



Fourteen Holy Helpers



The Fourteen Holy Helpers

St. Agathius

St. Agathius was a Cappadocian Greek centurion of the imperial army, martyred around 304. Agathius was arrested on charges for being a Christian, was tortured, and was then brought to Byzantium where he was scourged and beheaded, being made a martyr because he would not renounce his Christian faith. The date of his martyrdom is traditionally May 8, when his feast is observed.

St. Barbara

The following on St. Barbara, Virgin and Martyr, is taken from Father Francis Xavier Weninger, 1876:

The holy virgin and martyr, St. Barbara, who, from the most ancient times, has been celebrated in the whole Christian world, was born of heathen parents in Nicomedia, of Bithynia. She was much beloved by her father, Dioscorus, on account of her unusual intelligence. He appointed a tower as a special place, well fitted up, for her dwelling, and chose the best masters to instruct her in art and science, but especially in paganism, as he feared she might be induced to unite herself to one not agreeable



to him, or be seduced by the Christians, of whom he was a great enemy. But just this solicitude of her father gave her cause to think, and thus to arrive at the knowledge of the true God. She contemplated the heavens, the sun, moon and stars, in their regular course; she meditated on the changing of the seasons; looked on the wonderful creation of the world and its inhabitants, and justly concluded from it that there must be a Creator--that He alone must be the true God, and that the gods she worshipped had no power. To these contemplations she united prayers, and also led a most blameless life. The Almighty, who forsakes not one who aids himself, gave her opportunity to become instructed in the Christian religion, and to receive holy baptism, without the knowledge of her father.

Meanwhile, a suitor for her hand came to her father and asked his consent. Dioscorus was not unwilling to grant the wish, as the young man was his equal in rank and wealth; but he would make his daughter acquainted with the offer he had received for her before he gave his word. Barbara had a great many objections; and her father, who did not desire that she should hastily give her consent, and would not coerce her, urged her no further; and as he was about to set out on a long journey, he thought it but right to give her some time for consideration. Barbara requested to have, for her greater comfort, a bathingroom added to her dwelling, which Dioscorus gladly granted her. The object of the holy virgin was, to have a special apartment where, with those who, like herself, were secretly Christians, she could pray to the true God. The father ordered two windows for the new room; Barbara, however, had a third added, in honor of the three Divine Persons in the mystery of the Holy Trinity. The room was, by the pagan's order, adorned with idolatrous statues, with which the holy virgin would gladly have dispensed. Looking at them, she wept over the blindness of her father, who desired that she should worship them as gods. Going from one to another, she spat upon them, saying: "Those who honor you as gods are worthy to be turned into what you are made of--wood and stone." After this, she went to a column of marble, and with her fingers pressed the sign of the cross upon it, as if it had been wax. After her death, the health of many infirm, who devoutly kissed this miraculous cross, was restored.

No sooner had her father returned from his journey, than he desired to know his daughter's resolution. Already prepared by prayer for the approaching struggle, she said, unhesitatingly, that she would never consent to marry a pagan, as, being a Christian, she had chosen a much more noble spouse, Christ the Lord. Her father was speechless at this unexpected answer, and, when able to control himself, told her either to renounce Christ, or prepare herself for the most cruel death. The greater the wrath of the blind Dioscorus became, the more fearless was Barbara. This enraged him so greatly, that he seized his sword to take her life on the spot. Barbara, to escape his rage, fled, while her father, sword in hand, pursued her out of the city. According to an ancient legend, the fugitive virgin came to a rock, which miraculously opened, thus offering her a passage, and shielded her, for the moment, against her father's wrath. The latter, however, was not touched by this visible miracle, but passed over the mountain and pursued the maiden, as the hound pursues the deer. Barbara had, meanwhile, taken refuge in a cave, and would not have been found had not two shepherds informed the infuriated father of her retreat.

Hastening towards the place, he found her praying. No tiger could assail his prey with more rage than this tyrant assailed his innocent child. He threw her on the ground, stamped upon her with his feet, beat her, and finally dragged her by the hair



into the hut of a peasant, where he locked her up, until he had her brought back to his house by soldiers. Now began her martyrdom, which was so severe, that what she had before suffered was as nothing in comparison; for, Dioscorus was determined to force her to deny Christ. Seeing, at last, that all was in vain, he gave her up to the governor, Martian, that she might be dealt with according to the laws of the land.

