



**Novena in honour of the Sacred Heart of Jesus
in these special times**

FR GERRY O'SHAUGHNESSY SDB
SALESIANS OF DON BOSCO UK

Suggested way to begin each day:

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

O my Jesus, you have said: "Truly I say to you, ask and you will receive, seek and you will find, knock and it will be opened to you." Behold I knock, I seek and ask for the grace of... (Mention your Intention Here)

Sacred Heart of Jesus, I place all my trust in you. O my Jesus, you have said: "Truly I say to you, if you ask anything of the Father in my name, he will give it to you." Behold, in your name, I ask the Father for the grace of ... (Mention your Intention Here)

Sacred Heart of Jesus, I place all my trust in you. O my Jesus, you have said: "Truly I say to you, heaven and earth will pass away but my words will not pass away." Encouraged by your infallible words I now ask for the grace of ... (Mention your Intention Here)

Sacred Heart of Jesus, I place all my trust in you. O Sacred Heart of Jesus, for whom it is impossible not to have compassion on the afflicted, have pity on us and grant us the grace which we ask of you, through the Sorrowful and Immaculate Heart of Mary, your tender Mother and ours. Amen. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

Day 1: Option for the poor

REFLECT In the Gospel we see Jesus has a preferential option for the poor. He reaches out to the lowly and those on the edges. His ministry is prefigured by Mary's own Magnificat: "He casts down the mighty from their thrones and raises up the lowly; he fills the starving with good things and sends the rich away empty." (Luke 1: 52-53) The love of Jesus, shown in the Sacred Heart, reminds us all of our need to be aware of others in this time of international crisis. May we go out this day to proclaim Good News in our attitudes, words and actions for the good other others, especially the poor. We pray that we can feed the hungry and ensure that our local homeless have shelter. In the new normal, could you volunteer in your local food bank or soup kitchen?

PRACTICE Make a conscious decision to reach out to those who would appreciate something of your time.

Our Father...

Hail Mary...

Glory be....

Sweet heart of Jesus, we implore;
Help us to love you more and more

Family blessing: Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. (Mark 12:30)

A happy family is but an earlier heaven—George Bernard Shaw, playwright

Day 2: Frontline Heroes

REFLECT: This time last year, we gathered on our steps, ensuring physical distancing, to clap for our heroes. It was a national expression of unity as we applauded those on the frontline in hospitals and care homes across the land—working hard to protect life. These women and men are the backbone of our national care system; they ministered to the sick and dying—victims of a pandemic that took so many from us. They offered care and attention and ensured that no one had to face death alone. They did this in the most traumatic of circumstances, sometimes with only limited protection and many becoming victims of this killer virus themselves. Jesus, in his Sacred Heart, identifies with these health specialists; he brings healing to those who are sick, both physically and morally. "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners." (Mark 2: 17)

PRACTICE: As you remember for our NHS and Care Home frontline heroes once again tonight, think of those you know personally—those in your family or parish. Bring their effort and care before the Lord. As we slowly move forward to some sense of normality, may we never forget these heroes and the care they continue to bring.

Our Father...

Hail Mary...

Glory be....

Sweet heart of Jesus, we implore;
Help us to love you more and more

Family blessing: Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. (Mark 12:30)

In every conceivable manner, the family is link to our past, bridge to our future—Alex Haley, writer

Day 3: Laboratory Technicians

There are many who have been working in the background during these distressing times. They have been working ceaselessly to ensure that tests and results get to those who are suffering so that swift diagnosis and treatment be offered—lives have been saved. Countless hours are also being spent in laboratories across the world searching for a cure for the Coronavirus. A vaccine that will give us back our dignity and rights as women, men and children created in the image and love of God. A vaccine that will unlock the lockdown and give everyone back a normality that we crave. This is not going to happen overnight so we are called to TRUST in God always; it is the trust that we see in families, the trust we see on the Cross, the trust that needs to be in our parishes.

