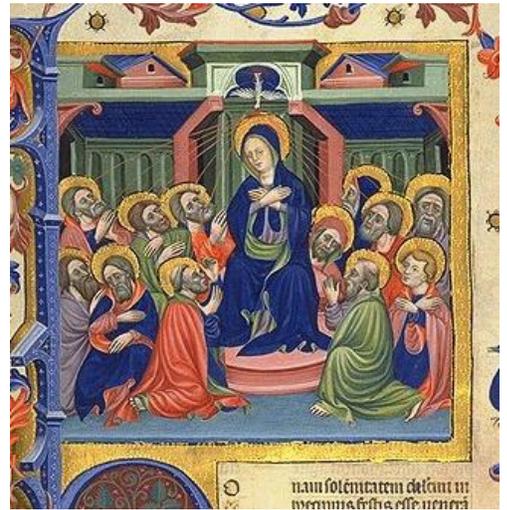


NOVENA OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

St Alphonsus Liguori

The nine day period of time from the **Ascension** until the coming of the Holy Spirit at **Pentecost** was the **first novena of prayer**, during which Mary the Mother of God and the Apostles prayed in the Upper Room for the gift of the Holy Spirit. *This Novena can also be prayed at any point throughout the year.*

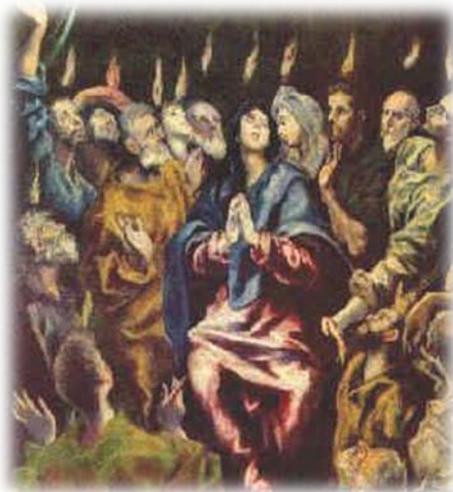
Jesus told the disciples that if He did not die, He could not send us the Holy Spirit: "it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send the Advocate to you." (John 16:7). We know, by faith, that the Holy Spirit is the love that the Father and the Eternal Word bear one to the other. Therefore, the gift of love, which God infuses into our souls, and which is the greatest of all gifts, is particularly attributed to the Holy Spirit, as St Paul says, "God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us." (Romans 5:5).



Therefore, in this novena, we must consider above all the great value of divine love, in order that we may desire to obtain it, and endeavor by spiritual "exercises", and especially by prayer, to be made partakers of it, since God has promised it to anyone who asks for it with humility: "If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask...!" (Luke 11:13).



MEDITATION 1. LOVE IS A FIRE THAT INFLAMES THE HEART



In the ancient law, God commanded a fire kept should continually be kept burning on the altar: "The fire on the altar shall be kept burning; it shall not go out." (Leviticus 6:12). St Gregory says that the altars of God are our hearts, where God desires that the fire of divine love should always be burning; and therefore the eternal Father, not satisfied with having given us the Son, Jesus Christ, to save us by His death, would also give us the Holy Spirit, who might dwell in our souls and keep them constantly on fire with love.

Jesus declared that He had come into the world to inflame our hearts with this holy fire, and that He desired nothing more than to see it kindled: "I came to bring fire to the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled!" (Luke 12:49). Therefore, forgetting the injuries and ingratitude He received from people on this earth, when He had ascended into heaven, He sent down upon us the Holy Spirit.

O, most loving Redeemer, you love us as much in the shame and disgrace that you suffered as in your kingdom of glory! This is why the Holy Spirit chose to appear in the upper room under the form of tongues of fire: "Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of

them." (Acts 2:3). Therefore, the Church teaches us to pray: "We ask you, O Lord, may the Holy Spirit inflame us with that fire which our Jesus Christ came to cast upon the earth, and which He ardently desired should be enkindled."

