

A NOVENA
for the Feast of
Saint Ignatius of Loyola

23 – 31 July
Prayed together by the community of St Canice's Parish

For the mission of the Society of Jesus throughout the world
Ad Maiorem Dei Gloriam

What Is a Novena, and Why Pray One?

The word novena comes from the Latin novem, meaning nine: nine consecutive days of prayer. Christians have prayed this way since the very beginning. After the Ascension, Our Lady and the apostles spent nine days in prayer awaiting the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Novenas take different forms. Some are prayed in mourning, asking God to be close to those who grieve; some in petition, seeking a saint's intercession for a particular need; some in penance, begging God's mercy; and some in preparation for a sacrament, a wedding, or a great feast.

This novena is one of preparation and petition. For nine days we prepare our hearts for the Feast of Saint Ignatius of Loyola on 31 July, and together we ask his prayers for a shared intention. Praying a novena forms a habit of returning to God daily, and along the way we come to know the saint we walk with: who he was, how he stumbled, and how grace made him holy. That knowledge teaches us how God might be working in our own ordinary lives.

Our Intention

Our primary intention, prayed together as the St Canice's community, is for the mission of the Society of Jesus throughout the world who serve the poor, the displaced and the forgotten across Asia, Africa and beyond, and for the works supported by Jesuit Mission, the overseas arm of the Australian Jesuits. Each day of the novena entrusts one part of that mission to God.

Alongside this shared intention, bring your own. Ask Saint Ignatius to pray for whatever you carry, whether a person, a decision, a grief or a hope, and for the graces he knew best: discernment, generosity, and finding God in the midst of daily life.

How to Pray This Novena

Each day takes about five to seven minutes. You can pray at any time, with your morning coffee, on the bus, or before bed, but

praying at the same time each day helps the novena become a rhythm rather than a chore. Each day follows the same simple order:

1. Begin with the Sign of the Cross, then pray the Novena Prayer (printed at the back of this booklet).
2. Read the day's Scripture slowly, and then the reflection.
3. Sit with the question for a moment, and offer the day's intention together with your own.
4. Close with an Our Father, a Hail Mary, a Glory Be, and the Suscipe (also at the back).

If you miss a day, do not give up and do not start again from the beginning. Simply pick up where you left off. God is not counting; He is waiting.

Who Was Ignatius?

Íñigo López de Loyola was born in 1491 in the Basque country of northern Spain, the youngest of thirteen children in a minor noble family. He grew up on tales of chivalry and dreamed of glory: fine clothes, swordsmanship, the favour of great ladies, a reputation at court. By his own later admission he was vain, hot-tempered and worldly, and once even faced charges for brawling in the street.

In May 1521, defending the fortress of Pamplona against a French army, a cannonball shattered his right leg. The soldier never walked without a limp again, and the courtier died on that rampart. During a long, painful convalescence, God quietly began the work that would transform him into a pilgrim, a beggar, a student, a priest, and finally the founder of the Society of Jesus, the Jesuits, whose schools, missions and retreat houses now circle the globe. He gave the Church the Spiritual Exercises, one of the great treasures of Christian prayer, and a way of living summed up in the motto *Ad Maiorem Dei Gloriam*: for the greater glory of God.

Ignatius died in Rome on 31 July 1556 and was canonised in 1622. His feast is kept on the day of his death, which the Church sees as the day of his birth into heaven. Over these nine days we will walk the arc of his life, because his story is a map of how God works: through interruption, through failure, through friendship, and through the slow schooling of an unruly heart.

DAY 1 · THURSDAY 23 JULY

The Cannonball

"For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord."

Jeremiah 29:11

On 20 May 1521, a French cannonball passed between Ignatius's legs at Pamplona, shattering one and wounding the other. His own surgeons set the bone badly. When he discovered that a lump of bone would protrude below the knee and ruin the elegant line of his courtier's boot, he ordered it sawn off, without anaesthetic, out of sheer vanity. This is the man God chose.

We tend to imagine that God calls the ready: the prayerful, the settled, the good. Ignatius's story says otherwise. God met him not at his best but at his most broken, flat on his back, career destroyed, vanity intact. The cannonball did not make Ignatius holy; it simply stopped him long enough for grace to get a word in.

Most of us have had a cannonball of some kind: an illness, a redundancy, a relationship ending, a plan collapsing. We rarely choose our interruptions, but we can choose what we do inside them. Ignatius teaches us to ask of every disruption, however unwelcome: what might God be beginning here that I could never have begun myself?

TO CARRY INTO THE DAY

Where has an interruption in my life, welcome or not, turned out to be a doorway?

TODAY'S INTENTION

For all whose lives have been overturned by war, disaster or sudden loss, especially the refugees and displaced families accompanied by the Jesuit Refugee Service, that in the wreckage of their plans they may find God beginning something new.

