International Federation of associations and pLaces dedicated to Saint Leonard

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english edition



Translation : Alexandre Mazin

This newsletter is distributed to around 860 people in more than 30 countries.

It is available in: German, English, French, Italian, Dutch, and Slovenian !

We need you! All the information that appears in the newsletters is transmitted by members of the great family of "Saint Leonard" throughout France, Europe and the World. If you wish to distribute information, contact us by e-mail : fil-leo@federationstleonard.com or by post : fil-leo, L'Escalier, 3 place Gay-Lussac, 87400 Saint-Léonard de Noblat (France).
The next issue will be published end of September 2026. We're counting on you. Thank you!

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- Bad Sankt Leonhard (Austria)
- Lenartov (Slovakia)

International Gathering
July 2 - 4 2027
In Normandy,
at the Saint Leonard priory in **Vains**
at the foot of **Mont St Michel**,
For the millenium of the birth of William the Conqueror

See detailed program
pages 6 and 7

10 Years of Connections woven across Europe!



May 7, 2016, on the sidelines of the Ostensions in Saint-Léonard de Noblat, all the delegations present gathered in a founding assembly to lay the foundation stone of fil-leo.

This 28th issue of the newsletter is an opportunity to look back on these 10 years during which we have gotten to know each other better and met more often.

But if fil-leo exists, it is also because, from the time of Saint Leonard's establishment in his hermitage in Saint-Léonard de Noblat, through the dissemination of his story and the spread of his cult 1000 years ago, in the contemporary period, after the Second World War, the need arose to build peace and to come together around shared values. And, when we look at the spread of the cult of our shared patron saint, when we understand the universality of the values he transmitted to us through his charisms, we realize that it is difficult to speak of Saint Leonard without speaking of Europe.

In this issue, we will take the time to pay tribute to those who, before fil-leo, paved the way and laid the foundations we continue to build today.

On May 8, 2026 (poster above), in Saint-Léonard de Noblat, a conference presented the "pioneers" and highlighted the acceleration of exchanges between us, made possible by relay contacts in various locations and also facilitated by certain European policies on the movement of people and communication.

Looking back, we realise that fil-leo is a true catalyst, an accelerator of exchanges which helps to forge deep and genuine bonds between us.

And as we look toward the horizon, the scale of the task can be dizzying. How can we continue to expand our network and forge new ties with other countries? How can we better identify, structure, and share knowledge of the heritage, both tangible and intangible, that Saint Leonard bequeathed to us, and which men and women have continued to pass down for centuries by keeping his history and veneration alive? Finally, how can we strengthen and deepen the bonds that unite us, so that we may build upon what brings us together to open up new horizons and pursue further projects in partnership?

We don't have a crystal ball; it is up to all those of goodwill in each of our locations to reach out and answer the call to keep fil-leo alive and growing, and to participate in what the federation will be tomorrow.

Or, as Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, the author of *The Little Prince*, would say: "*The future is nothing but the present to be put in order. You don't have to foresee it, but to allow it.*"

2016-2026 : 10 years of fil-leo : the Origins



It all began when Leonard, decided to refuse the honors of King Clovis's court and asked him for permission to free the prisoners he deemed worthy. He established his hermitage in Saint-Léonard de Noblat, provided the prisoners with land to cultivate and shelter, and thus contributed to their reintegration. He also helped deliver the newborn child of a Frankish queen who was passing through.

From these charismatic acts, he passed on to us two universal values:
-**Liberty**,
- **Fraternity**.



This story has been passed down to us thanks to **Jourdain de Laron**, former provost of Saint-Léonard de Noblat and Bishop of Limoges from 1023 to 1050.

He commissioned the oldest known **Vita** (written around 1025-1028). https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b10541002h/f153.item

He contributed to the spread of the saint's cult through the Benedictine and Cistercian orders.

And it was he who had the **Collegiate** church built to enshrine the saint's relics and to welcome pilgrims.





The feudal system and the incessant wars of the Middle Ages fostered the spread of the cult of a saint who possessed the charisma of freeing prisoners.