Martian at first showed compassion for the Saint, in consideration for her youth, and endeavored to win her by flattery and kind words. Not succeeding in this, he had recourse to severity, and had her whipped with scourges, until her whole body seemed to be but one great wound. After this, she was dragged to a dungeon, where she was left to die. The Almighty, however, who had destined her to still more glorious combats, sent an Angel during the night, who healed all her wounds, and encouraged her to perseverance, with the promise that she would overcome all tortures by Divine assistance. The following day she was again brought before Martian, who, not comprehending how Barbara had been healed, ascribed it to his gods. The virgin, however, said: "No, no, Martian! Wood and stone, of which your idols are made, have not this power. It is the work of the God of heaven and earth, whom I worship as the only true God, and for whose honor I am willing to die." Martian, full of anger at these words, ordered her to be tormented more cruelly than on the previous day. After her body was all bruised and wounded, she was barbarously burned with torches, and at last both her breasts were cut off. The torture was very great, but the eagerness of Barbara to suffer for Christ's sake was still greater. She gave no sign of pain, but turning her eyes to heaven, said: "Let not thy hand, O Lord, forsake me! In Thee I am full of strength; without Thee, I am powerless!"

A new martyrdom followed after this. The tyrant commanded her to be scourged in public through all the streets of the city. This was more terrible to her than all her previous tortures; hence she turned to the Almighty, praying humbly that she might not be exposed to the eyes of the heathen. She was immediately surrounded by a bright lustre, that veiled her form from all eyes. The barbarous Dioscorus was present at the martyrdom of his holy daughter, from beginning to end, and not only looked with satisfaction at the whipping, burning, and cutting, but animated the executioners in their cruelties; and when Martian, at last, sentenced Barbara to be beheaded, he asked, as a favor, to be allowed to take the place of the executioner, and behead his daughter. Having obtained his request, Dioscorus took her to a neighboring mountain, followed by a great crowd of people. Barbara rejoiced to be thought worthy to die for Christ's sake; and no sooner had she reached the mountain, than she again thanked God for all the graces that He had bestowed upon her, and begged Him to assist her to the end. A voice was heard from on high, which invited the undaunted martyr to come and receive the crown that awaited her. Kneeling down, she bared her neck, and received from her father the fatal stroke. She was hardly twenty years of age.

Juliana, a pious woman, who had been present at the martyrdom, burned with the holy desire to give her life, also, for Christ, and was beheaded on the same day, after she had suffered great torments. Her body was laid beside the body of St. Barbara; but her soul followed the soul of the fearless virgin into heaven. Quite different was the end of the inhuman father. Whilst he was descending from the mountain, with the blood of his innocent child still on his hands, a terrible thunder-storm arose, during which he was struck by lightning, and sank dead upon the ground. Thus the father went to hell on the same day on which his daughter ascended triumphantly to heaven.



We must not omit to remark that St. Barbara is especially invoked in the whole Christian world for the grace of receiving the last sacrament before death; and many facts have shown that this invocation has the desired effect.

St. Blasé



St. Blasé, Bishop and Martyr, devoted the early years of his life to the study of philosophy and afterward became a physician. He was ordained to the priesthood and made Bishop of Sebaste in Armenia, where he was seized and carried off to prison by Agricola, the Governor. On his way to prison a distracted mother whose child was suffering from a disease of the throat implored his aid. At his intercession the child was cured, and since that time his aid has often been solicited in cases of a similar disease. After cruel tortures the saint was beheaded in the year 316. Through his intercession many have been cured of throat diseases or protected from them.

The priest in giving the blessing of Saint Blasé holds two candles in the form a cross touching the throat, and prays that through the merits and intercession of St. Blasé the person blessed may be delivered from throat diseases and from every evil.

Excerpt from: [The Lives of the Saints by Rev. Hugo Hoever, 1961](#)

On the feast of St. Blasé the faithful participate in the [annual blessing of throats](#).



