



BASILICA OF THE FOURTEEN HOLY HELPERS—GERMANY

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NOVENA AND STORIES OF THE FOURTEEN HOLY HELPERS

Chapter 10

St. Cyriacus, Deacon and Martyr (Eighth Holy Helper)



The Legend of St. Cyriacus, Deacon and Martyr

The Eighth Holy Helper

THIS NOVENA IS RECITED FOR NINE CONSECUTIVE DAYS

LEGEND

EMPEROR MAXIMIN in token of his gratitude to Diocletian, who had ceded the western half of his empire to him, ordered the building of that magnificent structure in Rome, whose ruins are still known as the "Baths of Diocletian." The Christians imprisoned for the Faith were compelled to labor under cruel overseers at this building. A zealous Christian Roman, touched with pity at this moving spectacle, resolved to employ his means in improving the condition of these poor victims of persecution.

Among the deacons of the Roman Church at that time was one by the name of Cyriacus, who was distinguished by his zeal in the performance of all good works. Him, with two companions, Largus and Smaragdus, the pious Roman selected for the execution of his plan. Cyriacus devoted himself to the work with great ardor. One day, whilst visiting the laborers to distribute food amongst them, he observed a decrepit old man, who was so feeble that he was unable to perform his severe task. Filled with pity, Cyriacus offered to take his place. The aged prisoner consenting, the merciful deacon thenceforth worked hard at the building. But after some time he was discovered, and cast into prison. There he again found opportunity to exercise his zeal. Some blind men who had great confidence in the power of his prayer, came to ask him for help in their affliction, and he restored their sight. He and his companions spent three years in prison, and during that time he healed many sick and converted a great number of heathens from the darkness of paganism.

Then Emperor Diocletian's little daughter became possessed by an evil spirit, and no one was able to deliver her from it. To the idolatrous priests who were called, the evil spirit declared that he would leave the girl only when commanded to do so by Cyriacus, the deacon. He was hastily summoned, and prayed and made the sign of the cross over the girl, and the evil spirit departed. The emperor loved his daughter, therefore he was grateful to the holy deacon, and presented him with a house, where he and his companions might serve their God unmolested by their enemies.

About this time the daughter of the Persian King Sapor was attacked by a similar malady, and when he heard what Cyriacus had done for Diocletian's daughter, he wrote to the emperor, asking him to send the Christian deacon. It was done, and Cyriacus, on foot, set out for Persia. Arrived at his destination, he prayed over the girl and the evil spirit left her. On hearing of this miracle, four hundred and twenty heathens were converted to the Faith. These the saint instructed and baptized, and then set out on his homeward journey.

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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.

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.

Returned to Rome, he continued his life of prayer and good works. But when Diocletian soon afterward left for the East, his co-emperor Maximin seized the opportunity to give vent to his hatred for the Christians, and renewed their persecution. One of the first victims was Cyriacus. He was loaded with chains and brought before the judge, who first tried blandishments and promises to induce him to renounce Christ and to sacrifice to the idols, but in vain. Then the confessor of Christ was stretched on the rack, his limbs torn from their sockets, and he was beaten with clubs. His companions shared the same tortures. Finally, when the emperor and the judge were convinced that nothing would shake the constancy of the holy martyrs, they were beheaded. They gained the crown of glory on March 16, 303.

LESSON

IN THE life of St. Cyriacus two virtues shine forth in a special manner; his love of God and his charity toward his fellow-men. His love of God impelled him to sacrifice all, even his life, for His sake, thereby fulfilling the commandment: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind" (*Matt. xxii. 37*). A greater love of God no man can have than giving his life for Him.

St. Cyriacus also fulfilled the other commandment, of which Our Lord declared, "And the second is like to this: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (*Matt. xxii. 39*). He helped his fellow-Christians to bear their burdens, relieved them in their sufferings, assisted and encouraged them by word and deed, and edified them by his example. His sole aim was to do good to all men, mindful of the words of the Royal Prophet: "Blessed is he that understandeth concerning the needy and the poor" (*Ps. xl. 2*). He was so imbued with the virtue of charity, that he was disposed even to sacrifice his life for the relief and assistance of others.

Prayer of the Church

O GOD, who rejoicest us by the remembrance of Thy blessed martyrs Cyriacus, Largus, and Smaragdus; grant, we beseech Thee, that we, by celebrating their memory, may imitate their fortitude in suffering. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Novena in Honor of St. Cyriacus, Deacon 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. CYRIACUS

O GOD, who didst grant to St. Cyriacus the grace of heroic charity and trustful resignation to Thy holy will; bestow upon us, through his intercession, the grace to walk before Thee in self-denying charity and to know and fulfil Thy will in all things. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

INVOCATION OF ST. CYRIACUS

ST. CYRIACUS, great servant of God, loving Christ with all thy heart, thou didst for His sake also love thy fellow-men, and didst serve them even at the peril of thy life, for which charity God rewarded thee with the power to overcome Satan, the arch-enemy, and to deliver the poor obsessed from his dreadful tyranny; implore for me of God an effective, real, and true charity. Show thy power over Satan also in me; deliver me from his influence when he tries to tempt me. Help me to repel his assaults and to gain the victory over him in life and in death. 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