to become small so that the Gospel could go further.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, you emptied yourself for us. Free me from the need for position and recognition. Amen.

Today: Let someone else take the credit for something good.

Day 6: Saving the young

In Frisia, Wulfram opposed human sacrifice and rescued young people destined to die. One of them, Ovon, later became a monk at Fontenelle. Every life is precious in the eyes of God.

Prayer: God of life, protect children and young people who are in danger. Through Saint Wulfram, bless all who defend them. Amen.

Today: Support, by a gift or a prayer, an organization that protects children.

Day 7: The king who drew back

King Radbod stood at the baptismal font, then pulled his foot back, preferring to stay with his ancestors. Wulfram did not see the conversion he hoped for. Sometimes we sow and must leave the harvest to God.

Prayer: Lord, I entrust to you those I love who are far from you. Give me patience and hope for them. Amen.

Today: Pray by name for someone who has turned away from the faith.

Day 8: A simple monk

The former archbishop returned to Fontenelle and lived as a simple monk, in obedience and prayer. He gave his lands at Maurilly to the abbey. He ended his life in humility.

Prayer: Father, teach me the joy of a hidden life, given to you in small daily faithfulness. Amen.

Today: Do a humble household task with love and in silence.

Day 9: A seed that bears fruit

After Wulfram, Willibrord and Boniface brought the Gospel to Frisia. His relics are honored in Abbeville, and his name is known in Grantham. What he sowed in faith was not lost.

Prayer: Saint Wulfram, I place before you the intention of this novena. Present it to the Lord, and help me to trust that nothing done for God is wasted. Amen.

Today: Thank God for a missionary, past or present, who helped bring the faith to your family or country.

Closing prayer

Lord God, you gave Saint Wulfram the courage to leave a great office for the poor mission of Frisia, and the humility to end his days as a simple monk. Through his intercession, grant what I have asked during these nine days, if it is your will. Make me generous in mission, patient in sowing and humble in success. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

CREDITS

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).

Images

- Cover: Martinevans123, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons. Source · License
- The reliquary bust of Saint Wulfram, Collegiate Church of Saint-Vulfran, Abbeville.: Image: Pierre Poschadel, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons. Source · License
- The Collegiate Church of Saint-Vulfran, Abbeville, which keeps the saint's relics.: Image: Bycro, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons. Source · License



More free booklets

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

saintspedia.com