St. Catherine of Alexandria



The patron saint of philosophers and wheelwrights and one of the Fourteen Holy Helpers, Catherine of Alexandria was very popular in the Middle Ages. Her legend relates that in the early years of the fourth century, Catherine converted to Christianity a group of philosophers whom Emperor Maximinus had appointed to shake the maiden's own faith. The infuriated ruler had Catherine scourged and bound to wheels on which knives were fixed; but the wheels broke and the knives flew off, killing some of the onlookers. Then she was beheaded. Angels are said to have carried her body up to Mount Sinai in Arabia.

The Roman Martyrology, which is read every day in the Breviary by priests, monks, nuns, and laypeople who wish to pray it, recounts the following on her life for her feastday on November 25th:

At Alexandria, St. Catherine, virgin and martyr, in the time of Emperor Maximinus. For the confession of the Christian faith she was cast into prison, endured a long scourging with whips set with metal, and finally ended her martyrdom by having her head cut off. Her body was miraculously carried by angels to Mount Sinai, where pious veneration is paid to it by great gatherings of Christians.



St. Christopher



The following is taken from Catholic Tradition:

An ancient tradition concerning St. Christopher relates: He was born in the land of Canaan, and was named Reprobus, that is Reprobate, for he was a barbarous heathen. In stature and strength he was a giant. Thinking no one his like in bodily vigor, he resolved to go forth in search of the mightiest master and serve him. In his wanderings, he met with a king who was praised as the most valorous man on earth. To him he offered his services and was accepted. The king was proud of his giant and kept him near his person. One day a minstrel visited the king's castle, and among the ballads he sung before the court was one on the power of Satan. At the mention of this name the king blessed himself, making the Sign of the Cross. Reprobus, wondering, asked him why he did that. The king replied: "When I make this Sign, Satan has no power over me." Reprobus rejoined: "So thou fearest the power of Satan? Then he is mightier than thou, and I shall seek and serve him."

Setting forth to seek Satan, he came into a wilderness. One dark night he met a band of wild fellows riding through the forest. It was Satan and his escort. Reprobus bravely accosted him, saying he wished to serve him. He was accepted. But soon he was convinced that his new master was not the mightiest on earth. For one day, whilst approaching a Crucifix by the wayside, Satan quickly took to flight, and Reprobus asked him for the reason. Satan replied: "That is the image of my greatest enemy, Who conquered me on the Cross. From Him I always flee." When Reprobus heard this, he left the devil, and went in search of Christ.



In his wanderings, he one day came to a hut hidden in the forest. At its door sat a venerable old man. Reprobus addressed him, and in the course of the conversation that ensued the old man told him that he was a hermit, and had left the world to serve Christ, the Lord of Heaven and earth. "Thou art my man," cried Reprobus; "Christ is He Whom I seek, for He is the strongest and the mightiest. Tell me where I can find Him."

The hermit then began instructing the giant about God and the Redeemer, and concluded by saying: "He who would serve Christ must offer himself entirely to Him, and do and suffer everything for His sake. His reward for this will be immense and will last forever." Reprobus now asked the hermit to allow him to remain, and to continue to instruct him. The hermit consented. When Reprobus was fully instructed, he Baptized him. After his Baptism, a great change came over the giant. No longer proud of his great size and strength, he became meek and humble, and asked the hermit to assign to him some task by which he might serve God, his master. "For," said he, "I can not pray and fast; therefore I must serve God in some other way." The hermit led him to a broad and swift river nearby, and said: "Here build thyself a hut, and when wanderers wish to cross the river, carry them over for the love of Christ." For there was no bridge across the river.

Henceforth, day and night, whenever he was called, Reprobus faithfully performed the task assigned to him. One night he heard a Child calling to be carried across the river. Quickly he rose, placed the Child on his stout shoulder, took his staff and walked into the mighty current.

