

NOVENA TO ST. FRANCIS DE SALES



(Novena: 15-23 January, Feast: 24 January)

I. INTRODUCTORY PRAYER

OPTION 1

O Great St. Francis, glorious apostle of Jesus Christ, seraph of the earth, who did breathe but for the glory of God; perfect imitator of your meek and humble Saviour, and devoted child of the holy Mother of God, deign to receive me among the number of your special clients; be henceforth my advocate, my counsellor, my friend, and my father. Your prayers, even on earth, were the instruments of innumerable miracles of grace. Oh, vouchsafe to offer one for me, now that their efficacy is so greatly increased in heaven. May my entire conversion now add another to the already countless triumphs of your charity. Teach me, like you, to see God in my fellow-creatures; and for His sake to make myself all to all, weeping with them that weep, rejoicing with them that rejoice. May the example of your wondrous meekness sink into my soul and excite my earnest, persevering efforts to imitate it. Strengthen me, by your prayers, to pursue the difficult practice of interior mortification, without which I cannot hope to possess my soul in peace and patience. Oh, enkindle in my heart one spark of the heavenly fire of charity which glowed in yours! Teach me, like you, to seek and find my happiness in God, and to feel that it is good to live, to labour, and rejoice in Him alone. Shield me against the many perils which beset my path: watch over my immortal interests, and obtain that my soul may die the death of the just, and my last end be like unto yours. **Amen.**

OPTION 2

O Glorious St. Francis, model of the interior life, and full of zeal for the salvation of souls! Obtain for me the grace to employ all my faculties, not for my own sanctification alone, but for that of my neighbour also; that continually spreading abroad the sweet odour of Jesus Christ by my words and works, I may attain with you the blessedness promised to the merciful: "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy;" and that I may one day have a share in the glory which you enjoy in paradise with the angels and saints, where "those who edify and instruct to justice shall shine as stars for all eternity" (Dan. 12:3).

II. MEDITATION AND PRAYERS FOR EACH DAY FROM THE WRITINGS OF ST. FRANCIS

DAY 1: 15 JANUARY

A. Meditation

There is no clock, no matter how good it may be, that doesn't need resetting and rewinding twice a day, once in the morning and once in the evening. In addition, at least once a year it must be taken apart to remove the dirt clogging it, straighten out bent parts and repair those worn out. In like manner, every morning and evening a person who really takes care of his heart must rewind it for God's service by means of certain practices of piety. At least once a year he must take it apart and examine every piece in detail; that is, every affection and passion, in order to repair whatever defects there may be. (*Introduction to the Devout Life, Part 5, Ch. 1; O. III, p. 340*)

B. Prayer: An Act of Abandonment

O my God, I thank you and I praise you for accomplishing your holy and all-lovable will without any regard for mine. With my whole heart, in spite of my heart, do I receive this cross I feared so much! It is the cross of Your choice, the cross of Your love. I venerate it; nor for anything in the world would I wish that it had not come, since You willed it. I keep it with gratitude and with joy, as I do everything that comes from Your hand; and I shall strive to carry it without letting it drag, with all the respect and all the affection which Your works deserve. Amen.

DAY 2: 16 JANUARY

A. Meditation

State openly that you desire to be devout. I do not say that you should assert that you are devout but that you desire to be devout. Do not be ashamed to practice the ordinary, necessary actions that bring us to the love of God. Acknowledge frankly that you are trying to meditate, that you would rather die than commit a mortal sin, that you are resolved to frequent the sacraments and to follow your director's advice. This candid confession of our desire to serve God and to consecrate ourselves entirely to His love is most acceptable to His Divine Majesty. (*Introduction to the Devout Life, V, Ch. 18; O.*

III, p. 365)

B. Prayer: An Act Of Oblation

I vow and consecrate to God all that is in me: my memory and my actions to God the Father; my understanding and my words to God the Son; my will and my thoughts to God the Holy Spirit. I consecrate my heart, my body, my tongue, my senses and all my sorrows to the sacred Humanity of Jesus Christ, who consented to be betrayed into the hands of wicked men and to suffer the torment of the Cross for me.

