



PENTECOST

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The traditions of each holiday, family milestone, or church season provide their own unique opportunity for families to grow closer to one another — and with a little intentionality — closer to God. To this end, the feast of Pentecost offers us the tradition of the *novena*.

What is a novena

A novena is a prayer prayed for nine consecutive days, often for a specific intention. (Don't worry! If you skip a day, just rejoin when you can.) The tradition comes from the intense prayer of Jesus' followers during the nine days between his ascension into heaven and the coming of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. We ask God to act, and to ready our hearts for that action.

When to pray this novena

Start nine days before the feast of Pentecost, celebrating a family member's Confirmation or Baptism, or really any time you're looking for a personal or family devotional. It could even be the nine days following a special day, or spread out over nine weeks instead of nine days!

How to pray this novena

Find time to pray personally, or with loved ones daily. It could be a meal time or to start or end your day.

1. Read the quotation and reflection.
2. Pause for a moment of silent personal reflection.
3. Have a brief conversation about what has surfaced in your mind and heart, inspired by the reflection. Use the discussion questions to get things started.
4. Decide together how you're being called to apply these inspirations to your activities for the day. Use the application suggested, or come up with your own. (Check in on what you learned through your resolution from the previous day.)
5. Pray the "Come Holy Spirit" prayer together — provided on the final pages, including printable prayer cards if helpful





Day 1:

The More

“Despite everything, man, though but a small part of your creation, wants to praise you. . . For you have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you.” — St. Augustine, Confessions

Read and Reflect

We all want more: more apple pie, more hours in our day, more from our relationships. Desiring more is human. God made our finite hearts to have space for the infinite, so that we would seek him. We try to fill that space within, but things and experiences never completely satisfy us. They’re not infinite.

Religion is the human expression of a longing to participate in that which is divine, to enter into a relationship with God, who is infinite and eternal. But, sometimes, the practice of religion can feel less like a search for a relationship and more like a routine. Don’t settle for going through the motions in your practice of faith. Seek “the more.” No matter where you’d place yourself on the spectrum of belief or faith practice, there’s more to discover.

During these nine days of novena, the Church invites you to dip your toe into the ocean that is our God. Open your heart to the possibility that there’s more to life. There’s more to Catholic faith. There’s more to God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He wants you to experience “the more” your heart seeks. In fact, *God* is seeking you, gently drawing you towards himself. (See *Catechism of the Catholic Church* or CCC #27)

Talk About It

- ◆ Desire moves us to seek more. What do you desire?
- ◆ How would you characterize your faith practice? Is it a routine, a search, a relationship. . .?

Live It Today

- ◆ Throughout the day, be aware of your desires and where they lead you.

Pray Together *Come, Holy Spirit* ([see the final page](#))



Day 2:

The Spring Within

“The water I shall give will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” — John 4:14

Read and Reflect

Part of “the more” to be discovered in Catholic faith is getting to know the Holy Spirit. God the Father we can conceptualize, having been parented, or being a parent. Jesus became man; we can relate to his humanity. For many, the Holy Spirit remains a mysterious concept, that we may vaguely associate with a ghost or a dove.

The idea of getting to know or experience this mysterious Spirit personally can make us uncomfortable. Or it may seem like a distant possibility, something reserved for really holy people. But in fact, a quest to know the Holy Spirit begins by stopping. It isn’t just a search “out there,” but it involves entering our own interior.

You see, if you’re Baptized, Jesus has already sent the gift of his Holy Spirit to dwell within you! Beyond the water and words our senses perceive at Baptism, God *breathes* his own divine life – his Spirit—into each of his children. (CCC #694) So let’s *set out* on this novena journey, seeking to know the Holy Spirit. But let’s be conscious that a good starting place for encountering him is *within* our own hearts. Let’s slow our pace, quiet our volume, and allow ourselves to perceive the presence of God’s Spirit in our midst, as we are. He’s been preparing the way all along.

Talk About It

- ◆ Do you have any silent moments in your day? How is silence helpful?
- ◆ Our “hearts” are at the core of who we are. It is there God has placed his own spring of water, his Spirit. How often do you go to your interior? Have you experienced God there?

