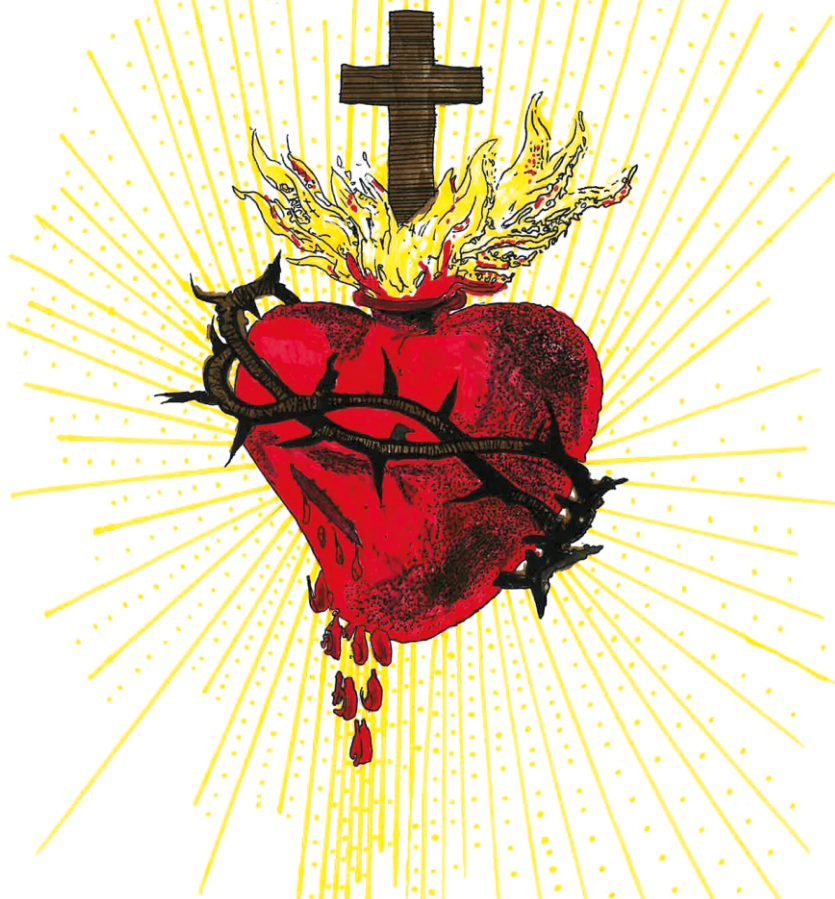


Diocese of Down and Connor

NOVENA TO THE SACRED HEART



There is no limit to the blessings
which God can send you.

2 Cor 9:8

LORD, GIVE US A NEW HEART.



Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

It is with great joy that I welcome you to this Sacred Heart Novena, a prayerful expression of our hope in this Jubilee Year. This year marks a particularly significant milestone - the 350th anniversary of the apparitions of the Sacred Heart to St. Margaret Mary Alacoque. It brings me immense joy that we are bringing this beautiful novena to great prominence again in our Diocese, rekindling a devotion that has brought countless people closer to Christ over the centuries.

The Sacred Heart Novena invites you to nine days of prayer, culminating in the celebration of the Feast of the Sacred Heart. These days offer a special opportunity to deepen your relationship with Jesus, to entrust your needs and intentions to His loving heart, and to grow in trust and surrender to God's will.

I encourage you to pray this novena in whatever way suits you best:

Solemn Novena: Bring your booklet with you to Mass during the novena. The prayer can be led in your parish, and after Communion or following Mass, take some quiet time reflecting on your intentions using the daily reflections in this booklet. If your church has a shrine to the Sacred Heart, spend some precious moments there in prayer.

Family Prayer: Gather with your family each day. Ask different family members to read the scripture passage, and

together share your insights on the reflection. Let this be a time of faith-sharing that strengthens the bonds of love in your domestic church.

Prayer Group: Your prayer group might organise to pray the novena together, gathering in homes or even using online meeting platforms to unite in prayer across distances.

Schools: Primary schools might gather for a daily assembly or create a Sacred Space dedicated to the Sacred Heart and pray together in the classroom. Many post-primary schools will be in the midst of exams during this time, and this novena might be a lovely way to gather in prayer before the school day begins, seeking the Sacred Heart's blessing on students and staff alike.

I would like to thank the students from across our Diocese who submitted artwork to enhance this booklet. Their creative contributions remind us that devotion to the Sacred Heart touches hearts of all ages and finds expression in many beautiful ways.

May these nine days of devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus bring abundant graces to you, your families, and our entire Diocese. Let us open our hearts to receive the love that Jesus longs to pour out upon us.

