

Pray This Novena for Protection Against Coronavirus

Our Lady of Monte Berico is the perfect intercessor right now.



Dear Parishioners,

In May of last spring my niece in the area of the Veneto, a lifelong dream of visiting Venice. The course the trip I was able to visit the shrine of our Lady of Monte Brisco in Vicenza, a shrine uniquely dedicated to our Lady's intercession during a period of plague. The Novena prayer is uniquely dedicated to our time and our needs. The following by Shaun McAfee tells the story of this heavenly intervention. The one thing that this difficult season demonstrates to me is that the greater virus is our fear and our lack of trust in God. There are people who love us. Our friends who are at home with God. They watch over us and pray for us all the time. This Novena reminds me of the concern our Lady has for us every day. I would ask you. I would invite you and your family to pray the prayer included with this every day, as I will continue to pray it, for you, your family, our community, our nation and our world. Through the intercession of our Blessed Lady, may God protect you during this time of illness.

Father Michael J. Twohig Pastor St. Theresa's in South Hadley MA

Shaun McAfee

The urgency for prayer and petition should not begin when we are most desperate. Our prayers for protection and deliverance from evil begin before that. Most of all, because we naturally desire protection: everyone values safety. Likewise, this sense of hope enables us to be situationally aware of our condition and all potential threats. That is why it's better to listen to warnings early and pray for protection and deliverance before a threat makes itself real.



Most of the world may have never heard of **St. Vincenza Pasini**, but she was a prayerful peasant's wife who understood the importance of the earliest appeals for prayer. The people of the historical city of Vicenza, Italy in the early 15th-century were somewhat dissimilar to Pasini. *Desperate in their own way, they had been fighting a pestilence for over a decade, when in 1426, Vincenza told the townspeople that as she was bringing lunch and drink to her husband laboring on a nearby hill overlooking the valley, the Virgin Mary appeared to her with instructions.*

The Blessed Virgin promised that the people of Vicenza would *be delivered from the plague* if on the spot of the apparition, they built a church. ***“I am the Virgin Mary, the Mother of Christ who died on the cross for the salvation of all. I beg you to go and say in my name to the people of Vicenza that they must build in this place a church in my honor if they want to recover their health. Otherwise, the plague will not cease.”***

Even Pasini was somewhat unconvinced, replying to Mary of the despondent and spiritual visionlessness of the local peoples. Our Lady assured her, “As proof of what I say, let them dig here, and from the rock, living water will spring.”



Immediately obedient, the 70-year-old woman preached this message on the streets, but the message fell on deaf ears, and the plague raged on without hope of a respite or an end in sight.

But Pasini continued to devote herself to Christian charity and the message of the woman who appeared to her, *visiting the spot of the apparition daily, where the Virgin herself struck the ground in the shape of a cross and the dimension of the church to be built alongside the vineyard her husband worked from.*

After two years, the Virgin appeared to her once again with the same message. With renewed vigor she told the people *including the bishop, who opted, finally, after some 70% of the population had left or deceased, to build the church on a spot in the most northern expanse of the Colli Berici hills.*

At once, upon the completion and consecration of the church, the plague that had ravaged the entire region for years ended without any doubt left in the hearts and minds of the people of the city and local area. But the Virgin didn't desire only a memorial to a moment of desperation, *but a continued devotion*. She vowed, "You will also say that those who visit this church on feasts dedicated to me and on the first Sunday of every month will have abundant graces and my will receive my maternal blessing."

To this day, the people of Vicenza and the entire surrounding valley pour upon the hill on Marian feast days and the first Sundays of each month. I used to live on this hill, about a five-minute walk from the basilica, and I can assure you that nearly 600 years later on these days it is nearly impossible to get around the traffic and the massive crowds heading to standing-room-only Masses.

Whether it amounts to local tradition or a pious devotion, the apparition is still highly regarded in the Veneto region. ***The image of the Virgin of Monte Berico*** (see above) is iconic, too. She dons a stunning crown and marvelous jewel-studded neckpiece. What's more is the novel depiction of her as the mother-protector: she stands with her mantle open, sheltering the people under her intercessory protection.