This is the holy fire which inflamed the saints to do such great things for God, to love their enemies, to endure contempt, to deprive themselves of earthly goods, and to embrace with delight even torments and death. Love cannot remain idle and never says, "This is enough." For the soul that loves God, the more she does for her beloved the more she desires to do, in order to please Him and to attract to herself His affections. This holy fire is enkindled by mental prayer. If, therefore, we desire to burn with love for God, let us love prayer; that is the blessed furnace in which this divine love is enkindled.

Affections and prayers

O my God, up to now I have done nothing for you, who have done so much for me. My coldness could well make you cast me away from yourself. But, O Holy Spirit, make warm what is cold. Deliver me from my lack of fervour and set me on fire with the desire to please you. I now wish to deny all that pleases me. I would rather die than displease you in the least thing. To you, who appeared in the form of fiery tongues, I consecrate my tongue so that it may not offend you again. You gave it to me to praise you, but I have used it to injure you, and cause others to offend you. I am sorry for my sins. For the love of Jesus Christ, who honoured you so much by His tongue when He walked this earth, grant that from this day forward I may honour you by praising you, by asking often for your help and by speaking of your goodness and the infinite love you deserve.

I love you, my supreme Good. I love you, O loving God.

O Mary, most beloved Spouse of the Holy Spirit, obtain for me this holy fire.



MEDITATION 2. LOVE IS A LIGHT THAT ENLIGHTENS THE SOUL



One of the greatest evils which the sin of Adam has produced in us is the darkening of our reason by means of the passions which cloud our mind. Oh, how miserable is that soul which allows itself to be ruled by any passion! Passion is like a vapour, a veil which prevents us from seeing the truth. How can we turn away from evil if we do not know what is evil, or how to recognize it?

In addition, this darkness increases in proportion as our sins increase. But the Holy Spirit, Who is called "most blessed light," not only inflames our hearts to love God, but also dispels our darkness and shows us the vanity of earthly things, the value of eternal goods, the importance of salvation, the worth of grace, the goodness of God, the infinite love which God deserves and the immense love which God has for us. "Those who are unspiritual do not receive the gifts of God's Spirit, for they are foolishness to them, and they are unable to understand them because they are discerned spiritually." (1 Corinthians 2:14).

A person who is absorbed in the pleasures of the world knows little of these truths and therefore, unfortunately, loves what ought to be hated and hates what ought to be loved. St Mary Magdalene de

Pazzi exclaimed: "O, love not known! O, love not loved!" And St Teresa of Avila said that God is not loved because God is not known. Therefore, the saints were always seeking light from God: "Send forth your light; illuminate my darkness; open my eyes;" because without light we cannot avoid precipices nor find God.

Affections and prayers

Holy and divine Spirit, I believe that you are true God, one God with the Father and the Son. I adore you and acknowledge you as the giver of those lights which make me know the evil I have done in offending you, and the obligation I have to love you. I thank you for these lights. I am sorry for having offended you.

I deserve to be left in darkness, but I see that you have not abandoned me. O Eternal Spirit, continue to enlighten my mind. Make me know still more your infinite goodness. Give me strength now to love you with all my heart. Add grace upon grace, so that I may be gently drawn to you and compelled to love none but you. I ask for this grace through the merits of Jesus Christ.

I love you, infinite Goodness, I love you more than myself. I will be all yours. Accept me and do not permit me to be separated from you again.

O my Mother, Mary, help me always by your intercession.



MEDITATION 3. LOVE IS A FOUNTAIN THAT SATISFIES

Love is also called "a living fountain, fire, and charity." Our blessed Redeemer said to the Samaritan woman: "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life. " (John 4:13). Love is the water which satisfies our thirst; those who love God with their whole heart neither seek nor desire anything else, because in God they find every good.

Therefore, satisfied with God, they often joyfully exclaim, "My God and my all!" My God, you are all good. But the Almighty complains that many souls go about seeking for fleeting and miserable pleasures from creatures and turn away from God, who is the infinite good and fountain of all joy: "They have forsaken me, the fountain of living water, and dug out cisterns for themselves, cracked cisterns that can hold no water. " (Jeremiah 2:13).

