

NOVENA OF GRACE



The missionary St. Francis Xavier SJ (1506-1552) joined St. Peter Faber SJ as the first of St. Ignatius's companions and was ordained in 1537. Francis Xavier SJ travelled to India, Malaysia and Japan, baptising tens of thousands into the faith. He preached the Gospel to the poor and sick, and spent his nights in prayer. It was his ambition to enter China but he died in 1552 just 14km from the mainland.

The saints who help us by their example in life also help us by their prayers in heaven. A novena is nine days of prayer and in these prayers we are accompanied by St. Francis Xavier SJ through his letters. This novena finishes on the 12th March, when Francis was officially canonised by the Church in 1622.

SHROVE TUESDAY

4TH MARCH



We must rejoice that we are, not where we might wish to be, but where the most holy will of our Lord God and the interests of His kingdom and of His greater glory require.

(St. Francis Xavier SJ, Tuticorin, 14th May, 1544)

“What about us?” Peter asked Jesus. “We have left everything and followed you.”

Jesus said, “I tell you solemnly, there is no one who has left house, brothers, sisters, father, children or land for my sake and for the sake of the gospel who will not be repaid a hundred times over, houses, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and land - not without persecutions - now in this present time and, in the world to come, eternal life.

Many who are first will be last, and the last first.”

(Mark 10:28-31)

No one should think that this invitation is not meant for him or her, since “no one is excluded from the joy brought by the Lord.” The Lord does not disappoint those who take this risk.

(Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 3)

Lord, thank you for the witness of St. Francis Xavier SJ. Help us to imitate his missionary zeal in preaching the Gospel during this Lenten novena.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen. Ten Hail Marys... Glory be...

ASH WEDNESDAY

5TH MARCH



I am perfectly persuaded in my own mind that the lovers of the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ consider a life of trials to be a blessed life, and that to fly from or to be without the Cross is death to them.[...] How blessed it is to live dying a daily death, breaking our own wills, so that we may seek, not that which is our own, but that which belongs to Jesus Christ!

(St. Francis Xavier SJ, Goa, 18th September, 1542)

“When you fast do not put on a gloomy look as the hypocrites do: they pull long faces to let men know they are fasting. I tell you solemnly, they have had their reward. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that no one will know you are fasting except your Father who sees all that is done in secret; and your Father who sees all that is done in secret will reward you.”

(Matthew 6:16-18)

An evangeliser must never look like someone who has just come back from a funeral! Let us recover and deepen our enthusiasm, that “delightful and comforting joy of evangelising, even when it is in tears that we must sow...”

(Pope Francis, EG, 10)

Jesus Christ, may your joy fill our lives so that others may share this joy with us.

Our Father... Ten Hail Marys... Hail Mary full of grace, the Lord is with thee; blessed are thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of our death. Amen. Glory be...

THURSDAY
6TH MARCH

+AMDG



It has come to pass, I perceive, that those who are the most diligent in their studies of higher literature, make open profession that their object in doing this is to gain a reputation for learning, and thus to obtain some ecclesiastical dignity through which to serve our Lord and His Church. Miserable mistake!

It is their own profit, not the profit of the public, which they are seeking by their studies. They are afraid that God will not choose what their own desires point to and so they are unwilling to commit the whole matter of their vocation entirely to the will of God.

(St. Francis Xavier SJ, Cochin, 31st December, 1543)

“For those who want to save their life will lose it; but those who lose their life for my sake will save it. What gain, then, is it for them to have won the whole world and to have lost or ruined their very selves?”

(Luke 9:23-24)

This stifling worldliness can only be healed by breathing in the pure air of the Holy Spirit who frees us from self-centredness cloaked in an outward religiosity bereft of God. Let us not allow ourselves to be robbed of the Gospel!

(Pope Francis, EG, 97)

Holy Spirit, keep our eyes fixed on Jesus and purify our hearts so that we may lay down our lives for the glory of God.

Our Father... Ten Hail Marys... Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

FRIDAY
7TH MARCH



It matters little how we are judged by
men, and especially by men who judge
matters before they understand them.

(St. Francis Xavier SJ, Lisbon,
28th September, 1540)

John's disciples came to Jesus and said, “Why is it that we and the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not?” Jesus replied, “Surely the bridegroom’s attendants would never think of mourning as long as the bridegroom is still with them? But the time will come for the bridegroom to be taken away from them, and then they will fast.”

(Matthew 9:14-15)

“My child, treat yourself well, according to your means... Do not deprive yourself of the day’s enjoyment” (*Sir* 14:11,14). What tender paternal love echoes in these words!

