BOOKLET TO PRINT

# Saint Acisclus of Córdoba

*Life, prayer and novena*

Feast day: November 17

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IN BRIEF

## Saint Acisclus of Córdoba

*Martyr of Córdoba under Diocletian with his sister Saint Victoria, patron saint of Córdoba.*

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| **Feast day** | November 17 |
| **Born** | second half of the 3rd century, Córdoba (Baetica, Spain) |
| **Died** | November 17, c. 304, Córdoba (Baetica, Spain) |
| **Canonized** | immemorial cult |
| **Era** | 4th century |
| **Patron saint of** | Córdoba, Breda (Catalonia) |

## In this booklet

Life

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Novena to Saint Acisclus of Córdoba

Credits and sources

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LIFE

# Saint Acisclus of Córdoba

Saint Acisclus (in French Acisle or Assisle, in Spanish San Acisclo) was a martyr of Córdoba, in Spain, put to death at the beginning of the 4th century, probably in 304, during the persecution of Diocletian. With his sister, Saint Victoria, he is the patron saint of Córdoba. Their relics are venerated in the basilica of Saint-Sernin in Toulouse, and their cult spread to Catalonia and Roussillon. His feast day is November 17.

## Who was Saint Acisclus?

Acisclus belongs to the generation of Spanish martyrs who fell victim to the last great persecution of the Roman Empire, like Saint Vincent of Saragossa or Saint Eulalia of Mérida. His existence and his cult are ancient: in the 6th century, Isidore of Seville already mentions his tomb near Córdoba. On the other hand, the detailed account of his passion, written much later, is mostly legendary. We therefore know little of his life, except that he died for Christ at Córdoba, together with his sister Victoria according to tradition.

## Key dates in the life of Acisclus

- **Second half of the 3rd century**: Born at Córdoba, in Baetica, a Roman province of southern Spain.
- **303-304**: The persecution of Diocletian strikes the Christians of Spain.
- **November 17, c. 304**: Martyred at Córdoba; according to tradition, he is beheaded and his sister Victoria pierced with arrows. Some sources place their death in 313.
- **After his death**: A chapel is raised on the supposed site of their house, and a shrine over his tomb, near Córdoba.

- **c. 550**: According to Isidore of Seville, the Visigothic king Agila desecrates his tomb.
- **Late 8th century**: According to tradition, Charlemagne lays relics of Acisclus and Victoria at Saint-Sernin in Toulouse.
- **9th century**: At Córdoba, the basilica of Saint Acisclus is a center of Christian life, where the martyr priest Saint Perfectus serves.
- **10th century**: A developed and legendary account of their passion is written.

## The martyrdom of Córdoba

At the beginning of the 4th century, Emperor Diocletian ordered a general persecution of Christians. At Córdoba, Acisclus and his sister Victoria refused to deny their faith. According to tradition, Acisclus was beheaded, while Victoria died pierced with arrows. Acisclus is sometimes shown with a scar on his neck, a sign of his beheading.

In the 10th century, an author wrote a long account of their passion, in which brother and sister are subjected to the four elements: thrown into the flames of a furnace, they sing psalms there; cast into the Guadalquivir, they float on the waters. These episodes, inspired by biblical stories such as that of the three young men in the furnace, belong to the hagiographical genre. They say, in their own way, that the faith of the martyrs is stronger than death.

## The patron of Córdoba

The tomb of Acisclus, near Córdoba, very early became a place of worship. Isidore of Seville reports that around 550 the Visigothic king Agila desecrated this tomb. A chapel was also built on the supposed site of the house of the brother and sister. In the 9th century, under Muslim rule, the basilica of Saint Acisclus remained a center of the Christian community of Córdoba: Saint

Perfectus, martyred in 850, was a priest there. Acisclus and Victoria are still the patrons of the city today, where their statues are venerated, notably in the basilica of Saint Peter.

## A cult that spread to France

The cult of Acisclus spread throughout Hispania, then to Provence and Languedoc. According to tradition, Charlemagne laid relics of the two martyrs in the abbey of Saint-Sernin in Toulouse, where a reliquary shrine and reliquary busts are kept. A small church is dedicated to him at the foot of the Montserrat massif, in Catalonia, and he is the patron of Breda, in the same region. In the Pyrénées-Orientales, several churches bear his name in the form Assiscle: in Perpignan, where he gave his name to a district, at Trouillas, at Sorède and at Villeneuve-des-Escaldes. In Haute-Garonne, the church of Avignonet-Lauragais is also dedicated to him. The two martyrs are still the patrons of Mudaison, in the Hérault.

## Devotion and art

Saint Acisclus is celebrated on November 17, with Saint Victoria. He is shown as a young man, with the martyr's palm, sometimes with a crown of flowers or the mark of his beheading, often beside his sister.

## What can we learn from Saint Acisclus?

Acisclus and Victoria were brother and sister by blood and by faith. They remind us that faithfulness to Christ is also lived in the family, and that we can support one another in trial. Their cult, which passed from Córdoba to Toulouse and Roussillon, also shows how the memory of the martyrs links the Churches together. You can pray to Saint Acisclus for persecuted Christians, for brothers and sisters, and for the city of Córdoba.

To pray with him, see the prayer to Saint Acisclus and the novena to Saint Acisclus.