Therefore God, who loves us and desires to see us happy, cries out and makes known to all: "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me" (John 7:37). Let those who desire to be happy come to Me; and I will give them the Holy Spirit, who will make them blessed both in this life and the next. "Out of the believer's heart shall flow rivers of living water." (John 7:38). Therefore, those who believe in Jesus Christ and love Him shall be enriched with so much grace that from their hearts (the heart, that is the will, is



the belly of the soul) shall flow many fountains of holy virtues, which shall not only serve to preserve their own life, but also to give life to others.

This water is the Holy Spirit, the substantial love which Jesus Christ promised to send us from heaven after His ascension: "Now he said this about the Spirit, which believers in him were to receive; for as yet there was no Spirit, because Jesus was not yet glorified." (John 7:39). The key which opens the channels of this blessed water is prayer, which obtains every good for us in virtue of the promise, "Ask, and you shall receive." We are blind, poor, and weak; but prayer obtains for us light, strength, and abundance of grace. Theodoret said: "Prayer, though but one, can do all things." Those who pray receive all they need. God desires to give us His graces; but asks us to pray for them.

Affections and prayers

Lord, "give me this water." Yes, Lord Jesus, I will say to you what the Samaritan woman said: give me this water of divine love that I may turn away from this world and live only for you who are so lovely. "Water that which is dry." My soul is like a dry land where nothing but the briars and thorns of sin grow. Ah! before I pass out of this world, give me an outpouring of divine grace to make my soul fruitful in works worthy of your heavenly glory.

O Fountain of living water, O Supreme Good, too often have I left you for the corrupt waters of this earth, which have deprived me of your love. Why did death not overtake me before I offended you?

In the future I will seek nothing but you, O my God. Help me and grant that I may be faithful to you. Mary, my hope, keep me ever under your protection.



MEDITATION 4. LOVE IS A DEW WHICH FERTILIZES



The Church teaches us to pray: "May the infusion of the Holy Spirit cleanse our hearts, and fertilize them by the interior sprinkling of His dew." Love fertilizes the good desires, the holy purposes, and the good works of our souls; these are the flowers and fruits which the grace of the Holy Spirit produces. Love is called dew, because it cools the heart of bad passions and of temptations. Therefore, the Holy Spirit is called refreshment and pleasant coolness in the heat. This dew descends into our hearts when we pray.

A quarter of an hour of prayer is enough to remove every passion of hatred or of inordinate love, however ardent it may be: "He brought me to the banqueting house, and his intention towards me was love." (Song of Songs 2:4). Meditation is the cellar where love is set in order, so that we love our neighbour as ourselves and God above everything. Those who love God love prayer. Those who do not love prayer will find it morally impossible to overcome their passions.

Affections and prayers

O Holy and Divine Spirit, I will no longer live for myself. I will spend the remaining days of my life in loving and pleasing you. For that purpose, I ask you to grant me the gift of prayer. Come into my heart, and teach me how to pray as I ought. Give me strength not to neglect prayer when my soul is weary and dry before you. Give me the spirit of prayer, that is, the grace to pray always and to say the prayers that are most agreeable to your divine Heart.

My sins have endangered my salvation, but I understand from so many kindnesses in my regard that you wish me to be saved and to become a saint. I will become a saint to please you. I love you, O supreme Good, O my Love and my All. I give myself totally to you.

O Mary, my hope, protect me.



MEDITATION 5. LOVE IS A REPOSE THAT REFRESHES



Love is also called "rest in labour, comfort in mourning." Love is the rest that refreshes, because the principal purpose of love is to unite the will of the lover to that of the beloved. To a soul that loves God, in every affront it receives, in every sorrow it endures, in every loss which happens to it, the knowledge that it is the will of its beloved for it to suffer these trials is enough to comfort it. That soul finds peace and contentment in all tribulations merely by saying, "This is the will of my God." This is "the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding" (Philippians 4:7). St Mary Magdalene de Pazzi was always filled with joy, merely by saying, "The will of God".