Thus, in addition to the copyist monks of Benedictine and Cistercian monasteries, the Normans contributed significantly to its dissemination through:

- The conquest of **England** by William the Conqueror in 1066, followed by

- The Crusades and the conquest of **southern Italy** by the Hauteville family including Bohemond of Antioch (right, email) .





Throughout Europe, celebrations are organised in honor of Saint Leonard, such as in France at Saint-Léonard de Noblat with the **Ostensions** (religious processions) dating back to 1094, and in Belgium at Zoutleeuw with the **Whit Monday** processions since 1274. In the collegiate church of Saint-Léonard de Noblat, starting in 1403, the relics of Saint Leonard were placed in the current wrought-iron cage, at the request of the town council, who were aware of the tourist potential and economic benefits of the influx of pilgrims (as evidenced by the **pilgrimage badges** (left, found in England in the 15th century, Cloisters museums New York)). Over time, the cult evolved towards the protection of livestock (animals wearing horseshoes), and specific celebrations appeared in Bavaria, the cavalcades or **Leonhardiritt**, such as in Bad Tölz since 1772.

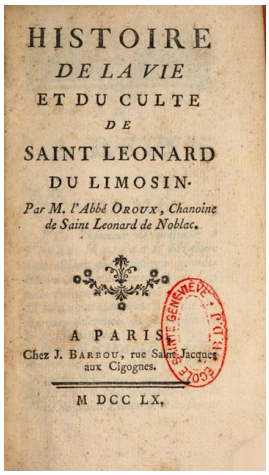
Throughout Europe and beyond, iconography and numerous hymns testify to the past and present vitality of the cult.


LA VIE,
TRANSLATION, ET
MIRACLES DV GLO-
rieux Saint Leonard
Confeſſeur.
Extraicte de diuers Autheurs.
Par I. C. citoyen de ladite Ville.
A S. Leonard de Noblac,
Pour Etienne Roland.
1624

1624

The Life, Translation, and Miracles of the Glorious Saint Leonard, Confessor, by Joseph du Chalard

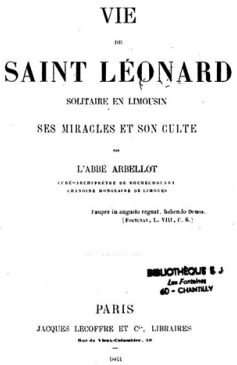
https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k8705712q


HISTOIRE
DE LA VIE
ET DU CULTE
DE
SAINT LEONARD
DU LIMOSIN.
Par M. l'Abbé Oroux, Chanoine de Saint Leonard de Noblac.
A PARIS,
Chez J. Barrois, rue Saint Jacques aux Cigognes.
M DCC LX.

1760

History of the Life and Cult of Saint Leonard of Limousin, by Abbot Oroux

https://numelyo.bm-lyon.fr/f_view/BML:BML_00GOO0100137001102437360/IMG00000003


VIE
DE
SAINT LÉONARD
SOLITAIRE EN LIMOUSIN
SES MIRACLES ET SON CULTE
PAR
L'ABBÉ ARBELLOT
PARIS
JACQUES LECOFFRE ET Cie, LIBRAIRES

1863

Saint Leonard, Hermit in Limousin, His Miracles and Cult, by Abbot Arbellot

https://numelyo.bm-lyon.fr/f_view/BML:BML_00GOO0100137001102494627/IMG00000011

Gutenberg's invention of the printing press in the 15th century greatly facilitated the dissemination of knowledge and learning. Printed books thus took over from the long and meticulous work of the monks who copied manuscripts. From the 17th century onward, one book per century was published to continue the transmission of the story of our shared patron saint and contribute to the spread of his cult. It is worth noting that Abbot Oroux dedicated one-eighth of his work to the spread of this cult, and Abbot Arbellot one-quarter, evidence of an awareness of its importance.

And in your community? ***How did the cult of Saint Leonard come about? What celebrations are held in his honor today? What iconography (statues, paintings, stained glass windows, etc.) is associated with him? What biographies of Saint Leonard exist in your language? What hymns? Help us expand our shared knowledge ; share all of this via fil-leo.***

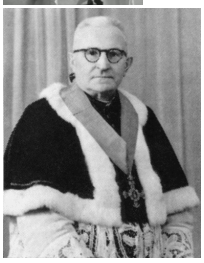
2016-2026 : 10 years of fil-leo : The « pionneers »

In the aftermath of World War II, in 1946, the Limousin Ostensions were revived in Limoges, in a spirit of peace and fraternity.