Trust is both an attitude and an action. Your first small step must be followed by another, and another, until you realize that God has indeed made a way for you to know him personally. The more you act on your faith in God, the more you will see of his way for you.
—Henry Cloud

PRACTICE: as you pray today for the laboratory workers, remember those words of trust spoken by the Master of love from his throne on Calvary: "Father into your hands I commit my spirit!" (Luke 23: 46)

Our Father...

Hail Mary...

Glory be...

Sweet heart of Jesus, we implore;
Help us to love you more and more

Family blessing: Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. (Mark 12:30)

Family is the most important thing in the world—Princess Diana

Day 4: Street Cleaners and Sanitation Staff

Time and time again we have been reminded to wash our hands—even singing 'Happy Birthday' twice as we do so. We are reminded to wipe down surfaces in our homes with disinfectant to ensure that the virus is kept at bay. Trains, buses and planes are being deep-cleaned on a daily basis, as passengers must continue to wear face masks and are told not to touch surfaces. Thus, we see the importance of cleanliness as a way of keeping safe—this cleansing saves our lives. It has taken a global pandemic to help us realise the importance of those who keep our streets, homes and workplaces clean. They take away the rubbish we create and so often just casually throw away. Let us pray that these times of extreme hardship will help us appreciate the efforts of those who work to care for the planet. In the first book of the bible, we see that humanity was asked to look after the earth. It is OUR responsibility—in post pandemic days, we will need our street cleaners and sanitation staff even more to ensure we keep our relationship of love with God. Our care for the earth is a sign of our love for God and for those we share our planet with:

In the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have care over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth." (Genesis 1: 26-28)

PRACTICE: simply do not drop litter! Do your bit to ensure that our streets are safe and clean. We need to show our love for our planet today

Our Father...

Hail Mary...

Glory be....

Sweet heart of Jesus, we implore;

Help us to love you more and more

Family blessing: Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. (Mark 12:30)

One of the things that binds us as a family is a shared sense of humour—Ralph Fiennes, actor

Day 5: Our pastoral leaders

As we gather for worship on the Feast of Corpus Christi, we rightly look back to past years when we celebrated, probably with a procession, and saw the community of faith gathered TOGETHER in celebration. Going to Church involved being WITH others. In 2020 our Church buildings were closed and we were forced gather in our lockdown homes around a computer screen as we celebrated mass virtually. On the feast of the Body of Christ in 2021, we still experience a physically distanced liturgy that mitigates against the unity we are invited to share at mass—gone is the social interaction that is the needed lifeblood of any strong community. We are spurred on to be a stronger Eucharistic People and to really **live** Eucharist in the love we show, the patience we display and in those little ways in which we are there for each other: that text to a friend; going shopping for an elderly relative and even keeping your distance at the supermarket. To be a true follower of Jesus means that we DO this in memory of the one who shows us his love. The Sacred Heart is a reminder to each of us to continue to DO this; real Christianity means that we cannot sit on the fence—Christianity is a call to be ACTIVE and INVOLVED in the local community and to SERVE, following the example of the servant of love, who washed the feet of his own disciples at the Last Supper:

Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. (John 13: 14-15)

PRACTICE: Live in the ARK today—don't worry there is no flood but can you do one Act of Random Kindness? Live and share the love of ARK today

Our Father...

Hail Mary...

Glory be....

Sweet heart of Jesus, we implore;

Help us to love you more and more

Family blessing: Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. (Mark 12:30)

The family is the first essential cell of human society—Pope John XXIII

Day 6: Our teachers and school communities

ALL schools in our land are open and serving children and families in a new and demanding way. 23rd March 2020 will go down in history as the day we were forced into lockdown and isolation as we were asked to STAY AT HOME to stop the spread of this killer virus—we were told to work from home and only leave the security of our homes if we were involved in essential services. The reality is that even then, schools did NOT close down: vulnerable children and children of essential workers were cared for and were kept safe. Hard working teachers delivered online classes and offered workbooks to ensure that children did not lose out. It was not ideal, but we were living in unusual times and educationalists were trying their best to respond in new and creative ways. Now, school leaders ensure that their staff and the families that they serve can prepare for the demands of the 'new normality' that we are told to expect. Huge changes are coming to the world of education; it is not a case of change for change's sake; it is change to show care and love for the community that they serve. As many of us were forced to homeschool, we realised just how demanding teaching is: our respect and understanding for those involved in the education of our children rose dramatically. Today we pray for our schools, especially remember your local parochial school. Those involved in the ministry of education are caught up in the compassion of Jesus who "taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law." (Matthew 7: 29). We remember all those who are supporting and helping our children and are making a difference in the lives of our families:

To truly reach a student is to touch their heart. This may be done with a kind word, a smile, an extra-curricular activity, a well-planned lesson! Whenever we touch the heart in any of these ways and beyond, we are befriending the young—Michael Bennet, De La Salle Academy, Liverpool)

PRACTICE: write a note, card or text of appreciation to the Headteacher of your local school for standing WITH the community in this crisis.

Our Father...

Hail Mary...

Glory be....

Sweet heart of Jesus, we implore;

Help us to love you more and more

Family blessing: Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and

with all your mind and with all your strength. (Mark 12:30)

We must take care of our families wherever we find them—Elizabeth Gilbert, author

Day 7: Our young people

All of us have suffered as a result of this pandemic; Covid-19 has forced us to live a life of isolation and seclusion as a sign that we care. However, our children and young people have been asked to make this sacrifice too, and it runs counter to everything they love to do. They cannot hang out or play together; they cannot share a burger or catch a movie; team games are out! Instead they have had to turn to social media and hang out together virtually. As adults, we can perhaps fully comprehend the need for such a drastic position, but it has been a big ask for our young people. Back in March 2020, it may have seemed 'cool' to have a lie in and learn from home. However, as we have experienced over twelve months of disruption in their young lives, the novelty has worn off: we were made for community and our children and young people realise that more than others in lockdown. Today, we remember these young people caught up in a crisis that they have no power over. They share that helplessness of the global community in the face of this silent killer. They have a story to tell and share; over the days, weeks, months and years ahead, the Church must offer them a space, so that their story can be told. Future generations will need to learn from their courage, the hopes, their failures, but above all, they need to learn from their selfless love. Jesus used children to remind us of our need to listen and to serve; as we approach the feast of love, we are reminded in these dark days of the love of God for each of us

My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. (John 15: 12-15)

When we treat young people with friendship, we are no longer the master and they the servant! We are co-creators in the journey of education that will lead to illumination. Of the many blessings I have received from the Salesian and Lasallian traditions, the greatest has been amicitia et pax – to educate through friendship and peace—Michael Bennett

PRACTICE: take time today to LISTEN to a young person from your family. Children and young people have so much to teach us-have you got the courage to LISTEN?

Our Father...

Hail Mary...

Glory be....

Sweet heart of Jesus, we implore;
Help us to love you more and more

Family blessing: Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. (Mark 12:30)

When you're in the thick of raising your kids by yourself, you tend to keep a running list of everything you think you're doing wrong. I recommend taking a lot of family pictures as evidence to the contrary—Connie Schultz, writer

Day 8: Our shopkeepers and shop workers

You might remember when panic hit the national psyche last year: people were going into shops and supermarkets thinking it was Christmas Eve! Shelves were emptied of everything as Britain went into hoarding mode—even crucial NHS workers found that they could not even get a loaf of bread when they came off shift. However, in the midst of global pandemic, 'Armageddon' did not happen. Food supplies were maintained, shops remained open and we were fed and nourished in the local corner shop or supermarket. For months, we were still cared for even though we could not go down the pub for a pint or pop into a McDonald's. We are living in a more tolerant age, I think: have you noticed those warmer smiles and the simple "thank yous" as we move out of the way to give people space? It would be lovely to think that this could continue into the new normal. We had to learn new ways to shop, using one-way systems; we had to be more polite and wait until it was our turn to move; we discovered a new choreography of movement as we gave each other two metres of space—or two shopping trolleys for those of us raised in imperial measurements! Shops have been our lifeline in these days, and I have been encouraged and helped by those shop workers who have greeted us with a smile and warmth. They have been true stars and an example to us all: we did not starve and shelves were not empty. In the Old Testament, the prophet Habakkuk preached a message of HOPE in the face of difficulties. For his agricultural people, even famine would not keep him from the glory and love of God:

Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will be joyful in God my Saviour.