(Pope Francis, EG, 4)

*Beloved Christ, you are with us in every moment.
May we encounter your Spirit in times of fasting
and of feasting.*

Our Father... Ten Hail Marys... Glory be...

SATURDAY

8TH MARCH



I have considered the great need they are in, with no one to instruct them or to give them the sacraments, and I have come to think that I ought to provide for their salvation even at the risk of my life. I have resolved to go there as soon as possible, and to offer my life to the risk.

(St. Francis Xavier SJ, Amboyna, May, 1546)

Jesus said to them in reply, “It is not those who are well who need the doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the virtuous, but sinners to repentance.”

(Luke 5:31-32)

I see clearly... that the thing the church needs most today is the ability to heal wounds and to warm the hearts of the faithful; it needs nearness, proximity. I see the church as a field hospital after battle. It is useless to ask a seriously injured person if he has high cholesterol and about the level of his blood sugars! You have to heal his wounds. Then we can talk about everything else. Heal the wounds, heal the wounds.... And you have to start from the ground up.

(Pope Francis, Interview with Antonio Spadaro SJ)

God our Father, may we bring healing to the lives of others as our wounds are healed by your grace.

Our Father... Ten Hail Marys... Glory be...

1ST SUNDAY OF LENT

9TH MARCH



I so much want the truth of Christ's life to be fully the truth of my own that I find myself, moved by grace, with a love and desire for poverty in order to be with the poor Christ; a love and a desire for insults in order to be closer to Christ in his own rejection by people; a love and desire to be considered worthless and a fool for Christ, rather than to be esteemed wise and prudent according to the standards of the world. I desire to follow Jesus Christ in the most intimate union possible.

(St. Ignatius of Loyola SJ, Spiritual Exercises, 167)

Next, taking him to a very high mountain, 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.”

Then Jesus replied, “Be off, Satan! For scripture says: ‘You must worship the Lord your God, and serve him alone.’”

(Matthew 4:8-10)

Money must serve, not rule! The Pope loves everyone, rich and poor alike, but he is obliged in the name of Christ to remind everyone that the rich must help, respect and promote the poor. I exhort you to generous solidarity...

(Pope Francis, EG, 58)

Jesus, give us your compassion to care for the poor, share with them the seed of the Gospel and walk in solidarity with them.

Our Father... Ten Hail Marys... Glory be...

MONDAY
10TH MARCH



I am quite sure that, however great and fatiguing may have been the toil by which the prize is won, far greater will be the prize itself, when one who has been faithful in little shall be set over many things.

(St. Francis Xavier SJ, Lisbon, 4th November, 1540)

“The King will answer, ‘I tell you solemnly, in so far as you did this for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did it to me.’”

(Matthew 25:40)

The word “solidarity” is a little worn and at times poorly understood, but it refers to something more than a few sporadic acts of generosity. It presumes the creation of a new mindset which thinks in terms of community and the priority of the life of all over the appropriation of goods by a few.

(Pope Francis, EG, 188)

God our Father, as we centre our lives on you may we also give our lives in service to the poor, to whom belongs the kingdom of heaven.

Our Father... Ten Hail Marys... Glory be...

TUESDAY
11TH MARCH



You may well consider how much you owe God, Who has enriched you with that rare talent of great learning — certainly not for your benefit alone, but that you may be of assistance to many others besides yourself.

(St. Francis Xavier SJ, Lisbon, 28th September, 1540)

“So you should pray like this:

**‘Our Father in heaven,
may your name be held holy,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.**

Give us today our daily bread.

**And forgive us our debts,
as we have forgiven those who are in debt to us.**

**And do not put us to the test,
but save us from the evil one.”**

(Matthew 6:9-13)

Reading the Scriptures also makes it clear that the Gospel is not merely about our personal relationship with God. Nor should our loving response to God be seen simply as an accumulation of small personal gestures to individuals in need, a kind of “charity à la carte”, or a series of acts aimed solely at easing our conscience. The Gospel is about the kingdom of God (cf. *Lk* 4:43); it is about loving God who reigns in our world. To the extent that he reigns within us, the life of society will be a setting for universal fraternity, justice, peace and dignity. Both Christian preaching and life, then, are meant to have an impact on society.

(Pope Francis, EG, 180)

*Lord, you are Saviour of us all and together we
journey to your kingdom. Help us bring that
kingdom to the world and to all peoples.*

Our Father... Ten Hail Marys... Glory be...

