



BASILICA OF THE FOURTEEN HOLY HELPERS—GERMANY

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NOVENA AND STORIES OF THE FOURTEEN HOLY HELPERS

Chapter 15

St. Catherine, Virgin/Martyr (Thirteenth Holy Helper)



The Legend of St. Catherine, Virgin and Martyr The Thirteenth Holy Helper

LEGEND

ST. CATHERINE was a native of Alexandria, Egypt, a city then famous for its schools of philosophy. She was a daughter of Costis, half-brother of Constantine, and of Sabinella, queen of Egypt. Her wisdom and acquirements were remarkable, the philosophy of Plato being her favorite study. While Catherine was yet young her father died, leaving her heiress to the kingdom. Her love of study and retirement displeased her subjects, who desired her to marry, asserting that her gifts of noble birth, wealth, beauty, and knowledge should be transmitted to her children.

The princess replied that the husband whom she would wed must be even more richly endowed than herself. His blood must be the noblest, his rank must surpass her own, his beauty without comparison, his benignity great enough to forgive all offences. The people of Alexandria were disheartened, for they knew of no such prince; but Catherine remained persistent in her determination to wed none other.

Now, it happened that a certain hermit who lived near Alexandria had a vision in which he saw the Blessed Virgin, who sent him to tell Catherine that her divine Son was the Spouse whom she desired. He alone possessed all, and more, than the requirements she demanded. The holy man gave Catherine a picture of Jesus and Mary; and when the princess had gazed upon the face of Christ she loved Him so that she could think of naught else, and the studies in which she had been wont to take delight became distasteful to her.

One night Catherine dreamed that she accompanied the hermit to a sanctuary, whence angels came to meet her. She fell on her face before them, but one of the angelic band bade her, "Rise dear sister Catherine, for the King of glory delighteth to honor thee." She rose and followed the angels to the presence of the queen of heaven, who was surrounded by angels and saints and was beautiful beyond description. The queen welcomed her and led her to her divine Son, Our Lord. But He turned from her, saying: "She is not fair and beautiful enough for me."

Catherine awoke at these words and wept bitterly until morning. She then sent for the hermit and inquired what would make her worthy of the heavenly Bridegroom. The saintly recluse instructed her in the true Faith and, with her mother, she was baptized. That night, in a dream, the Blessed Virgin and her divine Son again appeared to her. Mary presented her to Jesus, saying: "Behold, she has been regenerated in the water of Baptism." Then Christ smiled on her and plighted His troth to her by putting a ring on her finger. When she awoke the ring was still there, and thenceforth Catherine despised all earthly things and longed only for the hour when she should go to her heavenly Bridegroom.

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

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.

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.

After the death of Sabinella, Emperor Maximin came to Alexandria and declared a persecution against the Christians. Catherine appeared in the temple and held an argument with the tyrant, utterly confounding him. The emperor ordained that fifty of the most learned men of the empire be brought to dispute with her; but, sustained by the power of God, Catherine not only vanquished them in argument, but converted them to the true Faith. In his fury Maximin commanded that the new Christians be burned; and Catherine comforted them, since they could not be baptized, by telling them that their blood should be their baptism and the flames their crown of glory.

The emperor then tried other means to overcome the virtue of the noble princess; but, failing to do this, he ordered her to be cast into a dungeon and starved to death. Twelve days later, when the dungeon was opened, a bright light and fragrant perfume filled it, and Catherine, who had been nourished by angels, came forth radiant and beautiful. On seeing this miracle, the empress and many noble Alexandrians declared themselves Christians, and suffered death at the command of the emperor.

Catherine was not spared, for Maximin made a further attempt to win her. He offered to make her mistress of the world if she would but listen to him, and when she still spurned his proposals, he ordered her to the torture. She was bound to four spiked wheels which revolved in different directions, that she might be torn into many pieces. But an angel consumed the wheels by fire, and the fragments flying around killed the executioners and many of the spectators. The tyrant then ordered her to be scourged and beheaded. The sentence was carried into effect on November 25, 307.

A pious legend, recognized by the Church, says that angels bore Catherine's body to Mount Sinai, and buried it there.

LESSON

ST. CATHERINE, for her erudition and the spirit of piety by which she sanctified it, was chosen the model and patroness of Christian philosophers.

Learning, next to virtue, is the noblest quality and ornament of the human mind. Profane science teaches many useful truths, but when compared with the importance of the study of the science of the saints, they are of value only inasmuch as when made subservient to the latter. The study of the saints was to live in the spirit of Christ. This science is taught by the Church, and acquired by listening to her instructions, by pious reading and meditation.

Be intent on learning this science, and order your life according to its rules. It is the "one thing necessary," for it is the foundation of all wisdom and true happiness. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Ps. cx. 10).

Prayer of the Church

O GOD, who didst give the law to Moses on the summit of Mount Sinai, and by the holy angels didst miraculously transfer there the body of blessed Catherine, virgin and martyr; grant us, we beseech Thee, to come, through her intercession, to the mountain which is Christ. Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

Novena in Honor of St. Catherine, Virgin and 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. CATHERINE

O GOD, who didst distinguish Thy holy virgin and martyr Catherine by the gift of great wisdom and virtue, and a victorious combat with the enemies of the Faith; grant us, we beseech Thee, through her intercession, constancy in the Faith and the wisdom of the saints, that we may devote all the powers of our mind and heart to Thy service. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

INVOCATION OF ST. CATHERINE

ST. CATHERINE, glorious virgin and martyr, resplendent in the luster of wisdom and purity; thy wisdom refuted the adversaries of divine truth and covered them with confusion; thy immaculate purity made thee a spouse of Christ, so that after thy glorious martyrdom angels carried thy body to Mount Sinai. Implore for me progress in the science of the saints and the virtue of holy purity, that vanquishing the enemies of my soul, I may be victorious in my last combat and after death be conducted by the angels into the eternal beatitude of heaven. 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