



**BASILICA OF THE FOURTEEN HOLY HELPERS—GERMANY**

## **NOVENA AND STORIES OF THE FOURTEEN HOLY HELPERS**

### **Chapter 7**

#### **St. Vitus, Martyr (Fifth Holy Helper)**



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# The Legend of St. Vitus, Martyr

## The Fifth Holy Helper

### LEGEND

ST. VITUS belonged to a noble pagan family of Sicily, and was born about the year 291, at Mazurra. His father, Hylas, placed him in early childhood in charge of a Christian couple named Modestus and Crescentia, who raised him in the Christian faith, and had him baptized. He grew in years and in virtue, till, at the age of twelve, he was claimed by his father, who, to his great anger, found him a fervent Christian. Convinced, after many unsuccessful attempts, that stripes and other chastisements would not induce him to renounce the Faith, his father delivered the brave boy up to Valerian, the governor, who in vain employed every artifice to shake his constancy. Finally he commanded Vitus to be scourged, but when two soldiers were about to execute this order their hands and those of Valerian were suddenly lamed. The governor ascribed this to sorcery, yet he invoked Vitus' help, and behold, when the Christian boy made the sign of the cross over the lamed members, they were healed. Then Valerian sent him back to his father, telling him to leave no means untried to induce his son to sacrifice to the idols.

Hylas now tried blandishments, pleasures, and amusements to influence the brave boy. He even sent a corrupt woman to tempt him, and for that purpose locked them both together in one room. But Vitus, who had remained firm amid tortures, resisted also the allurements of sensuality. Closing his eyes, he knelt in prayer, and behold, an angel appeared, filling the room with heavenly splendor, and stood at the youth's side. Terrified, the woman fled. But even this miracle did not change the obstinate father.

Finally Vitus escaped, and with Modestus and Crescentia fled to Italy. They landed safe in Naples, and there proclaimed Christ wherever they had an opportunity. Their fervor and many miracles which they wrought attracted the attention of Emperor Diocletian to them. He ordered them to be brought before his tribunal, which being done, he at first treated them kindly, employing blandishments and making promises to induce them to renounce Christ. When this had no effect, they were cruelly tormented, but with no other result than confirming them in their constancy. Enraged, the emperor condemned them to be thrown to the wild beasts. But the lions and tigers forgot their ferocity and cowered at their feet. Now Diocletian, whose fury knew no bounds, ordered them to be cast into a caldron of molten lead and boiling pitch. They prayed, "O God, deliver us through the power of Thy name!" and behold, they remained unharmed. Then the emperor condemned them to the rack, on which they expired, in the year 303.

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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.

#### **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**

## LESSON

THE heroic spirit of martyrdom exhibited by St. Vitus was owing to the early impressions of piety which he received through the teaching and example of his virtuous foster-parents. The choice of teachers, nurses, and servants who have the care of children is of the greatest importance on account of the influence they exert on them. The pagan Romans were most solicitous that no slave whose speech was not perfectly elegant and graceful should have access to children. Shall a Christian be less careful as to their virtue? It is a fatal mistake to imagine that children are too young to be infected with the contagion of vice. No age is more impressionable than childhood; no one observes more closely than the young, and nothing is so easily acquired by them as a spirit of vanity, pride, revenge, obstinacy, sloth, etc., and nothing is harder to overcome. What a happiness for a child to be formed to virtue from infancy, and to be instilled from a tender age with the spirit of piety, simplicity, meekness, and mercy! Such a foundation being well laid, the soul will easily, and sometimes without experiencing severe conflicts, rise to the height of Christian perfection.

#### Prayer of the Church

WE BESEECH Thee, O Lord, to graciously grant us through the intercession of Thy blessed martyrs Vitus, Modestus, and Crescentia, that we may not proudly exalt ourselves, but serve Thee in humility and simplicity, so as to avoid evil and to do right for Thy sake. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

#### Novena in Honor of St. Vitus, 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. VITUS

GRANT us, O God, through the intercession of St. Vitus, a due estimation of the value of our soul and of its redemption by the precious blood of Thy Son Jesus Christ; so that, for its salvation, we bear all trials with fortitude. Give this Thy youthful servant and heroic martyr as a guide and protector to Christian youths, that following his example they may after a victorious combat receive the crown of justice in heaven. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

## INVOCATION OF ST. VITUS

ST. VITUS, glorious martyr of Christ; in thy youth thou wast exposed to violent and dangerous temptations, but in the fear of God and for the love of Jesus thou didst victoriously overcome them. O amiable, holy youth, I implore thee by the love of Jesus, assist me with thy powerful intercession to overcome the temptations to evil, to avoid every occasion of sin, and thus to preserve spotless the robe of innocence and sanctifying grace, and to bring it unstained to the judgment-seat of Jesus Christ, that I may forever enjoy the beatific vision of God which is promised to the pure of heart. 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