DAY 3: 17 JANUARY

A. Meditation

I desire very little, and what I do desire I desire very little; I have hardly any desires, but if I were to begin my life all over again I would want to have none at all ... Ask for nothing, refuse nothing; we must simply abandon ourselves into the hands of Providence, without nourishing any other desire but to do whatever God wills. St. Paul practised this act of absolute abandonment at the very moment of his conversion. When he was deprived of his sight, he immediately said, “Lord, what do you want me to do?” [cf. Act 22:10] From that moment on he put himself completely at God’s disposal. All our perfection consists precisely in the practical application of this principle. (*Spiritual Treatises XXI, O. VI, pp. 383-384*)

B. Prayer: Direction of Intention

My God, I give you this day. I offer you, now, all of the good that I shall do and I promise to accept, for love of you, all of the difficulties that I shall meet. Help me to conduct myself during this day in a manner pleasing to you. Amen.

DAY 4: 18 JANUARY

A. Meditation

Self-love dies only when our body dies, so we must, while we live in this land of exile, continue to counterattack its assaults on our senses and its underhanded tactics. It is enough if we firmly withstand, giving no willful or deliberate consent ... When we feel within ourselves the first movements of self-love or of other passions, let us prostrate ourselves immediately before the heart of God and tell Him, in a spirit of confidence and humility, “Lord, have mercy on me because I am a very weak creature.” Then let us tranquilly rest in peace and put ourselves at God’s disposal. (*Letters 1675; O. XIX, pp. 272-273*)

B. Prayer: Confidence in God

It is good to mistrust ourselves, but how would that advantage us were we not to throw all our confidence on God, and to wait on His mercy? If you feel no such confidence, cease not on that account from making these acts and from saying to Our Lord: “Yet, O Lord, though I have no feeling of confidence in You, nevertheless, I know that You are my God, that I am all Yours, and that I have no hope but in Your goodness; so, I

abandon myself entirely into Your Hands.” It is always in our power to make these acts; although we have difficulty in performing them, still there is no impossibility. Thus we testify faithfulness to our Lord.

DAY 5: 19 JANUARY

A. Meditation

This poor life is only a journey to the happy life to come. We must not be angry with one another on the way, but rather we must march on as a band of brothers and sisters united in meekness, peace and love. I state absolutely and make no exception: do not be angry at all if that is possible. Do not accept any pretext whatever for opening your heart’s door to anger. Saint James tells us positively and without reservation, ” ... a man’s anger does not fulfil God’s justice.” [Jas 1:20] (*Introduction to the Devout Life, Part III, Ch. 8; O. III, p. 162*)

B. Prayer: One With Jesus

If only I possessed the grace, good Jesus, to be utterly at one with you! Amidst all the variety of worldly things around me, Lord, the only thing I crave is unity with you. You are all my soul needs. Unite, dear friend of my heart, this unique little soul of mine to your perfect goodness. You are all mine; when shall I be yours? Lord Jesus, my beloved, be the magnet of my heart; clasp, press, unite me forever to your sacred heart. You have made me for yourself; make me one with you. Absorb this tiny drop of life into the ocean of goodness whence it came.

DAY 6: 20 JANUARY

A. Meditation

Do not pay any attention to the kind of work you do, but rather to the honour that it brings to God, even though it may seem quite trivial. Desire only to do the Divine Will, following Divine Providence, which is the disposition of Divine Wisdom. In a word, if your works are pleasing to God and recognized as such, that is all that matters. Work hard every day at increasing your purity of heart, which consists in appraising things and weighing them in the balance of God’s will. (*Letters 280; O. XIII, p. 53*)

B. Prayer: Be at Peace

Do not look forward in fear to the changes in life; rather, look to them with full hope that as they arise, God, whose very own you are, will lead you safely through all things; and when you cannot stand it, God will carry you in His arms.

Do not fear what may happen tomorrow; the same understanding Father who cares for you today will take care of you then and every day.

He will either shield you from suffering or will give you unfailing strength to bear it. Be at peace, and put aside all anxious thoughts and imaginations.

