QUATTUORDECIM AUXILIATORES · VIERZEHN NOTHELFER

The Fourteen Holy Helpers

A band of saints invoked together since the Middle Ages, each honored for powerful intercession in a particular need of body or soul. All but one gave their lives as martyrs in the early Church, and many were promised, by pious tradition, to aid those who call on them in their last hour.

"We also having so great a cloud of witnesses over our head …" — Hebrews 12:1



St. Acacius

from Cappadocia (Turkey)

FEAST May 8 · † c. 303

A Roman centurion converted to Christ and martyred at Byzantium under Diocletian. Tradition says he was scourged and crowned with thorns before being beheaded.

SYMBOLS
Crown of thorns, cross

INVOKED AGAINST
headaches and the agony of death



St. Barbara

from Nicomedia (Turkey)

FEAST December 4 · † c. 306

A virgin of Nicomedia shut in a tower by her pagan father, who beheaded her himself for her faith — and was then struck dead by lightning.

SYMBOLS
Tower, chalice and Host, palm

INVOKED AGAINST
lightning, fire and sudden death without the sacraments



St. Blaise

from Sebaste, Armenia (Turkey)

FEAST February 3 · † c. 316

Bishop of Sebaste in Armenia. He saved a boy choking on a fishbone — the origin of the blessing of throats with crossed candles on his feast.

SYMBOLS
Crossed candles, iron wool-comb

INVOKED AGAINST
diseases of the throat



St. Catherine

from Alexandria (Egypt)

FEAST November 25 · † c. 305

A learned noblewoman of Alexandria who refuted fifty pagan philosophers. The spiked wheel meant to kill her shattered at her touch, and she was beheaded.

SYMBOLS
Broken wheel, sword, crown

INVOKED AGAINST
sudden death; patroness of students



St. Christopher

from Canaan; died in Lycia (Turkey)

FEAST July 25 · † 3rd century

A giant who carried travelers across a river. One night he bore a child who grew heavier than the world — Christ Himself, who bears the world.

SYMBOLS
Christ Child, staff

INVOKED AGAINST
storms, plague and dangers of travel



St. Cyriacus

from Rome (Italy)

FEAST August 8 · † c. 303

A Roman deacon who served Christians condemned to forced labor and freed the emperor's daughter from a demon. Martyred on the Via Salaria.

SYMBOLS
Deacon's dalmatic, chained demon

INVOKED AGAINST
evil spirits and temptation at the hour of death



St. Denis

from Italy; bishop in Gaul (France)

FEAST October 9 · † c. 250

First bishop of Paris. Beheaded on Montmartre, he is said to have carried his own head, preaching, to the place of his burial.

SYMBOLS
His mitred head in his hands

INVOKED AGAINST
headaches and possession



St. Erasmus

from Antioch (Syria, now Turkey)

FEAST June 2 · † c. 303

Bishop of Formiae in Italy, martyred under Diocletian. Sailors called the blue light glowing on their masts in storms "St. Elmo's fire" after him.

SYMBOLS
Windlass, bishop's crozier

INVOKED AGAINST
pains of the stomach; patron of sailors



St. Eustace

from Rome (Italy)

FEAST September 20 · † c. 118

A Roman general, Placidus, converted when he saw a crucifix between the antlers of a stag he was hunting. Martyred with his wife and sons.

SYMBOLS
Stag bearing a crucifix

INVOKED AGAINST
family troubles; patron of hunters



St. George

from Cappadocia (Turkey)

FEAST April 23 · † c. 303

A soldier martyred at Lydda in Palestine. His legendary slaying of the dragon pictures the triumph of faith over the power of evil.

SYMBOLS
Armor, lance, dragon

INVOKED AGAINST
diseases of the skin; patron of soldiers



St. Giles

from Athens (Greece); lived in France

FEAST September 1 · † c. 710

The only helper who was not a martyr: a hermit of Provence nourished by a hind, which he shielded from a royal hunter's arrow. He founded an abbey there.

SYMBOLS
Hind pierced by an arrow

INVOKED AGAINST
epilepsy and mental illness; for a good confession



St. Margaret

from Antioch in Pisidia (Turkey)

FEAST July 20 · † c. 304

A virgin of Antioch who refused marriage to a pagan prefect. In prison, legend says, she overcame a dragon by the sign of the cross before her beheading.

SYMBOLS
Dragon, cross, palm

INVOKED AGAINST
dangers of childbirth



St. Pantaleon

from Nicomedia (Turkey)

FEAST July 27 · † c. 305

A physician of Nicomedia who cared for the poor without charge. Condemned under Diocletian, he is shown with his hands nailed to his head.

SYMBOLS
Hands nailed to his head, ointment jar

INVOKED AGAINST
consumption and wasting disease; patron of physicians



St. Vitus

from Sicily (Italy)

FEAST June 15 · † c. 303

A boy of Sicily raised in the faith by his nurse, martyred with her and his tutor. He came unharmed out of a cauldron of boiling oil.

SYMBOLS
Rooster, cauldron

INVOKED AGAINST
epilepsy, "St. Vitus' dance" and oversleeping

The Devotion

Calling on these fourteen saints together began in the Rhineland in the 14th century, when the Black Death swept Europe and the faithful sought heaven's help against sudden death and disease.

In 1445–46 a shepherd near Bamberg saw the Christ Child among fourteen children who asked for a chapel. The Basilica of Vierzehnheiligen stands on that spot today.

COMMON FEAST
August 8, kept in some German dioceses

A Short Invocation

Holy Helpers of God — Acacius, Barbara, Blaise, Catherine, Christopher, Cyriacus, Denis, Erasmus, Eustace, George, Giles, Margaret, Pantaleon and Vitus — intercede for us in every need of body and soul, and obtain for us the grace of a holy death. Amen.

Thirteen martyrs and one confessor: "so great a cloud of witnesses" (Heb 12:1).