WEDNESDAY

12TH MARCH



What ought you to do when you see the minds of these people so well prepared to receive the seed of the Gospel? May God make known to you His most holy will, and give you at the same time strength and courage to carry it out.

(St. Francis Xavier SJ, Cochin, 27th January, 1545)

The crowds got even bigger and Jesus addressed them, “This is a wicked generation; it is asking for a sign. The only sign it will be given is the sign of Jonah. For just as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites, so will the Son of Man be to this generation.”

(Luke 11:29-30)

The salvation which God has wrought, and the Church joyfully proclaims, is for everyone. God has found a way to unite himself to every human being in every age.

To those who feel far from God and the Church, to all those who are fearful or indifferent, I would like to say this: the Lord, with great respect and love, is also calling you to be a part of his people!

(Pope Francis, EG, 113)

Holy Spirit, give us strength and courage to go out, looking for the Father's lost sheep, and to bring them back to His Church. Give us the words to soften their hearts and to open them to receive your grace.

Our Father... Ten Hail Marys... Glory be...

A REFLECTION ON MY LENTEN EXPERIENCE,
GIVING TO...

"When you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you."

~ Matthew 6:3-4 ~

A REFLECTION ON MY LENTEN EXPERIENCE,
PRAYING FOR...

*"When you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your
Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you."*

~Matthew 6:6~

A REFLECTION ON MY LENTEN EXPERIENCE,
FASTING FROM...

"When you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by men but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you."

~Matthew 6:17-18~

SOURCES

Images:

Front page: <http://www.sfxparish.org/assets/1/Page/st-francis-xavier-icon.jpg>

Shrove Tuesday 4th March 2014: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/image/4577728-3x2-940x627.jpg>

Ash Wednesday 5th March: <http://cdn.theatlantic.com/newsroom/img/posts/2014/01/AP799850701943/893046270.jpg>

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Friday 7th March: <http://i.huffpost.com/gen/>

Saturday 8th March: <http://www.newyorker.com/online/blogs/closerread/2013/11/how-strong-is-pope-francis.html>

1st Sunday of Lent, 9th March: <http://www.cardinalseansblog.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/20130315cnsbr14662.jpg>

Monday Week 1, 10th March: [http://profit.bg/uploads/userfiles/images/1\(153\).jpg](http://profit.bg/uploads/userfiles/images/1(153).jpg)

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Quotations:

from the letters of St. Francis Xavier SJ, taken from 'The Life and Letters of St. Francis Xavier' by Henry James Coleridge (London: Burns and Oates, 1882)

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from the Gospel, taken from Readings at Mass, Universalis

from 'Evangelii Gaudium: The Joy of the Gospel' by Pope Francis (London: The Incorporated Catholic Truth Society, 2013)

from the interview with Antonio Spadaro SJ, taken from <http://americamagazine.org/pope-interview>

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O ALMIGHTY GOD, FATHER OF MY SOUL, CREATOR OF ALL THINGS THAT ARE IN THE WORLD, IN YOU, MY GOD AND LORD, THE SOURCE OF ALL MY GOOD, I PLACE MY WHOLE CONFIDENCE; I HOPE, WITHOUT ANY DOUBT, THAT I SHALL OBTAIN ETERNAL SALVATION FROM YOUR GRACE THROUGH THE INFINITE MERITS OF THE PASSION AND DEATH OF MY LORD JESUS CHRIST, ALTHOUGH THE SINS WHICH I HAVE COMMITTED FROM MY TENDER YEARS UP TO THIS DAY ARE VERY GREAT INDEED AND VERY MANY.

YOU, O LORD, HAVE CREATED ME, AND GIVEN ME BODY AND SOUL AND ALL THAT I HAVE. YOU ALONE, AND NO ONE ELSE, HAVE FORMED ME IN YOUR IMAGE AND LIKENESS. I RETURN TO YOU, O MY GOD, ENDLESS THANKS AND PRAISE, ESPECIALLY FOR THE BLESSING YOU HAVE GRANTED ME OF KNOWING THE FAITH AND THE TRUE LAWS OF JESUS CHRIST YOUR SON.

WEIGH IN THE BALANCE, O LORD, MY SINS AGAINST THE MERITS OF THE DEATH AND PASSION OF MY LORD JESUS CHRIST, AND NOT AGAINST MY OWN SLENDER MERITS, WHICH ARE INDEED NONE AT ALL; AND SO I SHALL BE FREE FROM THE POWER OF THE ENEMY, AND SHALL GO AND ENJOY ETERNALLY THE GLORY OF PARADISE. AMEN.



Prayer by St. Francis Xavier SJ