

## The Mission of Reparation

Is it possible for a Christian to suffer boredom? Let me ask that another way: “Is it possible for a Christian to find the Gospel no longer inspirational?”

I ask that because of what generous catechists I know have related to me about hostile children in their care who grumble about having to invest time and effort in their catechism lessons. These children say in one form or another: “Why do I have to go to Sunday school? I know all that stuff already!”

“All that stuff”? You mean, our creation from nothing, our betrayal of God’s trust, the drama God forming a people for Himself, the astounding fact of God-become-man, the horror and glory of the Crucifixion, the defeat of evil and death confirmed by the Resurrection, the descent of the power of God upon us as tongues of fire—do you mean *that* “stuff”?

What is it about human nature that takes the divine for granted? Like the Hebrews complaining in the desert (“What? Manna *again*?), like spoiled children who demand to be entertained by an endless succession of novelties, we recipients of grace and revelation, we who have been offered salvation from sin and promises of eternal glory, somehow find “all that stuff” to be painfully familiar and unstimulating. Consequently, we turn to the world in order to be dazzled and beguiled. Our Blessed Lord offers us a good reason to live and a good reason to die, and yet our reply can be, “I wonder if ‘Dances with the Stars’ is on tonight?”

Here, you may object: “Yes, Father—point taken. But what has this to do with the Novena of Grace?” If we spend time with that important question, we may be able to appreciate the privileges and opportunities of this novena in a new way.

Our Blessed Lord said: “But yet the Son of Man, when he cometh, shall he find, think you, faith on earth?” ([Luke 18:8](#)) If we look around us and within us during these dark times, we might be tempted to reply: “If the Son of Man came back right now, would He find faith on earth? Maybe...not so much...” It is not hard at all to find shuttered parishes, shrinking congregations, moribund religious communities, and self-identified Catholic institutions that speak of every form of “justice” except the justice owed to God as our creator and the justice owed to Christ as our King. How many Catholics can honestly say that their first thought at the start of every day is: “How shall I proclaim Christ today?”

Please do not misunderstand me. I have no interest in pointing fingers, and I am certainly in no position to be the “first to pick up a stone.” ([John 8:7](#)) Yet I must insist that it is time

for all Catholics to examine their consciences, to ask themselves if their zeal has flagged, if their “time, talent and treasure” have been diverted by the world, the flesh and the devil. It is incumbent upon us in these dark days to confess and lament that the love of God and zeal for souls that drove Saint Francis Xavier across the globe does not seem to be shared by many these days.

And after confessing and lamenting the painful facts, what shall we do? Here’s where I think we can look at the Novena of Grace from a fresh perspective. Let’s look at this novena in terms of what might be called, “A mission of reparation.”

Our Blessed Lord said, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.” ([Matthew 4:19](#)) Saint Francis Xavier answered that invitation with his whole being. While on mission, Saint Francis Xavier wrote letter after letter imploring missionaries to follow in his footsteps, to take up where he left off. I believe that he still prays that generous souls may take up the challenge to become missionaries and heralds for Christ. What a wound to the Sacred Heart, what a disappointment to Saint Francis Xavier, when they see tepid responses to such a high calling.

That’s why I say that if we are to pray the Novena of Grace with generosity and charity, we should spend some time offering prayers and acts of reparation for the lukewarmness we see around us and within us these days.

With prayers and works of reparation, we put ourselves and our preferences to one side. We offer our consolation to the Sacred Heart who thirsts for souls; we offer our apologies on behalf of all who have remained silent when they should have spoken, who reclined when they should have acted on behalf of the Gospel.

In the presence of Christ the King, in company with Saint Francis Xavier our intercessor, let’s spend this day of the Novena of Grace affirming the urgency and necessity of the missionary calling. And let’s resolve to find at least one small way today, and another tomorrow, to bring Christ to the world and the world to Christ.

## **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 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, 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?

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.