DAY 7: 21 JANUARY

A. Meditation

Our intellect is ordinarily full of ideas, opinions and considerations suggested by self-love. This is the root of many conflicts within the soul, putting before us all sorts of reasons dictated by human prudence to justify our pretensions. People who make use of this false prudence, instead of enlightening their intellect, obscure it. They reject advice given to them and let those reasons prevail in their minds which support their own opinions, even wrong ones. Make use of the virtue of prudence because it is good, but make good use of it. Employ it only rarely, with simplicity, and solely for the glory of God. (*Sermons 30; O. IX, pp. 297-298*)

B. Prayer for Writers by St. Francis de Sales

Ah, sweet Jesus, my Lord, my Saviour, and my God, behold me here prostrate before your Majesty as I pledge and consecrate this writing to your glory. By your blessing give life to its words so that the souls for whom it has been written may receive from it the sacred inspirations I desire for them, in particular that of imploring your infinite mercy in my behalf to the end that while I point out to others the way of devotion in this world I myself may not be rejected and eternally condemned in the other, but that with them I may forever sing as a canticle of triumph words that with my whole heart I utter in witness of fidelity amid the hazards of this mortal life: LIVE, JESUS! LIVE, JESUS!
Yes, Lord Jesus, live and reign in our hearts forever and ever. Amen.

DAY 8: 22 JANUARY

A. Meditation

One of the greatest proofs of love that Jesus displayed on the cross was putting up with the imperfections of His neighbour. There He showed us that He has a heart that loves us tenderly and watches over us kindly. He even showed His love for those who put Him to death. In those dire moments the Saviour expressed thoughts of love even for his executioners, pardoning them in the very act of sinning! How petty-minded we are when we cannot bring ourselves to forget some injury received, even after a long time! Whoever sincerely pardons another calls down abundant blessings and perfectly imitates Christ. (*Spiritual Treatises IV; O. VI, pp. 65-66*)

B. Prayer: I Am Yours

Lord, I am Yours, and I must belong to no one but You.
My soul is Yours, and must live only by You.
My will is Yours, and must love only for You.
I must love You as my first cause, since I am from You.
I must love You as my end and rest, since I am for You.
I must love You more than my own being, since my being subsists by You.
I must love You more than myself, since I am all Yours and all in You. Amen.

DAY 9: 23 JANUARY

A. Meditation

Think for a moment of the piety of the Madonna when the angel told her that the Spirit would overshadow her. What sentiments of humility, confidence and courage! At the very moment when she understood that God had given her His heart, that is, His Son, she gave herself to God. Her soul was flooded with charity, so she could say with the sacred spouse, "...My heart trembled within me, and I grew faint when he spoke." [Sg:5:4] As far as we are concerned, we receive a similar grace in Communion, because not an angel but Jesus Christ Himself assures us that in it the Holy Spirit descends on us. Heavenly power covers us with its shadow and the Son of God really comes to us. He can say that He is conceived and born in us. Truly then, the soul can respond with the Madonna, "I am the servant of the Lord; let it be done to me as you say." [Lk 1:38] (*Spiritual Directory, Art. 12*)

B. Prayer: To the Blessed Virgin Mary

Say not, merciful Virgin, that you cannot help me; for your beloved Son has given you all power in heaven and on earth. Say not that you ought not assist me, for you are the mother of all the poor children of Adam, and mine in particular. Since then, merciful Virgin, you are my mother and you are all-powerful, what excuse can you offer if you do not lend your assistance? See, my mother, see, you are obliged to grant me what I ask, and to yield to my entreaties.

III. NOVENA PRAYER

OPTION 1

O blessed Francis de Sales, who on earth did excel in a life of virtue, especially in the love of God and neighbour, I earnestly ask you to take me under your compassionate care and protection. Obtain for me conversion of mind and heart. Grant that all people, especially (*names of those whom you wish to include*) may experience the depth of God's redeeming and healing love.

Teach me to fix my eyes on the things of heaven even as I walk each day with my feet planted firmly on the earth. Help me, through the practice of virtue and the pursuit of devotion, to avoid anything that would otherwise cause me to stumble in my attempt to follow Christ and to be an instrument of the Holy Spirit. Encouraged by your prayers and example, help me to live fully my sacred dignity with the hope of experiencing my sacred destiny: eternal life with God. Receive also this particular need or concern that I now lift up in prayer. (*Mention your particular need*).