(Habakkuk 3: 17-18)

PRACTICE: next time you go shopping make a special effort to smile at the greeters, the stackers and checkout cashiers. It is something small, but it could make their day.

Our Father...

Hail Mary...

Glory be....

Sweet heart of Jesus, we implore;
Help us to love you more and more

Family blessing: Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. (Mark 12:30)

So we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. (Romans 12:5)

Day 9: Our farmers and those who work on the land.

Just as frontline workers, cleaners and shopkeepers have helped us to maintain a level of 'normality' in these abnormal days, where would we be without our farmers and those in the food chain? I thank my own family, working so hard to care for the animals and the earth. I remember vividly taking a group of children from inner city Liverpool to the Cheshire countryside. Not only were they able to breathe clean, unpolluted air, they saw real live sheep and cows. They discovered that milk didn't come from bottles bought from the local Tesco! Jesus, the Good Shepherd came from an agricultural background—he had an affinity with nature. As I see with my own family, farmers have to work long and hard: farms animals and food crops do not fit in with the concept of 'holidays'; they are 365 days-a-year operations. Even in pandemic, they cannot just go into lockdown: cows have to be milked and crops have to be harvested—farm life has to go on. At this time especially, we are reminded what Jesus himself said, "I am the good shepherd" (John 10: 11). In this statement, Jesus is reaching back into the rich agricultural tradition of his community, especially seen in Ezekiel and Jeremiah. Good shepherds meant prosperity and peace. Bad shepherds meant sure and certain destruction. The founding fathers of the Israelites were shepherds; Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were shepherds. Moses is prepared for his mission by leaving the safe space of a palace and being forced out into the wilderness to labour as a shepherd. And the greatest of the Israelite kings, King David, is introduced to us as a shepherd. Jesus comes as the one who cares and

loves to the end. Pope Francis urges us all to care and love so much that we SMELL just like the sheep we serve. This crisis has called for a new level of involvement and care, using different skill sets as we move into the new normal. As we pray for our farmers and those involved in food distribution, let us bless the table in front of us and stand in solidarity with those who will have nothing to put on their tables today.

PRACTICE: say a family grace before meals thanking God for the food on your table and all those who have helped to get it there

Our Father...

Hail Mary...

Glory be...

Sweet heart of Jesus, we implore;
Help us to love you more and more

Family blessing: Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. (Mark 12:30)

Your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south, and in you and your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed. (Genesis 28:14)

The Feast: Our own families, that we can share our love always, especially on this feast of love.

A very happy feast day of the Sacred Heart to you all. This is the feast that shows us the total and unconditional love of God, a love that we need to hang on to in these difficult days of pandemic. As we slowly move towards a new normal, we realise that our lives have been drastically transformed by this experience and that we will be forced to make some serious changes as we move forward. We can only make real progress if we choose to follow the example of the Sacred Heart in the way we care for each other. St Paul reminds us that there is nothing as strong as real gentleness:

Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice! Let your gentleness be known to all. The Lord is at hand. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4: 4-7)

Family prayer: Prayer to Have a Heart for God

Father, thank you for each one of my precious children. Lord, you know their hearts. You know their strengths, their weaknesses and every tiny detail about them. God, I pray that You draw them closer to You. Show them who You are. Let them see their need for you, Lord. Capture their hearts and fill them with Your Spirit. Lord, I pray that they would seek You above all else. That as they wake up in the morning and go to sleep at night, You would be on their minds and hearts. That everywhere they go and in everything they do, they would see You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

PRACTICE: enjoy the feast with a glass of something that warms the heart! Have an ice cream or a special cake or treat. Do something that marks this day as special. Do this for all those special days in your life: we are all called to celebrate life to the full.

Our Father...

Hail Mary...

Glory be....

Sweet heart of Jesus, we implore;
Help us to love you more and more

Family blessing: Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. (Mark 12:30)

Cover image: Br Mickey McGrath OSFS