I gCroí Íosa

+Alan McGuckian SJ.

+Alan McGuckian SJ



In ainm an Athar agus an Mhic agus an Spioraid Naoimh.
Amen

- 'I believe in God. I hope in God. I love God.'
- 'I am sorry for having offended God.'
- 'Sacred Heart of Jesus, I believe in your love for me.'
- 'Sacred Heart of Jesus, I believe you love me now.'
- 'Sacred Heart of Jesus, I place all my trust in you.'

Attributed to Blessed John Sullivan SJ



Jesus, you have said:

"Truly I say to you, ask and you will receive, seek and you will find, knock and it will be opened to you."

Pray the Our Father, Hail Mary and Glory Be.
O most Sacred Heart of Jesus, I place all my trust in you.

Jesus, you have said:

"Truly I say to you, if you ask anything of the Father in my name, he will give it to you."

Behold, in your name, I ask the Father for the grace of my request.
(Name intention)

Pray the Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory Be.
O most Sacred Heart of Jesus, I place all my trust in you.



Jesus, you have said:

"Truly I say to you, heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away."

Pray the Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory Be.
O most Sacred Heart of Jesus, I place all my trust in you.

O Sacred Heart of Jesus, for whom it is impossible not to have compassion on the afflicted, have mercy on us poor sinners and grant us the grace which we ask of you, through the Immaculate Heart of Mary, your tender Mother and ours.

St Malachy, Pray for us

St MacNissi, Pray for us

St Margaret Mary Alacoque, Pray for us

Our Lady Queen of Peace, Pray for us

In ainm an Athar agus an Mhic agus an Spioraid Naoimh.
Amen



MATTHEW 6:7-15

How to pray:

Jesus said to his disciples: 'In your prayers do not babble as the pagans do, for they think that by using many words they will make themselves heard. Do not be like them; your Father knows what you need before you ask him. So, you should pray like this:

'Our Father in heaven,
may your name be held holy,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts, as we have forgiven those who are in debt to us.
And do not put us to the test,
but save us from the evil one.

'Yes, if you forgive others their failings, your heavenly Father will forgive you yours; but if you do not forgive others, your Father will not forgive your failings either.'



Jesus teaches us to pray simply and directly. We don't need fancy words to reach God - Our heavenly Father already knows our needs before we speak them.

The Lord's Prayer shows us what matters: honouring God, seeking His will, asking for daily needs, giving and receiving forgiveness, and finding protection from evil. These simple requests connect us to what truly matters.

Notice how Jesus emphasises forgiveness: "If you forgive others, your heavenly Father will forgive you." The Sacred Heart offers boundless mercy but asks us to extend that same mercy to others.

Today, I will pray the Our Father slowly, phrase by phrase, letting each phrase sink in. I ask the Sacred Heart to help me forgive someone who has hurt me, opening myself to receive God's forgiveness more fully.





MATTHEW 6:19-23

Store up treasure for yourselves in heaven

Jesus said to his disciples: 'Do not store up treasures for yourselves on earth, where moths and woodworms destroy them, and thieves can break in and steal. But store up treasures for yourselves in heaven, where neither moth nor woodworms destroy them, and thieves cannot break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.'

'The lamp of the body is the eye. It follows that if your eye is sound, your whole body will be filled with light. But if your eye is diseased, your whole body will be all darkness. If then, the light inside you is darkness, what darkness that will be!'

