



BASILICA OF THE FOURTEEN HOLY HELPERS—GERMANY

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NOVENA AND STORIES OF THE FOURTEEN HOLY HELPERS

Chapter 11

St. Achatius, Martyr (Ninth Holy Helper)



The Legend of St. Achatius, Martyr

The Ninth Holy Helper

LEGEND

OF THE saints named Achatius, that one is reckoned among the Holy Helpers who, as a Roman soldier, died for Christ.

Achatius was a native of Cappadocia and as a youth joined the Roman army during the reign of Emperor Hadrian, attaining the rank of captain. One day, when leading his company against the enemy, he heard a voice saying to him, "Call on the God of Christians!" He obeyed, was instructed, and received Baptism. Filled with zeal, he henceforth sought to convert also the pagan soldiers of the army. When the emperor heard of this, Achatius was thrown into prison, then placed on the rack, bound to a post and scourged, because he refused to offer sacrifice to the idols. When all these tortures availed nothing, he was brought before the tribune Bibianus.

Asked by him what was his name and country, Achatius replied, "My name is Christian, because I am a follower of Christ; men call me Achatius. My country is Cappadocia. There my parents lived; there I was converted to the Christian faith, and was so inspired by the combats and sufferings of the Christian martyrs that I am resolved to shed my blood for Christ to attain heaven." Then Bibianus ordered him to be beaten with leaden clubs, after which he was loaded with chains and returned to the prison.

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After Achatius had been in prison seven days, Bibianus was called to Byzantium, and ordered all prisoners to be transported there. On the journey Achatius suffered greatly, for his entire body was covered with wounds, his chains were galling, the guards were cruel and the roads were bad. He thought himself dying. Praying to God, a voice from the clouds answered him, "Achatius, be firm!" The soldiers of the guard were terrified and asked each other, "What is this? How can the clouds have a voice?" Many prisoners were converted. Next day some of the converts saw a number of men in shining armor speaking to Achatius, washing his wounds and healing them, so that not even a scar remained.

Arrived in Byzantium the saint was again cast into prison, and after seven days dragged before the judge. When neither promises nor the most cruel torments shook the constancy of the brave confessor of the Faith, the judge sent him to Flaccius, the proconsul of Thracia, who imprisoned him for five days, and meanwhile read the records of his former trials. Then he ordered him to be beheaded. Achatius suffered death for Christ on May 8, 311.

LESSON

ACHATIUS manfully and without fear confessed the Faith amid persecutions and

IV. Prayer of Parents for Their Children

HOLY Helpers, assist me to give thanks to God for blessing me with children. Having received them from Him, it is my duty to train them for His service. Therefore I commend them to your special protection. Guard them from sin, help them to know and fulfil their duties, preserve them from all harm of body and soul; pray for them that they may be and remain children of God, For me, obtain the grace always to take good care of them, to edify them by good example, to punish their faults wisely, to preserve their innocence, and to instruct them unto piety, so that they and I may together enjoy the eternal happiness of heaven. Amen.

V. Prayer of Children for Their Parents

HOLY Helpers, mighty intercessors with God in all necessities; God strictly commanded that children should love, honor, and obey their parents. Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ Himself gave them the example of submission and obedience by being subject to His mother and foster-father. I commend myself to your powerful intercession and implore you to obtain for me the grace to follow His example. For my parents I implore protection from all evil of body and soul, a long and prosperous life, and a happy death. Reward them for all the care, anxiety, labor, and trouble which they underwent patiently for my sake with the eternal crown of heavenly glory. Amen.

VI. Prayer of Married People

HOLY Helpers, powerful intercessors at the throne of God, by whose providence we were indissolubly joined in holy wedlock through the sacramental bonds of matrimony; obtain for us, through your intercession, the grace to dwell together in mutual love and peace, and to fulfil faithfully the duties of our state of life; that following the example of the saints and elect who lived in wedlock, we may merit God's grace and blessing by a virtuous life here on earth, and united in heaven praise and bless Him for ever. Amen.

THIS NOVENA IS RECITED FOR NINE CONSECUTIVE DAYS

sufferings. We, too, are often placed in circumstances where the profession of our Faith and the practice of the virtues inculcated by it cause us trials. But so deplorable are the effects of sensuality, avarice, and ambition, and such is the laxity and spiritual callousness of many Christians, that there is real cause for every one to be filled with alarm for the safety of his soul. It is not the crowd we are to follow, but the precepts of the Gospel.

Therefore we ought to strive to give a good example by our faithful compliance with the demands of religion. For Our Lord Himself exhorts us: "So let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father, who is in heaven" (*Matt. v. 16*).

Prayer of the Church

O GOD, who dost give us joy through the remembrance of Thy blessed martyrs, Achatius and his companions; grant, we beseech Thee, that we may be inflamed by the example of those for whose merits we rejoice. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Novena in Honor of St. Achatius, Martyr

PREPARATORY PRAYER

ALMIGHTY and eternal God! With lively faith and reverently worshiping Thy divine Majesty, I prostrate myself before Thee and invoke with filial trust Thy supreme bounty and mercy. Illumine the darkness of my intellect with a ray of Thy heavenly light and inflame my heart with the fire of Thy divine love, that I may contemplate the great virtues and merits of the saint in whose honor I make this novena, and following his example imitate, like him, the life of Thy divine Son.

