

How to pray the Novena

- Give yourself about ten minutes to slowly read the content for each day.
- Repeat the Scripture to yourself a few times, and allow it to centre you on the love of God.
- Mull over the meditation, ending with the short prayer.
- In the Novena prayer, there is the opportunity to pray for the grace of God's love in your life, and to mention any special concern or intention you are bringing to the Novena. Feel free to do so.

The theme this year is the call and invitation of Jesus to come to know, love and follow him in our Christian lives. Real prayer is always to be understood as a personal meeting with our risen Lord, who invites us to enter into a loving relationship with him. In our own words we speak to him from our hearts, communicating whatever thoughts come to mind from the gospel quotations and reflections.

Closing prayer each day

Lord Jesus, your Sacred Heart is always open in love to each of us, especially when we are suffering. To all who come to you seeking your help, you show your compassion and healing power. 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 reach out your hand to us when we stumble and have most need of your help. I ask you to listen to my prayer during this Novena, and grant what I ask. If what I ask is not for my own or others' good, grant me always what is best, that I may build your kingdom of love in our world. Amen

A NOVENA prepares us over nine days to receive the graces of God special to a feast. In this Sacred Heart Novena, contributed to us by Charles Davy SJ, the grace we ask is to know personally the love of God in the heart of Christ.

The Novena to the Sacred Heart takes place from Thursday 31 May until Friday 8 June, 2018. Many churches celebrate this novena, or at least pray the novena prayer. During the nine days we renew our love of the heart of Jesus, who loved us first. This Novena presents a short piece of scripture followed by a meditation, a reflection and a prayer.

Day 1: Thursday May 31 A Humble Heart

SCRIPTURE: 'Among the pagans the rulers lord it over them and their great men make their authority felt. This is not to happen among you. No; anyone who wants to be first among you must be your servant . . . just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve . . .' (Mt.20:25-28).

REFLECTION: there is a part of us that likes to be the boss! Some have great gifts of leadership or organisation. Jesus reminds his disciples, and also ourselves, that leadership and authority are a service, not an ego trip.

PRAYER: give the grace of even-handedness to all who have authority be it at home, at work, in Church or state. Forgive us, Lord, for the times we were heavy handed when dealing with those in our care.

Day 2: Friday 1 June Much Loved Son

SCRIPTURE: 'Now when all the people had been baptised and while Jesus after his own baptism was at prayer, heaven opened and the Holy Spirit descended on him in

bodily shape, like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; my favour rests on you."' (Mt.3:21-22).

REFLECTION: at the turning point of his life, having left home and about to start his public ministry, Jesus is affirmed by his Father and the Holy Spirit. 'You are my Son, the Beloved; my favour rests on you.' Jesus is ever the Father's beloved Son. This is his identity, his strength and consolation. Everything he does is done with and for the Father.

PRAYER: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, in you we live and have our being. Help us live out our baptism which made us your children. Father, keep drawing us to the heart of your Son.

Day 3: Saturday 2 June A Tested Heart

SCRIPTURE: ' . . . the devil showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour. "I will give you all these" he said, "if you fall at my feet and worship me." Jesus replied, "Be off, Satan! For scripture says: You must worship the Lord your God and serve him alone."' (Mt.4:8-10).

REFLECTION: part of the wonder of the incarnation – Jesus becoming one of us – is that Jesus is tried and tested as we are. Jesus responds with firmness and clarity: 'you must worship the Lord your God and serve him alone'. Jesus lives with and for his Father guided by the Spirit.

PRAYER: Lord Jesus, we often lack clarity about what influences our decisions. We can be swayed by what others say, our ego can get in the way of making a good decision, free of pressure from others. Help us Lord Jesus, to put you and your kingdom first and so enable all else find its proper place.

Day 4: Sunday 3 June Generous Hearts

SCRIPTURE: 'Follow me and I will make you fishers of people.' (Mt.4:17).

REFLECTION: Jesus needs men and women who are willing to be witnesses of his love and his truth. To their credit, Peter and Andrew responded immediately, 'they left their nets at once and followed him.' They were ordinary weak individuals to whom Jesus made a promise. 'I will make you fishers of people.' With his grace they followed him to martyrdom.

PRAYER: Lord Jesus, we are often afraid to follow you closely. Afraid of where our 'yes' might lead us: loss of status, ridicule, suffering. Help us to believe that in becoming more like you, we will become our true selves.

Day 5: Monday 4 June A Heart Given For Us

SCRIPTURE: 'Then he took some bread, and when he had given thanks, broke it and gave it to them saying, "this is my body which will be given for you . . ."' (Lk.22:19).

REFLECTION: his body refers not just to his physical body but to his whole person: soul, heart and mind. 'For us and our salvation he came down from heaven.' These words are the lens to understand the death of Jesus who died that we might have life. Today the risen Lord is labouring for us, as St Ignatius used say, continually interceding before his Father for us.

PRAYER: Father, your Son's final act of love is almost beyond our comprehension. Help us to receive his life-giving love and with your grace become men and women with and for others.