



A Novena to the Blessed Virgin Mary

Family Handout

The praying of novenas is a time-honored Catholic tradition. This handout provides some basic information about novenas and a novena to Mary that you can pray with your family in preparation for a Marian feast or for a special intention.

What is a novena?

A novena is a prayer that lasts nine days. Why nine? It goes back to the time of the early Christian community when Mary and the disciples waited prayerfully for nine days from Jesus' Ascension to the coming of the Holy Spirit (Acts of the Apostles 1:12–14).

Why pray a novena?

When we have a special need or intention or want to celebrate a special feast, we may make a novena. Novenas may be made individually or with others. One of the most well-known novenas is prayed during the nine days before the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe on December 12.

How do we pray a novena?

Novenas vary widely in terms of the particular prayers, hymns, and scripture used. The commonality is in the fact that whatever format is used, it is prayed the same way each of the nine days.

What happens if we forget a day?

If you forget a day, don't worry. Just continue the next day. There is nothing magical about praying a novena or superstitious about praying nine consecutive days. Novenas help us to get into the habit of, in Saint Paul's words, "praying without ceasing."

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Family Handout (continued)

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- ✦ Begin with the **Sign of the Cross**.
- ✦ Sing a **Marian hymn** such as “Immaculate Mary,” “Hail Holy Queen,” “Ave Maria,” or another of your choosing.
- ✦ Pray **Psalm 46**. The psalm speaks of God’s presence with us in all things. The following antiphon is said by all at the beginning and end of the psalm. “You are the beloved Mother of God, O Mary, lead us to your Son.” Reverently read the psalm from the Bible. Each family member may take a section of the psalm.
- ✦ After the concluding antiphon, one family member leads the family in quiet prayer.

Leader: Let us pray: *[Pause for quiet prayer.]*

Great Mother of God
and mother of all the living,
as we honor you in your mysteries,
listen to our devout prayers
and stand by us in our every need.
We reverence you and worship your divine Son
who is the Savior of the world
and our living Lord, now and for ever.

All: Amen.

- ✦ Proclaim the **Good News of the Gospel**. Reverently read Luke 1:35,37–38 from the Bible. After the reading, take a few moments of silence to allow God to speak to you. Then pray the following response.

Leader: Blessed are you among women, O Mary

All: And blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus.

- ✦ Pray the **Magnificat** (Luke 1:46–55) or a **Marian Litany** together.

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✚ Lead the family in the concluding Novena Prayer.

Leader: We turn to you for protection, holy Mother of God.
Listen to our prayers and help us in our needs.
[Here we state our needs.]
Save us from every danger, glorious and blessed Virgin.

Mary, Queen of All Saints *[Make the Sign of the Cross.]*
intercede for us with the Lord.

All: Amen.

¹This Novena was adapted from *Novenas: Prayers of Intercession and Devotion*. Ed. William G. Storey.
Chicago: Loyola Press, 2005.

