BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Yon

Life, prayer, novena and pilgrimage

Feast day: August 5

IN BRIEF

Saint Yon

Priest and martyr of the 3rd century, evangelizer of the Hurepoix according to tradition.

Feast day	August 5
Born	3rd century
Died	c. 290, Saint-Yon (Essonne), according to tradition
Canonized	immemorial cult
Patron saint of	Saint-Yon (Essonne), Arpajon (secondary patron)

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Credits and sources

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LIFE

Saint Yon

Saint Yon (Ionius or Aeonius in Latin) is a priest and martyr of the late 3rd century, honored in the south of the Île-de-France region. According to tradition, a disciple of Saint Denis of Paris, he evangelized the Hurepoix, in particular Châtres, present-day Arpajon, before being put to death around 290 on the hill that now bears his name, at Saint-Yon, in the Essonne. His feast day is August 5.

Who was Saint Yon?

Saint Yon belongs to the first missionaries of the Paris region. What we know of him comes from local traditions and late hagiographical accounts, which link him to Saint Denis, the first bishop of Paris. Historians cannot verify the details of his life: his date of birth, his origin and the exact circumstances of his death remain unknown. But his cult is very old and has taken root in the places that keep his memory, as shown by the name of the village of Saint-Yon, attested from the 12th century in the Latin form *Sanctus Ionus*, and by the Romanesque church dedicated to him.

Key dates in the life of Yon

- **3rd century**: Born; neither the date nor the place is known.
- **Second half of the 3rd century**: According to tradition, he becomes a disciple of Saint Denis, first bishop of Paris.
- **Shortly after**: He preaches the Gospel in the Hurepoix, south of Paris, especially at Châtres (Arpajon), where he is said to have built a church.
- **c. 290**: He suffers martyrdom on the hill of the present village of Saint-Yon.
- **1186**: The place is recorded under the name *Sanctus Ionus*, a sign of a cult already established.

- **12th century**: Construction of the church of Saint-Yon, on the top of the hill.
- **18th century**: The Brothers of the Christian Schools, based at the manor of Saint-Yon near Rouen, are nicknamed the "Brothers of Saint-Yon".

A disciple of Saint Denis

In the 3rd century, Gaul still had few Christians outside the towns. According to tradition, Saint Denis, sent from Rome, founded the Church of Paris and gathered companions whom he sent to proclaim the Gospel in the countryside. Yon is said to have been one of them. He headed south, into the wooded and hilly region of the Hurepoix, between the Seine and the Beauce. At Châtres, present-day Arpajon, he is said to have gathered the first converts and built a church. This is why Arpajon honors him as a secondary patron of the town.

Martyrdom on the hill

Persecution finally reached the missionary. Tradition reports that Yon was put to death around 290 on a nearby hill, where the village of Saint-Yon now stands, above the valley of the Renarde. No reliable ancient account describes his torment: local tradition has above all kept the memory of the place. A church was later built there, and the village took the martyr's name. During the Revolution, the commune was for a time called "Yon", before recovering its present name in 1801.

Devotion and art

Saint Yon is the patron of the parish of Saint-Yon and the secondary patron of Arpajon. His cult remains mostly local, in the diocese of Évry-Corbeil-Essonnes. The church of Saint-Yon, built in the 12th century on an ancient hill fort, was restored in the 17th and 19th centuries and listed as a historic monument in 1948. In the basilica of Notre-Dame-de-Bonne-Garde at

Longpont-sur-Orge, a fresco shows him beside Saint Denis, his master according to tradition. He can also be seen in the church of Saint-Clément in Arpajon.

His name had an unexpected destiny. In the 18th century, the Brothers of the Christian Schools, founded by Saint John Baptist de La Salle, had their main house at the manor of Saint-Yon, near Rouen. For this reason, they were long called the "Brothers of Saint-Yon".

What can we learn from Saint Yon?

Saint Yon is one of those almost anonymous missionaries who carried the Gospel into the countryside of Gaul. He left neither writings nor great works, but a living Church, and his name has remained attached to a hill and a village. He reminds us that the faith of our regions rests on the courage of humble witnesses. You can pray to him for priests and missionaries, for rural parishes, and for all who proclaim Christ where he is still little known.

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

Where to pray to Saint Yon

- **Saint-Yon** (Essonne): the church of Saint-Yon, on top of the hill of his martyrdom according to tradition.
- **Arpajon** (Essonne): the former Châtres, of which he is the secondary patron, and the church of Saint-Clément.
- **Longpont-sur-Orge** (Essonne): the basilica of Notre-Dame-de-Bonne-Garde, where a fresco shows him with Saint Denis.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Yon for Missionaries and Country Parishes

Saint Yon, a priest and martyr of the late 3rd century, is said to have proclaimed the Gospel in the Hurepoix, south of Paris, before giving his life around 290 on the hill that bears his name. Prayer composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. It is not an official liturgical text. It entrusts to him missionaries, country parishes and those who pass on the faith.

Prayer to Saint Yon

Saint Yon,
disciple of Saint Denis according to tradition,
you left the city for the villages
and carried the Gospel
to those who did not know it.
Give me the desire to proclaim Christ around me.

At Châtres you built a church
and gathered the first believers.
Watch over our country parishes,
over their priests, often alone,
and over the faithful who keep them alive.

On the hill of your martyrdom,
you gave your life for your Lord.
Obtain for me a brave and faithful heart,
so that my life may bear witness to him.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

When to pray to Saint Yon

- On his feast day, August 5.
- For priests and missionaries.
- For rural parishes and villages that lack priests.
- Before daring to speak about your faith to someone close to you.
- For the diocese of Évry-Corbeil-Essonnes and the Church in the Île-de-France.