Arrived in midstream, the water rose higher and higher, and the child became heavier and heavier. "O child," he cried, "how heavy thou art! It seems I bear the weight of the world on my shoulder." And the Child replied, "Right thou art. Thou bearest not only the world, but the Creator of Heaven and earth. I am Jesus Christ, thy King and Lord, and henceforth thou shalt be called Christopher, that is, Christ-bearer. Arrived on yonder shore, plant thy staff in the ground, and in token of My power and might tomorrow it shall bear leaves and blossoms."

And the Child disappeared. On reaching the other shore, Christopher stuck his staff into the ground, and behold, it budded forth leaves and blossoms. Then, kneeling, he promised the Lord to serve Him ever faithfully. He kept his promise, and thenceforth became a zealous preacher of the Gospel, converting many to the Faith. On his missionary peregrinations he came also to Lycia, where, after his first sermon, eighteen thousand heathens requested Baptism. When Emperor Decius heard of this, he sent a company of four hundred soldiers to capture Christopher. To these he preached so convincingly, that they all asked for Baptism. Decius became enraged thereat and had him cast into prison. There he first treated him with great kindness, and surrounded him with every luxury to tempt him to sin, but in vain. Then he ordered him to be tortured in the most cruel manner, until he should deny the Faith. He was scourged, placed on plates of hot iron, boiling oil was poured over and fire was lighted under him. When all these torments did not accomplish their purpose, the soldiers were ordered to shoot him with arrows. This, too, having no effect, he was beheaded, on July 25, 254.



Two great Saints refer to the wonderful achievements of St. Christopher. St. Ambrose mentions that this Saint converted forty-eight thousand souls to Christ. St. Vincent Ferrer declares that when the plague devastated Valencia, its destructive course was stayed through the intercession of St. Christopher.

The life of St. Christopher conveys a wholesome truth. We ought all to be Christ-bearers, by preserving in our hearts faith, hope, and charity, and by receiving Our Lord worthily in Holy Communion. He alone is worthy of our service. In the service that we owe to men, we ought to serve God by doing His will. We can not divide our heart, for Our Lord Himself says, "No man can serve two masters" [Matt. 6: 24]. If you serve the world, it deceives you, for it can not give you what it promises. If you serve sin, Satan is your master. He, too, deceives his servants, and leads them to perdition. Christ on the Cross conquered these two tyrants, and with His help you can also vanquish them. Therefore, give yourself to Him with all your heart, and you shall find peace in this world, and eternal bliss in the next. St. Augustine learned this truth by sad experience, and therefore exclaims: "Thou hast created us for Thee, O Lord, and our heart is restless till it rests in Thee."

St. Cyriacus:

St Cyriacus was a holy deacon at Rome, under the popes Marcellinus and Marcellus. In the persecution of Dioclesian, in 303, he was crowned with a glorious martyrdom in that city. With him suffered also Largus and Smaragdus, and twenty others, among whom are named Crescentianus, Sergius, Secundus, Alban, Victorianus, Faustinus, Felix, Sylvanus, and four women, Memmia, Juliana, Cyriacides, and Donata. Their bodies were first buried near the place of their execution on the Salarian way; but were soon after translated into a farm of the devout lady Lucina, on the Ostian road, on this eighth day of August, as is recorded in the ancient Liberian Calendar, and others.

To honour the martyrs and duly celebrate their festivals, we must learn their spirit, and study to imitate them according to the circumstances of our state. We must, like them, resist evil unto blood, must subdue our passions, suffer afflictions with patience, and bear with others without murmuring or complaining. Many practise voluntary austerities cheerfully, only because they are of their own choice. But true patience requires, in the first place, that we bear all afflictions and contradictions from whatever quarter they come; and in this consists true virtue. Though we pray for heaven our prayers will not avail, unless we make use of the means which God sends to bring us thither. The cross is the ladder by which we must ascend.

Source: Fr. Alban Butler (1711–73). Volume VIII: August. *The Lives of the Saints*. 1866.



St. Denis



St. Denis was born in Italy. And, in 250 he was sent to France with six other missionary bishops by Pope St. Fabian. St. Denis became the first bishop of Paris. Because of his success, he angered the pagans and was imprisoned by the Roman governor. He was beheaded on the highest hill in France (the Montmartre) in 258 with the priest Rusticus and the deacon Eleutherius at Catulliacum, now Saint-Denis.