## Where to pray to Saint Acisclus

- **Toulouse**: the basilica of Saint-Sernin, which keeps the reliquary shrine and busts of Acisclus and Victoria.
- **Córdoba** (Spain): the city of which they are patrons, and the basilica of Saint Peter, where their statues are venerated.
- **Pyrénées-Orientales**: the churches of Saint-Assiscle at Perpignan, Trouillas, Sorède and Villeneuve-des-Escaldes.

PRAYER

# Prayer to Saint Acisclus for Persecuted Christians and Families

Saint Acisclus, martyr of Córdoba at the beginning of the 4th century, gave his life for Christ with his sister, Saint Victoria. They are the patrons of Córdoba, and their relics are venerated at Saint-Sernin in Toulouse. Prayer composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. It is not an official liturgical text. It entrusts to him persecuted Christians, brothers and sisters, and families.

## Prayer to Saint Acisclus

*Saint Acisclus,*
*martyr of Córdoba,*
*with your sister Victoria*
*you preferred Christ to your own life.*
*Obtain for me a firm faith*
*that does not draw back before trial.*

*Brother and sister by blood and by faith,*
*you supported each other to martyrdom.*
*Watch over the brothers and sisters of our families:*
*may they love one another, forgive one another*
*and help one another walk toward God.*

*Support the Christians who suffer for their faith today,*
*bless the city of Córdoba,*
*and all the Churches that keep your memory,*
*from Andalusia to Toulouse and Roussillon.*
*Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

## When to pray to Saint Acisclus

- On his feast day, November 17, with Saint Victoria.
- For persecuted Christians around the world.
- For unity between brothers and sisters.
- When faith requires courage.
- For the city of Córdoba and for the Church in Spain.

## A short invocation

> *Saints Acisclus and Victoria,*
> *martyrs of Córdoba,*
> *pray for us. Amen.*

To prepare for his feast, you can pray the novena to Saint Acisclus from November 9 to 17, and read the life of Saint Acisclus.

NOVENA

# Novena to Saint Acisclus of Córdoba

This novena is an original composition inspired by the life of Saint Acisclus, martyr of Córdoba with his sister Saint Victoria at the beginning of the 4th century. Novena composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. It is not an official liturgical text. To finish it on his feast day, November 17, begin on November 9. You can also pray it at any other time of the year.

## How to pray this novena

Each day, begin with the Sign of the Cross and entrust your intention to God. Read the meditation, say the prayer of the day, then an Our Father, a Hail Mary and a Glory Be. End with: "Saints Acisclus and Victoria, pray for us." The act of the day helps you live the novena concretely. Some of the episodes recalled come from a legendary account of the 10th century.

## Day 1: Christians in Córdoba

Acisclus and Victoria grew up in Córdoba, in a Roman province where the Christian faith had taken root. They received baptism and lived the Gospel in the midst of their city.

**Prayer:** Lord, thank you for the baptism I have received. Help me to live from it each day.

**Act of the day:** Give thanks for your baptism and, if possible, find out its date.

## Day 2: Brother and sister

Tradition joins Acisclus and Victoria inseparably. They shared the same faith and the same struggle.

**Prayer:** Lord, bless brothers and sisters, and make friendship and faith grow between them.

**Act of the day:** Reach out to a brother or sister, or pray for them.

## Day 3: The time of persecution

Diocletian ordered the persecution of Christians. At Córdoba as elsewhere, one had to choose between faith and safety.

**Prayer:** Lord, support the Christians persecuted today, and give them your peace.

**Act of the day:** Pray for a country where Christians suffer for their faith.

## Day 4: Refusing to deny

Acisclus and Victoria refused to deny Christ. Their faithfulness was born of a love stronger than fear.

**Prayer:** Lord, grant that I may never be ashamed of you.

**Act of the day:** Make the Sign of the Cross before a meal taken in public.

## Day 5: Singing in the furnace

The legendary account shows the two martyrs singing psalms in the midst of the flames, like the three young men of the book of Daniel.

**Prayer:** Lord, teach me to praise you even in the heart of trial.

**Act of the day:** Pray or sing a psalm of praise, for example Psalm 150.

## Day 6: Carried by the waters

The same account tells that they floated on the waters of the Guadalquivir. God carries those who trust in him.

**Prayer:** Lord, when everything seems to swallow me up, carry me and keep me.

**Act of the day:** Entrust a specific worry to God.

## Day 7: The witness of blood

Acisclus was beheaded, Victoria pierced with arrows. They joined Christ, the first faithful witness.

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, unite to your cross the sufferings of those who die for you.

**Act of the day:** Meditate for a few minutes on the Passion of Christ.

## Day 8: A venerated tomb

Their tomb became a place of prayer, and the basilica of Saint Acisclus, centuries later, a refuge for the Christians of Córdoba.

**Prayer:** Lord, make our churches places where faith is kept and handed on.

**Act of the day:** Spend a moment of prayer in a church.

## Day 9: From Córdoba to Toulouse

Their relics are venerated as far as Toulouse, and their name is borne by churches in Roussillon. The martyrs link the Churches together.

**Prayer:** Lord, keep your Church in unity. Through the intercession of Saint Acisclus and Saint Victoria, grant me the grace I ask in this novena, if it is your will.

**Act of the day:** Attend Mass if possible, and pray for the Church in Spain.

## Closing prayer

*Saint Acisclus,*
*martyr of Córdoba, brother of Saint Victoria,*
*you loved Christ more than your life.*
*Present to the Lord the intention I have entrusted to you.*
*Give me a courageous faith,*
*and watch over those who suffer for the Gospel.*
*Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

You can also pray the prayer to Saint Acisclus at any time, and read the life of Saint Acisclus.

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