In this life everyone must carry the cross. But as St Teresa of Avila says, the cross is heavy for those who drag it, but not for those who embrace it. Thus, our Lord knows very well how to strike and how to heal: "he wounds, but he binds up; he strikes, but his hands heal," as Job said (5:18). The Holy Spirit, by a sweet anointing, renders even ignominies and torments sweet and pleasant: "Yes, Father, for such was your gracious will." (Matthew 11:26). And so, we should say in all adversities that happen to us: "So be it done, Lord, because so it has pleased you." And when the fear of any temporal evil that may befall us alarms us, let us always say: "Do what you will, my God; whatever you do, I accept it all." And it is a very good thing, in this way, to offer oneself constantly during the day to God, as St Teresa of Avila did.

Affections and prayers

O my God, how often have I opposed and despised your will to do my own. I am sorry for this evil more than for any other. Henceforward, O Lord, I will love you with all my heart. "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening." Make me know what you would have me do and I will do it all. I will always desire and love nothing but your will.

O Holy Spirit, help my weakness. You are goodness itself: how can I love anything but you? May your holy love draw my whole heart to you! I leave all things to give myself entirely to you. Accept me and help me.

O my Mother Mary, I trust in you.



MEDITATION 6. LOVE IS THE VIRTUE WHICH GIVES US STRENGTH



"Love is strong as death" (Canticles 8:6). As there is no created strength which can resist death, so for a loving soul, there is no difficulty that love cannot overcome. When there is a question of pleasing its beloved, love conquers all--losses, contempt, and sorrow. "Nothing is so difficult that the fire of love cannot conquer it." This is the most certain mark with which to know if a soul really loves God, if it is as faithful in love when things are adverse as when they are prosperous. St Francis de Sales said that "God is quite as amiable when He chastises as when He consoles us, because He does all for love."

Indeed, when He strikes us most in this life, then it is that God loves us most. St John Chrysostom considered St Paul in chains more fortunate than St Paul caught up into the third heaven. The holy martyrs, in the midst of their torments, rejoiced and thanked the Lord for the greatest favour that could fall to their lot, that of having to suffer for love of God. And other saints, where there were no tyrants to afflict them, became their own executioners by the penances which they inflicted upon themselves in order to please God. St Augustine says that "For that which we love, either no labour is felt, or the labour itself is loved."

Affections and prayers

O God of my soul, I pretend to love you, and yet I do nothing for your love. Would this not be a sign that I do not love you, or love you very little? But send me the Holy Spirit, O Jesus, the Holy Spirit who will give me strength to suffer for your love and do something for you before I die. I pray you, O my beloved Redeemer, let me not die now, cold and ungrateful to you as I have been. Even though I have committed so many sins for which I should be in hell, grant me the courage to love suffering, to do something for you.

O my God, whose nature is all goodness and love, you desire to be the guest of my soul from which I have so often driven you. Oh! come and dwell in it: be its Master and make it all yours.

I love you, O my Lord. If I love you, you are already with me, since St John assures us that "those who abide in love abide in God and God in them," you are within me then, O my God. Make my love stronger. Bind me with stronger chains that I may desire, seek and love nothing but you. Let me never be separated from your love.

I desire to be all yours, O my Jesus.

O Mary, my Queen and Advocate, obtain for me love and perseverance.



MEDITATION 7. LOVE CAUSES GOD TO DWELL IN OUR SOULS



The Holy Spirit is called "Sweet Guest of the soul." This was the great promise made by Jesus Christ to those who love Him, when He said: "If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you for ever. This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you." (John 14:5-17). For the Holy Spirit never forsakes a soul if not driven away from it; the Holy Spirit does not forsake, unless we forsake the Holy Spirit first.

God, then, dwells in a soul that loves in return. But God is not satisfied if we do not love Him with our whole heart. St Augustine tells us that the Roman Senate would not admit Jesus Christ into the number of their gods because they said that our God was a proud god, who would have no other God loved but Himself. And so it is. God will have no rivals in the heart that loves Him; and when God sees that He is not the only object loved, God is jealous (so to speak).

