

Sacred Heart

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Saint Mary & Saint Joseph Parishes Ringtown/Sheppton

THE NAME "NOVENA" derives from the Latin word "*novem*," meaning "nine." A novena is nine days' private/public devotion in to obtain special graces. Though they are not part of our mass, per se, they've been prayed since the very beginning of the Church -- and before its official beginning: Mary and the Apostles prayed from the time of Jesus' Ascension to the time of Pentecost, a period of nine days (Acts 1). Also, a nine-day period of supplication was a pagan Roman & Eastern practice, so novenas were easily accepted by the earliest converts in these lands. (No, we didn't adopt a pagan custom).

The Christian and Jewish meaning of the number "9" entered into Christian thinking on the matter, as "9" was associated with suffering, grief, and imperfection, making it a fitting number for when "man's imperfection turned in prayer to God" (Catholic Encyclopedia). St. Jerome wrote that "the number nine in Holy Writ is indicative of suffering and grief" (Ezechiel, vii, 24).

Novenas, then, often, but not necessarily, have about them a sense of "urgency"; they are typically made for special intentions, one's own or another's ("I'll make a novena for you"). Novenas invoking the intercession of certain Saints are often made according to that Saint's patronage; for ex., because of his New Testament letter encouraging Christians to persevere in the face of persecution, St. Jude is the patron of desperate situations and "hopeless" causes, so one who finds themselves or a loved one in a tough bind might make a novena to St. Jude (by the way, it is traditional, after making a novena to St. Jude, to make a public expression of your gratitude. This is the reason for those mysterious thank you notes to St. Jude that you might see in your local newspaper's Classifieds section). There are four main types of novenas (a novena may fit into more than one category):

- novenas of mourning, such as the novena made during the novemdiales -- the nine day period following the death of a Pope
- novenas of preparation, or "anticipation," such as the Christmas or Easter Novenas
- novenas of prayer
- the indulgenced novenas

In some novenas, the same prayer is said each day for nine days, or sometimes 9 times in one day; others may have (or add) different prayers for each of the 9 prayer sessions. Some "novenas" aren't *properly* called "novenas" because the number nine plays no role in any way, but still retain the label. When a Novena is prayed in anticipation of a Feast, it is typically begun such that it ends the day *before* the Feast (i.e., to know when to start a Novena in anticipation of a Feast, count 10 days back from the Feast, with the Feast itself counting as "one".)

A word of caution: Some think a novena in a superstitious manner. Any Novena instructions that include words such as, "say this prayer for 9 consecutive days and your wish will be granted" or that describe the Novena as "never fail" in some sense might lead one to believe that we have control over God rather than *our* being *His* humble servants -- well, while the prayers themselves might (or might not) be OK, such instructions should be absolutely rejected. We pray what Jesus prayed: with confidence & expectation, but always: "Your will, not mine."

Adapted from: www.fisheaters.com/novenas.html

L: Leader
Family/All

A:

L: O my Jesus, You have said: "Truly I say to you, ask and it will be given you, seek and you will find, knock and it will be opened to you." Behold I knock, I seek, and I ask for the grace of*[state your request here]*.

A: Our Father..... Hail Mary..... Glory be.....

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

L: O my Jesus, You have said: "Truly, I say to you, if you ask anything of the Father in My name, He will give it to you." Behold, in Your name, I ask the Father for the grace of *[request]*.

A: Our Father.....Hail Mary.....Glory be.....

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

L: O my Jesus, you have said: "Truly I say to you, Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." Encouraged by Your infallible words, I now ask for the grace of *[request]*.

A: Our Father..... Hail Mary.....,Glory be.....

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

Let us pray:

L: O Sacred Heart of Jesus, for Whom it is impossible not to have compassion on the afflicted, have mercy on us poor sinners and grant us the grace which we ask of You, through the Sorrowful and Immaculate Heart of Mary, your tender Mother and ours.

A: Hail, Holy Queen, Mother of mercy, our life, our sweetness and our hope. To You do we cry, poor banished children of Eve. To You do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this valley of tears. Turn then, most gracious advocate, your eyes of mercy towards us. And after this our exile, show unto us the blessed Fruit of Your womb, Jesus.

O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary. Pray for us, O Holy Mother of God, that we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ. Amen.

St. Joseph, foster father of Jesus, pray for us.