Moreover, I beseech Thee to grant graciously, through the merits and intercession of this powerful Helper, the petition which through him I humbly place before Thee, devoutly saying, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Vouchsafe graciously to hear it, if it redounds to Thy greater glory and to the salvation of my soul. Amen.

PRAYER IN HONOR OF ST. ACHATIUS

O GOD, who didst fortify Thy holy martyr Achatius with constancy and trustful reliance on Thee in death; grant us through his intercession at the hour of our death to be free from all anxiety and victorious in our last combat with the enemy. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

INVOCATION OF ST. ACHATIUS

VALIANT martyr of Christ, St. Achatius, who preached Christ faithfully before kings and judges, and didst gain the victory over the enemies of God; help me through thy powerful intercession to resist and gain the victory over all the enemies of my salvation, over the world and its allurements, over the concupiscence of the flesh, and over the temptations of Satan. I implore thee particularly to assist me in my agony, when the powers of hell rise against me to rob my soul. Then do thou come to my aid and repel the assaults of the enemy, so that I surrender my soul into the hands of my Redeemer in faith, hope, and charity, and confiding in His infinite merits. Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

Prayers of Petition and Intercession

I. Three Invocations

1. GREAT friends of God, Holy Helpers, humbly saluting and venerating you, I implore your help and intercession. Bring my prayers before the throne of the Most Holy Trinity, so that I may experience in all the difficulties and trials of life the mercy of the eternal Father, the love of the incarnate divine Son, and the assistance of the Holy Ghost; that despondency may not depress me when God's wise decree imposes on my shoulders a heavy burden. Above all, I implore your assistance at the hour of death. Help me then to gain the victory over the temptations and assaults of Satan, and to leave this world hopefully trusting in God's mercy, to join you in heaven, there to praise Him for ever and ever. Amen.

2. With confiding trust I turn to you, Holy Helpers, who were selected by God before many other saints to be the special intercessors and advocates of the distressed. Obtain for me strength and courage to struggle and suffer on earth for the glory of God, for the propagation of our holy faith, and for my own perfection. You are fruitful branches of the true and living vine, Jesus Christ, for whom you heroically suffered hunger and thirst, persecution and ignominy, afflictions and adversity, tortures and death. Here on earth you were true disciples and dauntless martyrs of Christ. Assist me to follow your example and to suffer for His sake, so that I may not be parted from Him as a useless member, but persevere in His service despite all trials and tribulations of life. Knowing my inconstancy and weakness, I have recourse to you, O glorious members of the Church triumphant, and implore you to support my feeble prayers, and to bear them before the throne of the Almighty, who, for your sake, will hear them. Amen.

3. Great friends and servants of God, Holy Helpers! Humbly saluting and venerating you, I implore your help and intercession. God has promised and granted that whosoever invokes your aid shall be relieved in his needs and succored at the hour of death. Therefore I have recourse to you and confidently implore your aid. I am

surrounded by difficulties and my soul is oppressed with grief. Burdened with sins, the fear of God's rigorous judgment appalls me, whilst Satan ceases not to exert all his power to accomplish my eternal ruin.

Therefore I implore your assistance, powerful Holy Helpers, in my dire distress. By the penitential life you led, by the cruel tortures you suffered, and by your holy death I entreat you to pray for me. Obtain for me the remission of my sins and perseverance to the end in God's grace. Assist me in my agony and protect me against the wily assaults of Satan, that through your help I may die a happy death and enter a blissful eternity. Amen.

II. Prayer in Illness

COMPASSIONATE Holy Helpers, who restored health to so many through the power of the name of Jesus; behold me suffering from bodily illness and from wounds of the soul. Implore the kind, merciful Good Samaritan, your and my Lord Jesus Christ, to heal the wounds of my soul by washing them in His most precious blood, and to quicken my spirit by His sanctifying grace. If it, then, be God's holy will and for the welfare of my soul, let me experience the powerful effect of your intercession, that, restored to health, I may serve God with greater fervor, and promote your veneration together with so many who experienced your help in illness and suffering. Amen.

III. Prayer for the Sick

MERCIFUL Holy Helpers, look benignly upon me, who implore your intercession for a sick person. Our Lord and Redeemer Jesus Christ, who Himself went about healing and doing good, appointed you the special protectors and intercessors of the sick, and restored to bodily and spiritual health many for whom you prayed. Encouraged thereby to invoke you, I implore you to offer up to His sacred Heart all the pains and torments He suffered during His bitter passion. Offer up to Him also your own sufferings for God's glory, which you underwent during life, and in death; offer up to Him all the anguish and distress suffered by the sick person for whom I invoke your intercession. Ask Him to restore him to health of body, and to infuse into his soul the grace of salvation, so that he may devote his life with renewed vigor to the service of God and to the fulfilment of his duties, and thereby gather rich merits for eternity.

But if God, in the designs of His providence, should otherwise dispose, implore for the sick person patience in his illness, resignation to the divine will, and the grace of a happy death. Assist him in his agony, and conduct his soul to the throne of the Almighty. Amen.