Close with an Our Father, a Hail Mary, a Glory Be, and the Suscipe.

DAY 2 · FRIDAY 24 JULY

The Two Books

"Test everything; hold fast to what is good."

1 Thessalonians 5:21

Recovering at the family castle, Ignatius asked for the romance novels he loved. The house had none. All that could be found were a life of Christ and a book of lives of the saints. Bored, he read them, and kept daydreaming. Sometimes he dreamed of knightly glory and winning a great lady's admiration; sometimes he dreamed of outdoing the saints: "What if I did what Francis did, what Dominic did?"

Then he noticed something nobody had taught him. Both kinds of daydream were delightful while they lasted, but they left different aftertastes. The dreams of glory left him dry, restless and empty. The dreams of following Christ left him quiet, content and alive, and the peace remained. He later said this was his first lesson in the discernment of spirits: God and the enemy of our nature both move our hearts, and we can learn to tell them apart by paying attention to where our desires lead.

This is intensely practical. Scrolling, resentment, ambition, prayer, generosity, rest: everything leaves a trace. Ignatius invites us to become connoisseurs of our own interior weather. The point is not to suppress desire, but to notice which desires deepen our peace and draw us toward God, and which promise much and deliver dust.

TO CARRY INTO THE DAY

What activity or habit reliably leaves me at peace afterwards, and what reliably leaves me empty?

TODAY'S INTENTION

For all who are discerning the shape of their lives, for young people weighing their future, and for those in formation for religious life and priesthood across the Jesuit world, that they may learn to recognise the movements of God in their hearts.

Close with an Our Father, a Hail Mary, a Glory Be, and the Suscipe.

DAY 3 · SATURDAY 25 JULY

Manresa: The School of God

"Be still, and know that I am God."

Psalm 46:10

After his conversion, Ignatius hung up his sword at the shrine of Our Lady of Montserrat, exchanged his fine clothes with a beggar, and stopped at the small town of Manresa, intending to stay a few days. He stayed almost a year. He prayed for hours in a cave above the river, begged his food, and threw himself into ferocious penances: fasting, sleeplessness, letting his hair and nails grow wild in revolt against his old vanity.

It nearly destroyed him. He was tormented by scruples, replaying old sins endlessly, and at one point was tempted to despair of God's mercy altogether. Slowly he learned that extremism in the spiritual life is not holiness, and that the harsh voice demanding ever more punishment was not God's voice at all. God, he said later, was teaching him gently, "as a schoolmaster teaches a child." Beside the river Cardoner he received an illumination so profound that he claimed he learned more in that one moment than in all the rest of his life. He saw all things, creation, grace, his own story, held together in God.

From the notes he kept at Manresa grew the Spiritual Exercises. Its lesson for us is mercy. God is not waiting for us to punish ourselves into worthiness. He is a patient teacher, and we are allowed to be beginners.

TO CARRY INTO THE DAY

Is the demanding voice inside me the voice of God, or do I need to let God be gentler with me than I am with myself?

TODAY'S INTENTION

For communities rebuilding after conflict and poverty in Timor-Leste, Myanmar, Cambodia and beyond, that the patient, hidden work of healing may bear fruit, and for all who give the Spiritual Exercises around the world.

Close with an Our Father, a Hail Mary, a Glory Be, and the Suscipe.

DAY 4 · SUNDAY 26 JULY

Back to School at Thirty-Three

"Learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart."

Matthew 11:29

Ignatius's first great plan was to live in Jerusalem, walking where Jesus walked. He begged his way across the Mediterranean and reached the Holy Land in 1523. Within weeks the Franciscan authorities, fearing for his safety, ordered him home under threat of excommunication. His holy dream lasted less than a month.

So the former officer, now in his thirties, made an astonishing decision: if he was to help souls, he needed an education. He sat down in a Barcelona classroom beside schoolboys to learn basic Latin grammar. He was mocked. Later, at the universities of Alcalá and Salamanca, he was imprisoned and interrogated by the Inquisition, suspicious of this layman who spoke to people about God. Cleared each time, he simply moved on, finally to Paris, where he spent seven years earning the degree that would let him serve without hindrance.

There is deep wisdom here about patience and means. Ignatius wanted to serve God immediately and dramatically; God asked him to conjugate verbs for a decade. Sometimes the most spiritual thing we can do is the humble, unglamorous preparation in front of us: the study, the apprenticeship, the slow faithfulness, trusting that God wastes none of it.

TO CARRY INTO THE DAY

What slow, unglamorous work in my life right now might actually be God's preparation?

TODAY'S INTENTION

For students and teachers in Jesuit mission schools across Asia and Africa, and especially for the education of girls and women, that learning may open the door to full and free lives.