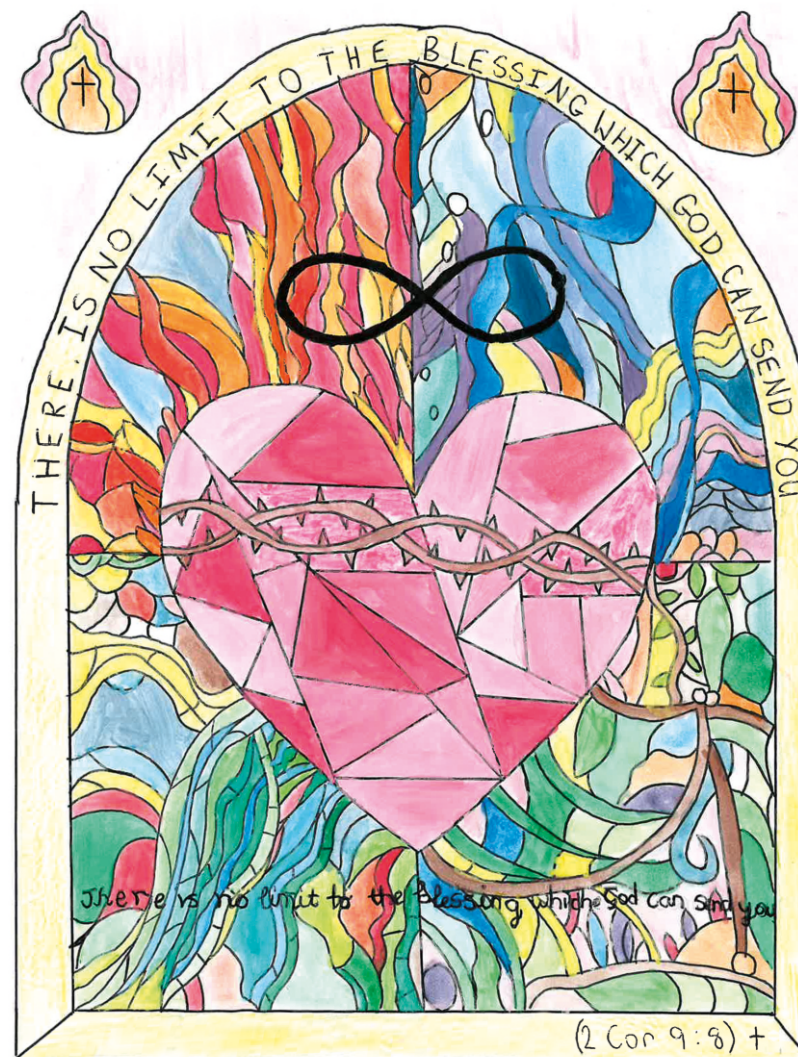
REFLECTION:

Where do I spend most of my time, energy, and resources? What does this reveal about what I truly value? Seriously. Where do I spend most of my time, energy, and resources?

Jesus speaks plainly about our priorities: "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." The things we value most shape who we become. Earthly treasures don't last - they break, wear out, or get stolen. But heavenly treasures - love, kindness, faith, and justice - endure forever. The Sacred Heart invites us to invest in what truly matters.

Jesus uses the image of the eye as "the lamp of the body." When we see clearly - valuing what God values - our whole life is filled with light. But when our vision is clouded by worldly concerns, darkness follows.

Today, I ask the Sacred Heart to help me see what really matters. What is one small change I could make to store up more treasure in heaven?





MATTHEW 6:24-34

*Do not worry about tomorrow:
your heavenly Father knows your needs*

Jesus said to his disciples: 'No one can be the slave of two masters: he will either hate the first and love the second or treat the first with respect and the second with scorn. You cannot be the slave both of God and of money.

'That is why I am telling you not to worry about your life and what you are to eat, nor about your body and how you are to clothe it. Surely life means more than food, and the body more than clothing! Look at the birds in the sky. They do not sow or reap or gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they are? Can any of you, for all his worrying, add one single cubit to his span of life? And why worry about clothing? Think of the flowers growing in the fields; they never have to work or spin; yet I assure you that not even Solomon in all his regalia was robed like one of these. Now if that is how God clothes the grass in the field which is there today and thrown into the furnace tomorrow, will he not much more look after you, you men of little faith? So do not worry; do not say, "What are we to eat? What are we to drink? How are we to be clothed?" It is the pagans who set their hearts on all these things. Your heavenly Father knows you need them all. Set your hearts on his kingdom first, and on his righteousness, and all these other things will be given you as well. So do not worry about tomorrow: tomorrow will take care of itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.'

What worries keep me awake at night? How might bringing these concerns to the Sacred Heart change my perspective?

"You cannot serve both God and money," Jesus tells us. Our hearts can't be divided between competing loyalties. The Sacred Heart shows perfect trust in God's care, and he invites us to the same freedom.

Look at how Jesus points to nature - birds and flowers cared for by God. "Are you not worth much more than they are?" he asks. Our worrying doesn't add a single moment to our lives, but it can certainly steal our peace.

The remedy? "Seek first the kingdom of God." When we put God's ways at the centre, everything else falls into proper place. The Sacred Heart doesn't promise a trouble-free life but offers the peace that comes from right priorities.

Today, I hand all my worries over to Jesus. I ask His Sacred Heart to help me trust in God's care for my needs one day at a time.





LUKE 9:11-17

The Abundance of God

Jesus made the crowds welcome and talked to them about the kingdom of God; and he cured those who were in need of healing.

It was late afternoon when the Twelve came to him and said, 'Send the people away, and they can go to the villages and farms round about to find lodging and food; for we are in a lonely place here.' He replied, 'Give them something to eat yourselves.' But they said, 'We have no more than five loaves and two fish, unless we are to go ourselves and buy food for all these people.' For there were about five thousand men. But he said to his disciples, 'Get them to sit down in parties of about fifty.' They did so and made them all sit down. Then he took the five loaves and the two fish, raised his eyes to heaven, and said the blessing over them; then he broke them and handed them to his disciples to distribute among the crowd.

