

Novena to the Sacred Heart 2011
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How To Pray The Novena

This novena is for the nine days leading to the Feast of the Sacred Heart, beginning on 23 June finishing on 1 July, the Feast of the Sacred Heart.

You may pray the novena privately or in the family, in a religious community or with your neighbours or friends.

If you are praying it with others, a different person may lead the novena each day, or you may share the parts among the group.

Read the scripture and the meditation slowly, pausing when something strikes you.

A short prayer takes up the theme of the day, and you end with the Novena Prayer.

Novena Prayer

(to be said each day)

Lord Jesus, the needs of your people open your heart in love to each of us.

You care for us when we are lost, sympathise with us in loneliness and comfort us in mourning; you are closest to us when we are weakest.

You love us most when we love ourselves least; you forgive us most when we forgive ourselves least; 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 (make your request silently). If what I ask is not for my own good and the good of others, grant me always what is best for me, that I may build up your kingdom of love in our world. Amen.

Day 1 – Thursday 23 June

Jesus Shows Us His Father

Scripture: When the father saw his prodigal son he said: 'Let us eat and celebrate; for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!'

Meditation: See yourself and ask: Who is that? Do you like her/him? Then see Jesus at your side, also looking at you in the mirror. How does he see you? His eyes are tender, happy in your company because you are his sister, brother, child of God. At the end thank God for his love, not because of anything we do, but because he is our father and we are his children.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, you know each of us by name. We are important to you. Each one of us is written on the palms of your hands. Now let us know your name, Lord, know it and feel it in our hearts and lives - the name that you have made known and loved in Jesus: the name of Father.

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

Day 2 – Friday 24 June

Jesus Face To Face With Evil

Scripture: Habakkuk 1, 2-3: O LORD, how long shall I cry for help, and you will not listen? Or cry to you 'Violence!' and you will not save? Why do you make me see wrongdoing and look at trouble?

Meditation: As we quieten our bodies in prayer, resentments can bubble to the surface of our mind. Let them bubble, and burst. We soon see that anger, if we indulge it, becomes a burden on us, not on those who offended us. As long as we withhold forgiveness, we are wasting energy, and in one part of our mind we are holding God at bay.

Prayer: Lord God, we see the sins of the world in the light of your only son. We ask you to renew us according to his example. Let us grow like him and no longer repay evil with evil but make peace and live in truth today and every day of our lives.

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

Day 3 – Saturday 25 June

Jesus and the Woman

Scripture: The disciples were astonished that Jesus was speaking with a woman at Jacob's well.

Meditation: Judaism sought to safeguard morality by keeping women as far removed as possible from the public eye. But all through the Gospels Jesus picks out women as the bearers of hope. It is no accident that women stand by the cross on Calvary, and are the messengers chosen by God to announce and bear witness that Jesus was risen.

Prayer: Thank you, Lord, for choosing women as carriers and witnesses of the Good News. They have sustained us men with hope when we have lost it. They have pointed us back to the hope that carries us through aging and sickness and death, to the person of Jesus, who chose them as the first witnesses of his death and resurrection. Thank you.

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

Day 4 – Sunday 26 June

Meeting Jesus in the Eucharist

Scripture: Jesus said: I am the bread of life. Whoever eats of this bread will live for ever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.'

Meditation: In the Eucharist we have a memorial of Jesus' passion, and nourishment for each of us. What we receive in Communion becomes part of our body. We can speak with the Lord who has become part of us. Not just speaking but listening, enjoying his presence without words.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, we break bread for one another and receive the body of Jesus Christ, your son. We ask you that, strengthened by him, we may live in love and peace, so that he may be present wherever we speak words, and we may become his body in this world, for ever.

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

Day 5 – Monday 27 June

Jesus Faces Suffering

Scripture: Jesus began to teach his disciples that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected. Looking at his disciples, he said, 'If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.

Meditation: A burden shared is a burden lightened. Jesus said: Take up your cross. It is not something you go looking for in faraway places. Sooner or later the Lord hands us a cross. Can we recognise it? This is true wisdom, a faith that can carry us through darkness, doubt, and suffering. At times like this we turn to the memory of Jesus' Passion, and agonised prayer in the Garden. He faced a dark and apparently empty heaven, yet stayed faithful, with a love that survives darkness and suffering.

Prayer: Lord God, we behold you in the broken body of Jesus our brother. We pray, let us enter into your peace, whoever we are, and send your spirit upon us so that we may be open and receptive to you, and pray to you in the words of the prayer that Jesus gave us.

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

Day 6 – Tuesday 28 June

Jesus and Healing

Scripture: Jesus said, 'Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.'

Meditation: Jesus' ministry focussed on the sick; but he restored people not just to the absence of pain but to Shalom, or wholeness, the ability to love and to work. Ask the Sacred Heart that his love may be poured out through each of us.

Prayer: You are not indifferent, heavenly Father, to our joy and suffering. Your deepest care is for our lives and happiness. Our peace is your peace. We thank you that you are so vulnerable in all your people. Make us receptive and free so that, with you, we may live for this world.

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

Day 7 – Wednesday 29 June

Jesus and Gratitude

Scripture: Mary said, 'My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour, for he has looked with favour on the lowliness of his servant.

Meditation: Mary, like Jesus, counted her blessings, and took nothing for granted. A habit of gratitude is a safeguard of sanity and good humour. Thank the Lord for his presence in all the encounters of our life, and the sight of our eyes, the sun on our back. Thank God for his love, which is not earned by anything we do, but because he is our faithful father.

Prayer: We thank you, heavenly Father, for being alive, tomorrow and today, for this earth, for bread and light, for the people around us, today, yesterday and every day. We thank you for our lives here and now, lives laborious and full of joy, And may neither future nor death separate us from Jesus Christ, who is your love for all mankind and all the earth.

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

Day 8 – Thursday 30 June

Jesus and Old Age

Scripture: We know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

Meditation: The Jesuit General, Pedro Arrupe, was crippled by a stroke but wrote this message: More than ever, I find myself in the hands of God. This is what I have wanted all my life, from my youth. And this is still the one thing I want. But there is a difference now: the initiative is entirely with God. It is indeed a profound spiritual experience to know and feel myself so totally in his hands.

Prayer: Lord God, you were happy to give us the light of our eyes, and to let us be born. You did not make us for darkness and death, but that we should, with all our hearts, live and come closer to you. Renew us when we grow old, make us open if we become closed to you, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

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Day 9 – Friday 1 July

Jesus and Prayer

Scripture: As he sat at table with the sisters, Jesus said to Martha: 'You are worried and distracted by many things; there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her.'

Meditation: What we do in prayer is the better part. We see ourselves like Mary at the feet of Jesus and fill our imagination with his presence. Then we listen to him speaking, take a phrase or two, and savour it slowly, hear what he is saying to me here and now.

Prayer: Lord, you wait for us until we are open to you. We wait for your word to make us receptive. Attune us to your voice, to your silence, speak and bring your son to us, Jesus, the word of your peace.

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