

French philosopher Blaise Pascal said that we each have a hole in our heart that can only be filled by God. Our Creator made us to share his life and calls us to a personal relationship with him. That relationship is nurtured like a human relationship is: through being present to each other and communicating. Prayer is precisely that, being aware of God and conversing with him. As we encounter God in prayer, we become more committed to him and more apt to live as he wishes. Being in God's presence makes us more Godlike, the way fire sets everything it touches aflame. Prayer also makes us worthier of heaven, where, face-to-face with God, we will be caught up in an eternal prayer of adoration.

Prayer has many forms. It can be vocal or mental. There are formula prayers, such as the Our Father and Hail Mary, and prayers written by other people that may express what is in our hearts better than we can. On the other hand, prayer can be spontaneous and personal.

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Liturgical prayer is the official public worship of the church: the seven sacraments and the Liturgy of the Hours (Divine Office). The greatest prayer is the Eucharist, which includes all forms of prayer. This booklet turns the spotlight on a special kind of prayer: devotions. Some of them you may be familiar with; others you might adopt to refresh your prayer life. All of them are tried and true channels to God.

# WHAT ARE DEVOTIONS?

Devotions are optional prayers or pious exercises centered on an aspect of God, Jesus, or God's holy ones—Mary and the saints. They focus us on the mysteries of our faith and appeal to our emotions. As a result, devotions make our hearts more “devoted” to God. They are prayed or carried out in common or in private.

Devotions are not part of the liturgy, but they flow from it and prepare us for it. Certainly, devotions should not substitute for liturgy, which is far more important and necessary. The Second Vatican Council in its *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* “highly commended” popular devotions but specified that they should be related to the liturgy. Moreover, they are to be approved by the church and practiced in accordance with church law. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* encourages teaching these popular forms of piety (no. 1674) for good reason. They help us to grow

in the knowledge of the mystery of Christ, and they nurture and enrich our spiritual life.

Christians have always been creative in devising devotions to express and deepen their love for God and his mother, Mary. Some devotions date back to the Middle Ages or earlier. Devotion to the Divine Mercy, which began in the twentieth century, is relatively new. A few devotions are of heavenly origin. Saints were commissioned in visions to spread them, for example, those related to the Sacred Heart. Often popes promoted devotions. After Jorge Bergoglio, now Pope Francis, brought home from Germany a picture of Our Lady, Untier of Knots, devotion to Mary under that title was launched in Argentina. Devotions vary from age to age and from country to country.

### ***Forms of Prayer Expressed by Devotions***

Most of us learned the acronym ACTS to remember the forms of prayer: adoration, contrition, thanksgiving, and supplication. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* presents the following list:

- ◆ **BLESSING AND ADORATION.** We bless God for having blessed us, and we acknowledge his greatness.

- **PETITION.** We ask God to help us in our need. First and foremost, we ask for forgiveness.
- **INTERCESSION.** We ask God for some favor for others.
- **THANKSGIVING.** We express gratitude for all God's gifts, especially salvation.
- **PRAISE.** We laud God simply for who he is.

A devotion embodies one or more of these forms. All devotions show reverence for God, either directly or by honoring or praying to Mary or another saint.

### *Devotions to Mary and the Saints*

Catholics are fond of devotions linked to saints, people whom the church has canonized (officially declared as being in heaven). Other people of faith, and maybe you, wonder why we do not just send our prayers straight to God. The saints are proven to have lived a life of heroic virtue; some are martyrs, who have died for their faith. Of course, the queen of all saints is St. Mary, the Mother of God. The church presents the saints to us to venerate and especially to imitate. They

are models who inspire us to be holy too.