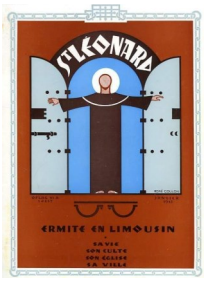
On **May 9, 1950**, **Robert Schuman's declaration** initiated the creation of the European Union..
https://european-union.europa.eu/principles-countries-history/history-eu/1945-59/schuman-declaration-may-1950_fr



En **1953**, the Ostensions were revived in Saint-Léonard de Noblat, featuring paintings of historical pilgrims, as they still do today. *Watch the film on the Nouvelle-Aquitaine Film Archive website:* https://www.memoirefilmiquenouvelleaquitaine.fr/films/ostensions-1953



Joseph Biossac, parish priest of Saint-Léonard de Noblat from 1945 to 1965, published a short, simple book in **1955** to spread knowledge about Saint Leonard and the continued relevance and influence of his cult to a wider audience.



On **March 25, 1957**, the **Treaty of Rome** laid the foundations of modern Europe with its 6 founding countries: West Germany, Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands.



Starting with the Ostensions of **1960**, the influence of the cult was symbolised by **models** of churches from all over Europe (*here, Kirkop in Malta*), and Bad Aussee (Austria) was the first delegation to participate.



In **1985**, the Saint Leonard confraternity organised its **first pilgrimage to Inchenhofen**, Germany. At the time, without the internet and without open borders, this required considerable **logistical preparation**, and credit must be given to **Pierre Royer** (*left*), Joseph Rigout, and Henri Constant, who made it possible. Inchenhofen has participated in the Ostensions since 1981, and pilgrimages from Saint-Léonard de Noblat have taken place there from 1985 (*right*) to 2013.

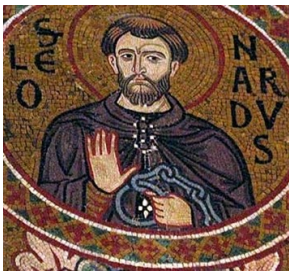




Frédéric Rougerie (left *as a member of the Marzipan confraternity*), organiser of the 1995 and 2002 Ostensions, initiated the **acceleration of welcoming external delegations**, 1995 : 4 delegations, 3 countries, and 2002 : 16 delegations, 8 countries. **Patrick Brissard** has done an enormous amount of work cataloging the **iconography** of Saint Leonard (*examples on the right*).



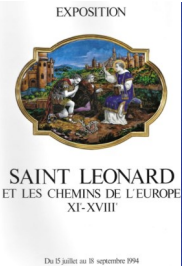


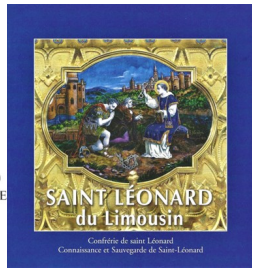


In **1995**, the **Schengen Agreements** on free movement came into force, followed in 1997 by the liberalisation of the air travel market. In **2002**, the introduction of the **Euro** accelerated the facilitation of travel within Europe.



Martine Tandeau de Marsac, president of the Association for the Knowledge and Preservation of Saint Leonard (*Connaissance et Sauvegarde de Saint Léonard*), has contributed in particular: in 1994 to the **exhibition** on the influence of the cult of Saint Leonard; in 2005 to the most recent **book** on Saint Leonard, in partnership with the confraternity; and in 2023 to the recording by the Gregorian Choir of Paris of the **CD** of the 1776 antiphonary.









In 2013, **Jacques Plainemaison** was instrumental in the inscription of the Septennial **Ostensions** of Limousin on **UNESCO**'s Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. For his contribution, the Vatican awarded him the title of Knight of the Pontifical Order of Saint Gregory the Great in 2017.

