

Novena Meditations to the Sacred Heart of Jesus

A Redemptorist Pastoral Publication



Catholic. Pastoral. Trusted.

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WHAT IS A NOVENA?

Traditionally, a novena is a prayer or set of prayers repeated for nine consecutive days. However, a novena can just as well be accomplished in nine consecutive hours of one day or be spread out to include one day each week for nine consecutive weeks. People who participate in the Eucharist on the first Friday of each month make a novena of First Fridays.

No fixed rules need to be set for making a novena except to persevere in the prayer, so a novena is merely a good way to help us form the habit of regular prayer.

Novenas in honor of Jesus are moments of shared friendship with him in heaven and on earth. Our devotion helps us live our lives steeped in deep love for God and neighbor. Like Jesus, we strive to be a light in the world, bringing the compassion and love of God to all we meet in our own journey of life. Novenas are good ways to relate to a favorite image of Christ in the midst of our daily lives. Through these prayers and devotions, we bring Christ into our lives and share with him our needs and worries. We ask our Lord to join his prayers with ours; as we do, our friendship with God grows.

DEVOTION TO THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS

Devotion to the Sacred Heart focuses attention on the physical heart of Jesus as the symbol of his love for us. Consider this: Valentine's Day is that special annual celebration during which we express our affection for those we love most dearly. On that day, we exchange cards decorated with hearts and give candy in heart-shaped boxes. Those hearts symbolize the core of our being, and that is where our love for others comes from.

Thus, the heart of Christ, in its sacredness and purity, symbolizes the place from which God's eternal and unconditional love for each of us emanates. Jesus' heart is often depicted with a flame spouting from it, indicating the warmth and passion of God's love for the whole world.

Tradition places the origin of devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus at around the year 1000. By the Middle Ages a strong emphasis on our Lord's passion had developed, and devotion to the Sacred Heart became a popular way to worship the mystery of Christ living among us in the Church. However, the saint most often associated with devotion to the Sacred Heart is Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque (1647–1690). Her

private revelations eventually prompted Pope Pius IX to establish an annual feast day in honor of the Sacred Heart beginning in 1856.

Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus is an act of love, returning to God the measure of love God has shown us. This devotion is usually practiced in preparation for the feast of the Sacred Heart, which is celebrated on the Friday following the second Sunday after Pentecost. It is also practiced in conjunction with the monthly First Friday observance traditional in many families and parishes.

HOW TO USE THIS PAMPHLET

When making this novena privately, try to find a place where you can be comfortable and quiet, away from distractions. Begin by closing your eyes and becoming aware of God's presence with you in that place, at that moment. Before starting your prayers, call to mind what it is you want to ask of Jesus in his Sacred Heart this day.

OPENING PRAYER

O loving heart of my Redeemer, you are the source of all grace and all love. Your Sacred Heart was wounded on the cross; it remains with us constantly in the Blessed Sacrament; it loves all people with a soothing tenderness.

I consecrate to you my entire being—my heart, soul, body, and mind. I unite all my thoughts and desires with yours. Please be my consolation in trials, my rest in work, and my comfort in anxiety.

Inflame the hearts of people everywhere with love for you. May my prayers and my activities in the world be an example to others of how to love you in return for the incredible and never-ending love you constantly offer to us. Amen.

Litany of the Sacred Heart

Heart of Jesus, center of all hearts:

have mercy on us.

Heart of Jesus, full of goodness and love:

have mercy on us.

Heart of Jesus, most worthy of all praise:

have mercy on us.

Heart of Jesus, our peace and reconciliation:

have mercy on us.

Heart of Jesus, source of all consolation:

have mercy on us.

Heart of Jesus, enriching all who invoke your name:

have mercy on us.

Heart of Jesus, fountain of life and holiness:

have mercy on us.

Heart of Jesus, patient and most merciful:

have mercy on us.

Heart of Jesus, our life and resurrection:

have mercy on us.

Now proceed to the appropriate meditation.

DAILY MEDITATIONS

1

The Gentle Heart of Jesus

*...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.*

MATTHEW 11:29-30

Perhaps there has never lived a more gentle person than Jesus. He is known as the lamb of God because of his innocence and his tenderness. He called little children to come to his side because he cared so much for them. He told us that if we accept him into our lives, our burden will become light.

Amid our stress and toil, Jesus calls us to him to find rest. He encourages us to turn all our needs and all our troubles over to him. Imagine yourself being held in our Lord's arms with your head resting upon his chest. If you remain really quiet for a moment, you may be able to hear his heartbeat. Listen for it. *(pause)*

What you may have just heard was actually your

own heart beating in sync with Christ's—who lives there... yes, within your heart. Continue being still for several more moments and allow the regular beat of Jesus' heart to bring calm into your life. (*pause*)

Closing Prayer

Gentle Heart of my Redeemer, help me in time of need. Draw me close to your compassionate heart. Calm my fears and lighten my burden in life. This prayer is one simple way I can express my love for you. May your love for every human being radiate from the way I live my life, and may it be evident in my relationships with others. Amen.

***Jesus, meek and humble of heart,
make my heart like yours.***