Close with an Our Father, a Hail Mary, a Glory Be, and the Suscipe.

DAY 5 · MONDAY 27 JULY

Friends in the Lord

"I have called you friends."

John 15:15

In Paris, Ignatius shared a room with two younger students: a gentle Savoyard named Pierre Favre, and a brilliant, ambitious Basque athlete named Francis Xavier, who found the shabby older student embarrassing. Ignatius won Favre quickly. Xavier took years of patient friendship and, tradition says, one question posed again and again: "What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his soul?"

On 15 August 1534, in a small chapel on Montmartre, Ignatius and six companions vowed poverty, chastity and service to God. They had no name, no rule, no plan for an order. They called themselves simply "friends in the Lord." The Society of Jesus began not as an institution but as a friendship.

Ignatius, the fiercely independent soldier, had learned that no one follows Christ alone. The same is true of a parish. Faith kept private slowly suffocates; faith shared over a meal, in a prayer group, at the kitchen door, or in this novena prayed together, multiplies. The people beside us at Mass are not strangers who happen to share a building. They are, or could become, friends in the Lord, and some of them may be the means by which God intends to reach us.

TO CARRY INTO THE DAY

Who has been a "friend in the Lord" to me, and for whom might I become one?

TODAY'S INTENTION

For the lay men and women, catechists and local partners who carry the Church's mission in places where priests are few, and for the deepening of friendship and community within our own parish.

Close with an Our Father, a Hail Mary, a Glory Be, and the Suscipe.

DAY 6 · TUESDAY 28 JULY

Sent to the Ends of the Earth

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations."

Matthew 28:19

In 1540, Pope Paul III formally approved the Society of Jesus. Its members took an unusual fourth vow: to go wherever the Pope should send them for the good of souls, without delay or excuse. The very next year the vow was tested. The King of Portugal asked for missionaries to the Indies; the man chosen fell ill, and Ignatius turned to his old roommate. Francis Xavier packed within a day, mended his cassock, and left for India. The two friends never saw each other again. Xavier would reach India, Indonesia and Japan, and die within sight of China.

Ignatius himself never left Rome again. His mission field was a desk. From it he wrote nearly seven thousand letters, guiding companions scattered across four continents. It is a striking pairing: one friend sent to the ends of the earth, the other sending, sustaining, praying. Both were fully on mission.

That remains the shape of the Church's mission today. A few go; the rest of us send, by prayer, by generosity, and by refusing to let our horizon shrink to our own suburb. This novena's central intention is exactly this: to stand behind the Jesuits and their companions serving in more than a dozen countries, as Ignatius stood behind Xavier.

TO CARRY INTO THE DAY

Is my faith's horizon as wide as the world, or has it quietly shrunk to my own concerns?

TODAY'S INTENTION

For Jesuit missionaries and their co-workers serving far from home, and for Christians in lands where faith is persecuted or costly, that they may be sustained by our prayers as Xavier was by Ignatius's.

Close with an Our Father, a Hail Mary, a Glory Be, and the Suscipe.

DAY 7 · WEDNESDAY 29 JULY

Finding God in All Things

"In him we live and move and have our being."

Acts 17:28

Ignatius governed a rapidly growing order from Rome, buried in correspondence, administration and Roman politics. Yet those who knew him said he had become a contemplative in the midst of action: a man who found God as readily in a ledger or a difficult conversation as in the chapel. He once remarked that if the Society were ever dissolved, a short time in prayer would be enough to restore his peace.

His great gift for busy people is the Examen, a prayer he asked his men never to omit however pressed they were. It takes ten minutes. First, become quiet and thank God for the day's concrete gifts. Second, ask the Spirit for light to see the day honestly. Third, walk back through the day and notice where God was present, in a kindness given or received, a moment of beauty, even a struggle. Fourth, face what was wrong without excuses, and ask forgiveness. Fifth, look to tomorrow with hope, and decide one thing to do differently.

Prayed daily, the Examen slowly changes how we see. God stops being confined to Sunday and starts turning up everywhere: in the commute, the kitchen, the ward, the office. That is the heart of Ignatian spirituality. We do not escape ordinary life to find God; we find God already hidden within it.

TO CARRY INTO THE DAY

Tonight, try the five steps of the Examen. Where was God in this ordinary day?

TODAY'S INTENTION

For chaplains, spiritual directors and retreat ministries throughout the world, and for the grace for each of us to find God in our work, our homes and our streets.

Close with an Our Father, a Hail Mary, a Glory Be, and the Suscipe.

DAY 8 · THURSDAY 30 JULY

The Greater Glory, and the Poor

"Just as you did it to one of the least of these... you did it to me."

