

**St. Joseph**, who provided a home to the child Jesus, is often invoked by Catholics needing to sell a home ([www.stjosephsite.com/SJS\\_Prayer\\_To\\_sell\\_a\\_home.htm](http://www.stjosephsite.com/SJS_Prayer_To_sell_a_home.htm))

**St. Thérèse of Lisieux**, also called the Little Flower, is popular among many today who pray various novenas to her for help in all kinds of situations ([www.ewtn.com/therese/novena.htm](http://www.ewtn.com/therese/novena.htm)).



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### How Do I Pray a Novena?

There are many ways to pray a novena. You could certainly pray spontaneously for nine days and designate that as a novena for a particular intention. But praying, like speaking or writing, is a skill. You learn how to speak or write persuasively from people who know what they're doing. In the same way, when you use some of the saints' own prayers, you're learning to pray from people who have practiced

the art for a long time. That's why you'll find many novenas with a set text, usually a prayer for each of nine days, with a space for you to mention your special intention.

In times of difficulty, anxiety, or uncertainty, many people turn to St. Jude, long known as the patron saint of "hopeless" or desperate causes. This novena prayer is simple — one set of prayers, said for nine days — and, as a powerful aid in restoring calm in stressful times, can be a great way to begin a novena devotion.

### Novena Prayer to St. Jude

*(The following prayers are repeated once a day for nine consecutive days.)*

Most holy Apostle St. Jude, faithful servant and friend of Jesus, the name of the traitor who delivered your beloved Master into the hands of His enemies has caused you to be forgotten by many, but the Church honors and invokes you universally



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as the patron of hopeless cases, of things almost despaired of. Pray for me, I am so helpless and alone. Make use, I implore you, of that particular privilege given to you, to bring visible and speedy help where help is almost despaired of. Come to my assistance in this great need, that I may receive the consolation and help of heaven in all my necessities, tribulations, and sufferings, particularly *(mention your request here)*, and that I may praise God with you and all the elect forever.

I promise, O blessed St. Jude, to be ever mindful of this great favor, to always honor you as my special and powerful patron, and to gratefully encourage devotion to you. Amen.

*(Recite one Our Father, one Hail Mary, and one Glory Be.)*

St. Jude Thaddeus, pray for us, and for all who invoke your aid.

### Christ Teaches Us to Pray Without Ceasing

God is our loving Father. We come to him in our childlike simplicity and ask for what we think we need, endeavoring to understand what it is he knows we need. This continual dependence, this childlike asking, is what the novena emphasizes by its very form. We don't stop at once or twice; we keep going back, nine times. Novenas invite us to *keep* asking, just as Jesus told us to.



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### For Further Reading

*The How-To Book of Catholic Devotions* (Our Sunday Visitor), Mike Aquilina and Regis Flaherty.  
*The Church's Most Powerful Novenas* (Our Sunday Visitor), Michael Dubruiel.  
*Treasury of Novenas* (Catholic Book Publishing), Father Lawrence Lovasik.

### General Novena Prayers

[www.catholiclinks.org/novenasenglish.htm](http://www.catholiclinks.org/novenasenglish.htm)

To view a PDF of additional topical pamphlets or to order bulk copies of this pamphlet, go to [www.osv.com/pamphlets](http://www.osv.com/pamphlets)

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# What is a Novena, and Why Should I Pray One?



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“Jesus always responds to a prayer offered in faith.”

— *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 2616

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## What Is a Novena, and Why Should I Pray One?

The word *novena* refers to *nine* of something. Traditionally it's a nine-day prayer, but it can also be a prayer of nine hours, or nine weeks, or simply nine repetitions. One of the more famous recent testimonies we have to the power of this simple form of prayer is the "express novena" to the Blessed Mother — a repetition of the *Memorare* nine times in a few minutes — that Mother Teresa liked to pray during times of challenge or difficulty.

So, why nine? Is this the *magic* number that ensures God hears and answers our prayers? And why should you and I pray novenas today?



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The number we invoke during the devotion of a novena is, itself, symbolic and historically significant. Three times three, nine, is a trinity of trinities — it brings God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit to mind by its very form. On the other hand, it's incomplete — one shy of ten. The incompleteness we sense can only be made complete by God, and that's something we can't forget. The novena reminds us of our neediness even as it assures us of God's greatness.

Novenas take their inspiration from Scripture. After Jesus Christ ascended into heaven, the apostles and the Blessed Virgin Mary spent nine days in prayer in

the upper room: "All these with one accord devoted themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers" (Acts 1:14). Then, at the end of their "novena," on the feast of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came upon them, filling them with supernatural gifts.

