Do We Want His Help, or Do We Want to Help Him?

If you ask a thoroughly secularized child what he likes most about Christmas, what's his answer likely to be? "Getting presents!" (Note the emphasis on *getting*.)

Now, if you ask a pious Catholic, "Why do you pray novenas?", how likely is it that the answer will include the word "getting." "Getting favors." "Getting graces." "Getting what I need." There is no sin in desiring or asking for graces, etc. Yet our motives are far from pure, and are aspirations are far from high, if we approach novenas solely as seasons of "getting." In fact, we're not very much different from the thoroughly secularized kid who associates Christmas only with presents and not at all with Jesus.

The beloved Saint Thérèse of Lisieux (who with Saint Francis Xavier is a co-patron of the Missions) said, "I want to spend my Heaven doing good on earth." I could easily imagine, during his earthly life, Francis Xavier answering with those very same words, if he were asked, "How would you like to spend your Heaven?"

That leads me to believe that we may have to rethink our common, often self-seeking views regarding novenas. Perhaps one reason to pray a novena is to help our saintly patrons fulfill their desire to spend their Heaven doing good on earth, as our intercessors. Should that surprise us? The saints, who ordered their whole lives on earth to love God and neighbor—how could they not desire to share their joy and love on earth, in a manner that is without limits, now that they have moved from earth to Heaven? The saints are special friends of God, and they are our friends. Shall we not befriend God's friends by affording them opportunities to make known and loved the God Whom the saints now see face-to-Face?

I believe that to pray a novena is first of all to make an act of gratitude and adoration to God Who raised up a person as human as you and me to the heights of sanctity and joy. As we pray a novena, I think we would do well to ask ourselves: "If God could make a great saint out of such unlikely candidates as Augustine and Ignatius Loyola, what might He do with the likes of me, if only I would let Him?"

Another generous reason to pray a novena, in addition to the praise of God, and seeking good for ourselves and our neighbor, is to become, according to our state in life, like this or that particular saint, so that we might help the saint realize his desire to see achieved on earth what he strove for in his earthly life.

Yes, it is fine and well to seek the aid of Saint Francis Xavier during this Novena of Grace. Yet, how much more praiseworthy it would be if we prayed, above all, to become like

Copyright © catholicfamilynews.com. All rights reserved.

him in some way, as our circumstances and Divine Providence may allow. Couldn't we think of a novena as a time to *give* gifts to a saint and not just ask for them? Would it not be pleasing to Saint Francis Xavier to ask for the grace to imitate his zeal to make Christ known and loved wherever we are? I think it would be an especially praiseworthy act of charity, pleasing to Saint Francis Xavier, and honoring Almighty God, if we prayed to imitate that saintly Jesuit by planting the seed of the Gospel wherever we are and wherever we go.

As we make our way through this precious Novena of Grace, let's make our needs and desires known with clarity, humility and trust. And then, let's make an offering of our own—to make ourselves available to become helpers and imitators of Saint Francis Xavier, proclaiming Christ, for the good of our neighbor, for the salvation of our soul, and for the greater glory of God.

Prayers for the Novena

Novena Prayer to St. Francis Xavier
(By Father Marcello Mastrilli, S.J.)

O most lovable and loving St. Francis Xavier, in union with thee, I adore the Divine Majesty with all reverence. Filled with deep joy on account of the extraordinary graces which God bestowed upon thee during thy sojourn here on earth, and on account of the extraordinary glory conferred upon thee after death, I thank Him from the depths of my soul. I implore thee at the same time from my innermost heart, to secure for me through thy powerful intercession the special grace to live a holy life and die a holy death. I also beseech thee to obtain for me the following graces. (Make some petition). But should my supplication not be in keeping with the greater honor of God or the good of my soul, obtain for me then what is more conducive to both. Amen.

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be. (300 Days Indulgence)

To the Passion and Precious Blood of Jesus

Antiphon: His sweat became as drops of blood trickling down upon the ground. One of the soldiers opened His side with a spear, and immediately there poured forth blood and water.

