

**W**hen someone mentions “Catholic devotions,” perhaps you think of a group of little old ladies gathered in the church to pray the Rosary. Or maybe you remember your own parents’ prayers to a particular saint years ago. But devotions do not have to be just for old ladies or a thing of the past. They can be an enriching part of your faith life and an inspiring part of your personal prayer practice today.

Devotions are meaningful ways we can engage in prayer to Jesus, Mary, and the saints—beyond how we honor God with our words and actions throughout our busy days. They are not meant to replace the liturgy but to extend it into our daily lives.

Indeed, the life of the church centers on the liturgy. The Second Vatican Council teaches us that “the liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the church is directed; at the same time it is

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the font from which all her power flows.” And while we cannot spend all day, every day, at Mass, St. Paul encourages us to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:17). This is where devotions come in.

When we practice devotions, we steep our days in prayer, keeping God at the forefront of our minds, even as we go about our work and play. Devotions are practical, daily ways that we grow closer to our Creator as we make our way toward heaven. They do not distract us from God; they lead us toward him.

One of the most wonderful things about our Catholic faith is the fact that we have so many diverse devotions and traditional practices. There is no one-size-fits-all approach to Catholic devotions. There truly is something for everyone! I hope that this booklet can be a resource that reminds you of some old favorite devotions but maybe also inspires you to search out and try something new.

Before we begin, let’s look a little more deeply at liturgical and devotional prayer.

## DEVOTIONS TO JESUS

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There are many prayer practices focused on Jesus, his life, passion, death, and resurrection. Let's look at a few of the most popular ones.

### *Sacred Heart of Jesus*

The feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus is celebrated on the Friday that falls nineteen days after Pentecost. Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus began in 1675 when, in France, St. Margaret Mary Alacoque reported having a vision of Jesus in which he revealed to her his heart—suffering and burning with love for all of humanity—and told her he wanted a feast day established in honor of his Sacred Heart. Jesus shared with St. Margaret Mary these twelve promises for those who would practice devotion to his Sacred Heart.

#### **PROMISES OF THE SACRED HEART**

1. I will give them all the graces necessary for their state of life.
2. I will give peace in their families.
3. I will console them in all their troubles.
4. I will be their refuge in life and especially in death.
5. I will abundantly bless all their undertakings.
6. Sinners shall find in my Heart the source and infinite ocean of mercy.
7. Tepid souls shall become fervent.

8. Fervent souls shall rise speedily to great perfection.
9. I will bless those places wherein the image of My Sacred Heart shall be exposed and venerated.
10. I will give to priests the power to touch the most hardened hearts.
11. Persons who propagate this devotion shall have their names eternally written in my Heart.
12. In the excess of the mercy of my Heart, I promise you that my all powerful love will grant to all those who will receive communion on the First Fridays, for nine consecutive months, the grace of final repentance: they will not die in my displeasure, nor without receiving the sacraments; and my Heart will be their secure refuge in that last hour.

### **FIRST FRIDAYS**

You might notice mention of First Fridays in that list of promises. This is a traditional practice of attending Mass and receiving communion on nine consecutive first Fridays in honor of Jesus' Sacred Heart and in reparation for humankind's indifference to God's infinite and merciful love.

### **ENTHRONEMENT OF THE SACRED HEART**

You might also note that Jesus, in his revelation to St. Margaret Mary, says that he will bless the places

where his image is displayed and honored. Thus, another Catholic tradition is that of “enthroning” an image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in the home. This is a small ceremony where we officially invite Jesus into our home and give him authority over our family. As part of the ceremony, an image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus is displayed in a permanent place of honor in the home, and the family members make a commitment to love and honor the Sacred Heart of Jesus. An enthronement can be done in a home, business, or school. (You can find more information about enthronements at [Enthronements.com](http://Enthronements.com).)

#### **PRAYER TO THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS**

*O most holy Heart of Jesus, fountain of every blessing, I adore you, I love you, and with a lively sorrow for my sins, I offer you this poor heart of mine. Make me humble, patient, pure, and wholly obedient to your will. Grant, good Jesus, that I may live in you and for you. Protect me in the midst of danger; comfort me in my afflictions; give me health of body, assistance in my temporal needs, your blessings on all that I do, and the grace of a holy death. In every need let me come to you with humble trust, saying, Heart of Jesus, help me. Amen.*

#### ***Divine Mercy***

Another popular devotion to Jesus, also inspired by revelations to a saint, is that of Divine Mercy. St. Faustina

Kowalska, a young Polish nun, detailed Jesus' visits to her in her diary. In his visits to St. Faustina, Jesus revealed to her an image of himself, dressed in white, raising one hand in blessing, with two beams of light emanating from his chest—one red and one white. He told St. Faustina that he wanted her to have this image painted. Jesus told St. Faustina that he wanted her to do this so that he could pour out his mercy on the whole world. She wrote his words in her diary: "My gaze from this image is like my gaze from the cross. By means of this image I shall be granting many graces to souls; so let every soul have access to it" (Diary of Sr. Faustina, Note numbers 326, 570).

#### **DIVINE MERCY SUNDAY**

In 2000, Pope St. John Paul II officially designated the Second Sunday of Easter—the last day in the Octave of Easter, as Divine Mercy Sunday, dedicated to celebrating Jesus' Divine Mercy. On this day, many churches and Catholic communities have processions with the Divine Mercy image and place the image in a place of honor in the church.

#### **DIVINE MERCY NOVENA**

A novena is nine days of devoted prayer. In her diary, St. Faustina also details nine specific prayers that Jesus revealed to her as a Divine Mercy novena. She writes that

he told her: “On each day of the novena you will bring to my heart a different group of souls and you will immerse them in this ocean of my mercy... on each day you will beg my Father, on the strength of my passion, for the graces for these souls... By this novena, I will grant every possible grace to souls” (Diary of Sr. Faustina, 1209, 796). Each day of the novena focuses on different people—“priests and religious,” “those separated from the church,” and “devout and faithful souls.” (You can find all of the prayers and much more information about devotion to Divine Mercy at the website for the National Shrine of Divine Mercy, [TheDivineMercy.org](http://TheDivineMercy.org).)

#### **DIVINE MERCY CHAPLET**

One popular way of practicing devotion to Jesus’ Divine Mercy is by praying the Chaplet of Divine Mercy. These are prayers said using traditional rosary beads, as follows:

- The Sign of the Cross
- Our Father
- Hail Mary
- Apostles Creed

On each of the large beads: *Eternal Father, I offer you the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of your Dearly Beloved Son, Our Lord, Jesus Christ, in atonement for our sins and those of the whole world.*