We celebrate saints on their feast days, make statues and paintings of them, wear their medals, erect shrines to them, and name our children and churches for them. This honor takes nothing away from God, for God is the creator of the saints, and what is good in them is a reflection of God's goodness. In particular, the honor we give to Mary pleases God, who filled her with grace and chose her to be his mother. We also ask the saints to intercede for us, just as we ask our friends and relatives on earth to pray for us. Because the saints are in heaven, they are seen as being closer to the ear of God! Therefore, the church has named saints as patrons, or caretakers, of places, occupations, and situations. For example, the Immaculate Conception is the patroness of the United States, St. Martha is the patroness of cooks, and St. Jude Thaddeus and St. Rita handle impossible cases. The saint we are named for is our personal patron saint.

It makes sense, then, to do such things as hold a May crowning for Mary and make a novena (nine days of prayer) to St. Anthony of Padua. But no doubt most Catholics' favorite devotion is the Rosary.

# MARIAN DEVOTIONS

## *The Rosary*

After September 11, 2001, Pope Saint John Paul II urged everyone to pray the Rosary “possibly every day, for peace, so that the world can be preserved from the wicked scourge of terrorism.” He was echoing the words of Our Lady in her apparitions, most notably at Fatima, Portugal. Except for the Mass, the Rosary is arguably the prayer most associated with Catholics. We hang rosaries in our cars, and we are buried with the beads in our hands. The Rosary’s prayers are compared to a garland of roses offered to Mary—a token of our love. It is sometimes called a chaplet, which means “crown.” The Rosary is prayed especially during May and October.

According to a legend, the Rosary originated when Mary gave it to St. Dominic. Actually, Christians were praying on beads a hundred years before he lived. And the mysteries were for-

mulated about two hundred years after his time. The Dominicans, however, were great promoters of the Rosary. The Rosary has evolved. It began when illiterate people who couldn't pray the hundred and fifty psalms in the Bible prayed 150 Our Fathers instead, keeping track of the prayers on strings of beads. After the Hail Mary prayer was composed, people began praying Hail Marys instead of Our Fathers. As they prayed, people meditated on events—called mysteries—in the lives of Jesus and Mary—one mystery for each decade, or set of ten beads. There were three sets of mysteries: Joyful, Sorrowful, and Glorious. Then, in 2002, Pope John Paul II gave us a fourth set, the Luminous Mysteries or Mysteries of Light, which covers the public life of Jesus. Most rosaries have five decades of beads. One-decade bracelets and rings are also available.

When we pray the Rosary, we unite two forms of prayer: While our minds dwell on the mysteries, we say the formula prayers. The rhythmic praying is so peaceful that some people pray the Rosary when they have trouble sleeping. Because we meditate on the mysteries, the Rosary is called the gospel on beads. It's customary to pray the mysteries as follows:

***Monday, Saturday:*** Joyful Mysteries

***Thursday:*** Luminous Mysteries

***Tuesday, Friday:*** Sorrowful Mysteries

***Sunday, Wednesday:*** Glorious Mysteries

We can also pray our own mysteries, such as the parable mysteries, the miracle mysteries, or mysteries that speak more to us and our lives.

To ensure that we are *praying* and not merely saying the Rosary, we might motivate ourselves by making an intention for the Rosary. Or before praying each decade, we might spend a minute concentrating on the mystery and asking for the grace to grow in a virtue related to it. Another option is to insert after the word *Jesus* in each Hail Mary a phrase that refers to the mystery being prayed. For example, for the Annunciation pray “... thy womb, Jesus, who was announced by an angel.”

#### JOYFUL MYSTERIES

1. *The Annunciation:* The angel Gabriel was sent by God to announce to Mary that God had chosen her to be the Mother of Jesus the Savior, the Mother of God. (Luke 1:26–33)
2. *The Visitation:* Mary traveled to help her older

relative Elizabeth, who was pregnant with John the Baptist. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, she cried out, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb." Mary responded with the Magnificat. (Luke 1:39–55)

3. *The Birth of Jesus:* Mary gave birth to Jesus, wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger. Angels appeared to shepherds and said, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors." (Luke 2:1–20)

4. *The Presentation in the Temple:* Mary and Joseph presented baby Jesus to God in the Temple as the law required. There, Simeon and Anna recognized that Jesus was the Savior. (Luke 2:22–38)