Live It Today

- ◆ Carve out a few moments of silence—turn off music, go for a walk, read. Signal the Spirit: I’m available.

Pray Together *Come, Holy Spirit* ([see the final page](#))



Day 3:

Perfect Love

“God is love. . . . No one has ever seen God. Yet, if we love one another, God remains in us, and his love is brought to perfection in us. This is how we know. . . He has given us of his Spirit.” -- 1 John 4: 8, 12-13

Read and Reflect

The Holy Spirit is mysterious alright. Fortunately, we have help in trying to understand who he is. Jesus himself told us about this Advocate (John 14:26) he would send, and lived his life – as recorded in Scripture – in the Spirit, sent by the Father. We have evidence of the Holy Spirit’s work in and through salvation history and the People of God, collectively as the Church, and individually in the lives of holy men and women. And let’s not forget that the Holy Spirit himself *abides with us* here and now. We can know him personally – not just as an object of study, but by becoming aware of his movements and whispers within us.

No single explanation, symbol, or title can fully capture the divine Spirit. But a good starting point is this. The Holy Spirit (the third Person of the Trinity) is often explained as the Love between God the Father and God the Son. Perfect love. (CCC #221, 733-735)

Divine love brings together, and rejoices in this communion. The Holy Spirit always seeks to draw us to Jesus, that we may be caught up in the joy and the glory of the love between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. (CCC #51, 737) It’s not a fairy-tale, but it is a love story. It is the real gift to which we’re invited in Catholic faith. To be brought into intimate friendship with an unconditionally loving and merciful God! To be a branch connected to the vine that is God, with his own “sap,” his own Spirit, giving us life. (John 15) This gift will be fully experienced in heaven, but it’s begun and meant to be enjoyed here and now.

Talk About It

- ◆ In every-day speech we can use the word “love” rather loosely — like *loving* chocolate. Describe real love. The kind that reflects. . . even participates in. . . God’s love. How have you experienced God’s love for you personally?

Live It Today

- ◆ If the Holy Spirit is love, maybe he’s more present in our lives than we realize. Look for “sightings” of the Spirit in the lived love, forgiveness, goodness, and patience he inspires in those you encounter today.

Pray Together *Come, Holy Spirit* ([see the final page](#))



Day 4:

Messy

“Blessed are they who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the land. . .” — Matthew 5: 4-5

Read and Reflect

It’s all well and good to imagine the ideal of being caught up in the love of God. But how does this translate into real life? First, let’s be clear that the Holy Spirit and his work in the world today *is real*. It can change things! There’s nothing he *can’t* do. This is at the heart of the Good News of Catholic faith.

But secondly, let’s acknowledge the real life we experience. It’s messy. We can find ourselves overwhelmed, sad, angry, unable to forgive, at fault, stuck, or simply exhausted. But this *is* the reality the Holy Spirit wants to enter into and heal. In fact, our broken places may be the best entry points for grace. He works best in those who are in touch with their need. Because there is one thing the Holy Spirit *won’t* do: Violate our freedom. (CCC #160) He won’t renovate, uninvited, where he is thought to be unneeded. (John 9:41)

If we look at the people closest to Jesus in his earthly life – those able to recognize him and those healed, forgiven, and embraced by him – we see that they were the humble of heart. Mary, the shepherds, some fishermen, the poor, the lame, and sinners. (CCC #725) If we can acknowledge the ways in which we are struggling and unwell, we can invite in the Healer. In our mess and misery, the Consoler can join us more deeply to the mystery of our Savior’s suffering and death. And afterwards, to the power and joy of his resurrection!

Talk About It

- ◆ Name some ways in which our world is a mess right now. Call to mind people you know who are dealing with illness or other challenges. What are you struggling with? Can we be vulnerable with each other?
- ◆ Talk about a time you experienced God entering in through your broken places.

Live It Today

- ◆ Acknowledge a need you have to someone else today. Ask for help, prayer, or simply share your heart.

