

Therefore we can not sufficiently thank God for having given us in Mary so powerful an advocate. St. Bernard aptly says: "The angel announces, 'thou hast found grace before God.' O supreme happiness! Mary shall always find grace. And what else could we wish? If we seek grace, let us seek it through Mary; for what she seeks, she finds. Never can she plead ineffectually."

God, then, who in His infinite mercy has been pleased to provide for all our needs, desires through Mary to console us, to comfort us, to remove all distrust, to strengthen our hope. How consoling to him who calls upon God in sore distress, or implores His pardon for sins committed, is the thought that at the throne of divine Mercy he has in Mary an advocate as mighty as she is gracious, who supplements his great unworthiness by her sublime dignity, and who makes good the defects of his prayer by her intercession! Therefore St. Bonaventure exclaims: "Verily, great is Our Lord's mercy! That we, through fear of our divine Judge, depart not forever from Him, He gave us His own Mother for our advocate and mediatrix of grace."



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## Mary the Help of Christians

Novenas in Preparation for the Principal Feasts of the Blessed Virgin

Part II

Chapter I of VI

Novena Rules for the Proper Observance of Novenas



"Holy Mary, aid the miserable, assist the desponding, strengthen the weak, pray for the people, plead for the clergy, intercede for the devout female sex. Let all who have recourse to thee experience the efficacy of thy help!"—HOLY CHURCH.

## Rules for the Proper Observance of Novenas

*By St. Alphonsus Liguori*

1. THE soul must be in the state of grace; for the devotion of a sinful heart pleases neither God nor the saints.
2. We must persevere, that is, the prayers for each day of the novena must never be omitted.
3. If possible, we should visit a church every day, and there implore the favor we desire.
4. Every day we ought to perform certain specified acts of exterior self-denial and interior mortification, in order to prepare us thereby for the reception of grace.
5. It is most important that we receive holy communion when making a novena. Therefore prepare yourself well for it.
6. After obtaining the desired grace for which the novena was made, do not omit to return thanks to God and to the saint through whose intercession your prayers were heard.

### On the Manner of Reading the Meditations and Observing the Practices

HOLY SCRIPTURE says, "Before prayer prepare thy soul; and be not as a man that tempteth God" (*Eccles. xviii. 23*). Therefore place yourself in the presence of God, invoke the assistance of the Holy Ghost, and make a most sincere act of contrition for your sins. Offer up to God your will, your intellect, and your memory, so that your prayer may be pleasing to God and serve to promote your spiritual welfare.

Then read the meditation slowly, reflecting on each point of the thought or mystery treated, and consider what you can learn from it, and for what grace you ought to implore God. This is the principal object to be attained by mental prayer.

Never rise from your prayer without having formed some special resolution for practical observance. The practices at the end of each consideration in the following novenas will aid you to do so. Finally, ask for grace to carry out effectively your good purposes, and thank God for enlightening your mind during the meditation.

## Introduction to Mary, the Help of Christians

NO CATHOLIC denies that Our Lord Jesus Christ is the only mediator through whose merits we became reconciled to God. Nevertheless, it is a doctrine of our faith that God willingly grants us grace if the saints, and especially the Blessed Virgin Mary, the queen of saints, intercede for us. If the saints, during their life on earth, were so potent with God that through their prayers the blind obtained sight, the deaf hearing, and the dumb speech, that the sick of all conditions were healed, the dead restored to life, and the most obstinate sinners converted; if thousands of other miracles in the order of nature and of grace were performed through their intercession; what, then, will not she obtain for us from God, whose virtue and merits transcend those of all the saints, and who did more for the greater honor and glory of God than they all? Mary is the queen of saints not only because she is the Mother of the Most High, but also because her sanctity is more perfect than theirs, and she therefore thrones above them all in heaven. Hence the favor with which God regards her, and consequently the power of her intercession with Him is so much the greater.

If Mary's sanctity thus impressively illustrates the potency of her intercession, the contemplation of her dignity as the Mother of God does still more so. Mary brought forth Him who is the Almighty. She calls Him her Son, who by the word of His omnipotence created from out of nothing the whole world with all its beauties, and who can call into being countless millions of other worlds. She calls Him her Son, whose throne is heaven and whose footstool is the earth, who governs all nature with almighty power and reveals His name to mankind through the most astounding miracles. In a word, Mary calls Him her Son, whose omnipotence fills heaven and earth; and this great, almighty God, who honors her as His Mother and has wrought in her such great things, will He not heed her word of intercession, and hear her pleading for those who have recourse to her? On earth He was subject to her. Her intercession moved Him to exercise His omnipotent power at the wedding feast at Cana; and now, when He has glorified and raised her up so high He would let her invoke Him in vain? No, it is inconceivable that God should not hear the prayers of His Mother!

The holy Fathers and Doctors of the Church vie with each other in proclaiming the power of Mary's intercession with the Heart of her divine Son. Some say that having been subject to her on earth, He desires to be so in heaven, inasmuch as to refuse her nothing she asks. Hence St. Bernard calls her the "Intercessory Omnipotence." Indeed, when all the angels and saints in heaven join in supplication to God, their prayers are but those of servants; but when Mary prays her intercession is that of His Mother.