5. *Finding of the Child Jesus in the Temple:* As a twelve-year-old, Jesus remained in Jerusalem after Passover. On the way home his parents discovered he was missing. Three days later they found him in the Temple listening to teachers and asking them questions. (Luke 2:41–50)

## THE LUMINOUS MYSTERIES

1. *The Baptism in the Jordan River:* Jesus had

John the Baptist baptize him. John saw the heavens open and the Spirit of God descend on Jesus. A voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.” (Matthew 3:13–17)

2. *The Wedding at Cana*: When wine ran out at a wedding, Mary appealed to Jesus and he worked his first miracle. He turned water into excellent wine. (John 2:1–11)

3. *The Proclamation of the Kingdom of God*: Jesus proclaimed the good news of God’s love and salvation, saying “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.” (Mark 1:14–15)

4. *The Transfiguration*: Jesus took Peter, James, and John up a mountain. While he prayed, his face changed and his clothing became dazzling white. He spoke with Moses and Elijah. (Luke 9:28–36)

5. *The Institution of the Eucharist*: On the night before he was crucified, Jesus shared a meal with his disciples and gave us the Eucharist. He offered himself for us under forms of bread and wine. In the Eucharist he remains with us. (Mark 14:22–26)

## THE SORROWFUL MYSTERIES

1. *The Agony in the Garden:* After the Last Supper, Jesus went to a garden with Peter, James, and John. He prayed, “My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet, not what I want but what you want.” He found the apostles sleeping. (Matthew 26:36–46)

2. *The Scourging at the Pillar:* Pontius Pilate, to satisfy the crowd, had Jesus scourged by the soldiers and then handed him over to be crucified. (Mark 15:6–15)

3. *The Crowning with Thorns:* Soldiers stripped Jesus and threw a scarlet cloak on him. They made a crown out of thorns and placed it on his head. They put a reed in his hand like a scepter. Kneeling before him, they mocked, “Hail, King of the Jews!” (Matthew 27:27–31)

4. *The Carrying of the Cross:* Jesus, weak from being whipped and beaten, could not carry his cross all the way to Calvary. Simon of Cyrene was forced to help him. (Mark 15:20–22)

5. *The Crucifixion:* At Golgotha, Jesus was crucified between two criminals. He prayed, “Father,

forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.” (Luke 23:33–46)

## THE GLORIOUS MYSTERIES

1. *The Resurrection*: Early Sunday morning an angel appeared to two women at Jesus’ tomb and said, “Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said.” The angel sent the women to tell the disciples. (Matthew 28:1–10)

2. *The Ascension of Our Lord*: Jesus led his disciples to Bethany. He blessed them, and then he went apart from them and was taken up to heaven. (Luke 24:50–53)

3. *The Descent of the Holy Spirit*: When the disciples were gathered together on Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came to the Church with signs of fire and wind. The apostles boldly went out and proclaimed the good news, and people of every language could understand them. (Acts 2:1–13)

4. *The Assumption of Our Lady into Heaven*: At the end of her earthly life, Mary was taken up body and soul into heavenly glory, as all faithful followers of Jesus will be someday.

5. *The Coronation of the Blessed Virgin Mary:* Mary, the holy Mother of God, reigns in heaven as Queen of All Saints. There she prays for and cares for the members of Christ.

#### HOW TO PRAY THE ROSARY

Make the sign of the cross while holding the crucifix, and if you wish, kiss the crucifix. With your fingers on the crucifix, pray the Apostles' Creed. Then, on the single bead, pray an Our Father. On the next three beads, pray Hail Marys, and at the end, pray a Glory Be. Then, for each decade, pray an Our Father on the single bead, pray ten Hail Marys, and end with a Glory Be.

