

Friendship Novena



“I call you friends.” –John 15:15

A novena is a special form of prayer, where on nine successive days, a prayer is said for some special occasion or intention. The practice of saying novenas is scripturally based, modeled after the nine days of consecutive prayer that the apostles, Blessed Mother, and other followers of Jesus prayed together in the upper room between Jesus’ Ascension into heaven and the descent of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. Prayed in communion with the saints, novenas often petition the intercession of specially selected saints (our exemplary role models in faithful living) for a particular request or in thanksgiving for God’s gracious goodness in our lives.

This novena is a prayer of petition and thanksgiving for the blessing of **holy friendships** which not only provide happy companionship in our earthly pilgrim journeys, but also lead us to greater heights in knowing, loving, and serving God.

“A faithful friend is a sturdy shelter; He that has found one has found a treasure.”
– Sirach 6:14

Directions

On each day of the novena, pray:

1. Opening Prayer:

“In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, Amen. Holy God, Mighty God, Benevolent Creator and Lover of All Life, I praise You and I Glorify You! Your beloved Son has called me **“friend!”** As I quietly come to You to contemplate the great gift of His gracious friendship to me, please calm my mind and still my body. Bring me to a deep awareness, O My Father in Heaven, of Your presence to me right here, right now above me, below me, behind me, before me, around me, beside me, within me. I lovingly thank You for Your infinite goodness to me, in particular today in the gifts of Jesus’s friendship with me, and what an example He has given to me for my friendship with others. I thank you for the examples the Saints have given me in the ways and blessings of holy friendship. I ask You to grant me the gift of holy friendships in my life, with individuals who will walk faithfully side by side and arm in arm with me, back to You, as we travel our pilgrim journeys on this earth together. Amen.

2. A Prayer to the Specially Selected Saint for the Day: *(see prayers attached for each of the nine days of the novena)*

3. An Our Father, A Hail Mary, and a Glory Be

4. A Concluding Litany:

Saint Bonaventure and St. Thomas, pray for me and my friends.
St. Francis of Assisi and St. Clare, pray for me and my friends.
St. Francis de Sales and St. Jane de Chantal, pray for me and my friends.
St. Theresa of Avila and St. John of the Cross, pray for me and my friends.
St. Dominic Savio and St. John Bosco, pray for me and my friends.
Servant of God Elisabeth Leseur and Soeur Marie Goby, pray for me and my friends.
St. Ignatius Loyola and St. Francis Xavier, pray for me and my friends.
St. Louis and Zelig Martin, pray for me and my friends.
St. Martin de Porres and St. Rose of Lima, pray for me and my friends.
All the angels and saints, pray for me and my friends, that we may always lead each other to holiness and heaven.

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Day 1

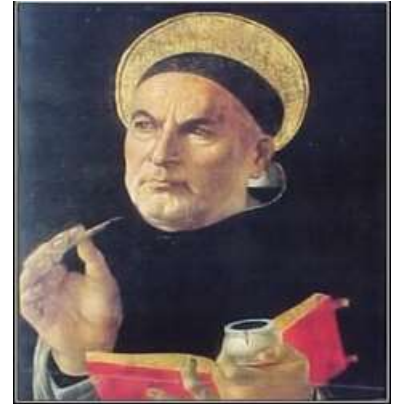
St. Bonaventure and St. Thomas Aquinas

With a focus on humble esteem

O holy saints Bonaventure and Thomas Aquinas, you first became friends when you studied together as young men in 13th century Paris, and you shared a very close friendship throughout



the rest of your lives. After earning your doctoral degrees together, you put your brilliant minds and humble hearts to work for Holy Mother Church. St. Bonaventure (miraculously healed as a young child by St. Francis of Assisi), you not only became a Franciscan friar yourself, but you took leadership of the order for more than 17 years. Eventually being elevated to Bishop and Cardinal, your writings and sermons still



guide and inspire the faithful to this very day. And St. Thomas, most highly esteemed Dominican priest, your life's work became volumes of some of the most brilliant theology our Church has ever known. Throughout the years of the work to which God called you each, you holy men of God, you brilliant Doctors of the Church, you enjoyed a friendship, based on a humble esteem for each other, that continually challenged the other to deeper inspirations and more complete union with God.