UNESCO
Organisation des Nations Unies pour l'éducation, la science et la culture
Patrimoine culturel immatériel

Les Ostensions septennales limousines

inscrites sur la liste du patrimoine culturel immatériel en 2013



Member of the confraternity and organizer of the 2009 Ostensions, Michel Braem (*left*) contributed to the growth in the number of European members of the Saint-Léonard -de-Noblat confraternity and advocated for strengthening and maintaining ties with the outside world. This culminated, with all the delegations present, in the **constituent assembly of fil-leo on May 7, 2016** *(right).*





In **2016**, the arrival of **fiber optics** (Connectivity for European Gigabit Society),
in **2017**, the **end of mobile roaming** charges greatly facilitated communication between people within Europe.

2016-2026 : 10 years of fil-leo : 1985-2015 the first exchanges

For the 30 years preceding the creation of fil-leo, the Saint Leonard Confraternity of Saint-Léonard de Noblat visited three parishes (Inchenhofen, Zoutleeuw, and Panza d'Ischia) in three countries (Germany, Belgium, and Italy).

In addition to these visits, outside of the Ostensions, numerous large delegations of pilgrims were welcomed from Germany (Inchenhofen, Kreuth, Munich), Belgium (Zoutleeuw), Italy (Parma, San Stefano di Magra, Treviso), and Switzerland (Saint Leonard of Valais).
And also smaller delegations: from Germany (Füssigen, Hipolstein, Laupheim, Nersigen), Austria (Sankt Leonhard im Forst), Italy (Borgoricco, Mascali, Intimiano, San Giovanni Rotondo), Malta (Kirkop), and Portugal (Atouguia da Baleia, Galafura).

In **2002**, the "Wegen naar vriendschap / les routes d'amitié" (Paths to Friendship) **pilgrimage on foot** between Saint-Léonard de Noblat (France) and Zoutleeuw (approximately 700 km) from May 8 to 23, preceding the traditional Whit Monday procession in Zoutleeuw, was a highlight of the ties between our two parishes and a testament to the devotion to Saint Leonard.



In **2016**, the Ostensions of Saint-Léonard de Noblat coincided with the commemoration of the end of World War II, and the **speech by Karl Metzger**, mayor of **Inchenhofen** (Germany), marked a turning point, signaling the end of a cycle that began with the participation of the first German delegation in the Ostensions in 1981. It was the generation that experienced the war or was born just afterward that was determined to build friendship and ultimately achieve peace.

2016-2026 : 10 years of fil-leo : what is fil-leo ?

To summarise the association's purpose :

- Unite legal entities (local authorities, associations, confraternities, parishes),
- Develop and strengthen ties between different locations,
- Promote international recognition of Saint Leonard and his legacy.

To put it more simply: fil-leo is… "l'auberge espagnole".



Apologies to the translators (!): in French, the expression "**auberge espagnole**" refers to **a place where you find only what you bring with you**.

It is also the title of a 2002 film by Cédric Klapisch that celebrates encounters, sharing, and discovering others. In many ways, this image can be likened to fil-leo.

Everyone brings their own history, culture, language, and traditions.

Yet, once language barriers are overcome and prejudices left behind, a genuine community of exchange emerges.

One where everyone is enriched by the experience.

And for you, what is fil-leo ?

After 10 years of existence and 2 years as president, and especially after all the encounters: welcoming people here in Saint-Léonard de Noblat and visiting 11 locations in 9 countries, this is our personal vision.

And for you ? What does fil-leo represent? To help us evolve, grow, and be closer to our community, we value your opinion...

For a new census !



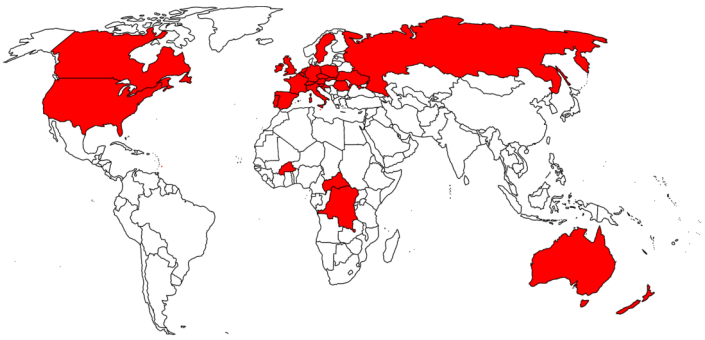
The current knowledge of these places is based on the study conducted for the 1994 Connaissance et Sauvegarde exhibition, "Saint-Léonard on the Paths of Europe" (*map on the left*). This study only lists place names, without postal or email addresses. Therefore, a great deal of research was required.