An optional concluding prayer is the Hail, Holy Queen. Another option is to pray after each Glory Be the prayer that the angel taught the three children at the Fatima apparitions:

*“O my Jesus, have mercy on us, forgive us our sins, save us from the fires of hell. Take all souls to heaven, especially those most in need of thy mercy.”*

To pray the Rosary with the help of the Internet, go to [www.theholynosary.org](http://www.theholynosary.org).

## VARIATIONS OF THE ROSARY

The traditional Rosary spawned several spin-offs. Versions vary in the number of beads and the prayers said. There is the seven-decade Franciscan rosary for which one meditates on the seven joys of Mary. Other versions are the Chaplet of Divine Mercy, the St. Joseph Chaplet, and the Chaplet of the Seven Sorrows of Mary (Servite Chaplet).

### *The Immaculate Heart of Mary*

Devotion to the Heart of Mary focuses on Mary as our model in faith, humility, and love of God. In 1830, Mary appeared to St. Catherine Labouré and asked to have a medal cast that is known as the **Miraculous Medal**. It bears her image on one side, and on the other side the sacred hearts of Jesus and Mary.

### *First Saturdays*

The practice of going to Mass and receiving communion on the first Saturday of the month for five months in reparation for sin became very popular after Mary's appearances at Fatima and the promises that Mary later made to Lucy, the eldest of the children to whom she appeared

there. According to Lucy, Mary promised to “assist at the hour of death with all the graces necessary for the salvation of their souls” every person who faithfully follows this devotion.

### ***May Crownings***

To honor Mary as queen of heaven and earth, a statue of her is crowned during a prayer service. The ceremony may include Marian hymns and a procession in which flowers are placed in vases around the image. A May crowning usually appropriately occurs in the month of May, when Mother’s Day is celebrated.

### ***May Altars***

The custom of setting up a May altar in May began in churches and then spread to houses. An image of Mary is placed on a table or shelf, which is decorated with lovely fabric, flowers, and one or more candles. A May altar is more correctly called a May shrine because an altar is a table for sacrifice.

# DEVOTIONS HONORING JESUS

## *Eucharistic Devotions*

Because at one time receiving communion was an infrequent privilege for most lay people, devotions to the Blessed Sacrament arose. **Exposition**, in which the sacred host is exposed in a holder called a monstrance, is a devotion from the thirteenth century. People come to adore Jesus present in the Blessed Sacrament. Some churches or chapels have perpetual adoration in which, day and night, people take turns praying before the exposed Blessed Sacrament. Making a **Holy Hour** has its roots in Jesus' question to the apostles during his agony in the garden when they fell asleep instead of praying with him: "Could you not stay awake with me one hour?" (Matthew 26:40). There is also **Forty Hours Devotion**, in which Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament is adored continually for forty hours over three days. Exposition usually concludes with Benediction.

*Benediction* means “blessing.” During the rite of **Benediction**, people are blessed with the Blessed Sacrament. For Benediction, first the priest places the sacred host in a monstrance and incenses it while a hymn of praise is sung. After a period of adoration, the priest again incenses the Blessed Sacrament and another hymn is sung. The priest then wraps his shoulders and hands in a humeral veil, lifts the monstrance, and silently makes the Sign of the Cross over the people with the sacred host. The service concludes with the Divine Praises.

#### VISITS TO THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

Another Catholic devotion is to go into a church or chapel for a visit with Jesus present in the Blessed Sacrament. This visit strengthens our relationship with Christ. It also makes a welcome oasis in the midst of a busy day. Unfortunately, nowadays many churches must be locked.

#### THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS

Our heart pumps about 100,000 times a day to circulate our lifeblood, so it has come to symbolize the whole of a person. The heart is also a symbol of love. How fitting, then, that devotion

developed to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The heart of Jesus stands for the Savior himself as well as the total love of Jesus, divine and human. His heart was literally wounded for love of us when a soldier pierced it with a lance as Jesus hung on the cross (John 19:34).

In art, the Sacred Heart appears as a wounded heart surrounded by thorns and surmounted by a cross and flames that signify Jesus' burning love for us. Rays emanating from the heart represent his divinity. The Sacred Heart may stand alone, or Jesus may be pointing to his Sacred Heart in his chest or holding his heart in his hand and gesturing toward it.

