



**The Venerable Servant of God
Bishop Dr. George Michel Wittmann
Apostle and Intercessor of the City and Diocese of Regensburg.**

Born on January 22, 1760, George Michel Wittmann was the son of a proprietor of a metalworking business (forge) in Finkenhammer near Pleystein/Opf., Bavaria. From his pious and hardworking parents, he received a solid religious upbringing. At the age of nine, he entered the high school in Amberg. Even then, he was noted for his piety and talent. His attachment to the Virgin Mary, evident from childhood, led him to join the Marian Congregation, within which he was elected prefect in the upper class. After his studies in philosophy, he obtained a doctorate in theology from the University of Heidelberg. Wittmann was ordained priest in Regensburg on December 21, 1782. He initially served as an assistant priest in the countryside, and he later became the sub-rector of the Regensburg bishopric in 1787 and the rector of the seminary in 1802. Driven by an apostolic spirit, he devoted forty-five years to the training of pastors. As a distinguished teacher and educator of more than 1,500 priests, he firmly opposed the spirit of the Enlightenment, which was then widespread, while promoting a faithful attitude to the Church. From 1804 to 1829, Reverend Wittmann also served as parish priest of the cathedral parish, which then counted 8,000 faithful. As a tireless proclaimer of the Gospel in words and actions, privileged spiritual guide, defender of the public celebration of the sacraments, exemplary catechist, and, above all, thanks to his genuine, truly heroic charity, Pastor Wittmann was one of the most outstanding personalities of the Church. During this difficult period for Regensburg, he distinguished himself as a notable rescuer in the service of the population. He became a canon of the cathedral in 1821, provost of the cathedral, and auxiliary bishop from 1829, while simultaneously holding the roles of general visitor of the diocese of Regensburg and vicar general from 1830. King Ludwig I of Bavaria appointed him as successor to the bishop of Regensburg, Johann Michel Sailer, who died in 1832. Even before receiving papal confirmation, Wittmann, called "the man of prayer" by Cardinal Diepenbrock, passed away in a climate of holiness on March 8, 1833.

His significance

A few days before Bishop Wittmann's death, the Apostolic Nuncio in Bavaria, Charles Count Mercy d'Argenteau, wrote to the Holy Father that Wittmann could, "thanks to his great virtues and knowledge, justly be considered as one of the leading lights of the German-speaking world." A deeply convinced and convincing priest, he managed to unite apostolic action with prayer, sacrifice, and suffering in rare harmony. Thus, he ranks among the most notable figures of the Church at the beginning of the 19th century. Wittmann serves as an unwavering and unyielding advocate who unwaveringly opposed the unilateral rationalism of the Enlightenment, a movement

that endeavored to elucidate the supernatural with mere humanity, regardless of its complexity and ingenuity.

He declined the opportunity to exchange the strict universe of Christian dogma for insipid and unsubstantial moralism. For a long time, he headed the priestly seminary of Regensburg and helped to overcome Enlightenment ideas and to influence, in a changing world, the movement of Church renewal in Bavaria.

Wittmann's intransigence also showed in his heroic commitment to the poorest, in whom he saw Christ himself. Without hesitation to risk his life, on April 23, 1809, as French troops took over Regensburg and set the city ablaze, he strove to aid friends and foes alike. He showed the same spirit of sacrifice during the typhus epidemic in 1813 and the terrible famine of 1816/17. He acted without seeking attention, in line with his deeply Christian conception of service.

Justly, Wittmann, who always showed sincere love for children, is recognized as one of the pioneers of girls' education in Bavaria. Through the pedagogical and ascetic training he gave to his students, especially to Blessed Sister Mary Theresa of Jesus Gerhardinger, he established the foundations of a congregation that would spread far beyond borders: the School Sisters of Notre Dame, now active in Europe, North and South America, and recognized as one of the most influential women's teaching orders in the Catholic Church.

In his capacity as rector, then as auxiliary bishop and vicar general, Wittmann, thanks to his wide circle of friends and important correspondence, was a renovator of Catholic thought. His works on Holy Scripture, the Breviary, celibacy, and youth education met with great success. Wittmann's distinct merit lies in the fact that, during the conflict over mixed marriages in 1831, he knew how to preserve the Church's position while uniting the Bavarian episcopate.

To a man like Bishop Wittmann, who, through his exemplary practice of all priestly virtues, set a shining example and especially gave aid to the people of Regensburg, the faithful still express their gratitude and veneration today, continually praying for his beatification—the process for which was opened on March 7, 1955. The procedure is already underway in Rome.

On 28 November 2019, Pope Francis recognised the heroic virtues of Bishop Wittmann.

Words of Bishop Wittmann

“Pray, work and endure. In the spiritual life, these three things cannot and may not be separated”.

“If we want to have God's gift, the Spirit of God, we must pray for it. Chastity cannot survive without prayer. The Spirit and power of God come only through prayer”.

“In all doubtful matters, I receive definite and reliable counsel only in the Sacrifice of the Mass. I do not remember ever having been disappointed by counsel that I obtained during Holy Mass.”
“The more nightly prayer, the more grâce”.

**Devotion prayer for the beatification
of the Servant of God George Michel Wittmann**

Triune God, you crown all holiness ! You continuously raise new saints in your Church. We pray you : may your servant, Bishop George Michel Wittmann, soon be raised to the honors of the altar, so that he may be, before your throne, a model and intercessor for bishops, priests, and the faithful—especially for pastors—and that through him you, almighty God, may be all the more glorified. You who live and reign now and forever. Amen.

Prayer for a Novena

Lord, you guided your faithful servant, Bishop George Michael Wittmann, from childhood along the path of exemplary piety and virtue; grant families and nations peace, preserve youth in the fear of God and purity, inspire Christians with a burning love for the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar and filial trust in the intercession of the Immaculate Virgin Mother of God, Mary. Convert unbelievers, heretics, and sinners, and show mercy to the souls of the departed. Hear our prayers and grant us, through the intercession of your servant, Bishop Wittmann, the grace we fervently implore. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

With ecclesiastical permission (Dr. W. Gegenfurtner, vicar general, Regensburg, 16/02/2000).

To promote the beatification process of Bishop Wittmann, please send, in detail and in writing, prayer intentions and graces received attributed to the intercession of the Servant of God to Msgr. George Schwager, at the Department for Causes of Beatification and Canonization, Obermünsterplatz 7, 93047 Regensburg (Germany).

Translated by Ayeva Adzo Dzodzinam.