Whether they are prayers of thanksgiving or petition, novenas by their very form remind us of our dependency on Christ, and allow us to ask — in a manner united to the first foundations of our Church — for the Holy Spirit to come assist us.

## Praying a Novena with the Right Attitude

Because a novena is such a powerful form of prayer, sometimes we can be tempted to abuse that power. When you hear stories of prayers that supposedly never fail — as though the novena were a magical incantation that always gets you what you want — you're seeing abuse, and misuse, of the novena.

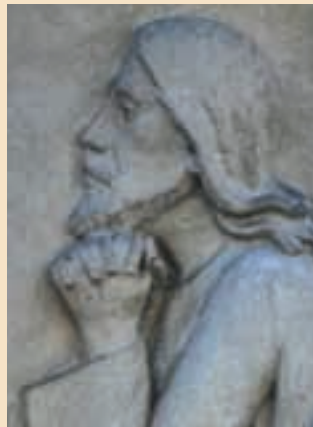
Prayer is not magic. We can't manipulate God just by saying a few "special" words. Even the most sincere prayer doesn't come with a "guarantee" that we'll get what we want. We will *get* an answer — that much is guaranteed. The answer may not be what we expect, and there will be times when it's exactly the opposite of what we think we want. But God answers on the basis of our *needs*, not just our *wants*.

In everything we pray, the prayer of Jesus himself at Gethsemane is implicit:

"Father, if thou art willing, remove this cup from me; nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done."

— Luke 22:42

The Gospels teach clearly that time and time again, Jesus turned to his Father in prayer. He did this, as he did everything in life, for the glory of the Father, and for love of us. He wanted to leave us an example. When we pray, we must pray that God's will be done.



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From Jesus' prayer, we learn the real object of prayer. Prayer isn't about changing God, because God doesn't change. The object of prayer is changing ourselves.

We should be prepared for our prayers to be answered the way the apostles were answered. The gifts they received at Pentecost were surely an answer to their novena prayers. But the gifts weren't just a day's worth of good feeling. They were a spiritual preparation for the hard life the apostles had ahead of them — a life of trials and even martyrdom, but a life nonetheless that conformed them ever more closely to Jesus Christ.

Even when they suffered, the apostles knew joy — even ecstasy — because they had received the outpouring of the Holy Spirit that they had prayed for in those nine days before Pentecost. That outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and the lasting joy that comes with it, is the real object of all our prayers.



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## Praying with the Whole Church

Since those days of the apostles praying together for nine days, novenas have developed slowly, perhaps more slowly and quietly than many other devotions with which we may be familiar. By now, of course,



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novenas are not only a well-known popular devotion but have also been adopted officially by the Church for certain occasions.

One of the best ways to pray a novena is to pray with the whole Church. Around the liturgical calendar, various feasts have traditional novenas assigned to them. In particular, there's a Pentecost Novena, a Christmas Novena, a Novena of the Immaculate Conception, and the Divine Mercy Novena, which is prayed beginning on Good Friday.

## Different Kinds of Novenas

**Novenas to the Holy Spirit** take their inspiration from the apostles' nine days of prayer between the Ascension and Pentecost. When he called the Second Vatican Council, Pope John XXIII asked the whole Church to join him in a novena to the Holy Spirit for the inspiration of the council ([www.ewtn.com/devotionals/pentecost/seven.htm](http://www.ewtn.com/devotionals/pentecost/seven.htm)).

**Novenas to the Blessed Virgin Mary** appear under many of her titles, among them Our Lady of Sorrows ([www.catholicdoors.com/prayers/novenas/p00028.htm](http://www.catholicdoors.com/prayers/novenas/p00028.htm)) and Our Lady of Good Remedy ([www.catholicdoors.com/prayers/novenas/p00067.htm](http://www.catholicdoors.com/prayers/novenas/p00067.htm)).



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**St. Anthony of Padua** was known as the Wonder-Worker, and Catholics often turn to him for finding lost objects, or even souls ([www.ewtn.com/devotionals/novena/anthony.htm](http://www.ewtn.com/devotionals/novena/anthony.htm)).

**St. Josemaria Escrivá**, founder of Opus Dei, is popular with people who want to find or keep work ([www.josemariaescriva.info/opus\\_dei/NovenaforWork.pdf](http://www.josemariaescriva.info/opus_dei/NovenaforWork.pdf)).