Pray Together *Come, Holy Spirit* ([see the final page](#))



Day 5:

Transformer

“The wind blows where it wills, and you can hear the sound it makes, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes; so it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.” — John 3: 8

Read and Reflect

We value progress and results. Imagine for a moment then, wind and fire as symbols for the Holy Spirit. They suggest that the Spirit is a divine energy. He moves, purifies, and animates. He transforms all those willing to let him work, helping each become their best self by becoming more like Jesus. This is holiness.

Two principles to consider for this transformation process. First, *to the degree we make space* to receive the Holy Spirit, we will begin seeing evidence of his filling and transforming those spaces. Inside of us. In our relationships. In our home. And even *beyond* what we ask or hope for. Wouldn't you like these characteristics of a heart increasingly filled by the Holy Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control? (The “fruits of the Holy Spirit” listed in Galatians 5: 22-23.)

Secondly, *grace builds on nature*. This means that the Holy Spirit takes our understanding, abilities, and daily efforts and elevates them with his supernatural gifts (of wisdom, right judgment, courage, etc.) – making possible a goodness and generosity we couldn't reach alone. As a sail unfurled to the wind, the more we give the Holy Spirit to work with, the more he can do in and through us.

At Mass, the priest holds his hands over bread and wine, praying, “Make holy. . . these gifts. . . By sending down your Spirit upon them like the dewfall, so that they may become for us the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (*Eucharistic Prayer II, Epiclesis*) By the work of the Holy Spirit, ordinary offerings are transformed into the Body and Blood of Jesus. And each time we receive Jesus, by the work of the same Spirit, *we*—our ordinary lives — can also be transformed.

Talk About It

- ♦ What is holiness? Is it attractive to you? Would you say it is more something we do or God does? [Pope Francis](#) said “advancing on the path of holiness means first and foremost letting ourselves be transfigured by the power of God's love.” What practical “spaces” can we make for the Spirit to *let* him transform us?

Live It Today

- ♦ Go about your tasks with loving energy, offering them as a sail the Spirit can “blow where it wills.”

Pray Together *Come, Holy Spirit* ([see the final page](#))



Day 6:

Anointed

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord.” — Luke 4: 18-19

Read and Reflect

In previous reflections, we considered what the Holy Spirit wants *for* us. He wants to unite us to Jesus in love. He wants to heal us. He wants to transform us. But, beyond the ongoing collaboration between God and us in the healing - transformation process, what does the Holy Spirit ask *from* us?

In Bible times, oil was ritually poured on a chosen individual to empower them for a special role – like that of a king or prophet. Jesus was anointed not with oil, but with the Holy Spirit. (*Christ* means “anointed.”) By the power of the Spirit he began growing within the womb of Mary. By that Spirit he taught, healed, and forgave sins. And by the power of the Holy Spirit he rose from the dead. (CCC #695)

Having accomplished his mission on earth, Jesus poured out his Spirit – anointing his followers. So that, by the power of this same Holy Spirit, the people of God can continue accomplishing the work of Jesus. And what is this work we are to continue? It is to draw all people to be caught up in the love of God, through the Person of Jesus Christ. (CCC #737) Through us, the love of God can transform the world!

This is the mission the Holy Spirit asks *from* us. In Baptism and Confirmation, we are anointed, literally. We are empowered for our own unique participation in and contribution to salvation history.

Talk About It

- ◆ The introductory Gospel passage above was Jesus claiming the mission of the promised Messiah (“anointed”) as his own. What does it tell us about the work of Jesus we are to continue?
- ◆ Have you ever thought about your having been chosen for a unique mission to help transform the world? How do *you* feel called to contribute. . . in big ways? In small ways?

Live It Today

- ◆ Display some Baptism/Confirmation family photos. Before leaving the house today, trace a cross on each other’s foreheads, saying, “(Name), you have a mission. Continue the work of Jesus.”

Pray Together *Come, Holy Spirit* ([see the final page](#))



Day 7:

Equipped

“There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit; there are different forms of service but the same Lord; there are different workings but the same God who produces all of them in everyone. . . . For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body. . .” -- 1 Corinthians 12: 5-6, 13

Read and Reflect

Continuing the work of Jesus is a call to love. We are amazed by the unconditional love of God for us, personally, and seek to love him in return. His love so fills us, that it pushes out and overflows into expressions of love for all those around us. It is a creative force that inspires individual self-giving and communal service.

