



Novena Prayers to

ST ALBAN

PROTOMARTYR OF THE BRITONS



THE CARDIFF ORATORY



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Novena Prayers to St. Alban
Protomartyr of the Britons
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Oratory of St. Philip Neri at Cardiff

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✠ Cum permissu superiorum,
Orat. S. Ph. Neri Cardiffense,
die XX Jun., anno Dñi MMXXII.

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INTRODUCTION

The Feast of St. Alban the Protomartyr is kept on 20 June in the Roman Calendar of the Dioceses of England and Wales in the *Usus Recentior* and on 22 June in the *Usus Antiquior*. The Novena, nine days of prayer leading up to the feast, therefore begins on 11 June.

The novena readings are drawn from the seventh chapter of Book One of St. Bede the Venerable's *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*, translated by the Rev. William Hurst in 1814. Their hagiographical content has not been endorsed by the authority of the Church, but it does reflect the sense of deep devotion which the people of this Island have held for our first martyr down through the centuries.

The Oratory Church in Cardiff is dedicated to St. Alban, and thanks to the kindness of the Lord Abbot of Farnborough, the only First-Class Relic of the Saint permanently available for the veneration of the Faithful in Britain is kept in the Reliquary Shrine at the Oratory. Invoking the mighty prayers of their titular patron, of whose Shrine they are guardians, the Oratorians and their parishioners turn to the protection of the First Martyr of the Britons:

Saint Alban the Protomartyr, pray for us!

THE NOVENA
OF SAINT ALBAN THE PROTOMARTYR

*The substance of these accounts
is taken from the History written by
St. Bede the Venerable, Priest & Doctor of the Church.*

11 June

St. Alban's Conversion

DURING A PERSECUTION of the Christians by the Romans in Britain during the Second Century, one of the most illustrious of those who suffered death for the Faith was St. Alban, of whom the Priest Fortunatus, in the book which he wrote in commendation of Virgins, speaking of the great number of martyrs who were sent to heaven by it from every part of the world, says, "*Albanum egregium fœcunda Britannia profert.*" (Fruitful Britain holy Alban yields.)

Alban was yet a Pagan, when the cruel Emperors first published their edicts against the Christians, and when he received a certain Priest of God, Amphibalus, flying from his persecutors into his house as an asylum.

Having observed that his priestly guest spent whole days and nights in continual praying and watching, he felt himself on a sudden inspired by the grace of God, and began to emulate so glorious an example of faith and piety, and being leisurely instructed by his wholesome admonitions, casting off the darkness of idolatry, he became a Christian in all sincerity of heart.

Then follows the Litany of St. Alban, p. 19.

12 June

St. Alban takes St. Amphibalus' place

WHEN ST. ALBAN had exercised his hospitality towards the Priest Amphibalus, for some days, a report reached the ears of the impious magistrate, that the confessor of Christ, to whom the glory of martyrdom had not yet been granted, was concealed in Alban's house: upon which, he commanded some soldiers to make a strict search after him.

When they came to his house, St. Alban immediately presented himself to them, dressed in the clothes which his guest and instructor usually wore. Now it happened that the Judge, at the time when Alban was carried before him, was standing at the altar, and offering sacrifice to the pagan gods. And, when he saw Alban, being much enraged at his having presumed, of his own accord, to deliver himself into the hands of the soldiers, and incur the danger of being put to death, he ordered him to be dragged to the idols of the false gods.

Then follows the Litany of St. Alban, p. 19.

13 June

St. Alban confesses to being a Christian

THE ROMAN MAGISTRATE had dragged St. Alban before the pagan altar, before which he stood. The magistrate said, "Because you have chosen to conceal a rebellious and sacrilegious person, rather than to deliver him up to the soldiers, that he might suffer the punishment due to him, for despising and blaspheming the gods — you shall undergo all the punishment, which was to have been inflicted on him, if you refuse to comply with the rights of our religion."