St James writes of those creatures who divide up the heart which God desires to have all to Himself: "Or do you suppose that it is for nothing that the scripture says, 'God yearns jealously for the spirit that he has made to dwell in us'? (James 4:5). In short, as St Jerome says, "Jesus is jealous." Therefore, the heavenly spouse praises that soul which, like the turtledove, lives in solitude and hidden from the world (Canticles 1:9). Because God does not choose that the world should take a part of that love which He wants to have all to Himself, therefore He also praises His spouse by calling her "a garden locked" (Song of Songs 4:12), a garden closed against all earthly love. Do we doubt that Jesus deserves our whole love? "He gave Himself wholly to you," says St John Chrysostom, "He left nothing for Himself." He has given you all His blood and His life; there is nothing left to give.

Affections and prayers

I understand, O my God, that you want me to be all yours. Many times I have driven you from my soul, but you did not shrink from returning to be united to me again. Ah! take possession of my entire self, for today I give myself wholly to you. Accept me, O Jesus, and do not permit that I should ever live, no, not even for a moment, without your love.

You seek me, and I seek none but you. You love me and I love you. Since you love me, bind me to yourself that I may never abandon You.

O Mary, Queen of heaven, I trust in you.



MEDITATION 8. LOVE IS A BOND WHICH BINDS



As the Holy Spirit, who is uncreated love, is the indissoluble bond which binds the Father to the eternal Word, so the Holy Spirit also unites the human person with God. "Charity is a virtue," says St Augustine, "uniting us with God." And so, full of joy, St Laurence Justinian exclaims: "Love, your bond has such strength that it is able to bind even God and unite Him to our souls." The bonds of the world are bonds of death; but the bonds of God are bonds of life and salvation (Ecclesiastes 6:31), because the bonds of God by means of love unite us to God, our true and only life.

Before the coming of Jesus Christ, people fled from God and, being attached to the earth, refused to unite themselves to their Creator. But a loving God has drawn them to Himself by the bonds of love as promised through the prophet Hosea: "I led them with cords of human kindness, with bands of love." (11:4). These bands are the benefits, the lights, the calls to God's love, the promises of paradise which He makes to us, the gift which He has bestowed upon us of Jesus Christ in the Sacrifice of the Cross and in the Sacrament of the Altar, and finally, the Gift of the Holy Spirit.

Therefore, the prophet exclaims, "Shake yourself from the dust, rise up, O captive Jerusalem; loose the bonds from your neck, O captive daughter Zion!" (Isaiah 52:2). Oh, my soul, you who are created for heaven, loose yourself from the bonds of earth, and unite yourself to God by the bonds of holy love: "Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony" (Colossians 3:14). Love is a bond which unites with herself all other virtues and makes the soul perfect. "Love, and do what you will," said St Augustine. Love God, and do what you wish, because those who love God tries to avoid causing any displeasure to their beloved and seeks in all things to please the beloved.

Affections and prayers

O my dear Jesus, you have put me under a sweet obligation to love you, and how much it has cost you to win my love! I would be an ungrateful wretch if I loved you little after that, or if I let creatures share my heart with you, who have given your life and your blood for me. I wish to detach myself from everything and place all my affections in you alone. But I am weak and unable to realize this desire. You who have inspired it, help me to bring it into effect.

O my beloved Jesus, pierce my heart with the arrows of your love so that it may always sigh after you and be melted in you! You alone I seek; you alone may I always seek. May I desire and find only you!

My Jesus, I desire only you and nothing more. Grant that I may repeat these words always during my life, and especially at the moment of my death: I desire only you and nothing more. O my Mother Mary, from this moment forward, make me desire nothing but God.



MEDITATION 9. LOVE IS A TREASURE CONTAINING EVERY GOOD



Love is that treasure of which the Gospel says that we must leave all to obtain it, because love makes us partakers of the friendship of God, "for it is an unfailing treasure for mortals; those who get it obtain friendship with God, commended for the gifts that come from instruction." (Wisdom 7:14). Oh human, says St Augustine, why, then, do you go about seeking for good things? Seek that one good alone in which all other good things are contained.