St. Bonaventure, when your friend Thomas asked you one day where you got all the beautiful things you wrote, you took your friend's hand, led him to your desk, pointed at the large crucifix that hung above it, and simply said: ***"Look, it is He who tells me everything. He is my only teacher!"***

And St. Thomas, when you found your friend Bonaventure in deep fervor writing his biography of St. Francis, you quietly retreated, saying, ***"Let us leave a saint to write about a saint!"***

When both of you were requested to write the Mass for the new Feast of Corpus Christi – after you, St. Bonaventure read your friend Thomas's version, you tore up your own. O Saintly Friends Bonaventure and Thomas Aquinas, I ask your intercession for me and my friends. Pray God bless us with a holy friendship as you two shared. Pray that my friends and I, in imitation of you, sharpen each other's minds, and humbly lead each other to deeper spiritual inspirations and a more complete union with our Good and Gracious God. Amen.



Day 2

Saints Francis and Clare of Assisi

With a focus on kindred souls



O holy saints Francis and Clare, your friendship is legendary. You Francis, after a dramatic conversion, shocked your fellow town folk as you preached and begged in the streets of Assisi. One Assisian however, after hearing you speak, was particularly quick to feel the draw of your holiness -- the young Clare Offreduccio. She was beautiful, born of nobility, and wealthy. But none of that made Clare blind to the wisdom of the God-centered life of holy poverty you preached in word and action. Greatly inspired by you, Clare left comfort, wealth, and prominence behind, and literally ran one Palm Sunday evening toward the lifestyle you preached. From that moment on, a deep friendship led the two of you into deeper communion with God. You were two kindred souls both on fire with the same love for God, and you helped each other greatly along the path to perfection. As you Francis led your male companions to a new and revolutionary way of life and the development of the Franciscan Order, you Clare led the women who came to you also wanting to embrace a similar and extremely humble way of living that demanded total trust in divine providence. You were in many ways partners in the formation of Franciscan spirituality – especially in its four-fold pattern of prayer emphasizing gazing, considering, contemplating, and imitating. O holy saints Francis and Clare, how much you supported and inspired each other in your spiritual journeys, which were often difficult and rife with suffering. The tremendous fruits of your lives, faith, examples, and friendship are still present in our world today, more than 800 years after your deaths.

Pray, O holy St. Francis and St. Clare, for me in my friendships. Pray I be to all my friends an instrument of God's peace. Help me to ever inspire my friends to live the Gospel fully gazing upon Christ, considering Christ, contemplating Christ, and imitating Christ. And when I am so blessed to find that rare and precious gift of a kindred soul in a holy friend, on fire with the same love of God that burns within me, pray we each be led by the Holy Spirit in all our words and actions to assist the other on our paths to perfection with wisdom, understanding, piety, fortitude, knowledge, prudence, and fear of the Lord. Amen.

Day 3

St. Francis de Sales and St. Jane de Chantal

With a focus on answer to prayer

O holy St. Francis de Sales and St. Jane de Chantal, ever so blessed was your friendship that it started before you even met! St. Jane, in the difficult years after your husband's tragic death, when you felt alone and burdened with your struggles in life, you asked God in prayer to send you a friend and guide. In a vision, God shared with you the spiritual director he held out in promise to you. Years later when traveling, you heard the Bishop of Geneva preaching in the Sainte Chapelle in Dijon, and were surprised to recognize him as the person of your dream! And meanwhile St. Francis, you had a similar dream, of a woman who would come into your life and deeply impact it. As you preached from the pulpit that day, you saw a woman in the pews whom you immediately recognized as the woman in your dream. You inquired



about her, and arranged a meeting. A deep, fruitful spiritual friendship took wing that day, and lasted more than 20 years. You were both impressed and humbled by the other's commitment to God. St. Francis, you became St. Jane's trusted spiritual director, meeting with her periodically thereafter in person, but also communicating through letters of spiritual direction over those many years. With your unwavering support, Francis, Jane founded a religious order, for whom you wrote your famous "Treatise On the Love of God." Your holy friendship gave to the Church what is today known as Salesian Spirituality. It has inspired and guided many faithful for centuries. So connected in friendship were your hearts and souls, that St. Jane sensed the very moment of your death, St. Francis, even though you two were separated by great distance at the time. On the subject of friendship, St. Francis you wrote:

"It is a blessed thing to love on earth as we hope to love in Heaven, and to begin that friendship here which is to endure for ever there. I am not now speaking of simple charity, a love due to all mankind, but of that spiritual friendship which binds souls together, leading them to share devotions and spiritual interests, so as to have but one mind between them"
(*The Introduction to a Devout Life, III, 19*).

O Holy Saints Francis and Jane, whose friendship was an answer to prayer, pour forth your prayers from heaven above, asking God to answer my prayers for my friends. When any of my friends are heavily burdened by life's difficulties and they feel alone, ask God to bless them as He blessed you, with friendships that make straight their way to God's heart. And pray to Our Gracious Lord that I never shrink in my calling as a friend to be a humble instrument of His great comfort and grace. Amen.

Day 4

St. Teresa of Avila and St. John of the Cross

With a focus on co-laboring for the Church

O holy Doctors of the Church, St. Teresa of Avila and St. John of the Cross, your meeting and becoming friends was life-altering for each of you. St. John, enroute to fulfill your ardent



desire to join the Carthusian Order, you happened to meet the charismatic Carmelite nun Teresa of Avila along the way. So immediately impressed was Teresa by your holy practices in total submission to the will of God, that she asked you to join in her efforts to reform the Carmelite order. And so impressed were you John with this holy woman of God, so devoted to Christ, so talented, so courageous, so contemplative, so enthusiastic, so ardently persevering, so disciplined, that you accepted the invitation despite the realization that it would completely change the course of your life. In a society bereft with hostilities to the reforms Teresa was attempting to implement, she needed a courageous and holy friend with a constancy of action and purpose with whom to collaborate. She found that dear and dependable friend in you. Together you co-founded the Discalced Carmelites, establishing

convents and monasteries across Spain that returned practices of the Carmelites to original and stricter rules (established in 1209), which had been relaxed, corrupted, and discarded over the years. How beautifully you collaborated together – St. John you became St. Teresa’s spiritual director and confessor, and St. Teresa, you and your nuns nursed St. John back to health after his many months of imprisonment and torture. As friends and co-laborers for the Church, you provided support, encouragement, direction, and inspiration to each other. Recognizing the great value of this, St. Teresa, wrote: ***“What a great favor God does to those He places in the company of good people!”***

O holy St. Teresa of Avila and St. John of the Cross, may my friends and I always look to your friendship for inspiration when we co-labor together as followers of Christ and in the work of the Church. I petition your prayers from above. Ask Almighty God to bless my friendships abundantly. Pray, when my friends and I endeavor in the work of building up the Kingdom together, He graciously guide our hands, minds, and hearts as we serve Him and His Church. Pray we can be -- as you two were -- holy, dependable, inspiring (and maybe even life-altering!) friends to each other. Amen.



Teresa of Avila by François Gérard (1770–1837)