But genuine love will not only serve the immediate needs of whoever is in front of us. It will accompany that person a step closer to Jesus, wherever they’re at on their journey. While many Catholics are comfortable embracing service, this mission of sharing faith can make some want to hide. That’s what the followers of Jesus did *before* Pentecost. What changed on and *after* Pentecost? The Holy Spirit came, and empowered them. They did things they weren’t able to do on their own, witnessing boldly even in languages they didn’t know. (Acts 2) The Holy Spirit never asks something *from* us without also providing *for* us.

It is the Holy Spirit who enables us to love, *even as Jesus loves*, beyond our natural capacities. He calls many hearts – in concert – that together we can discern his workings. He gives each of us charisms, or gifts needed to build up the Body of Christ, that together we may serve the world. The Spirit guides us by reminding us of the Word of God in real time. He makes Christ present to us, especially in the Eucharist, our nourishment for the journey. And it is the Holy Spirit already working in the hearts of all those we encounter on our journey. That when the time is right, they, too, may be open to God’s love—through our witness. (CCC #739)

Talk About It

- ◆ In what ways do we express our love in service. . . in our family, in our community? Where do our gifts or charisms intersect with the needs of those around us?
- ◆ What might it look like to “accompany” someone “a step closer to Jesus”?

Live It Today

- ◆ Ask the Holy Spirit to point out opportunities to serve and accompany others today, and do it!

Pray Together *Come, Holy Spirit* ([see the final page](#))



Day 8:

The Risk Worth Taking

“Come, Holy Spirit, Creator blest, and in our souls take up Thy rest; come with Thy grace and heavenly aid to fill the hearts which Thou hast made.” — Veni, Creator Spiritus

Read and Reflect

Toward the beginning of this novena, we considered how some of us might feel uncomfortable with the idea of opening ourselves to the Holy Spirit. Even a holy unknown can be scary.

We’ve glimpsed who the Spirit is, Divine Love. We’ve reflected on the Holy Spirit’s desire to heal us and transform us into our best selves, more Christ-like. We know, in general terms, what the Holy Spirit asks from us: love that continues the work of Jesus. The time has come for us to again look to that space within ourselves where the Holy Spirit waits silently. What is our own personal posture to the Holy Spirit? Are we mostly open, or mostly closed? To which interior “rooms” have we not yet invited him? Do we want to know him personally and learn to recognize his movements? If we have trepidations, why?

It can come down to control, right? Getting close to the Holy Spirit feels risky. The Holy Spirit metaphors of wind and fire can evoke images of gentleness and warmth. But they also imply a certain wildness – an energy that is not tame or safe. And yet, do we *want* a god that we have shaped? That we control? That we know better than? Is that the kind of “god” we want?!

Hand over your need to control. Being in control is a lie, anyway. We’re not. But God can be, if we surrender our will, our lives to him. What might feel risky would be the surest long-term bet we’ve ever made. (John 12: 24) Invite the Spirit of *the* almighty God into your heart with the transforming fire of his love. With open hands, dare to humbly ask: *Come, Holy Spirit!* The Spirit will never fail to enter in where invited.

Talk About It

- ◆ What is your comfort level with opening yourself to the Holy Spirit? Explain.
- ◆ Discuss the image of a “god” we control, vs. *the* true God. What’s the difference?

Live It Today

- ◆ Take some personal quiet time to assess your own posture to the Holy Spirit. Talk to him about it. And if you’re ready, invite him to come and fill you more completely.

Pray Together *Come, Holy Spirit* ([see the final page](#))



Day 9:

Life after Pentecost

“Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit” — John 14: 5

Read and Reflect

Let’s say you have dared to ask the Holy Spirit to take a more active role in your life. What now? What does modern-day life, led by the Holy Spirit, look like?