Historically associated with plagues, the Madonna of Monte Berico is the perfect intercessor for our current coronavirus outbreak. Crisis or not, pandemic or not, people have died from coronavirus and the rapid spillover of the virus should be enough cause for everyone to take up a devotion. The following novena may be said and offered for the petition of a swift end to the spread and for a maternal protection for all.



The Church of St. Mary of Mount Berico

The **Church of St. Mary of Mount Berico** (**Italian**: *Basilica di S. Maria di Monte Berico*) is a **Roman Catholic** and **minor basilica** in **Vicenza**, northern **Italy**. The church is a Marian shrine, and stands at the top of a hill which overlooks the city.

ORIGINS

According to the legend, the **Blessed Virgin** appeared on the hill twice to a peasant worker named Vincenza Pasini; the first time occurred on March 7, 1426, the second on August 1, 1428. At this time in **Veneto**, the people and economy had been suffering from a terrible plague for years. The Madonna promised that if the people of Vicenza built a church on the top of the hill she would rid them of the plague. The people kept their promise and the church was built in 3 months.

The original church later became a sanctuary. It was designed by the architect **Carlo Borella** (1688) and was decorated by the sculptor **Orazio Marinali** from **Bassano**. The city of **Vicenza** ordered an inquiry through the *Notary Publics* to look into these two exceptional events. The inquiry followed through during November, 1430. The court recordings are still preserved today in the city library, '**Biblioteca Civica Bertoliana**'.

The first religious services of the basilica were given to the Order of [Bridgettines](#) (the Franciscan Order of Santa Brigida) by the city on November 2, 1429. At the end of May, 1435, the nuns of [Saint Brigid](#) were ordered to leave the basilica by order of [Pope Eugene IV](#) on March 18, 1435, and were ordered to return to their original way of life of their order's foundation.

The Vicenza city magistracy was given the rights to Monte Berico. They then proceeded to cede the church and convent to the [Servite Order](#) (Servants of Mary) on May 31, 1435. The next day, Francesco Malipiero, the [bishop of Vicenza](#), gave the chapel the name that still exists today.

In 1821 were cast the 15 bells in B, rung in the [Veronese bellringing art](#).

PIAZZALE DELLA VITTORIA

Piazzale della Vittoria is the square in front of the basilica which was dedicated September 23, 1924. It lies at the front of the northern [facade](#) and show a full view of the city of [Vicenza](#). A vast circular cement railing circles around this large open balcony, which looks out over the city.

On the top of the railings there are markers that point out the well-known cities and panoramic views. One of the best known views is [Monte Grappa](#). Some other sites that can be viewed are the foothills of the Alps ([Dolomites](#)), along with the Lessini hills, [Venetian Lagoon](#), Mount Pasubio, Piave River, and many other sites in the [Veneto](#).

THE MADONNA

The statue of the Virgin Mary was sculpted by [Nicolò da Venezia](#) in 1430, two years after the second apparition to a local peasant named Vincenza Pasini.

RESTORATION

The original basilica has been restored repeatedly during the centuries, sometimes with famous architects such as [Palladio](#), Piovene and Miglioranza. All these changes are still visible today.

ARCHITECTURE

The stairs constructed in honour of the Blessed Virgin Mary in 1595 were ordered by Giacomo Bragadin, a leading figure of the [Republic of Venice](#) in Vicenza. The stairway terminates in a small open clearing halfway up the hill where there is a view of the city below.

Veronese's *The Supper of St. Gregory*

This walkway currently connects the city with the Sanctuary of the Madonna. These stairs were designed and built by [Francesco Muttoni](#) on March 7, 1746. The total length of the stairs is around 700 meters, consisting of 150 arches, grouped in tens. Each group is divided to symbolize the 15 mysteries and the 150 Hail Marys in the [rosary](#).

The church contains a number of artworks, including:

- *The supper of St Gregory* by [Paolo Veronese](#) (1572).

The supper of St. Gregory recalls an event wherein, Gregory who always dined with 12 individuals to recall the last supper, once found that while dining an unexpected pilgrim arrived. Later this pilgrim identified himself as Jesus. The monkey in chain supposedly symbolizes paganism; while the dog symbolizes the power of fealty.