A short invocation

> *Lord, send laborers into your harvest.*
> *Saint Yon, pray for us. Amen.*

To prepare for his feast, you can pray the novena to Saint Yon from July 28 to August 5, and read the life of Saint Yon.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Yon

This novena is inspired by the tradition of Saint Yon, priest and martyr of the Hurepoix around 290. Novena composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. It is not an official liturgical text. To finish it on his feast day, August 5, begin on July 28. 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 Yon, pray for us." The act suggested each day helps you live the novena concretely. The life of Saint Yon is known to us through tradition, which above all keeps the memory of places.

Day 1: Called to follow

According to tradition, Yon became a disciple of Saint Denis, first bishop of Paris. Every mission begins by listening to a call.

Prayer: Lord, make me attentive to your call, and help me to follow you generously.

Act of the day: Take ten minutes of silence to listen to what God is asking of you.

Day 2: Formed by a master

With Denis, Yon learned to know Christ and to proclaim him. We can only pass on well what we have received.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for those who formed me in the faith. Bless catechists and educators.

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

Day 3: Toward the countryside

Yon set out south of Paris, into the Hurepoix, a region of woods and villages. He went to those who had never heard of Christ.

Prayer: Lord, help me to go toward those who are far from you, without fear and without contempt.

Act of the day: Pray for someone around you who is far from the faith.

Day 4: Building a church

At Châtres, present-day Arpajon, Yon is said to have gathered the first believers and built a church. The Gospel creates community.

Prayer: Lord, bless my parish. Make us a fraternal and welcoming community.

Act of the day: Do a service for your parish.

Day 5: Rural parishes

The memory of Saint Yon remains attached to villages. Today many rural areas still lack priests and committed Christians.

Prayer: Lord, send laborers into your harvest and support the priests who serve many villages.

Act of the day: Pray for a country priest, or write him a word of encouragement.

Day 6: A witness to the end

Around 290, Yon was put to death for his faith. The missionary became a martyr: his word was sealed by the gift of his life.

Prayer: Lord, may my words and my actions say the same thing. Make me a consistent witness.

Act of the day: Do one concrete thing that matches what you believe.

Day 7: A hill and a name

The place of Yon's martyrdom took his name. The saints mark the places where they lived and prayed.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for the holy places of our region. Make my home a place where you are prayed to.

Act of the day: Visit a church or chapel near your home.

Day 8: Christian educators

In the 18th century, the Brothers of the Christian Schools were called the "Brothers of Saint-Yon". The missionary's name remained linked to the education of the young.

Prayer: Lord, bless Christian teachers and educators. Give them patience and joy.

Act of the day: Pray for a teacher or help a young person with their studies.

Day 9: The feast of Saint Yon

For centuries, the faithful of the Hurepoix have honored Saint Yon as the one who brought them the Gospel. His memory invites us to continue his work.

Prayer: Lord, make me a missionary where I live. Through the intercession of Saint Yon, grant me the grace I ask in this novena, if it is your will.

Act of the day: Attend Mass if possible, and speak simply about your faith to someone.

Living the novena with Saint Yon

Saint Yon is a saint of beginnings: he sowed the faith in a region where it was still unknown. During these nine days, you can carry missionaries, priests, rural parishes and educators. If you can, visit the church of Saint-Yon, on top of its hill, or Arpajon.

Closing prayer

> *Saint Yon,*
> *missionary of the Hurepoix and martyr of Christ,*
> *you sowed the Gospel in our countryside.*
> *Present to the Lord the intention I have entrusted to you.*
> *Give me the courage to bear witness*
> *and the joy of serving the Church.*
> *Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

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

PILGRIMAGE

Church of Saint-Yon

The church of Saint-Yon stands on top of the hill of the village of Saint-Yon, in the Essonne, about thirty-five kilometers southwest of Paris. It is dedicated to Saint Yon, a priest and martyr of the late 3rd century, whom tradition presents as a disciple of Saint Denis and the evangelizer of the Hurepoix. According to the same tradition, it was on this hill that he gave his life for Christ around 290.

A hill full of history

The church is built on a site occupied long before Christianity: an ancient oppidum, that is, a fortified height, overlooking the valley of the Renarde. The memory of the martyr gave the place its name: the Latin form *Sanctus Ionus* is found as early as 1186. The present building dates back to the 12th century. It was extensively restored, and partly rebuilt, in the 17th and 19th centuries. Since 1948, it has been listed as a historic monument.

What you can see

The church portal dates from the 12th century and bears witness to the original Romanesque building. The bell tower marks the church above the houses of the village. From the hill, you look out over the valley of the Renarde and the woods of the Hurepoix, the country that Saint Yon is said to have traveled to proclaim the Gospel. The church is still a parish church today, part of the Trois-Vallées-Arpajon pastoral sector, in the diocese of Évry-Corbeil-Essonnes.

Praying on site

Before you come, you can read the life of Saint Yon. On the hill, entrust to him missionaries, priests and country parishes, then say the prayer to Saint Yon. August 5, his feast day, is a special time to come and pray at the place where, according to tradition, he bore witness to Christ. These suggestions are offered by Saintspedia.

Other places of Saint Yon

- **Arpajon** (Essonne): the former Châtres, where he is said to have built a church; he is the secondary patron of the town, and the church of Saint-Clément keeps his image.
- **Longpont-sur-Orge** (Essonne): the basilica of Notre-Dame-de-Bonne-Garde, where a fresco shows him beside Saint Denis.

Practical information

Saint-Yon is in the canton of Arpajon, in the south of the Essonne, and can easily be reached by car from Arpajon or Étampes. As a parish church, it is not always open outside of services. To find out Mass times and visiting possibilities, check with the parish or the diocese of Évry-Corbeil-Essonnes before you come. Modest dress and silence are expected in this place of prayer.

Credits and sources

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