BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Hermias

Life, prayer and novena

Feast day: May 31

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IN BRIEF

Saint Hermias

Roman soldier martyred at Comana, in Pontus, in the 2nd century.

Feast day	May 31
Born	late 1st or early 2nd century
Died	c. 160-170, Comana in Pontus (present-day Turkey)
Canonized	immemorial cult
Era	2nd century

In this booklet

Life

Prayer to Saint Hermias for Soldiers and Persecuted Christians

Novena to Saint Hermias

Credits and sources

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LIFE

Saint Hermias

Saint Hermias was a Roman soldier martyred for his faith in the 2nd century at Comana, in the province of Pontus, in what is now northern Turkey. According to tradition, he had served many years in the army before publicly confessing Christ, under the emperor Antoninus Pius. Honored by both the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Churches, his feast day is May 31.

Who was Saint Hermias?

Hermias belongs to the great family of soldier martyrs, those Christians serving in the legions who refused, at the decisive moment, to worship the gods of the Empire. His story has come down to us through accounts of his passion, the best known of which in the East was taken up in the 17th century by Saint Dimitri of Rostov in his Lives of the Saints. These texts, written long after the events, multiply tortures and wonders: they should be read as accounts meant to edify rather than as court records. The core they hand down, however, remains sober and plausible: a Christian veteran at Comana gave his life rather than deny Christ.

Key dates in the life of Hermias

- **Late 1st or early 2nd century**: Born, at a date and place the sources do not specify.
- **For many years**: He serves as a soldier in the Roman army at Comana in Pontus.
- **Under Antoninus Pius (138-161)**: At the end of his service, he refuses his pay and declares himself a Christian.
- **Shortly after**: Arrested, he appears before the governor Sebastian, who orders him to sacrifice to the gods.

- **During his trial**: According to the account, he undergoes many tortures and survives them.
- **During his martyrdom**: The magician Marus, charged with poisoning him, is converted and beheaded.
- **c. 160-170**: Hermias is beheaded at Comana; Christians bury him in secret.
- **May 31**: The day of his memorial in the Roman Martyrology and in the Orthodox calendar.

A veteran who refused his pay

The account begins when Hermias, after a long career, is about to leave the army. At the end of service, a Roman soldier received his reward, and the ceremony was often accompanied by religious gestures toward the emperor and the gods. Hermias refuses everything: the pay as well as the sacrifice. He simply says that he is a Christian. This refusal is no improvised outburst. It is the act of a mature man who had served loyally and who did not want, at the end of his life, to buy a peaceful retirement at the price of denial.

Arrested, he is brought before the governor Sebastian. The governor asks him to prove his loyalty to the emperor by offering incense to the idols. Hermias answers that he has served the emperor with honor, but that his worship belongs to God alone.

The martyrdom and the conversion of Marus

The passion then describes a long series of torments: broken jaws, a flayed face, a burning furnace from which the martyr is said to have emerged unharmed after three days. The governor then calls on a magician named Marus, who prepares a deadly poison. Seeing Hermias drink it without harm, Marus

acknowledges the power of Christ and declares himself a Christian in turn. He is beheaded at once. Tradition counts him among the martyrs, baptized in his own blood.

According to the account, Hermias still endures boiling oil, the loss of his eyes and being hung upside down for three days, without ceasing to give thanks. The governor finally beheads him with his own hand. These details, typical of later passions, aim to show that human violence cannot overcome the faithfulness of the believer. Two features above all stand out: the perseverance of Hermias and the conversion of the man who was supposed to kill him.

Devotion and art

Christians secretly gather the martyr's body and bury it. The account adds that many healings were obtained at his tomb. His cult developed mainly in the Greek and then the Slavic world, where he is celebrated on May 31. The Catholic Church commemorates him on the same day in the Roman Martyrology. No major shrine is dedicated to him in the West today, and the location of his tomb is unknown.

Eastern icons usually show him as an elderly man with a white beard, a reminder of his long years of service, holding the cross of the martyrs.

What can we learn from Saint Hermias?

Saint Hermias reminds us that faithfulness is also tested at the end of a life. He could have left quietly, collected his pay and lived in peace. He chose to tell the truth about who he was. His example speaks to soldiers and veterans, but also to everyone reaching retirement age who wonders how to remain a witness. Finally, the conversion of Marus reminds us that a testimony held to the end can open the heart of the one who seemed farthest away.