Matthew 25:40

Ignatius's motto was *Ad Maiorem Dei Gloriam*, "for the greater glory of God." The key word is greater. He was never satisfied with the merely good; he asked what more love could do. The Jesuits call it the *magis*.

But for Ignatius the "greater" was rarely grand. In the brutal Roman winter famine of 1538, he and his companions begged bread and firewood, filled their own house with the starving, and cared for hundreds. He founded a house of refuge for women trapped in prostitution, walking beside them publicly through streets where respectable men jeered; he established homes for orphans and taught catechism to children in the piazzas. The former nobleman who once had a bone sawn off to preserve his elegant leg now spent his elegance on the destitute.

Our parish's own kitchen stands in an unbroken line from that Roman winter. Serving a meal, sitting with someone the city steps around, giving until it costs: none of this is an optional extra to Ignatian spirituality. It is its proof. "Love," Ignatius wrote at the summit of the Spiritual Exercises, "ought to show itself in deeds more than in words."

TO CARRY INTO THE DAY

Where is the magis for me this week? What is one concrete deed of love that costs me something?

TODAY'S INTENTION

For the hungry and homeless of our own city and of every city; for St Canice's Kitchen and all works of mercy; and for the grace of a generosity that gives and does not count the cost.

Close with an Our Father, a Hail Mary, a Glory Be, and the Suscipe.

DAY 9 · FRIDAY 31 JULY, THE FEAST

Take, Lord, Receive

"Those who lose their life for my sake will find it." Matthew 16:25

Ignatius died at dawn on 31 July 1556, so quietly that no one realised the end was near: no dramatic last words, no gathered companions, not even the last rites he would surely have wanted. It was, on the surface, an unremarkable death, and perhaps that is fitting. He had spent thirty-five years handing his life over piece by piece; by the end there was nothing left to surrender dramatically. The offering had already been made.

That offering has a name: the Suscipe, the prayer that closes the Spiritual Exercises and closes each day of this novena. "Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, and my entire will... Give me only your love and your grace; that is enough for me." It is easy to say and terrifying to mean. Ignatius did not begin his converted life able to pray it honestly. He grew into it, through cannonballs and prison cells and Latin grammar and seven thousand letters.

Today, on his feast, we are not asked to have arrived. We are asked only to want to want it: to open our hands a little wider than yesterday, trusting that everything we place in God's hands is not lost but transformed. Saint Ignatius of Loyola, soldier, pilgrim, friend and father, pray for us, and pray for the mission of your Society throughout the world.

TO CARRY INTO THE DAY

What is the one thing I am still gripping tightly? Can I loosen my hold, even slightly, today?

TODAY'S INTENTION

In thanksgiving for Saint Ignatius and for all who have gone before us in faith; for the benefactors, volunteers and friends of Jesuit Mission; and that our whole parish may grow in the spirit of the Suscipe.

Close with an Our Father, a Hail Mary, a Glory Be, and the Suscipe.

The Prayers of the Novena

The Novena Prayer

Prayed at the start of each day.

*Saint Ignatius of Loyola, pilgrim and friend of God,
you allowed Christ to remake your broken plans into his mission.*

*Pray for us during these nine days,
and pray for the mission of the Society of Jesus throughout the
world:*

*for all who serve the poor, the displaced and the forgotten,
and for those who send them by prayer and generosity.*

*Obtain for us the graces you knew best:
to discern the movements of God in our hearts,
to find him in all things,
and to love him in deeds more than in words.*

We ask this, with our own intentions, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Suscipe

*The prayer of Saint Ignatius, from the close of the Spiritual Exercises. Prayed
at the end of each day.*

*Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty,
my memory, my understanding, and my entire will,
all that I have and possess.*

*You have given all to me;
to you, Lord, I return it.*

All is yours: dispose of it wholly according to your will.

*Give me only your love and your grace;
that is enough for me. Amen.*

Prayer for Generosity

Traditionally attributed to Saint Ignatius.

*Lord, teach me to be generous;
teach me to serve you as you deserve:
to give and not to count the cost,
to fight and not to heed the wounds,
to toil and not to seek for rest,
to labour and not to ask for reward,
save that of knowing that I do your will. Amen.*

Anima Christi

A prayer beloved by Saint Ignatius, placed at the front of the Spiritual Exercises.

*Soul of Christ, sanctify me.
Body of Christ, save me.
Blood of Christ, inebriate me.
Water from the side of Christ, wash me.
Passion of Christ, strengthen me.
O good Jesus, hear me.
Within your wounds hide me.
Never let me be separated from you.
From the malignant enemy defend me.
In the hour of my death call me,
and bid me come to you,
that with your saints I may praise you
for ever and ever. Amen.*

Saint Ignatius of Loyola, pray for us.