One of the many legends about his torture and death was that his body carried his severed head some distance from his execution site. During that walk, he continued to preach! This was a miracle of God. Saint Genevieve built a basilica over his grave, which is the burial site of French Kings. His feast was added to the Roman Calendar in 1568 by Pope Saint Pius V, though it had been celebrated since 800 AD.

St. Erasmus

Saint Erasmus of Formia, also known as Saint Elmo, was a Christian saint and martyr, who died c. 303. He is venerated as the patron saint of sailors and abdominal pain.

St. Erasmus was Bishop of Formia in Italy. During the persecution against Christians under the emperors Diocletian (284-305) and Maximian Hercules (284-305), he left his diocese and went to Mount Libanus, where he hid for seven years. However, an angel is said to have appeared to him, and counseled him to return to his city. On the way, he encountered some soldiers who questioned him. Erasmus admitted that he was a Christian and they brought him to trial at Antioch before the emperor Diocletian. After suffering terrible tortures, he was bound with chains and thrown into prison, but an angel appeared and helped him escape.

He passed through Lycia, where he raised up the son of an illustrious citizen. This resulted in a number of baptisms, which drew the attention of the Western Roman Emperor Maximian who, according to Voragine, was "much worse than was Diocletian." Maximian ordered his arrest and St. Erasmus continued to confess his faith. They forced him to go to a temple of the idol, but along the saint's route all the idols fell and were destroyed, and from the temple there came fire which fell upon many of the pagans.



That made the emperor so angry he had Erasmus enclosed in a barrel full of protruding spikes, and the barrel was rolled down a hill. But an angel healed him. Further tortures ensued. When he was recaptured, he was brought before the emperor and beaten and whipped, then coated with pitch and set alight as Christians had been in Nero's games, and still he survived. Thrown into prison with the intention of letting him die of starvation, St Erasmus managed to escape.

He was recaptured and tortured some more in the Roman province of Illyricum, after boldly preaching and converting numerous pagans to Christianity. Finally his abdomen was slit open and his intestines wound around a windlass.

St. Eustace

St. Eustace was a distinguished Roman officer. He owed his conversion to the vision of a stag with a crucifix between its antlers, seen by him while he was hunting. His wife and their two sons became Christians at the same time. In about the year 120 AD, St. Eustace and his wife and two children, after undergoing many cruel tortures, were martyred for having refused to offer sacrifice to false gods.

The account of St. Eustace from the traditional Breviary states:

Eustache, whose name before his Baptism was Placidus was a Roman, alike well-known on account of his noble birth, his great earthly wealth, and his eminent distinction as a soldier. He gained, under the Emperor Trajan, the post of military commander. Once upon a time he was hunting, and following an extraordinarily large stag, when the beast stood still, and Eustace saw between his horns a tall and glorious figure of the Lord Christ hanging upon the Cross, whence came a voice bidding him to follow after life eternal. Thereupon Eustace and his wife Theopista, and their two little sons Agapitus and Theopistus, enlisted themselves as soldiers under the Great Captain, Christ.

In a little while he went back, according as the Lord had commanded him, to the place where he had seen the first vision, and there he heard from God how much he was to bear for His glory. It was not long after that he had great losses and became exceedingly poor, but he bore it very patiently. Then he was constrained to fly away privily, and on the journey was grievously afflicted in that, first, his wife and then his children were parted from him and carried he knew not whither. Under the weight of these sorrows he lay hid a long while in a far-off place, working as the steward of a land-owner, until the voice of God called him forth, and Trajan sought for him again to make him a captain in his army.

While he was with the army he found his wife and children once more, by an unexpected happiness, and re-entered the city (of Rome) as a conquering soldier amid the loud applause of all men, but thereupon, when he was commanded to offer sacrifices of thanksgiving for the victory to the gods that are no gods, he stoutly refused. They tried him in vain with divers cajoleries to make him deny Christ, but could not, and he and his wife and little ones were thrown to the lions. When these beasts would not touch them, the Emperor's fury was kindled, and he commanded them all to be shut up in the brazen image of a bull, which was heated with fire underneath. There they praised God until their testimony was ended, and they departed hence to be perfectly blessed for ever and ever, upon the 20th day of



September. Their bodies were buried whole by the faithful, with deep reverence, and were afterwards honourably carried to a Church built in their name.