Thank you to everyone, particularly those recently in Austria and Slovenia, who helped update the information.

Changes in religious geography (large parishes, deaneries) and changes in personnel (priest, mayor, president, or association secretary) make research complex and contacts can quickly become outdated.

One of the major projects for the future of fil-leo would be to launch a large-scale census with the support of the Church and/or the help of volunteers in each country.

2016-2026 : 10 years of fil-leo : Some achievements



With over 900 members representing more than 400 locations, fil-leo has contacts in some thirty countries.

To date, it has around thirty member organisations (municipalities, parishes, associations) in 10 European countries.

If you would like to help us grow and join the movement, please contact us by email : fil-leo@federationstleonard.com



A contemporary statue of Saint Leonard was created by Claude F. Bromet, an artist from Saint-Léonard de Noblat and an honorary member of the confraternity, who passed away in 2024.

The statue was created in partnership with the Carpenet porcelain factory in Saint-Léonard de Noblat.

Note that Limoges porcelain has just been awarded the very first EU-wide Geographical Indication for artisanal and industrial products.

To learn more:

https://france.representation.ec.europa.eu/informations/la-porcelaine-de-limoges-obtient-la-premiere-indication-geographique-artisanale-et-industrielle-de-2026-05-18_fr



A concerted effort has been undertaken with the Vatican to have the celebration of Saint Leonard's Day on November 6th included in the Roman liturgical calendar.

So far, we have not been successful, but we will try to achieve this through other means.

2016-2026 : 10 years of fil-leo : The Story Continues, Call for Contributions

The celebration of fil-leo's 10th anniversary continues in upcoming newsletters in 2026…

To write a new chapter, we need you! 3 questions:

- **What are your best memories since the creation of fil-leo?**
- **What does fil-leo represent for you?**
- **Imagine fil-leo in 10 years…**

Send us your stories and ideas to fil-leo@federationstleonard.com

2016-2026 : 10 years of fil-leo : To be continued in upcoming newsletters

This focus on fil-leo's 10 years continues. In upcoming newsletters, we will write about two further aspects:

- **The highlights experienced by the Saint Leonard brotherhood during pilgrimages and welcoming events since fil-leo's debut.**
- **The men and women who, in each location, contribute to maintaining the connection between us and are true living stones of fil-leo.**

International Gathering 2027, July 2—4 , Mont-Saint-Michel bay (Normandy, France)



Mont-Saint-Michel Bay, between the Saint Leonard Priory of Vains and the Mont

In July 2027, something unprecedented in history will occur in Normandy.

The relics of Saint Leonard—kept at the Collegiate Church of Saint-Léonard de Noblat, the living heart of the Limousin septenary Ostensions tradition, inscribed on UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage list—will leave their sanctuary and be carried across the Mont-Saint-Michel Bay on foot from the **Saint Leonard Priory of Vains**. They will be carried by former prisoners: men and women who know firsthand what it means to be free. This is not a ceremony. It is the charisma of Saint Leonard made flesh, in 2027, on a bay that has drawn pilgrims for a thousand years.

These celebrations are an opportunity to give thanks to the Normans for their contribution to spreading the cult of Saint Leonard in England (William the Conqueror) and in southern Italy (Bohemian of Antioch and the Hauteville family), and to bear witness that 1,000 years later, Saint Leonard unites us and his cult is very much alive today.

MILLENIUM
2027, ANNÉE EUROPÉENNE DES NORMANDS 1027-2027

The 2027 Saint Leonard's Day celebrations have been awarded the "Millennium 2027" label by the Normandy region as part of the European Year of the Normans.