But St. Alban, who had before voluntarily professed himself a Christian to the persecutors of the faith, was not the least intimidated at the prince's threats; but, being armed with the armour of the spiritual warfare, plainly told him that he would not obey his commands.

"Then," said the judge, "of what family or descent are you?"

"What does it concern you," answered Alban, "of what family I am? But if you desire to hear the truth of my religion, be it known unto you, that I am now a Christian, and employ my time in the practice of Christian duties."

Then is offered the Litany of St. Alban, p. 19.

14 June

St. Alban endures scourging for Christ

ST. ALBAN HAD REVEALED his Christian faith to the pagan judge. “I ask your name?” said the judge, “which tell me immediately.”

“I am called Alban by my parents,” he replied, “and ever worship and adore the true and living God, who created all things.”

Then the judge, in a rage, said, “If you will enjoy the happiness of eternal life, do not delay to offer sacrifice to the great gods.”

To which Alban answered, “Those sacrifices, which you offer to devils, can neither avail the offerers anything, nor obtain for them the effect of their petitions; on the contrary, whosoever offers sacrifices to these idols, shall receive the eternal pains of hell for his reward.”

The judge, on hearing him say these words, was exasperated even to fury. He therefore ordered the holy confessor of God to be scourged by the executioners, thinking that stripes would shake that constancy of heart which words could not affect. But he bore the greatest torments for our Lord, not only patiently, but joyfully.

Then follows the Litany of St. Alban, p. 19.

15 June

St. Alban miraculously crosses a river

AFTER ST. ALBAN was scourged, the judge perceived the saint was not to be overcome by tortures, or withdrawn from the profession of the Christian religion, and so he sentenced him to be beheaded.

Being led to execution, St. Alban came to a river, which was divided at the place where he was to suffer with a wall and sand, and the stream was very rapid. Here he saw a multitude of persons of both sexes, and of all ages and ranks, who were doubtless assembled by a divine impulse, to attend the most blessed confessor and martyr; and had so occupied the bridge on the river, as to render it almost impossible for him and all of them to pass over it that evening. Almost everybody flocking out of the city to see the execution, the judge, who remained in it, was left without any attendance.

St. Alban therefore, whose mind was filled with an ardent desire to arrive quickly at his martyrdom, approached to the stream, and, lifting up his eyes to heaven, addressed his prayer to the Almighty; when, behold, he saw the water immediately recede, and leave the bed of the river dry, for them to pass over.

Then follows the Litany of St. Alban, p. 19.

16 June

St. Alban's witness converts his executioner

THE SOLDIER WHO was to act as St. Alban's executioner, who was to have beheaded him among the rest, observed the saint miraculously crossing the river. He hastened to meet the saint at the place of execution; and, being moved by divine inspiration, threw down the drawn sword which he carried, and prostrated himself at his feet, earnestly desiring that he might rather suffer death, with or for the martyr, than be constrained to take away the life of so holy a man.

Whilst he of a persecutor became a companion in the true faith, and the rest of the executioners hesitated to take up the sword from the ground, the most venerable confessor of God ascended a hill with the throng. This very pleasant place was about half a mile from the river, enamelled with a great variety of flowers, or rather quite covered with them; where there was no part very steep or craggy, but the whole of it was levelled by nature, like the sea when it is calm: which beautiful and agreeable appearance seemed to render it fit and worthy to be enriched and sanctified with the martyr's blood.

Then follows the Litany of St. Alban, p. 19.

17 June

St. Alban's Martyrdom

WHEN ST. ALBAN had reached the summit of the hill, he prayed to God to give him water; and immediately, an ever-flowing spring rose at his feet, the course being confined; so that every one might perceive that the river had been before obedient to the martyr.

For it could not be supposed that he would ask for water at the top of the hill, who had not left it in the river below, unless he had been convinced that it was expedient for the glory of God that he should do so. That river, nevertheless, having been made subservient to the martyr's devotion, and performed the office which he enjoined it, returned; and continued to flow in its natural course as before.