St. George



Who was the real St. George? When St. George is mentioned, what often comes to mind is the image of the dragon slaying knight. But St. George's impact extends far beyond the tale of "dragon slayer." Many of the Christians in the Middle East in modern day Jordan are named George after this holy saint. Are they named after a fictional knight or is St. George real?

The Church asserts that St. George was a real person and his feast is celebrated on April 23rd.

George from an illustrious family, was a Cappadocian who fought in the Roman army during the third century. He rebuked Diocletian when that ruler began to persecute the Christians, and was in consequence tortured and beheaded. The brave and defiant cheerfulness of the young officer during his torture was so great an inspiration to Christians of succeeding centuries that both the East and the West surrounded his bright figure with clusters of beautiful legends. St. George is the patron of England, and Christian soldiers. He was especially venerated in Christian Russia.

St. George lived in the early centuries of Christianity and died in c. 303 AD.



"The first piece of evidence of George's existence appeared within the works of the Bollandists Daniel Papebroch, Jean Bolland, and Godfrey Henschen's Bibliotheca Hagiographica Graeca. George was one of several names listed in the historical text, and Pope Gelasius claimed George was one of the saints 'whose names are justly revered among men, but whose actions are known only to God.'" (Catholic Online)

Born into an illustrious family, St. George was a Cappadocian who fought in the Roman army. While Emperor Diocletian began to persecute the Christians in 303 AD, St. George rebuked the Emperor. Despite the Emperor's friendship with George's father, he spared not his cruelty from St. George. For his "crime," St. George was tortured by laceration on a wheel of swords and was ultimately beheaded. This all came after many attempts by the Emperor to George to simply sacrifice to the Roman gods and receive his life, wealth, and fame in the process. St. George remained steadfast in worshiping the only True God.

On April 23, 303 AD, St. George was decapitated. He was buried in Lydda and honored by Christians as a martyr.

His cheerfulness and acceptance of suffering for the sake of Christ while being tortured served as a great inspiration for Christians in many lands for centuries to come. St. George is the patron saint of England and Christian soldiers. In Russia, he is especially venerated as well. Thus, we see in St. George far more than a "Dragon slayer" - we see an example of final perseverance and the ability to preserve in the midst of the greatest difficulties.

Also, of note, St. George is revered by both Christians and Muslims - one of the few saints to hold such a place.

St. Giles



St. Giles is said to have been born in Athens, Greece, and as a youth, he cured a sick beggar by giving him his own cloak. Following the death of his parents, he was frequently showered with the applause of men, which he dreaded. He hated both applause and temporal prosperity. He took a



ship and landed in Marseilles, France. After two years of journeying with St. Caesarius at Arles, he made a hermitage in the woods.

During his time of solitude and prayer, he was, according to tradition, nourished by the milk of a hind. The hind took refuge in the cave of St. Giles. The hounds of Favius, king of the Goths, were hunting the hind. On the third day, Favius and the bishop approached the area, and Favius fired an arrow into the bushes. The arrow wounded St. Giles. When the two men found the wounded St. Giles with the hind with him, they ordered him to account for himself. After St. Giles told his story, Favius and the bishop asked for his forgiveness and offered him medical help and gifts. St. Giles refused all gifts.

King Flavius continued to visit St. Giles, who eventually asked the King to found a monastery. The King agreed but only if St. Giles would serve as the abbot. The monastery was built near the cave where St. Giles lived. Soon Charles, the King of France, heard of St. Giles. They talked on spiritual matters, but the King Charles was too ashamed to admit one particular sin to the saint during their discourse.