Devotion to the Sacred Heart became popular after St. Margaret Mary Alacoque, a Visitation nun in France, had visions of the Sacred Heart from 1673 to 1675. On the Feast of the Body and Blood of Christ, Jesus showed her his wounded heart and said, "Behold this heart burning with love..." Although this devotion focuses on the love and mercy of Jesus, it also involves reparation for sin. Jesus asked that a communion of reparation be made on nine first Fridays. He also made twelve promises to those who honor his Sacred Heart.

Wearing or carrying a **Sacred Heart badge** or wearing a **Sacred Heart scapular** shows devotion to the Sacred Heart. The **Enthronement of the Sacred Heart**, which is promoted by the Apostleship of Prayer organization, involves consecrating the family to the Sacred Heart. A statue of the Sacred Heart is placed in the home to remind the family members of their consecration.

#### FIRST FRIDAYS

In one of St. Margaret Mary's visions, Jesus requested that reparation for sin be made by receiving communion on the first Friday of every month for nine consecutive months. The last of the twelve promises Jesus made in his appearances to this saint was salvation for those who made the first Fridays.

#### *Divine Mercy*

Devotion to Divine Mercy is centered on God's mercy and love for all, in particular, great sinners. People committed to this devotion trust in God's mercy, are grateful for it, and show mercy themselves. This devotion began with St. Faustina Kowalska (1905–1938), an uneducated nun in Poland. In February 1931, Faustina saw Jesus with

one hand raised in blessing and the other touching his white garment at his heart. From that spot came forth two large rays, one red and one pale, which stood for the blood and water that streamed from his heart when it was pierced. Jesus directed Faustina to have an image made of him like this along with the words “Jesus, I trust in you.” Jesus also requested that every day at 3 PM, the hour of his death, we remember his great mercy. In addition, Jesus asked that the Sunday after Easter be a feast dedicated to the Divine Mercy and promised graces to those who receive communion on this day. He also asked that beginning on Good Friday a novena for this feast be made, and he gave an intention for each day of the novena. In the year 2000, Pope John Paul II declared the Second Sunday of Easter “Divine Mercy Sunday.”

Jesus asked St. Faustina to promote the Chaplet of Divine Mercy, which is prayed on a rosary as follows:

Pray the Our Father, the Hail Mary, and the Apostles’ Creed.

Then, on the single bead before each decade, pray:

*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.*

On the ten beads of each decade, pray:  
*For the sake of his sorrowful Passion,  
have mercy on us and on the whole world.*

Conclude by repeating three times:  
*Holy God, Holy Mighty One,  
Holy Immortal One,  
have mercy on us and on the whole world.*

### ***The Stations of the Cross***

You have probably noticed scenes of the crucifixion on the walls of your church or on posts in the parish yard. The Stations of the Cross, or Way of the Cross, is a devotion especially popular during Lent. Originally, pilgrims walked the path of Jesus' passion and death in the Holy Land. This practice gained a plenary indulgence, which means that all punishment due for sin was cancelled. But not everyone could travel to Jerusalem. Therefore, the church offered the

same indulgence for making the Stations elsewhere. The Stations can be prayed alone or with a group. In praying the fourteen stations, we trace Jesus' steps from his being condemned to death to his burial. Meditating on the supreme sacrifice Jesus made out of love for us moves our hearts to love and gratitude. The following are the traditional stations. Some people add a "fifteenth station," the resurrection.

