

Novena to the Sacred Heart 2007

This Novena is to help you prepare for the Feast of the Sacred Heart on Friday 15 June. You may pray the Novena privately or with others over the nine days. On each day of the Novena, set aside enough quiet time to do a short meditation on that day's prayer. Read the Scripture slowly once or twice. The theme of our Novena this year is Christ's love for us. The reflections develop how we can carry Christ's love into our daily life.

If a few people are doing the Novena together, the reflections can be the basis for a period of sharing on the Scripture. Always end with the Novena Prayer and include in it any intention you would like to make.

NOVENA PRAYER

Lord Jesus, the needs of your people open your heart in love for each of us. You care for us when we are lost, sympathize with us in loneliness, and comfort us in mourning; you are closest to us where we are weakest. You love us most when we love ourselves least; you forgive us most when we forgive ourselves least; and you call us to spread your love in whatever way we can.

Lord Jesus, your heart is moved with compassion when we are suffering, when we need your help, and when we pray for each other. I ask you to listen to my prayer during this Novena, and grant what I ask (*mention your intention silently*). If what I ask is not for my own good and the good of others, grant me always what is best, that I may build up your kingdom of love in our world. Amen.

First Day (Thursday 7 June): The one and only commandment

Scripture: 'Which commandment is the first of all?' Jesus answered, 'The first is... you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart... The second is this: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these' (Mk. 12:28-31).

Reflection:

One cannot love God without loving one's brothers and sisters. In fact, Jesus later will tell his disciples, 'Love one another as I have loved you' without any mention of God. To love those around us is to love God. Wherever there is love, there is God' (1Jn).

Prayer:

Help me, Jesus, to understand that only when I truly am concerned for the well-being of every person in my life can I truly say that I love you.

Sacred Heart of Jesus, I place all my trust in you.

Second Day (Friday 8 June): Receiving comes from giving

Scripture: Love your enemies, do good and lend, expecting nothing in return... Do not judge... do not condemn... Forgive and you will be forgiven... Give and it will be given you (Lk. 6: 35,37).

Reflection:

To 'love' one's enemies does not require pretending they are one's closest friends. What Jesus asks is that I desire the well-being of every person. In being deeply concerned about the well-being of others, we ourselves experience healing.

Prayer:

Jesus, as your executioners drove those nails into your hands, you called out: 'Father, forgive them. They do not know what they are doing'. Help me to see that those who hate and hurt are not fully aware of how they are hurting themselves.

Sacred Heart of Jesus, I place all my trust in you.

Third Day (Saturday 9 June): To give and not to count the cost

Scripture: A poor widow put in two copper coins, worth one penny. Jesus said to his disciples, 'This poor widow has put in more than all the others' (Mk. 12: 42-43).

Reflection:

What the poor devout woman in the Temple gave in offering was only a fraction of what the well-off put in. The difference was that it was all that she had. She is a symbol of Jesus, who gave everything in his love for each one of us. How generous am I?

Prayer:

Jesus, I often want to show that I love you with everything I have got but I know that at times I am so often tempted to hold back just in case. Teach me, Lord, to be generous; to give and not to count the cost; to love and not to heed the wounds. Let my only concern be that in all things I am following in your footsteps.

Sacred Heart of Jesus, I place all my trust in you.

Fourth Day (Sunday 10 June): Totally united with Jesus

Scripture: 'Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life... for my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink' (Jn.6:54-55).

Reflection:

'Going to communion' is not just a passive experience by which Jesus comes to me. 'Eating' and 'drinking' expresses a totally active desire on our part as the Body of Christ to be wholly identified with Jesus, our Head, to be one with all his teaching and in modelling our lives totally on his, in dedicating ourselves in service to others.

Prayer:

Jesus, we pray that our eating and drinking of your Body and Blood may truly be a sign of our desire to bear visible witness to the message of the Gospel in all our words and actions.

Sacred Heart of Jesus, I place all my trust in you.

Fifth Day (Monday 11 June): Qualities of a disciple

Scripture: Blessed are the gentle... Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for justice... Blessed are the compassionate... Blessed are the peacemakers... (Mt.5:5,6, 7,9).

Reflection:

It has been said that the Beatitudes are a portrait of Jesus himself. It is also clear that they are a portrait of the truly committed follower of Jesus. How beautiful if each one of us was known for our gentleness, our passion for justice, our deep compassion for those in need, for our skill in breaking down the barriers of division that so damage our world.

Prayer:

O Jesus, meek and humble of Heart, fill my heart with a deep longing to reflect your qualities in my life. Give me strength with gentleness, tolerance with a sense of what is right, firmness with sensitivity for the weak, a clear vision of my goals that still keeps me in union with those who think otherwise.

Sacred Heart of Jesus, I place all my trust in you.

Sixth Day (Tuesday 12 June): A light for the world

Scripture: Jesus said: I am the Light of the world... Jesus said: You are the light of the world, the salt of the earth (In. 8: 12; Mt. 5: 13, 14).

Reflection:

Gathered in community and each one endowed with unique gifts, Christians are in any place the visible presence of the Risen Christ in the world. We are the Body of Christ in whom he is really present. And we, too, have to be what he is: a light for the world.

Prayer:

We live, Lord, in a world where there is much darkness and lack of understanding. Each one of us shares to some extent in that darkness. Fill us, Jesus, with your light and teach us how to shine that light in the darkness around us.

Sacred Heart of Jesus, I place all my trust in you.

Seventh Day (Wednesday 13 June): Finding God in those around us

Scripture: Those who say 'I love God' and hate their brothers or sisters are liars. Those who do not love a brother or sister they can see cannot love the God they have not seen (Jn. 4: 20).

Reflection:

The Apostle James tells us that it is no use wishing a brother or sister well if we do nothing to ease their needs. Everything we pray for as a community implies that, as the Body of Christ in the world, we acknowledge a responsibility in contributing to its solution.

Prayer:

Teach me, Lord, that all my utterances of love for you only have value when I realize that that love must be expressed in the same way as your love for your Father, namely, in bringing compassion, healing and peace to those around me.

Sacred Heart of Jesus, I place all my trust in you.

Eighth Day (Thursday 14 June): Genuine offerings

Scripture: When you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and first be reconciled with them (Mt. 5: 23-24).

Reflection:

How often we see ourselves as 'good' Catholics because we go to Mass and Communion every day and attend novenas, etc. None of these has value unless in my everyday life my love for God is expressed in living in harmony with those around me, being ready to forgive and be reconciled. Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me.

Prayer:

Jesus, I often find great peace when I receive you in Communion or pray to you in front of the tabernacle but help me to realize that the real test of my love is in being able to reach out to the people who are the greatest challenges to love in my daily life.

Sacred Heart of Jesus, I place all my trust in you.

Ninth Day (Friday 15 June): A message for the marginalized

Scripture: The tax collectors and sinners came to listen to Jesus. The Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling, 'This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them' (Lk. 15: 1-2).

Reflection:

Many holy people were shocked at the way Jesus mixed with the riff-raff of society. Jesus was with them because they were the ones who most needed to hear the Gospel message of God's love and compassion. Let me ask myself: Who in our society most needs to hear the message of Jesus? And how can I be one of the messengers?

Prayer:

Dear Jesus, we rejoice in the gifts we have received from your loving Heart. Fill us with the same generosity towards brothers and sisters by which you shared that life and love in bringing healing to people, in making them know that they are all unconditionally loved.

Sacred Heart of Jesus, I place all my trust in you.