

WHAT IS A NOVENA?

1. Know what a novena is. A novena is a form of Catholic prayer. Those praying a novena recite a specific prayer or a series of specific prayers with a certain request or intention in mind. This practice continues over the course of nine days or nine hours.

2. Understand what a novena is not. A novena is *not* a magic spell. In other words, praying a novena does not guarantee that a miracle will occur, and the mere words of your chosen novena do not hold any set power alone. *It is the act of devotion you display by praying a novena that has spiritual significance.*

- **Understand what a novena is.** The Catholic Catechism even warns against acts of superstition. When a practice or the performance of that practice is deemed magical in some manner, the individual viewing it as such is only looking at the external aspect of it, not its deeper spiritual significance. Novenas are among those acts that have deep spiritual significance but are commonly treated as superstition.
- **Trust God.** When you pray your novena, say the prayers with faith in God and trust that God will give you the right answer in the right way. Do not pray a novena in the hopes of manipulating God into an answer.

3. Know the history of the novena. After Jesus ascended to Heaven, Mary, the Apostles, and other devoted disciples prayed constantly for nine days until Pentecost Sunday. Catholics looked to this example and, from it, derived the practice of praying nine-day novenas.

- **Count.** The word "novena" comes from the Latin word for "nine," hence the consecutive set of nine prayers.

4. Ask yourself why you want to pray a novena. As noted already, a novena is not a magic spell that will answer all your needs and wants. Nonetheless, there are spiritual benefits that can be derived from reciting a novena, and these benefits should not be overlooked.

- **Praise God.** Novenas, like all prayers, are a means of praising God.
- **Express.** The novena structure also provides a unique channel to express strong spiritual wants, needs, or sentiments.
- **Connect.** Novenas spoken as a Church family also keep the individual believer connected to the Christian community.