*First Station:* Jesus Is Condemned to Death

*Second Station:* Jesus Carries his Cross

*Third Station:* Our Lord Falls the First Time

*Fourth Station:* Jesus Meets his Mother

*Fifth Station:* Simon of Cyrene Helps Jesus Carry his Cross

*Sixth Station:* Veronica Wipes the Face of Jesus

*Seventh Station:* Jesus Falls the Second Time

*Eighth Station:* Jesus Consols the Women of Jerusalem

*Ninth Station:* Jesus Falls the Third Time

*Tenth Station:* Jesus Is Stripped of his Garments

*Eleventh Station: Jesus Is Nailed to the Cross*

*Twelfth Station: Jesus Dies on the Cross*

*Thirteenth Station: Jesus Is Taken Down from the Cross*

*Fourteenth Station: Jesus Is Laid in the Tomb*

We can pray our own prayers at each station or use a booklet. For public stations, usually one person carries the processional cross, flanked by persons carrying lighted candles. The leader and the three people process from station to station. The name of the station is stated, and we genuflect and pray, "We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you, because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world." Then a reflection is made.

To pray the stations of the cross with the aid of the Internet, go to [www.catholic.org/prayers/station.php](http://www.catholic.org/prayers/station.php).

### ***The Infant of Prague***

The Infant of Prague devotion honors two mysteries: Christ's childhood and kingship. The statue depicts Jesus as a small child. He is crowned and holds a globe surmounted by a cross. His right hand is raised in blessing. The original stat-

ue, eighteen inches high, was brought from Spain and presented to Discalced Carmelite Fathers in Prague, Czechoslovakia, in 1628. During a war, the Fathers left and the statue was tossed with rubbish. When the Fathers returned, Fr. Cyril discovered it behind the altar. One day, while praying by the statue, Fr. Cyril heard Jesus say, "The more you honor me, the more I shall bless you." Today the statue stands in a gold and glass case at the Church of Our Lady of Victory in Prague. Carmelite sisters change its more than seventy outfits. Copies of the statue can be found in churches and homes today.

### ***The Holy Child of Atocha***

Devotion to the Santo Niño de Atocha is popular in Spain, Mexico, and the southwestern United States. He is usually seated and wears a wide-brimmed hat and a long ornate cloak. In one hand he holds a basket of roses or food and in the other a pilgrim's staff. This Holy Child helps prisoners, travelers, miners, the sick, and now immigrants. Legends surround the statue of the Santo Niño. When the town of Atocha in Spain fell to the Muslims, Christians were imprisoned. After the women prayed to Our Lady of Atocha,

a child in pilgrim's clothing began bringing food to prisoners. People noticed that on the statue of Our Lady of Atocha, the shoes of the child Jesus were worn and dusty. Whenever these shoes were replaced, they became soiled again. Travelers told how a boy, dressed as a pilgrim, brought them food and supplies, traveled with them, and guided them to safe roads.

Still another story recounts that an explosion in Fresnillo, Mexico, trapped many miners. When their wives went to church to pray, they saw that the child on the statue of Our Lady of Atocha was missing. After the miners emerged safely from the mine, they explained that a child had given them water and had shown them the way out. Later, there were other reports of a child helping miners. Each time the image of the child on Mary's lap was found dirty and with torn clothes.

# OTHER DEVOTIONS

## *Scapulars*

Some people wear a cloth scapular or even several sewn together. A scapular is a part of the religious habit of some religious orders. It is a long piece of cloth that covers the front and back. The practice developed of wearing small scapulars as a sign of association with the spirituality of a particular religious order. These devotional scapulars are two small pieces of cloth connected by strings that are worn around the neck. Such scapulars are sacramentals, and indulgences are attached to their use. A person is invested in a scapular by a priest.

Of the eighteen approved scapulars, the most widespread is the brown scapular of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, which usually bears her image. According to tradition, in 1251 Our Lady appeared to St. Simon Stock, a Carmelite, and promised that anyone (meaning the Carmelites) who wears this scapular until death will be saved.

Wearing a scapular is not a superstitious practice that guarantees salvation no matter what the person does. Naturally a person who wears a scapular is already striving to live a good life. A scapular medal can substitute for a cloth scapular. The medal bears an image of the Sacred Heart on one side and Our Lady on the other.