"On the following Sunday, when the holy man was celebrating Mass according to custom and praying to God for the king during the canon, an angel of the Lord appeared to him and laid on the altar a scroll on which was written the sin which the king had committed, and which further said that he would be forgiven at Giles's intercession, provided he did penance and desisted from that sin in the future...When Mass was ended Giles gave the scroll to the king to read, who fell at the saint's feet, begging him to intercede with the Lord for him. And so the man of the Lord commended him to God in prayer and gently admonished him to refrain from that sin in the future."

St. Giles returned to his monastery and then, soon afterward, went to Rome to commend his monks to the Holy See. The pope granted them many privileges and gave him a present - two carved doors of cedar. St. Giles threw the doors in the Tiber River trusting in God's guidance, that they would arrive in France before him. And, behold, they did just that.

After being warned in a dream, St. Giles died on Sunday, September 1 in c. 710 AD. He is remembered on September 1st every year.

St. Margaret of Antioch

This St. Margaret is not St. Margaret Mary, who received from Our Lord Himself the First Friday Request.

According to the version of the story in the Golden Legend, St. Margaret was a native of Antioch and the daughter of a pagan priest named Aedesius. Her mother having died soon after her birth, Margaret was nursed by a Christian woman a short distance from Antioch. Having embraced Christianity and consecrated her virginity to God, St. Margaret was disowned by her father, adopted by her nurse, and lived in the country keeping sheep with her foster mother. Olybrius, Governor of the Roman Diocese of the East, asked to marry her, but with the demand that she renounce Christianity. Upon her refusal, she was cruelly tortured, during which various miraculous incidents occurred.



St. Margaret was tortured at Antioch in Pisidia, in the last general persecution during the third century. After having endured many torments, she finished her martyrdom by the sword.

St. Pantaleon



Martyr, died about 305. According to legend he was the son of a rich pagan, Eustorgius of Nicomedia, and had been instructed in Christianity by his Christian mother, Eubula. Afterwards he became estranged from Christianity. He studied medicine and became physician to the Emperor Maximianus. He was won back to Christianity by the priest Hermolaus. Upon the death of his father he came into possession of a large fortune. Envious colleagues denounced him to the emperor during the Diocletian persecution. The emperor wished to save him and sought to persuade him to apostasy. Pantaleon, however, openly confessed his faith, and as proof that Christ is the true God, he healed a paralytic. Notwithstanding this, he was condemned to death by the emperor, who regarded the miracle as an exhibition of magic.

According to legend, Pantaleon's flesh was first burned with torches; upon this Christ appeared to all in the form of Hermolaus to strengthen and heal Pantaleon. The torches were extinguished. After this, when a bath of liquid lead was prepared, Christ in the same form stepped into the cauldron with him, the fire went out and the lead became cold. He was now thrown into the sea, but the stone with which he was loaded floated. He was thrown to the wild beasts but these fawned upon him and could not be forced away until he had blessed them. He was bound on the wheel, but the ropes snapped, and the wheel broke. An attempt was made to behead him, but the sword bent, and the executioners were converted. Pantaleon implored heaven to forgive



them, for which reason he also received the name of Panteleemon (the all-compassionate). It was not until he himself desired it that it was possible to behead him.

The lives containing these legendary features are all late in date and valueless. Yet the fact of the martyrdom itself seems to be proved by a veneration for which there is early testimony, among others from Theodoret (Graecarum affectionum curatio, Sermo VIII, "De martyribus", in Migne, P.G., LXXXIII 1033), Procopius of Caesarea (De aedificiis Justiniani I, ix; V, ix), and the "Martyrologium Hieronymianum" (Acta SS., Nov., II, 1, 97). Pantaleon is venerated in the East as a great martyr and wonderworker. In the Middle Ages he came to be regarded as the patron saint of physicians and midwives, and became one of the fourteen guardian martyrs. From early times a phial containing some of his blood has been preserved at Constantinople. On the feast day of the saint the blood is said to become fluid and to bubble. Relics of the saint are to be found at St. Denis at Paris; his head is venerated at Lyons. His feast day is 27 July, also 28 July, and 18 February.

Source: Löffler, K. (1911). St. Pantaleon. In *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. New York: Robert Appleton Company. Retrieved July 25, 2013 from New Advent.