But we cannot find God, who is this sovereign good, if we are caught up in the things of the earth. St Teresa of Avila writes, "Detach your heart from creatures, and you will find God." Those who find God find all that they could ever desire: "Take delight in the LORD, who will give you the desires of your heart." (Psalm 37:4). The human heart is constantly seeking after good things that may make it happy; but if it seeks them from creatures, however much it may acquire, it will never be satisfied; if it seeks God alone, God will satisfy all its desires. Who are the happiest people in this world, if not the saints? Why? Because they desire and seek only God.

A tyrant offered gold and gems to St Clement, in order to persuade him to renounce Jesus Christ. The saint exclaimed with a sigh, "Is God to be put into competition with a little dirt? Blessed is he who knows this treasure of divine love, and strives to obtain it. He who obtains it will of his own accord divest himself of everything else, that he may have nothing else but God." "When the house is on fire," says St Francis de Sales, "all the goods are thrown out of the windows." And Father Paul Segneri the Younger, a great servant of God, used to say that love is a thief which robs us of all earthly affections, so that we can say, "And what else do I desire but you alone, my Lord?"

Affections and prayers

I have not lived for you in the past, O my God, but rather for myself and my own gratifications. I have accordingly turned my back upon you, my supreme good. But I take heart at these words of Jeremiah: "The Lord is good to the soul that seeks Him." Jeremiah says, then, that you are all goodness for those who seek you.

O my beloved Lord, I know well the evil I have done in going away from you, and I am sorry for it with all my heart. I know the infinite treasure we find in you. I will profit by this light that you give me. I leave all things and choose you for my only love.

My God, my love, my all, I love you, I sigh after you, I desire you. Come, O Holy Spirit, come and consume, by your sacred fire, every affection in me that is not for you. Make me all yours, and grant me the grace to overcome everything in order to please you.

O Mary, my Advocate and Mother, help me by your prayers.



NOVENA RESOLUTION



The more we love God, the more holy we become. St Francis Borgia says that prayer introduces divine love into the human heart, and mortification withdraws the heart from the world and renders it capable of receiving this holy fire. The more there is of the world in the heart, the less room there is for holy love: "But where shall wisdom be found? And where is the place of understanding? Mortals do not know the way to it, and it is not found in the land of the living." (Job 28:12-13). The saints have always sought to mortify their self-love and their senses as much as possible. The saints are few, but we must live with the few if we will be saved with the few. St Bernard says, "That cannot be perfect which is not singular." He who would lead a perfect life must lead a singular one.

But above all, in order to become saints, it is necessary to have the desire to be saints; we must have the desire and the resolution. Some are always desiring, but they never begin to put their hands to the work. St Teresa of Avila says, "Of these irresolute souls, the devil has no fear." On the other hand, the saint said, "God is a friend of generous souls."

The devil tries to make it seem to us that it is pride to think of doing great things for God. It would indeed be pride if we thought of doing them all by ourselves, trusting in our own strength; but it is not pride to resolve to become saints trusting in God and saying, "I can do all things through Him who strengthens me." (Philippians 4:13). We must therefore be of good courage, make strong resolutions, and begin. Prayer can do everything. What we cannot do by our own strength, we can do easily with the help of God, who has promised to give us whatever we ask: "If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you." (John 15:7).

Affections and Prayers

Sweet Redeemer of my soul, you want me to love you, and command me to love you with all my heart. With all my heart I desire to love you, O my Jesus. I will even go so far as to say to you: O my God, such is the trust I have in your mercy that my sins do not inspire me with fear, since I detest them above every other evil.

I know also that you do not remember the offences of one who repents and who loves you. Even more, since I have offended you more than others, I wish to love you more than others.

O my Lord, you want me to be a saint, and I wish to become one in order to please you. I love you, infinite Goodness. I give myself entirely to you. You are my one good, my only love. Do not turn me away, but make me all yours. Do not permit me to displease you again. Grant that I may give myself entirely for you, as you have sacrificed yourself entirely for me.

Mary, most loving and beloved spouse of the Holy Spirit, obtain for me love and faithfulness.

Amen. Amen. Amen.