They all ate as much as they wanted, and when the scraps remaining were collected, they filled twelve baskets.

The disciples saw scarcity - just five loaves and two fish for thousands of hungry people. The Sacred Heart of Jesus saw abundance waiting to be revealed.

When faced with overwhelming needs, our response is often like the disciples: "Send the people away." But Jesus challenges us: "Give them something to eat yourselves." He doesn't dismiss our limited resources but transforms them when we place them in His hands.

Notice what Jesus does: He takes what's offered, blesses it, breaks it, and shares it. These same actions happen at every Mass, reminding us that Jesus continues to multiply our small offerings.

Everyone ate "as much as they wanted," with twelve baskets left over. The Sacred Heart provides not just barely enough, but abundantly. Today, I offer Jesus my "five loaves and two fish" - whatever seems too small to make a difference. I trust His Sacred Heart to multiply my offering beyond what I can imagine.



MATTHEW 7:1-5

Do not judge, and you will not be judged

Jesus said to his disciples: 'Do not judge, and you will not be judged; because the judgements you give are the judgements you will get, and the amount you measure out is the amount you will be given.'

Why do you observe the splinter in your brother's eye and never notice the plank in your own? How dare you say to your brother, "Let me take the splinter out of your eye," when all the time there is a plank in your own? Hypocrite!

Take the plank out of your own eye first, and then you will see clearly enough to take the splinter out of your brother's eye.'



In our social media age, everybody has become a professional commentator, quick to condemn others from behind our screens. With a simple tap, we can judge, criticise, and expose others' flaws. But even before technology, gossip served the same purpose - a way to elevate ourselves by pointing out others' failings. When was the last time I jumped to judge someone? What might have been going on in my own heart at that moment?

This isn't saying we should never address problems or speak truth. Rather, Jesus calls us to begin with honest self-examination. He uses a striking image: trying to remove a splinter from someone's eye while having a plank in our own. I wonder what is the plank in my eye!

Jesus sees our tendency to spot others' faults while being blind to our own. The Sacred Heart looks at us with perfect understanding and perfect mercy. He invites us to see others with His eyes, replacing harsh judgment with compassion.

Today, when I am tempted to criticise someone or share that juicy piece of gossip, I will pause and ask the Sacred Heart of Jesus to show me my own blind spots first.

DAY 6 – TUESDAY 24TH JUNE

NATIVITY OF ST JOHN THE BAPTIST



PSALM 138(139):1-3,13-15

I thank you for the wonder of my being.

O Lord, you search me and you know me,
you know my resting and my rising,
you discern my purpose from afar.
You mark when I walk or lie down,
all my ways lie open to you.

I thank you for the wonder of my being.

For it was you who created my being,
knit me together in my mother's womb.
I thank you for the wonder of my being,
for the wonders of all your creation.

I thank you for the wonder of my being.

Already you knew my soul,
my body held no secret from you
when I was being fashioned in secret
and moulded in the depths of the earth.

I thank you for the wonder of my being.

DAY 6 – REFLECTION



"I thank you for the wonder of my being." Isn't that a powerful refrain! God wants me to say it with confidence. The Sacred Heart of Jesus knows everything about me - and loves me completely.

Pope Benedict XVI captured this profound truth beautifully: "Each one of us is the result of a thought of God. Each of us is loved. Each of us is willed. Each of us is necessary." These words echo the psalm's celebration of how intentionally we were created.

God knows when I sit and stand, my thoughts, my comings and goings. Before I was born, He knit me together. Nothing about me is hidden from His loving gaze. Isn't it amazing!

This complete knowing brings comfort, not fear. Even when we feel misunderstood by others or disconnected from ourselves, the Sacred Heart continues to know and love us fully.

Today, I will sit quietly with the knowledge that I am fully known and fully loved by the Sacred Heart. I repeat these words slowly to myself: "I am loved. I am willed into being. I am necessary." I let this truth sink deeply into my heart as I marvel at the wonder of my being, created and cherished by God Himself.



GENESIS 15:1-12,17-18

An old childless couple will have descendants, as many as the stars.

It happened that the word of the Lord was spoken to Abram in a vision, 'Have no fear, Abram, I am your shield; your reward will be very great.'