V. O Lord, come to the aid of Thy servants.
R. Whom Thou hast redeemed with Thy Precious Blood.

Let us pray: O Lord Jesus Christ, Thou didst come down from Heaven and shed Thy Most Precious Blood on the Cross for our salvation; by Thy Sacred Wounds and the bitterness

Copyright © catholicfamilynews.com. All rights reserved.

with which Thy holy Soul departed from Thy Body, we humbly beseech Thee, through the merits and intercession of Thy servant, St. Francis Xavier, who always bore in his heart Thy bitter Passion, mercifully grant us the favors we ask of Thy infinite mercy, Who livest and reignest, world without end. Amen.

To the Immaculate Conception

Antiphon: Thy Immaculate Conception, O Virgin Mother of God, has brought joy to the whole world, for from Thee has arisen the Sun of Justice, Christ our Lord.

V. In Thy Conception, Thou wert immaculate.
R. Holy Mother of God, pray for us.

Let us pray: O God, Who by the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary didst prepare a worthy habitation for Thy Divine Son, preserving Her by the foreseen merits of the Passion and Death of Thy Son from every stain of sin: we beseech Thee through Her intercession and the prayers of St. Francis, who always devoutly venerated Her Immaculate Conception, to cleanse us from all sin, in order that we may be partakers in the Divine Grace, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

To the Holy Angels

Antiphon: Holy Angels, Archangels, Principalities, Powers, Virtues, Dominations, Thrones, Cherubim and Seraphim: praise the Lord and be our intercessors with God.

V. He hath given His Angels charge over thee.
R. To keep thee in all thy ways.

Let us pray: O Lord Who doth dispense the services of angels and men in a wonderful order, mercifully grant that our life may be defended by them on earth, as they always protected St. Francis, and that what we ask of Thee we may obtain by their intercession, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

To St. Francis Xavier

Antiphon: The Lord led the just man by right paths and showed him the Kingdom of God.

V. Pray for us, St. Francis Xavier.
R. That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Let us pray: O God, Thou wast pleased by the preaching and miracles of St. Francis Xavier,

Copyright © catholicfamilynews.com. All rights reserved.

to unite unto Thy Church the nations of the Indies. Grant, we beseech Thee, that we who reverence his glorious merits may also imitate his example, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Prayer of St. Francis Xavier for the Conversion of Infidels

Eternal God, Creator of all things, remember that Thou alone didst create the souls of infidels, framing them to Thy Own image and likeness; behold, O Lord! how, to Thy dishonor, hell is daily replenished with them. Remember, O Lord! Thy Only Son, Jesus Christ, Who suffered for them, most bountifully shedding His Precious Blood: suffer not, O Lord Thy Son and our Lord to be any longer despised by infidels; but rather, being appeased by the entreaties and prayers of the elect, the Saints, and of the Church, the most blessed spouse of Thy Son, vouchsafe to be mindful of Thy mercy, and forgetting their idolatry and infidelity, cause them also to know Him Whom Thou didst send, Jesus Christ Thy Son, our Lord, Who is our health, life, and resurrection, through Whom we are freed and saved, to Whom be all glory forever. Amen.

Saint Francis Xavier's Hymn of Love

O God, I love Thee for Thyself,
And not that I may Heaven gain,
Nor because those who love Thee not,
Must suffer hell's eternal pain.

Thou O my Jesus! Thou didst me
Upon the Cross embrace;
For me didst bear the nails and spear
And manifold disgrace;

And griefs and torments numberless,
And sweat of agony;
E'en death itself – and all for one Who was Thine enemy.

Then why, O blessed Jesus Christ,
Should I not love Thee well:
Not for the sake of winning Heaven,
Or of escaping hell;
Not with the hope of gaining aught, not seeking a reward;
But, as Thyself hast loved
me, O ever-loving Lord?

Copyright © catholicfamilynews.com. All rights reserved.

E’en so I love Thee, and will
love, and in Thy praise will sing;
Solely because Thou art my
God and my eternal King.

Copyright © catholicfamilynews.com. All rights reserved.