Day 5

St. Dominic Savio and St. John Bosco

With a focus on the joys of friends of all ages

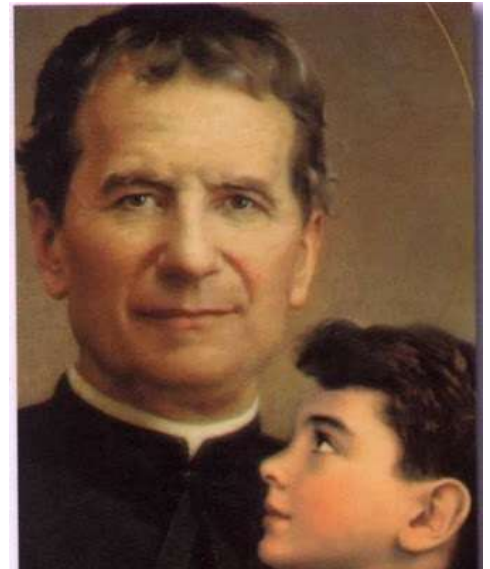


O holy St. Dominic Savio and St. John Bosco, how much your deeply loving relationship exemplifies the beauty and gifts found in friendships with people among different age groups. Young St. Dominic, you were extremely pious, preserving your Baptismal innocence all your life. At age 12, you entered the school of Fr. John Bosco, his "Oratory," hoping in this way to fulfill your desire to become a priest. After Fr. Bosco examined your thoughts and desires, you asked: ***"What do you think of me?"*** ***"I think you're good material,"*** answered Fr. Bosco, with a smile. ***"Well, then,"*** you replied, ***"You are a good tailor, so if the material is good, take me and make a new suit out of me for Our Lord!"*** In the Oratory, full of rough and wayward young men from the streets who needed love, encouragement and direction, your heroic virtue, Dominic, quickly became apparent

and appreciated. How very much Fr. Bosco was helped and inspired by you in the daily challenges of the Oratory, and how very much he wisely counseled and spiritually mentored you. Despite the age difference, you grew a holy friendship that was rooted in a deep admiration for each other and a common desire to serve the Lord with holy joy. When at age 14, you became seriously ill, the difficult decision was made that you should leave the Oratory, and return to your home for convalescence. Even though Fr. Bosco held high hopes you would fully recover and return soon, the parting between you and him was tearful. When Fr. Bosco received the very sad news of your death, Dominic, in a letter from your father, he was overcome with grief. So great was his love for you, that he wrote a moving biography of you, that later became instrumental in the process of your canonization. Today, your tombs rest close to each other in Turin, giving perpetual witness to the closeness of your friendship.

O holy St. Dominic Savio and John Bosco, youth and maturity complimented each other well in your lovely friendship. As you now rest in the arms of the One you love in Heaven and whom you served so admirably upon the earth, send down your prayers upon me and my friends especially upon my friends who are of a different age group than I. Pray God give us a holy appreciation for the gifts we can give to each other because of our different state and stages in life. Pray

that the Holy Spirit will guide us to be mentor and inspiration, salt and light to each other. Pray we can learn from one another, as you two did, to preserve our Baptismal innocence as much as possible throughout our lives. Amen.



Day 6

Servant of God Elisabeth Leseur and Soeur Marie Goby

With a focus on companionship in our pilgrim journey

O sisters in Christ, Elisabeth Leseur and Soeur Marie Goby, providence brought you together in a chance encounter. Despite meeting in person only twice (in late 19th century France), you grew a deep friendship through letter writing, and it became one of the most significant, nurturing, and holy relationships in either of your lives. The instantaneous appreciation you had for the other's spirituality, heart, and soul was powerful. You each quickly found the perfect confidante so needed in your lives – a treasured blessing indeed. You, Elisabeth, while love was present in your marriage, a shared faith wasn't. Your husband Felix and much of your circle of family and friends were hostile toward religion. They did not join you in seeking a deep relationship with Our Lord. In many ways you lived isolated – you were forced to live a parallel life to the ones you loved. You spent much of your time praying and offering your physical suffering for Felix's conversion, who



after your death and upon reading your journals, was lead to conversion and to the priesthood! And you, Soeur Marie Goby, although you lived in community with other professed religious, you did not find a confidant whom you could freely share, discuss, and deepen your great love of God until you met Elisabeth. Your letters to each other were filled with deep spiritual sharing, prayerful assistance, emotional support, sage advice in difficult decision making times, and a sisterly love that uplifted your spirits. Soeur Marie Goby, you wrote to Elisabeth: ***“I simply say to you that I felt and understood your soul, and from the depth of my own, I thank God for having given you such a lively faith! Your soul is never far from me and before God, your memory is mixed together with those whom I love.”***

And Elisabeth in your letters, you said providence had granted you in your friendship ***“a sweet treat,”*** and that you felt ***“a total union of heart”*** with this your treasured friend. You were companions on your pilgrim journeys back to Our Heavenly Father, and helped each other ascend to the heights you reached for in your love of God.