Here, therefore, this most valiant martyr, being beheaded, received the crown of life which God has promised to those who love him.

Then follows the Litany of St. Alban, p. 19.

18 June

St. Alban's former executioner is martyred

AFTER ST. ALBAN was beheaded, the executioner, who was so wicked as to embrue his sacrilegious hands in the martyr's sacred blood, was not permitted to rejoice at his death; for the executioner's eyes dropped to the ground at the same moment as the blessed martyr's head.

At the same time that St. Alban was martyred, the pagans also beheaded there the soldier, who before, through a divine inspiration, had refused to execute the sentence on the martyr.

Concerning this soldier, it is evident, that, though he was not baptised at the baptismal font, yet he was cleansed with the laver of his own blood, and made worthy to enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Then is offered the Litany of St. Alban, p. 19.

19 June

St. Alban's witness ends the persecution

AFTER SO MANY heavenly miracles, the judge, astonished at the great portents and prodigies, ordered that the persecution should cease immediately, beginning thus to honour the saints for their patience and constancy, in suffering that death by the terrors of which he had expected to have withdrawn them from their adherence to the Christian faith.

St. Alban suffered on 20 June, near the city of *Verulamium*, now, for him, called St. Alban's; a church of most exquisite workmanship, and suitable to commemorate his martyrdom, having been afterwards erected there as soon as peace was restored to the Catholic Church. With the holy saint's relics, there cease not to this day the miraculous cures of many sick persons, and the frequent working of wonders.

At the same time suffered Saints Aaron and Julius, inhabitants of the city of Caerleon, and many others of both sexes, in other places; who, having been tormented on the rack till their members were dislocated, and having endured various other unheard-of cruelties, yielded their souls, after the conflict was over, to the joys of the city above.

Then follows the Litany of St. Alban, p. 19.

THE LITANY
OF SAINT ALBAN
THE PROTOMARTYR

The Litany of St. Alban

Lord, have mercy.	<i>Lord, have mercy.</i>
Christ, have mercy.	<i>Christ, have mercy.</i>
Lord, have mercy.	<i>Lord, have mercy.</i>
Christ, hear us.	<i>Christ, graciously hear us.</i>
God the Father of heaven,	<i>have mercy on us.</i>
God the Son, Redeemer of the world, "	"
God the Holy Ghost,	"
Holy Trinity, one God,	
Holy Mary,	<i>pray for us.</i>
Holy Michael the Archangel,	"
St. Alban,	
First Martyr of these shores,	
Friend of Travellers,	
Protector of Persecuted Catholics,	
Sure support of those fleeing persecution,	
Devout presence at Holy Mass,	
Silent adorer of the Blessed Sacrament,	
Unfeigned in the face of the mob,	
Defender of the Catholic Priesthood,	
Soldier of Jesus Christ,	
Alban most just,	
Alban most temperate,	

Alban most prudent, *pray for us.*
Alban most courageous, "
Alban most faithful,
Alban most hopeful,
Alban most loving,
Model of devotion,
Exemplar to pagans,
True Roman and true Christian,
Guardian of the clergy,
Labourer for honour,
Preserver of wisdom,
Victor over oppressors,
Witness of God's glory,
Keeper of God's commandments,
Finder of God's Kingdom,

Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world,
spare us, O Lord.

Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world,
graciously hear us, O Lord.

Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us.

Christ, hear us. *Christ, graciously hear us.*

✠ He has given him his heart's desire.

✠ And has set upon his head a crown of precious stones.

Let us pray.

O GOD, by whose grace Saint Alban gave himself up for his friend and received the martyr's crown as the first in this land to shed his blood for Christ; grant, we pray, that following his example and supported by his prayers, we may worship you, the living God, and give true witness to Christ our Lord.

ALMIGHTY and merciful God, who brought your Martyr blessed Alban to overcome the torments of his passion, grant that we, who celebrate his triumph, may remain invincible under your protection against the snares of the enemy.