### ***Pilgrimages***

Traveling to a sacred place is known as a pilgrimage. Pilgrimages were popular in the Middle Ages, especially walking the Camino de Santiago to the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela in Spain, traditionally the site of St. James's remains. Today people still make that pilgrimage as well as pilgrimages to the Holy Land, where Jesus lived, to Rome, which is the heart of the church today, or to a shrine such as Our Lady of Lourdes in France and Our Lady of Fatima in Portugal. You might make a pilgrimage to a shrine near you.

### ***Veneration of Relics***

A relic is something related to a saint. It can be a part of a saint's body or something that has touched the saint. The relic is kept in a special container called a *reliquary* and is honored by the

faithful. At a formal veneration, people may kiss the reliquary or kiss their fingers and then touch the reliquary. At such a veneration in New York in 2014, thousands of people were blessed by the relic of the blood of Pope Saint John Paul II.

### ***Votive Lights***

Votive lights, or vigil lights, are candles lit to accompany prayers to honor a saint or to ask for a favor such as eternal rest for a loved one. The burning candle symbolizes prayer and sacrifice. A donation can be deposited to defray the expense of the candles. Some churches use electronic candles instead of wax candles.

### ***Devotions Lasting a Set Time***

- **AN OCTAVE** is eight days of prayer. Prayer for Christian Unity is an octave from January 18 through January 25, during which we pray that all Christians may be one. The Octave of Christmas comprises Christmas and the seven days following it.
- **A NOVENA** is praying a prayer for nine consecutive days or nine hours. Novenas imitate the nine days that Mary and the disciples

prayed while awaiting the coming of the Holy Spirit. People pray novenas to obtain a favor or to honor Jesus or a saint. A Christmas novena, for example, honors the nine months Jesus spent in Mary's womb. Among the many novenas are ones to Our Lady of Perpetual Help, St. Jude Thaddeus, and St. Anthony.

- A **TRIDUUM** is three days of prayer. The great Paschal Triduum, also known as the Holy Triduum, is the three days starting Holy Thursday evening and ending Easter Sunday evening.

### *Devotions for Spiritual Renewal*

- A **RETREAT** is a period of prayer away from the busyness of life in which people concentrate on developing their relationship with God in silence and solitude. It is usually made under the guidance of a retreat director and can run from one to thirty days.
- A **DAY OF RECOLLECTION** is a mini-retreat that may include a talk, activities, and prayer in common and private. The day (or part of a day) often has a theme.

### ***Dedications of Months and Days***

Traditionally each month has been dedicated to a certain devotion. Most devotions were determined based on a liturgical feast celebrated during their respective month. Likewise, each day of the week is dedicated to a devotion.

JANUARY	Holy Name of Jesus/ Holy Childhood
FEBRUARY	Holy Family
MARCH	St. Joseph
APRIL	Holy Spirit/Holy Eucharist
MAY	Blessed Virgin Mary
JUNE	Sacred Heart
JULY	Precious Blood
AUGUST	Blessed Sacrament
SEPTEMBER	Seven Sorrows of Mary
OCTOBER	Holy Rosary
NOVEMBER	Souls in Purgatory
DECEMBER	Immaculate Conception

SUNDAY	Resurrection/The Trinity
MONDAY	The Holy Spirit/Poor Souls
TUESDAY	The Holy Angels
WEDNESDAY	St. Joseph
THURSDAY	The Blessed Sacrament
FRIDAY	Christ's Passion/The Sacred Heart
SATURDAY	The Blessed Virgin

## A FINAL WORD

As you can see, the Catholic Church offers a rich smorgasbord of ways to worship God and honor the saints. Different people are attracted to different devotions. In fact, some people do not find devotions appealing at all. What draws one person closer to God may not do the same for another person. Moreover, prayer preferences change as our relationship with God grows. Choose the kind of prayer that best resonates with you and feeds your soul. Hopefully you will take advantage of some of the devotions explained in this booklet. Not only are they a beautiful and beloved part of Catholic tradition, but they intensify our love for God, the ultimate goal of all prayer.