O good and faithful friends Elisabeth Leseur and Soeur Marie Goby, you experienced “the communion of saints on this side of death” in your friendship. I ask your and all the saints' intercessory prayers for me and my friends. Pray God bless us with a holy sharing of hearts as you experienced, no matter whether we're physically present to each other or separated by distance. Pray that by holy friendship, I may dispel isolations experienced in my friend's spiritual journey, and that my friend may do the same for me. Pray we grow in our abilities to uplift each other in our quests to know, love, and serve God as we together strive to become perfect in His sight. Amen.

Day 7

St. Ignatius Loyola and St. Francis Xavier

With a focus on the transforming power of friendship



Few friends can say that their friendship transformed much of the world, but you, St. Ignatius of Loyola and St. Francis Xavier, can indeed make such a claim. God truly did work wonders through your friendship! You Francis, young, intelligent, proud, wild, and worldly ambitious, met Ignatius at the University of Paris in 1527. Ignatius, 15 years your senior and a former military official, had undergone a profound conversion. Because Ignatius was so intent on loving and serving God, you at first ridiculed him mercilessly. But over time, Ignatius opened wide



your heart to Christ, and you forever more called him the *“father of my soul.”* Within a few years, you two and five other friends, solemnly vowed to spend your lifetimes in the service of the Church, laying the foundation of the “Society of Jesus,” the Jesuit order. How holy a day it was in 1537 that you, Francis and Ignatius, were ordained to the priesthood together!! Shortly thereafter, you were separated, never to see each other again. You Francis, agreed to serve the Pope as a missionary and embarked to spread the gospel in India, Indonesia, and Japan. Harrowing as this work was, you were so successful that your baptizing arm actually hurt from the thousands of souls you brought to Christ, and you have often been referred to as the greatest missionary since St. Paul. And you Ignatius, capable leader and tremendous spiritual director that you were, busily establishing the ranks and good work of the Jesuits, despite the distance, always remained extremely close to Francis through the letters you shared. Your words to him in one letter, *“Entirely yours, Francis, without power or possibility of ever forgetting you,”* brought your dear friend to tears when he read them. Francis replied, *“Let us ask God for the grace of seeing each other joined together in the next life. Whoever will be the first to go to the other life and does not there find his brother, whom he loves in the Lord, must ask Christ our Lord to unite us all there in glory.”* How fitting an honor for your deep friendship -- a friendship that gave rise to so many conversions and an ardent priestly order that gave such glory to God -- that you were both declared saints on the same day.

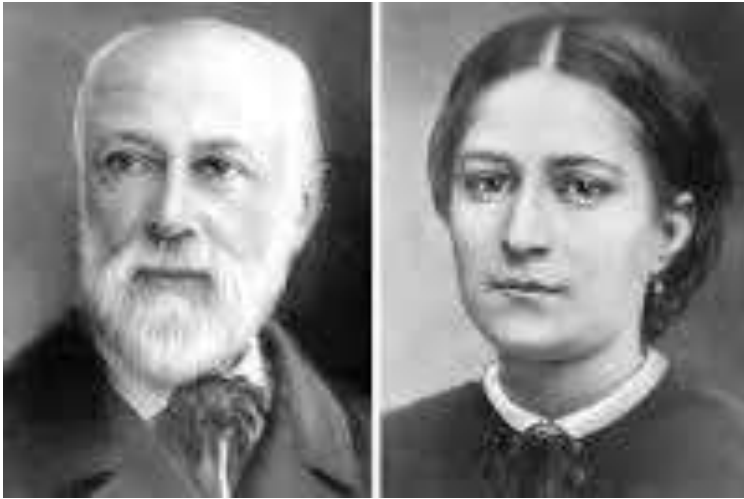
O holy St. Ignatius of Loyola and St. Francis Xavier, I implore your intercession along with all the angels and saints in Heaven, to pray for me and all those I love as friends. Pray we can elevate our relationships to holy heights as you did, by basing them in love of and obedience to God. Pray we too find our way to saintliness, and in so doing, extend our friendship from its beginnings here on earth into everlasting glory with Almighty God in Heaven. Amen.