We’ve already mentioned the gradually increasing fruits and gifts of the Holy Spirit, as well as the charisms he gives us to serve others. But perhaps this image can help. Life with the Holy Spirit is a bit like a concert – or if it appeals more to you – a basketball game or a dance. Good musicians, athletes, and dancers have learned how to coordinate their movements with those of another. They can seemingly act as one. Each contributes. And if there’s a superstar in the group, it makes the composite better. The Holy Spirit is the superstar teaming up with us. He is not us. We are not him. He never violates our freedom. But the more we’re attuned to follow his lead, the more Christ-like we can become.

Unforeseen opportunities, new insights, a softening of our heart toward someone, joy in all things, reminders of God’s presence and call at just the right moments . . . these are real life examples of the Spirit leading us. Let’s seek quiet moments throughout each day to visit that Spring of living water within our hearts. And drinking there, let’s constantly calibrate our way of being to the ways of love. Let’s be attentive to the Holy Spirit inspiring us to *seek more*, to *be more*, and to *do more* to share with others the truly Good News of Jesus! Like the “sap” of the vine, he will help us to lead lives that are abundantly fruitful.

Talk About It

- ◆ Flesh out the analogy of a musician/athlete/dancer. How do we coordinate with the Holy Spirit?
- ◆ How is the joy of the Holy Spirit different from happiness? What is this “fruit” our lives will bear?

Live It Today

- ◆ Browse through the following two pages (individually and/or as a family) and select one concrete action you will take or habit you will foster in the coming weeks to grow your own life in the Spirit.

Pray Together *Come, Holy Spirit* ([see the final page](#))



WAYS TO GROW A RELATIONSHIP

with the Holy Spirit

1. Invite the Holy Spirit

- Decide to surrender to the Holy Spirit.
- Pray “Come Holy Spirit” many times a day – in good moments and bad. Have an ongoing conversation with him throughout the day. (You’ll learn he *does* respond.)

2. Build the habit of reflection

- Find the physical and mental rhythms that best dispose you to hear and respond to the Holy Spirit. (Nutrition, exercise, sufficient sleep, balance of work/restful activities, etc.)
- Seek silence. Create healthy, family tech/media habits. Some car-rides can be without music or podcasts. Schedule-in down-time. Encourage personal, device-free quiet time.
- Think back over experiences in your day. Look for the Spirit’s presence and action. Journaling or learning to pray the [examen](#) can help.
- Use family dinners as a time for reflecting together on the highs/lows of the day – thoughts, feelings, lessons, connections, etc.

3. Get to know Jesus

- As Jesus is “the image of the invisible God” (Colossians 1:15), knowing him will help us also grow closer to the Holy Spirit. (CCC #259, 689-690)
- **Read Scripture** (especially the four Gospels) personally and as a family. Reflect together. Ask the Spirit to speak to your hearts, and guide/remind you to act upon that message during the day.
- Take personal prayer time daily. Start with 10 minutes. There are lots of great resources out there to help. Do it for yourself, and pray with your kids to teach them how to do it themselves.

4. Read about the Holy Spirit

- See resources listed below. Explore on your own, share what will speak to your kids.

5. Receive the Sacraments of the Eucharist and Reconciliation

- The Sacraments are the ordinary means by which God gives us the gifts of his Spirit. Holy Communion is the nourishment we need for our spiritual journey. Reconciliation restores and strengthens our relationship with God, fine-tunes our consciences (where the Holy Spirit speaks), and supernaturally boosts our daily efforts to love.

6. Find your spiritual community

- The Spirit calls individuals, but always within the context of a community. If you haven’t, register at a parish. If you don’t have meaningful relationships with members of your parish, find (or start) a small faith sharing group or ministry that fits your needs/gifts. Find a spiritual mentor.