O God, for the salvation of all, you desired that St. Francis de Sales — preacher, missionary, confessor, bishop and founder — should befriend many along the road to salvation. Mercifully grant that we, infused with the humility and gentleness of his charity, guided by his wisdom and sharing in his spirit may experience eternal life. We ask this through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

OPTION 2

O great prelate, most blessed saint, model of bishops, the glory of the Church. You were and ever shall be revered on earth as a man according to God's own heart, and a most perfect imitator of our adorable model, Jesus Christ. You were the champion of the Faith whose zeal extirpated heresy; the ardent victim of charity and docile disciple of that heavenly spirit who spoke by your pen, and rendered your inspired doctrine the treasure of the Church. O good and faithful servant, you have now entered into the joy of your Lord; the divine and Holy Object of your love on earth is now your reward exceedingly great in heaven. O amiable saint, whose tender, compassionate charity was always the refuge of the miserable, despise not our supplications. Since your conduct on earth toward all your fellow-creatures, particularly the weakest, marked you out, like your beloved Master, as the friend of sinners, show yourself such to us, by obtaining for us the intentions of this novena. (*Mention your particular need*).

Receive us, O great Master of solid perfection into the number of those whom you did form according to the true spirit of the religious state. Teach us those heavenly virtues which your blessed life, no less than your word, so constantly inculcated. You were one of the most humble of men, though gifted with all that could exalt you before God and the world; O plant in our hearts that root of every virtue, humility. You were an angel of peace, whose presence alone gave consolation to the most afflicted hearts, and whose heavenly meekness succeeded in gaining the most obdurate sinners; obtain, then, for us, also, that peace of God which surpasses all understanding; a condescending meekness in our conduct toward our neighbour. But principally teach us your own favourite lesson of perfect conformity to the will of God, that we may repose tranquilly in the arms of His adorable Providence; that we may cast all our solicitude on God, so as "to ask for nothing and to refuse nothing;" at least to ask for nothing more earnestly than the treasure of His divine love, and to refuse nothing so resolutely as the misfortune of consenting to sin. **Amen.**

IV. LITANY TO ST. FRANCIS DE SALES

OPTION 1

Lord have mercy on us. **Lord have mercy on us.**

Christ have mercy on us. **Christ have mercy on us.**

Lord have mercy on us. **Lord have mercy on us.**

Christ hear us, **Christ graciously hear us.**

God the Father of heaven, **Have Mercy on us.**

God the Son, Redeemer of the world, **Have Mercy on us.**

God the Holy Spirit, **Have Mercy on us.**

Holy Trinity, one God, **Have Mercy on us.**

Holy Mary, Mother of God, **Pray for us.**

St. Francis, loved by God, **Pray for us.**

St. Francis, lover of God, ***Pray for us.***
St. Francis, imitator of Christ, ***Pray for us.***
St. Francis, lover of the Cross, ***Pray for us.***
St. Francis, companion of the saints, ***Pray for us.***
St. Francis, imitator of the Apostles, ***Pray for us.***
St. Francis, glory of confessors, ***Pray for us.***
St. Francis, light of the Church, ***Pray for us.***
St. Francis, founder of Visitation, ***Pray for us.***
St. Francis, good shepherd, ***Pray for us.***
St. Francis, teacher of the faith, ***Pray for us.***
St. Francis, patron of devotion, ***Pray for us.***
St. Francis, distinguished preacher, ***Pray for us.***
St. Francis, great missionary, ***Pray for us.***
St. Francis, gentle confessor, ***Pray for us.***
St. Francis, spiritual director, ***Pray for us.***
St. Francis, patron of the deaf, ***Pray for us.***
St. Francis, patron of the press, ***Pray for us.***
St. Francis, salt of the earth, ***Pray for us.***
St. Francis, model of humility, ***Pray for us.***
St. Francis, model of gentleness, ***Pray for us.***
St. Francis, man of compassion, ***Pray for us.***
St. Francis, courageous reformer, ***Pray for us.***
St. Francis, companion and guide, ***Pray for us.***
St. Francis, lover of beauty, ***Pray for us.***

Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, ***Spare us, O Lord.***
Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, ***Hear us, O Lord.***
Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, ***Have mercy on us, O Lord.***

V. Pray for us, Blessed Francis of Sales.

R. *That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.*

Let Us Pray:

Loving God, you gave St. Francis de Sales the spirit of compassion, enabling him to befriend many along the road to salvation. Through his inspiration and example, help us to embody your humble, gentle and passionate love in the service of our brothers and sisters. Grant this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

OPTION 2

Lord have mercy on us. ***Lord have mercy on us.***
Christ have mercy on us. ***Christ have mercy on us.***
Lord have mercy on us. ***Lord have mercy on us.***
Christ hear us, ***Christ graciously hear us.***
God the Father of heaven, ***Have Mercy on us.***

God the Son, Redeemer of the world, ***Have Mercy on us.***
God the Holy Spirit, ***Have Mercy on us.***
Holy Trinity, one God, ***Have Mercy on us.***

Holy Mary, Mother of God, ***Pray for us.***

St. Francis de Sales, ***Pray for us.***

St. Francis, miracle of the most august Trinity, ***Pray for us.***

St. Francis, faithful imitator of Jesus Christ, ***Pray for us.***

St. Francis, attached to the service of the Blessed Virgin, ***Pray for us.***

St. Francis, practising the virtues of the Saints, ***Pray for us.***

St. Francis, most devoted to Jesus crucified, ***Pray for us.***

St. Francis, august Tabernacle of true religion, ***Pray for us.***

St. Francis, most humble in prosperity, ***Pray for us.***

St. Francis, most patient in adversity, ***Pray for us.***

St. Francis, true portrait of the meekness of Christ, ***Pray for us.***

St. Francis, simple as the dove, ***Pray for us.***

St. Francis, example of angelic modesty, ***Pray for us.***

St. Francis, exact observer of evangelical poverty, ***Pray for us.***

St. Francis, excellent example of the purity of angels, ***Pray for us.***

St. Francis, ever obedient to the Apostolic See, ***Pray for us.***

St. Francis, generously despising the world, ***Pray for us.***

St. Francis, powerful vanquisher of demons, ***Pray for us.***

St. Francis, invincible triumpher over the flesh, ***Pray for us.***

St. Francis, inflamed with the love of God, ***Pray for us.***

St. Francis, abounding in virtues, ***Pray for us.***

St. Francis, all to all for the salvation of souls, ***Pray for us.***

St. Francis, most dear to God, and beloved by men, ***Pray for us.***

St. Francis, unwearied apostle of Geneva and its territory, which you did so laboriously reunite to the one true Church of God, ***Pray for us.***

St. Francis, most fervent pastor, ever careful to lead your flock to the fold of Jesus the Good Shepherd, ***Pray for us.***

St. Francis, most renowned for your miracles, ***Pray for us.***

St. Francis, greatest of all your miracles, ***Pray for us.***

St. Francis, patriarch of the Visitation, ***Pray for us.***

St. Francis, continual martyr to your love of God, ***Pray for us.***

St. Francis, father of many Saints, by the holy rules which you have left for every state, ***Pray for us.***

St. Francis, powerful protector to obtain of God that mildness which preserves the peace of the heart, ***Pray for us.***

St. Francis, amiable patron of those who invoke you, ***Pray for us.***

Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, ***Spare us, O Lord.***

Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, ***Hear us, O Lord.***

Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, ***Have mercy on us, O Lord.***

O Blessed Francis, like the fruitful olive-tree in the house of God, radiant in miracles, make us partakers of your sanctity and of the light which you enjoy.

V. Pray for us, Blessed Francis of Sales.

R. *That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.*

Let Us Pray:

O God, by whose gracious will the Blessed Francis, your confessor and bishop, became all things unto all men, for the saving of their souls, mercifully grant that, being filled with the sweetness of your love, we may, through the guidance of his counsels, and by the aid of his merits, attain unto the joys of life everlasting. Through Christ our Lord.

Amen