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

Where to pray to Saint Hermias

- **In your parish**, on May 31, entrusting to God soldiers and persecuted Christians.
- **In an Orthodox or Byzantine-rite church**, where his icon may be venerated on his feast day.
- **At home**, with the prayer and the novena offered by Saintspedia.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Hermias for Soldiers and Persecuted Christians

Saint Hermias, a Roman soldier of Comana, refused at the end of his service both his pay and the sacrifice to idols, and gave his life for Christ in the 2nd century. Prayer composed for Saintspedia, in the spirit of Church tradition. It is not an official liturgical text. It entrusts to him soldiers, veterans, persecuted Christians and all who want to stay faithful to the end.

Prayer to Saint Hermias

Saint Hermias,
faithful soldier and witness to Christ,
you served loyally for many years,
and in the evening of your life you would not
buy your peace with a denial.

Teach me to stand upright
when it would be easier to keep silent.
Help me to serve with honor those I work for,
without ever giving anyone
the place that belongs to God alone.

You whose steadfastness touched the heart of Marus,
pray for those who persecute Christians,
that they in turn may discover Christ.
Watch over soldiers, over veterans,
and over all who suffer for their faith.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

When to pray to Saint Hermias

- On his feast day, May 31.
- For soldiers, police officers and all who wear a uniform.
- At the time of retirement, to live this stage faithfully.
- For persecuted Christians and for the conversion of their persecutors.
- When you must bear witness to your faith in a hostile setting.

A short invocation

> *Saint Hermias, soldier of Christ,*
> *keep me faithful to the last day. Amen.*

To prepare for his feast, you can pray the novena to Saint Hermias from May 23 to May 31, and read the life of Saint Hermias.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Hermias

This novena is inspired by the life of Saint Hermias, a Roman soldier martyred at Comana, in Pontus, in the 2nd 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, May 31, begin on May 23. 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: "Saint Hermias, pray for us." The act suggested each day helps you live the novena concretely. The episodes recalled come from the traditional account of his passion, which mixes history and legend.

Day 1: Long years of service

Hermias spent a large part of his life in the army. His faith did not keep him from serving loyally. A Christian is no stranger to the world: he works in it honestly.

Prayer: Lord, bless my daily work. Help me to do it uprightly, for you and for others.

Act of the day: Carry out an ordinary task with particular care.

Day 2: Refusing the pay

At the end of his service, Hermias refuses the reward due to him, because it was tied to an act of idolatry. He prefers to lose an advantage rather than his faithfulness.

Prayer: Lord, free me from attachment to money and to advantages that take me away from you.

Act of the day: Give up a small comfort and offer its value to a charity.

Day 3: Saying "I am a Christian"

Before his superiors, Hermias simply declares that he is a Christian. He seeks neither to provoke nor to hide.

Prayer: Lord, give me the quiet courage to speak of my faith when I should, with gentleness and respect.

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

Day 4: Before the governor

The governor Sebastian asks Hermias to prove his loyalty by sacrificing to the gods. Hermias distinguishes the service owed to the emperor from the worship owed to God alone.

Prayer: Lord, help me to render to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to you what is yours.

Act of the day: Pray for those who hold civil or military authority.

Day 5: Holding firm in trial

The passion tells of many torments, which Hermias endures while giving thanks. Beyond the details, it says something true: God's grace sustains those who suffer for him.

Prayer: Lord, be my strength in the trials I am going through, and keep me thankful.

Act of the day: Offer to God one difficulty of the day without complaining.

Day 6: The conversion of Marus

The magician charged with poisoning Hermias acknowledges the power of Christ and becomes a Christian. The one who was to give death receives life.

Prayer: Lord, I entrust to you those who are far from you, even those who fight your Church. Touch their hearts.

Act of the day: Pray by name for someone who has hurt you.

Day 7: For persecuted Christians

Even today, Christians are threatened, imprisoned or killed for their faith. Hermias is their elder brother.

Prayer: Lord, support persecuted Christians. Give them strength, and give us the generosity to help them.

Act of the day: Learn about the situation of a persecuted Church and pray for it.

Day 8: Faithful in the evening of life

Hermias was no longer young when he bore witness. Faithfulness does not wear out with age: it can grow stronger.

Prayer: Lord, bless the elderly and the retired. Make their years a time of witness and prayer.

Act of the day: Visit or call an elderly person.

Day 9: The martyr's crown

Hermias dies by the sword, and Christians gather his body in secret. His death is not a defeat: it is the passage to the Christ he served.

Prayer: Lord, grant me to live and die in your peace. Through the intercession of Saint Hermias, 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 departed members of your family.

Closing prayer

> *Saint Hermias,*
> *loyal soldier and martyr of Christ,*
> *you preferred faithfulness to reward*
> *and your witness converted your executioner.*
> *Present to the Lord the intention I have entrusted to you.*
> *Keep me faithful to the end,*
> *and support all who suffer for their faith.*
> *Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

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

Credits and sources

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