

Instruction Guide for the *Family Novena, 2021*

Intended for prayer within families but may also be prayed individually or in groups.

What:

Welcome to the Family Novena! In the history of Christianity, novenas have been offered traditionally as nine days of prayer prior to a great feast day, or for any special intention. Novenas are devotions, not sacraments, so they may be prayed by anyone at any time.

The first Christians who prayed a novena were the Apostles themselves when they gathered with the Virgin Mary in the Upper Room after the Ascension. Together, they “watched and prayed” for nine days prior to the coming of the Holy Spirit on the tenth day at Pentecost (Acts, Chapter 2).

Why:

We must be clear *why* we pray this novena. In our current circumstances, there is hardly a greater need for our society than to strengthen the family. We no longer live in an age where the traditional model of family is accepted. The divine plan of the union of husband and wife who beget children in a lifelong, intact, consecrated marriage is under violent attack from every angle. Even the definition of gender is being redefined.

At the core of this problem is a *spiritual* reality, a challenge to the sovereignty of God over life, family, and society. The family itself is an image of the Blessed Trinity. In this novena we call on the power of God to sustain and renew the family, which is the “domestic church”, the first place where we learn human values and faith in God.

How:

The nine days of prayers in the following pages are carefully structured to provide a complete prayer program on behalf of families and their concerns:

Each day provides a different prayer Intention; a specific Intercession for people; and a petition to a Patron Saint or saints of those for whom we pray. These are followed by the Prayer Offering of a decade of the Holy Rosary where we contemplate a mystery associated with the particular intention or petition of the day. Any family may pray the entire Rosary if so desired. On all nine days, the novena concludes with a Family Novena Prayer.

Ideally, the Family Novena should be prayed within families themselves, with parents taking leadership for the prayer and children participating in various ways. Families are encouraged to supplement each day with additional prayers, which are available in the *Prayers in the Pew: Family Edition* prayer card, the companion to this novena.

The entire novena concludes at the end of Day 9 with Prayer for Christian Families which was composed by Pope Pius XII.