Day 8

Saints Louis and Zelig Martin

With a focus on friendship in marriage



Sometimes husbands and wives -- when their marriage is blessed with a high degree of compatibility, open communication, and tender affection -- consider themselves to be best friends. This was true in your marriage, Saints Louis and Zelig Martin. Married (in a beautiful candle lit midnight wedding) only three months after meeting each other, you went on to experience a happy 19 year marriage rooted in a deeply satisfying and spiritual friendship. Having each seriously considered religious life prior

to your meeting, you lived an exemplary Christian marriage, creating a family and home environment that invited each member to holiness. You and all your children responded to the invitation with great love of God and obedience to His holy will. Letters that survive today from the times you were separated reveal the deep devotion, admiration, and support you gave one another throughout the trials of everyday living. You wished each other happiness in this world, AND the next. Despite much tragedy (including the death of four of your nine children) and sickness (the special needs of one of your daughters and Zelig's breast cancer), your home bubbled with happy, simple pleasures and great affection for one another. Each of your five surviving children, all daughters, entered the convent, and one, Therese, is a canonized saint and Doctor of the Church.



O Heavenly Father, how well pleased You must have been to see the deep love and warm friendship present in the marriage of Louis and Zelig Martin. It not only benefitted the two of them, but it also benefitted their children, the Church, and society. May all of us who have entered into the holy sacrament of marriage be inspired by this venerable husband and wife, and boldly uphold the holy covenant of marriage as being between one man and one woman, as You have so wisely ordained.

Gracious Lord, I humbly ask You today to pour forth Your blessings into my marriage and into the marriages of my friends. I pray You strengthen each man and woman joined in Holy Matrimony as they walk together through the joys and sorrows of life. Generously instill Your grace upon each husband and wife called by You to the vocation of marriage, so that they can attain more perfectly the heroic virtues that might enable them not only to call each other "my beloved spouse," but also "my best friend." Amen.

Day 9

St. Martin de Porres and St. Rose of Lima

With a focus on friendship with Jesus

Just prior to His passion, Jesus told His disciples, *“You are My friends if you do what I command you. I no longer call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father, I have made known to you.”*



O holy Saints Martin and Rose, it can easily be seen that you were truly friends of Jesus. Martin, you grew up in poverty, abandoned by your father, and ridiculed by much of society because of your illegitimate birth and mixed race. Your heart became holy through suffering. When you desired to become a Dominican priest, you were rejected because in Peru at that time, Africans and Indians were barred by law from becoming full members of religious orders. Instead, you went to work in the Dominican friary as a servant helper, and in great humility, you did not resent this injustice. You performed all your duties at the friary (as well as care of the city's sick, homeless, and animals), with holy humbleness, devotion, and care. You truly lived out



Jesus' command to love one another. You showed great understanding and compassion toward another person of your town -- another lay member of the Dominicans -- who was often ridiculed and misunderstood: the beautiful Rose of Lima. Totally dedicating herself to God, she lived a mostly secluded life of fasting, penance, and mortification. Like you, Rose full-heartedly lived out Jesus' commands, and the two of you shared a highly comforting friendship. After experiencing visions,



Rose went through agonizing periods of great disturbance in her soul, and was brought before the Inquisition by confused townspeople. You however, as her true friend, came to her aid and gave to Rose what she needed: reassurance that her experiences and sufferings were actually signs of the highest friendship with Our Lord.

O holy St. Martin de Porres and St. Rose of Lima, I am so thankful for my holy friendships. Pray for me and my friends that we may always remember that Christ calls us **His friends**. Pray that my friends and I may be, as you were, comfort to each other, reassuring presence to one another, and most importantly, ever drawn throughout our lives to that highest of all friendships . . . friendship with Our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.