To learn more about the millennium of the birth of William the Conqueror (in French):

https://www.normandie.fr/2027-millenaire-de-la-naissance-de-guillaume-le-conquerant



Priory Saint Leonard in Vains (Normandy, France)

This is the heart of the **Saint Leonard festivities**, from July 2nd to 4th, 2027 — three days of European gathering at the Saint-Léonard Priory in Vains, the last stop before Mont Saint-Michel, founded in 1087 by William the Conqueror himself, at the crossroads of the **Via Angelica** (Monte Sant'Angelo — Mont-Saint-Michel) and the **Route des Ducs** (Rouen — the bay).

International Gathering 2027, July 2—4 , Mont-Saint-Michel bay (Normandy, France)

A 3-day program with 3 themes:



Mont-Saint-Michel from the mainland

Friday 2: Liberation

Workshops, songs, a public lecture on Saint Leonard in **Avranches** (the diocesan capital), exploring the bay, and an evening of European voices from across the network—testimonies, discussions, and traditional songs.

Saturday 3: Light

Medieval ostensions in the village of Vains, followed by a walk across the tidal flats—relics, pilgrims, guides, and contemplative stops—arriving at **Mont-Saint-Michel** at 5:30 p.m. Saint Leonard's Day celebrations in the village of Mont-Saint-Michel.

In the evening: a Requiem for a Conqueror in the abbey church, followed by **veneration of the relics of Saint Leonard in the Marvel—the Benedictine abbey of Mont-Saint-Michel** itself—accompanied by the Gregorian Choir of Paris.

Sunday 4: Unity

Solemn **twinning** ceremonies with sister sites dedicated to Saint Leonard throughout Europe.

Inauguration of the frescoes in the chapel of the Saint Leonard Priory in Vains, painted in the living tradition of the Rublev school by Father Maciej Leszczynski.

Festive closing evening—celebration, gatherings, and a closing concert.

Throughout the three days, European Youth Encounters run like a thread through the program—young people from the Normandy European Routes and the network of « Saint Leonard » sites, meeting, creating, and journeying together.



View of Mont-Saint-Michel from the Saint Leonard Priory in Vains

Please join us ! These festivities are for everyone, believers or not, history buffs, bay lovers, families, artists, and European delegations.
It won't be a show but a living experience. The experience of a figure whose message; liberation, reaching out to others, building together transcends centuries and borders, and resonates here, on the shores of the bay.

Pre-register now for free and without obligation—places and nearby accommodations are limited.

Accommodation
Stay with local residents, in guesthouses, hotels, or with partner organisations.

Transportation

Nearest airports:
- Nantes: 200 km
- Paris-Beauvais: 320 km
- Paris-Orly: 350 km

More information and pre-registration:

https://prieure-saint-leonard.fr/presence/pre-inscription

Email : contact@prieure-saint-leonard.fr

Phone : +33 745 200 900

Belgium : May 24 2026, Whit Monday processions

Zoutleeuw

information and photos Guido Coningx






The Whit Monday procession is a tradition which has existed in Zoutleeuw since 1274.

It is listed as part of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Flanders:

https://immaterieelerfgoed.be/nl/erfgoederen/de-sint-leonardusprocessie-van-zoutleeuw

A video slideshow of the 2026 procession is available:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=numEJ_ZWH2o

Sint Lenaarts

information Els Van Loeveren






In Sint Lenaarts, this tradition has existed since 1495.

The event is organised by the Vrienden van Leonardus ("Friends of Leonard"), association which makes a special effort to involve young people. to live and perpetuate this festival. It is also listed as part of the intangible cultural heritage of Flanders:

https://immaterieelerfgoed.be/nl/erfgoederen/leonardusprocessie-sint-lenaarts

The costumes of the young pilgrims (photos bottom right) were made thanks to donations received in 2025 *(see newsletter no. 25 of December 2025).*

Visits to Lenart (Slovenia)

information Marjan Pucko





On May 21, on the sidelines of a pilgrimage to Medjugorje, a delegation from Lenartov (Slovakia) visited Lenart (Slovenia)

On May 29, Lenart (Slovenia) hosted their neighbors from Bad Sankt Leonhard im Lavanttal (Austria).