'My Lord,' Abram replied 'what do you intend to give me? I go childless...' Then Abram said, 'See, you have given me no descendants; some man of my household will be my heir.' And then this word of the Lord was spoken to him, 'He shall not be your heir; your heir shall be of your own flesh and blood.' Then taking him outside he said, 'Look up to heaven and count the stars if you can. Such will be your descendants' he told him. Abram put his faith in the Lord, who counted this as making him justified.

'I am the Lord' he said to him 'who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to make you heir to this land.' 'My Lord,' Abram replied, 'how am I to know that I shall inherit it?' He said to him, 'Get me a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtledove and a young pigeon.' He brought him all these, cut them in half and put half on one side and half facing it on the other; but the birds he did not cut in half. Birds of prey came down on the carcasses, but Abram drove them off.

Now as the sun was setting Abram fell into a deep sleep, and terror seized him. When the sun had set and darkness had fallen, there appeared a smoking furnace and a firebrand that went between the halves. That day the Lord made a Covenant with Abram in these terms:

'To your descendants I give this land, from the wadi of Egypt to the Great River, the river Euphrates.'



Abraham questioned God's promise. With no children of his own, how could he become the father of many nations? God didn't respond with anger at his lack of faith but told him to look at the stars! God's plans were huge; Abraham's vision was small.

Like Abraham, we often struggle when God's promises don't match our current reality. The Sacred Heart understands our doubts and responds with patience, not rejection.

Notice how God makes a formal covenant with Abraham, binding Himself to His promise. The Sacred Heart makes a similar covenant with us, sealed with Christ's blood, promising to be with us always.

Today, I share my honest doubts with the Sacred Heart. Where do I struggle to trust God's goodness? I ask Jesus to strengthen my faith, even as I question.





MATTHEW 7:21-29

The wise man built his house on a rock

Jesus said to his disciples: 'It is not those who say to me, "Lord, Lord," who will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the person who does the will of my Father in heaven. When the day comes, many will say to me, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, cast out demons in your name, work many miracles in your name?" Then I shall tell them to their faces: I have never known you; away from me, you evil men!

'Therefore, everyone who listens to these words of mine and acts on them will be like a sensible man who built his house on rock. Rain came down, floods rose, gales blew and hurled themselves against that house, and it did not fall it was founded on rock. But everyone who listens to these words of mine and does not act on them will be like a stupid man who built his house on sand. Rain came down, floods rose, gales blew and struck that house, and it fell; and what a fall it had!'

Jesus had now finished what he wanted to say, and his teaching made a deep impression on the people because he taught them with authority, and not like their own scribes.



How does my faith show up in the actions and decisions of my every day? Jesus draws a clear line between saying and doing: "Not everyone who says 'Lord, Lord' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father." We are called beyond words to lived faith.

The parable of the two houses makes this concrete. Both builders hear Jesus' words, but only one acts on them. When storms come - as they do in every life - only the house built on the foundation of obedience stands firm.

Today, I place my trust in the Sacred Heart of Jesus and ask the Holy Spirit to guide me. Which of His teachings is Jesus calling me to put into practice more intentionally in my life right now? Is it forgiveness? Generosity, or speaking truth with love? How is he prompting me?

Our divided times call not for more religious talk, but for people whose lives radiate Christ's compassion, truth, and mercy. I will let my life be built on the solid rock of lived faith, a testimony that speaks louder than words.



LUKE 15:3-7

There will be rejoicing in heaven over one repentant sinner

Jesus spoke this parable to the scribes and Pharisees:

'What man among you with a hundred sheep, losing one, would not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the missing one till he found it? And when he found it, would he not joyfully take it on his shoulders and then, when he got home, call together his friends and neighbours? "Rejoice with me," he would say "I have found my sheep that was lost."

In the same way, I tell you, there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one repentant sinner than over ninety-nine virtuous men who have no need of repentance.'



Jesus reveals the Sacred Heart's relentless love with the image of a shepherd who leaves ninety-nine sheep to search for just one that wandered away. This isn't practical by human standards, but it shows God's extraordinary love for each person. This is what we celebrate on the great feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

The shepherd doesn't wait for the sheep to find its way back but actively searches "until he found it." The Sacred Heart seeks us with the same persistence, not to scold but to restore us to safety and communion.

Notice the joy when the lost is found - the sheep carried home, friends called to celebrate. The Sacred Heart takes special delight in welcoming back those who recognise their need for mercy.

Today, I place my trust in the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the Good Shepherd who never stops seeking me. As I make this act of trust, I am united with the whole community, praying that all of us will find what our hearts truly long for - community where we belong, purpose that gives meaning to our days, and the profound joy of knowing we are sons and daughters of God, eternally loved and cared for.

My return to His love brings joy to heaven itself.

Scripture passages:

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