St. Vitus



St. Vitus, born of an illustrious Sicilian family, was arrested with his tutor and his nurse. After many sufferings, they were martyred A.D. 303. In the Middle Ages St. Vitus was declared one of the Fourteen Holy Helpers and came to be considered as the special patron of those inflicted with nervous disorders.



The following is taken from *The Liturgical Year* by Abbot Gueranger:

One of the titles of this Divine Spirit who is reigning so specially over this portion of the Cycle is the Witness of the Word (John xv. 26). Thus was He announced to the world by the Man-God Himself when about to quit it in order to return to His Father after having on His part rendered His own great testimony to Sovereign Truth (John xviii. 37). Formed by the Holy Ghost on the type of Jesus Christ, the faithful too are witnesses whose mission is to trample on lying error, the enemy of God, by expressing the Truth, not in words only but in deeds. There is a testimony however, that is not given to all to render: this is the Testimony of blood. The martyrs hold this privilege, this is the special stand granted to them in the ceaseless battle ever being waged betwixt Truth and Falsehood, and this battle is the sum total of all History. Hence Martyrs come crowding on the brilliant heavens of Holy Church at this season. In a few days the Church will be all thrilling with gladness at the birth of Saint John the Baptist, that man great beyond all men (Matthew xi. 11), and whose greatness specially consists in that he was sent by God to be a witness, to give testimony of the Light (John i. 6, 8). We will then meditate at leisure on these thoughts for which we seem to be prepared by the ever swelling groups of joyous martyrs who cross our path as it were to announce the near approach of the Friend of the Bridegroom (John iii. 29).

Today we have Vitus, accompanied by his faithful foster-parents, Modestus and Crescentia. He is but a child, yet he comes teaching us the price of Baptism and the fidelity we owe to our Father in Heaven despite all else beside. Great is his glory, both on Earth and in Heaven. The demons who used to tremble before him in life still continue their dread of him. His name remains ineffacably inscribed on the memory of the Christian people, just as that of a Saint Elmo or Erasmus, among their most potent "helpers" in daily needs. Saint Vitus, or more commonly Saint Guy, is invoked to deliver those who are attacked by that lamentable sickness which is named from him, as also to neutralise bad effects from the bite of a mad dog, and his beneficence is evinced even to the dumb brutes also. He is likewise implored in cases of lethargy, or unduly prolonged sleep. For this reason, the cock is his distinctive attribute in Christian art, as well as because recourse is usually had to this Saint when one wants to awake at some particular hour.

YOU have won the battle, glorious Martyrs! The struggle was not long, but it gained for you an eternal crown! You have purchased to yourselves, O Modestus and Crescentia, the everlasting gratitude of your God Himself, for to Him you faithfully gave back the precious charge committed to your keeping in the person of that dear child who became your very own through Faith and Baptism. And you too, noble boy, who preferred your Father in Heaven to your earthly parent, who may tell the caressing tenderness lavished on you eternally by Him whom before men you did so unflinchingly own to be your true Father? Even here below He is pleased to load you with striking marks of His munificence, for to you he confides, on a large scale, the exercise of His merciful power. Because of that holy liberty which reigned in your soul from reason's earliest dawn by which your body was subjected to your soul's control, you now hold over fallen nature a marvellous power. Unhappy sufferers whose distorted limbs are worked violently at the caprice of a cruel malady, and are no longer mastered by the will or, on the other hand, those who are rendered powerless and no longer free to act by reason of resistless sleep: all these recover at your feet, that perfect harmony of soul and body, that needful docility of the material to the



spiritual, by which man may freely attend to the duties incumbent on him, whether as regards God or his neighbour. Vouchsafe to be ever more and more lavish in the granting of these favours, which are the precious gifts specially at your disposal, for the good of suffering mankind, and for the greater glory of your God who has given you an eternal crown. We implore you, in the words of the Church and by your merits, that God may destroy in us that pride which spoils the equilibrium of man himself and makes him deviate from his path. May it be granted us to have a thorough contempt of evil for thus is restored to man, liberty in love: superbe non sapere, sed placita humilitate proficere, ut prava despiciens, quoecumque recta sunt libera exerceat charitate.