O GOD, who were pleased to give light to your Church by adorning blessed Alban with the victory of martyrdom, graciously grant that, as he imitated the Lord's Passion, so we may, by following in his footsteps, be worthy to attain eternal joys.

THROUGH our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever.

℟ Amen.

HYMNS
IN HONOUR OF
SAINT ALBAN
THE PROTOMARTYR

In A Town Below The Hillside

Tune: HYFRYDOL (8787 D)

1 In a town below the hillside
As the sun began to set
Came a priest beseeching shelter
From a man he'd never met.
Alban hid him from the soldiers
Learnt from him of God's own Son
Took his place before the Governor
With his life in Christ begun.

2 With rough hands and ropes they
bound him
Dragged him to the river's side
There he looked upon the water
Saw the flow of Jordan's tide.
Walked bare-foot across the stream-bed
And continued on his way
Reached the trees upon the hill-top
In the early light of day.

3 'You are charged with grave offences',
said the Judge upon the hill,

'Do you bow to Caesar's power,
his divine and perfect will?'
'I am Alban', cried the martyr,
'and I worship and adore
neither Caesar nor his servants
but the true and living Lord.'

4 With a sword-stroke, there they killed him
Felled his body to the ground
Jeered and mocked the martyr's witness
Laughed with cruel, spiteful sound.
But just where his blood had fallen
Like the rain upon the earth
Flowers sprang at once to blossom
Signs of Alban's grace and worth.

5 In old Splott, on Cardiff's border
Stands the shrine of Britain's saint,
honoured, loved by those who know him,
Freed at last from all restraint,
For he stands with saints in glory,
With his prayers our feet are shod;
May our courage never fail us,
As we journey home to God!

6 He the True God through all ages,
Reigneth o'er the saints above;

With Saint Alban, Protomartyr,
May we know His endless love;
Praise and honour, might and blessing,
With and through th'angelic host:
To th'almighty God be given,
Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

Christopher Herbert (b. 1944), alt.

Alban, High In Glory Shining

Tune: ABBOT'S LEIGH (8787 D)

1 Alban, high in glory shining,
friend on earth of Christian priest,
risking life to give him succour
was through him from sin released;
then the great surrender making,
caring not for pain or loss,
owned his Lord in full allegiance
as a soldier of the Cross.

2 Steadfast in the hour of danger,
ready still to pay the price,
mocked and scourged e'en as his Master,
garbed and led to sacrifice.
On the slopes above the city
roses flow'r'd as he passed by,
and the first of Britain's martyrs
on a green hill knelt to die.

3 But the seed then sown was quicken'd
far beyond all mortal ken.
On that hill there rose an Abbey,

witness of the faith to men.
Down the ages countless thousands
bowed before their Lord divine,
and in gratitude have scattered
gems and flowers on Alban's shrine.

4 There the relics of dear Alban
Rested for the countless years,
'Till the pride and haughty greed of
Those who knew him not brought tears:
For their soldiers scatter'd all the
Bones of him, our glorious saint,
And the prayers of all the faithful
Raised to Alban sad complaint.

5 Alban heard their prayers of longing
As the faithful kept their watch.
In God's time, by His own mercy,
Wicked men He would dislodge.
Now a Relic long forgotten
Draws the faithful to a Shrine,
Guarded by the Sons of Philip
And upon them, favours shine.

6 Still today rings out the challenge
of the Saviour of the world;
still His soldiers fight His battles,

with the flag of faith unfurled.
Glory be to God the Father,
glory be to God the Son,
glory to the Holy Spirit
for Saint Alban's vict'ry won.

G. A. George, vv. 1-3, 6
A brother of the Cardiff Oratory, vv. 4-5

SAINT ALBAN, PROTOMARTYR OF THE BRITONS : PRAY FOR US!

SAINT AMPHIBALUS, PRIEST & MARTYR : PRAY FOR US!