

Novena Meditations for the Wounded

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Bratislava, Slovakia. A relief sculpture of the risen Jesus Christ. Made out of modelling clay by Lubo Michalko.

Displayed in the Quo Vadis Catholic House.

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Who Are Today's Wounded?

They are those who have been traumatized by betrayals of trust—in childhood, adolescence, or adulthood—from parents, other family members, authority figures, and strangers. They struggle to believe in their dignity as beloved children of God.

Today's wounded are those who have lost homes or communities to violence, natural disaster, and/or economic factors. They are those who bear the marks of abuse, assault, addiction, discrimination, harassment, and bullying. They include those who have lost loved ones, suffered infertility, miscarriage, extended illnesses, the dissolution of marriage, and more.

Today's wounded are those whose fears—of the future, financial insecurity, harm—so overwhelm them that they feel compelled to control their world by avoiding change at all costs. They are those whose relationships have suffered because of bitter divisions within families over religion, politics, identity, or unresolved conflict. They are stay-at-home moms, asylum seekers,

overworked heads of households, neglected children, and people who feel betrayed by institutions they have always counted on.

Who are today's wounded? They are us.

What Is a Novena?

A novena is any prayer prayed for nine days for a specific intention. For instance, the Divine Mercy novena is prayed beginning nine days before Divine Mercy Sunday so that it is completed on the second Sunday of Easter. There are novenas asking for the intercession of specific saints, and there are novenas for high feast days, such as Christmas and Pentecost.

The beauty of the novena is its flexibility. In these pages you will find a nine-day devotional intended to offer support for the journey, in prayer and Scripture, to those suffering from wounds old and new. We pray that through sitting with these meditations, you will find a path to greater healing.

This novena will help you pray through some of the ways our wounds manifest, but it is by

no means exhaustive. Look upon this as a first step. Give yourself—and the Holy Spirit—permission to nudge you toward areas where you most need healing.

Opening Prayer

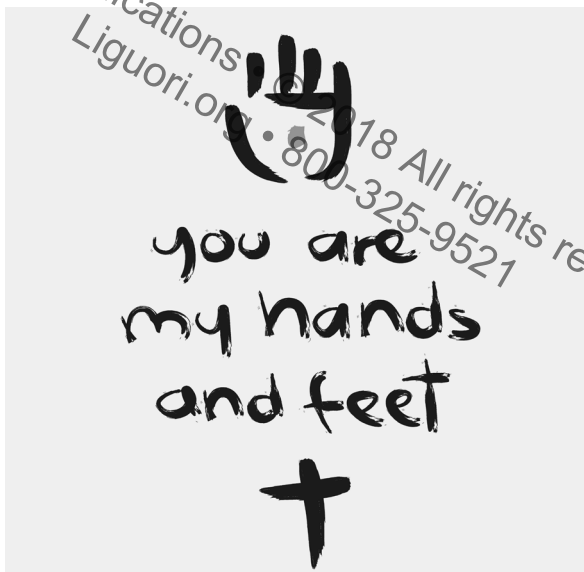
Before each prayer session, quiet your mind. Ask the Holy Spirit, the great healer, to come into your heart and help you to open up to God's voice. Sit in silence for a minute or two, allowing the quiet to make a space for the Lord to work. Then pray...

Lord Jesus, you know what it means to love until it hurts. You did it when, weary of being touched, you tried to withdraw, but the crowds came looking for you. You saw that they were like sheep without a shepherd, and in your love, you dug deep and found more to give. But most of all, you did it on that walk up to Golgotha, and on the cross at the height of that hill.

You know what it means to be wounded, not just in body but also in spirit, to feel abandoned by friends and even by God. I want to embrace my brokenness as you did. I want to

offer my suffering as a sharing in yours. But the pain of my wounds is too heavy for me to bear, Jesus. Will you come and walk beside me, put your arm around my shoulder and bear me up? I place myself in your hands, Lord, trusting that you will guide me along the path to healing. Amen.

Turn to the meditation of the day.



Day 1

Facing Our Wounds

[The Lord] said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness."

—2 Corinthians 12:9

People begin twelve-step programs, like Alcoholics Anonymous, by admitting they have a problem. This is a very hard step to take. It is difficult to be honest about our wounds because, over time, without ever intending, we've developed coping mechanisms that help us get by in the moment. They protect us from vulnerability and let us hide our problems from others. We distract ourselves with social media, binge-watching, and busyness. We self-medicate with food, drugs (legal or otherwise), or alcohol. We shop and hoard, hoping that we can pack the gaping emptiness of our wounds with stuff.

Stripping all of that away and facing our broken places with honesty can be terrifying. Won't it give our demons more power to torment us? Without the flimsy protection of our coping strategies, we'll have to admit that we're powerless against

our own pain, that attempting to control everything around us causes more harm than good.

Being honest could mean upending our lives—home, employment, and in some cases, our families. It could mean rethinking opinions we thought sacrosanct and being open to realities that challenge the safe, black-and-white worldview we grew up with.

Facing our wounds means we can no longer pretend we are in control. We have to fall on God's grace. That can be hard because don't we sometimes blame God for failing to protect us in the first place? To face our weakness, we must admit our need for help—both divine and, in many cases, earthly help from a professional. We must abandon saccharine, distant, and safe piety, and wrestle with God, as Jacob did in Genesis 32.

Prayer

Oh, God, how I know my weakness. All my choices are calculated to protect me from coming face to face with it. How often I flee from the stillness, fearing what monsters might leap out and crush me! For so long, I've tried