7. Practice recognizing the Spirit's promptings and responding

- Discuss ways we hear the Holy Spirit. It might be a theme that is repeated coincidentally in a day from different sources, a recurring thought that compels us to action, an idea that seemed to come out of nowhere, an inner certainty or new insight. Sometimes the Spirit speaks “loudly” in an unmistakable way. Often he whispers in a “still small voice.”
- Rules of thumb for discerning whether an inspiration is authentically from the Holy Spirit: is it inclined towards goodness, does it “fit” your vocational calling, does it produce a sense of peace, does it inspire humble obedience to God’s plan, and does it ring true if shared with a spiritual mentor or a person of deep faith whom you trust (for kids – often a parent)?
- If discerned to be an inspiration of the Holy Spirit, try to act promptly. The more we respond, the more sensitive we become to his movements within us.

8. Surrender what holds you back; embrace what is out of your control

- As you become aware of attitudes/behaviors/attachments that hinder love, surrender them to the Holy Spirit with trust. (This is an ongoing process.) Family can help us be self-aware!
- Accept what’s beyond your control as somehow part of God’s plan. Seek to actively embrace even the challenging and painful with trust in God’s goodness and love. (See Romans 8:28)

9. Discover your unique call to serve

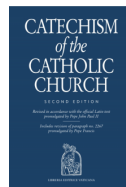
- Giving of ourselves to others can be both an expression that comes *from* a deep connection to the Holy Spirit and that *leads to* a deeper connection. Prayer and service support one another.
- Find ways to serve that stretch you, but fit your family’s gifts. (Programs like [Called and Gifted](#) can help you discern your gifts.) As a family, serve your parish but also the broader community.

Holy Spirit Resources for Learning and Reflection

Catechism of the Catholic Church

([available online here](#))

See index for multiple references, but the following paragraphs are a good starting place: 683-747



In His Spirit and Moving in the Spirit

By Richard Hauser, SJ
(Paulist Press)



Videos by Bishop Barron ([8 min.](#) and [28 min.](#))

[The Wild Goose](#) Video Series

Some **New Testament Scripture Passages** about the Holy Spirit

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- | | | |
|--------------------|------------------|--------------------------|
| ◆ Matthew 3: 11-17 | ◆ John 3: 8 | ◆ Romans 8: 14-16, 26-27 |
| ◆ Luke 1: 26-35 | ◆ John 7: 37-39 | ◆ 1 Corinthians 3: 16-17 |
| ◆ Luke 4: 18-19 | ◆ John 14: 15-31 | ◆ 1 Corinthians 12: 3-11 |
| ◆ Luke 10: 21 | ◆ John 20: 21-23 | ◆ Galatians 5: 22-25 |
| ◆ Luke 12: 11-12 | ◆ Acts 1: 7-8 | ◆ I John 4: 7-8, 12-13 |
| | ◆ Acts 2: 1-4 | |

Another Family Prayer Experience

Veni Sancte Spiritus

Read this ancient prayer slowly. Circle all of the "names" for the Holy Spirit. Underline the verbs or actions that we are asking of the Holy Spirit. Reflect on and discuss what these mean in your own life. Pray this prayer from your heart.

Come, Holy Spirit, come!
And from your celestial home
Shed a ray of light divine!
Come, Father of the poor!
Come, source of all our store!
Come, within our bosoms shine.
You, of comforters the best;
You, the soul's most welcome guest;
Sweet refreshment here below;
In our labor, rest most sweet;
Grateful coolness in the heat;
Solace in the midst of woe.
O most blessed Light divine,
Shine within these hearts of yours,
And our inmost being fill!
Where you are not, we have naught,
Nothing good in deed or thought,
Nothing free from taint of ill.
Heal our wounds, our strength renew;
On our dryness pour your dew;
Wash the stains of guilt away:
Bend the stubborn heart and will;
Melt the frozen, warm the chill;
Guide the steps that go astray.
On the faithful, who adore
And confess you, evermore
In your sevenfold gift descend;
Give them virtue's sure reward;
Give them your salvation, Lord;
Give them joys that never end.
Amen. Alleluia.

COME HOLY SPIRIT

Prayer

Leader: Come, Holy Spirit!

All: Fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love.

Leader: Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created

All: And you shall renew the face of the earth.

Leader: Lord, by the light of the Holy Spirit you have taught the hearts of your faithful. In the same Spirit, help us to relish what is right and always rejoice in your consolation. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

If helpful, print and cut prayer cards for each family member.

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