

Novena to the Body
and Blood of Christ
by St. Alphonsus Liguori

Adapted by David Werthmann



Liguori

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The Patron of Confessors

Saint Alphonsus Liguori (1696–1787) was born into a family of Italian nobility. He earned law degrees in civil and canon law by age sixteen. Upon recognizing corruption within the legal system, he became a priest and founded the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, commonly known as the Redemptorists, in 1732. The mission of his priests and brothers is to serve people who are “poor and most abandoned.” In 1762, he was appointed a bishop. He was ninety when he died in 1787. Pope Gregory XVI canonized him in 1839, and Pope Pius IX named him a doctor of the Church in 1871. Saint Alphonsus’ feast day is August 1.

Alphonsus, the patron of confessors, wrote extensively on issues of spirituality and morality. This novena is adapted from one of the many devotionals he wrote for Redemptorist priests and brothers, but it is relevant for everyone. In this shortened version, some of the imagery has been updated to make it easier to understand for modern readers.

What Is a *Novena*?

Traditionally, a *novena* is a prayer or set of prayers repeated for nine consecutive days. However, it could also be accomplished in nine consecutive hours of one day or spread out to include one particular day each week over nine weeks. For example, those who participate in the Eucharist on the first Friday of each month make a novena of first Fridays.

No fixed rules are required for making a novena, except to persevere in prayer. Thus, a novena is a good way to help us form the habit of regular prayer.

Novenas can also help us focus on a particular aspect or image of God amid our daily life. Our devotion helps us live steeped in deep love for God and neighbor. Through these prayers and devotions, we invite God into our hearts and share with him our needs and worries. We ask God to accept our prayers and, as we do, our relationship with the Divine One grows.

The Body and Blood of Christ

The celebration of the Eucharist (or the Mass) is our single greatest prayer. During Mass, Catholics believe that bread and wine are changed into the sacramental presence of Christ's Body and Blood. It is then offered up to the Father, just as Jesus offered himself to his Abba on the cross at Calvary. Jesus instituted the Eucharist for us at his Last Supper the night before he died, and he commanded us to commemorate his death by doing the same thing until the end of time.

We became members of Christ's body in baptism, and each time we receive Communion at Mass we renew our membership in that body of Christ. That is, we deepen our relationship with God and with each other as fellow members of Christ's body.

Sometimes, because of prolonged illness or infirmity, not everyone can participate regularly in the Church's celebration of the Eucharist. So it has become customary to save leftover eucharistic

bread to share with those who could not come to church. As a result, that reserved eucharistic bread is also available for private adoration.

I hope this booklet will help deepen your devotion to our Lord's sacramental presence among us.

DAVID WERTHMANN

..... **HOW TO USE THIS BOOKLET**

When making this novena privately, try to find a place where you can be comfortable and quiet, away from distractions. This might be before the tabernacle in a church or chapel, but even a cozy chair at home will do. Begin by closing your eyes and becoming aware of God's presence with you in that place, at that moment. Before beginning the prayers that follow, call to mind what you want to ask of our Lord.

Opening Prayer: A Spiritual Communion

Lord Jesus, I believe you truly are present in the eucharistic sacrament. I love you, my Lord, and want you to live within my heart. Since I cannot receive holy Communion at this moment, I ask that you come into my heart once again spiritually. Of course, I know you are already there, so I unite myself to you completely and ask that you never allow me to be separated from you. Amen.

Litany to the Body and Blood of Christ

Body and Blood of Christ, God's gift of love to us: pray for us.

Body and Blood of Christ, approachable by all believers for help with life's problems: pray for us.

Body and Blood of Christ, always with us in the Eucharist: pray for us.

Body and Blood of Christ, God's eternal sacrifice for us: pray for us.

Body and Blood of Christ, you unite us to each other: pray for us.

Body and Blood of Christ, desiring to be joined to us: pray for us.

Body and Blood of Christ, you bring us closer to God: pray for us.

Body and Blood of Christ, through you we share in God's divine life: pray for us.

Body and Blood of Christ, you transform the world: pray for us.

Now proceed to one of the nine meditations on the following pages.