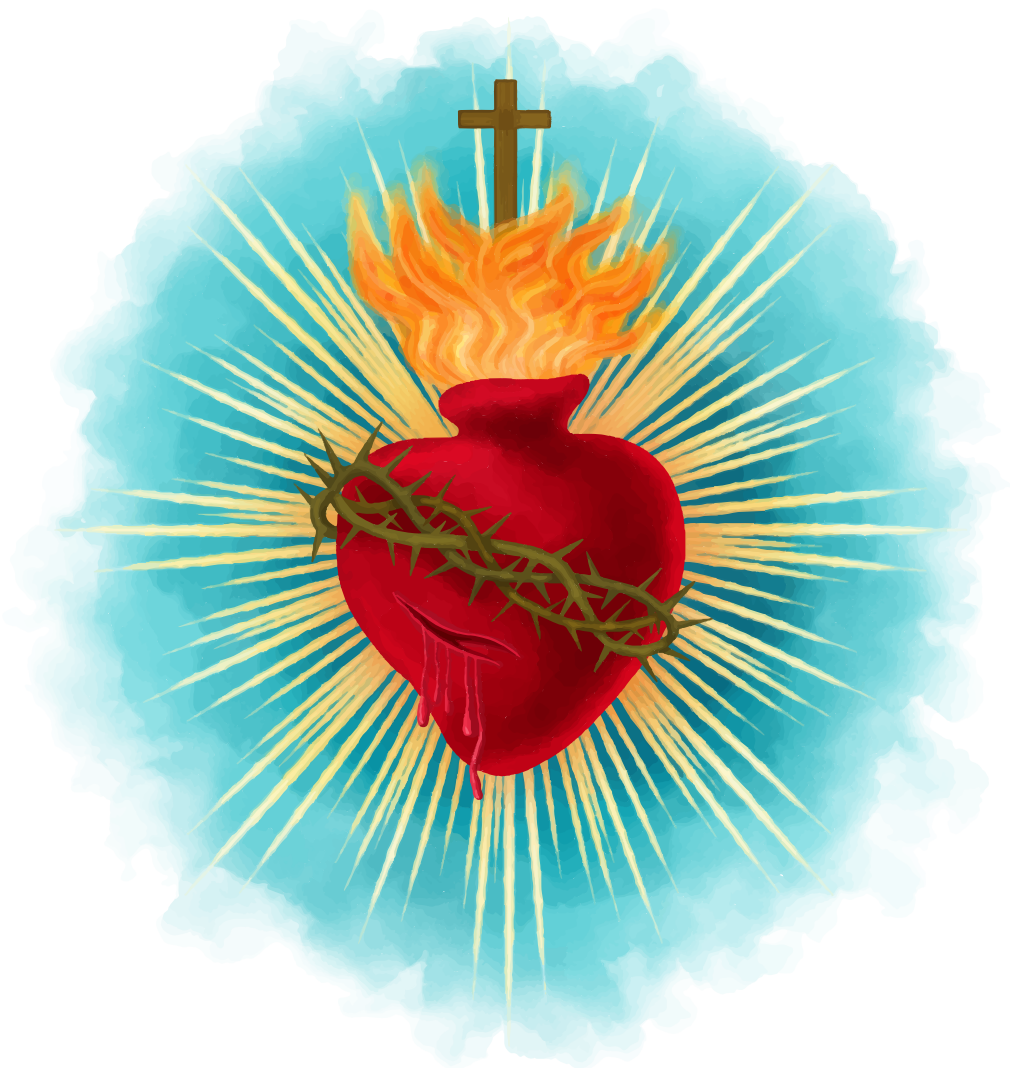


RENEW OUR HEARTS



Diocese of Down and Connor
Novena to The Sacred Heart



LORD, GIVE US A NEW HEART.

Around the time I heard that I was to be the bishop of Down and Connor I was revisiting the life of Blessed John Sullivan SJ. One thing I read spoke to me about the renewal that God wants for our diocese. It was the testimony of a nun in the Dominican convent in Wicklow. She recalled how in 1919 Father Sullivan recommended that she pray the following aspirations:

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

Fr Sullivan said to her; 'Say these frequently and you'll become very holy'. Although the aspirations suggested were nearly all well-known ones, the nun was so struck by Father Sullivan's tone in recommending them that she never forgot his words, and never allowed a day to pass without saying them.

Every day during the Novena leading up to the Feast of the Sacred Heart I invite you to join me in saying these prayers and meditating on the scripture for each day.

The Heart of Jesus wants to renew the heart of each one of us and prepare us to walk our pathway to the future. Together we turn to him in trust that he will bring the healing and renewal that each one of us needs.

I gCroí Íosa

+Alan McGuckian SJ.

+Alan McGuckian SJ

The Sign of the Cross.

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 Thee.'



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.

Hail, Holy Queen, Mother of Mercy,

hail our life, our sweetness and our hope.

To you do we cry,

poor banished children of Eve.

To you do we send up our sighs,

mourning and weeping in this valley of tears

Turn then, most gracious advocate,

your eyes of mercy toward us,

and after this, our exile,

show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary.

Pray for us Oh Holy Mother of God

that we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Amen

The Sign of the Cross.

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

Amen

DAY 1 – SCRIPTURE

GOSPEL: MARK 10:46-52

They came to Jericho. As he and his disciples and a large crowd were leaving Jericho, Bartimaeus son of Timaeus, a blind beggar, was sitting by the roadside. When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout out and say, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" Many sternly ordered him to be quiet, but he cried out even more loudly, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" Jesus stood still and said, "Call him here." And they called the blind man, saying to him, "Take heart; get up, he is calling you." So throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus. Then Jesus said to him, "What do you want me to do for you?" The blind man said to him, "My teacher, let me see again." Jesus said to him, "Go; your faith has made you well." Immediately he regained his sight and followed him on the way.

DAY 1 – REFLECTION

What do you want me to do for you?

Blind Bartimaeus sat in darkness every day as the busy world passed by. Then, one great day Jesus, the Son of David passed by. That day everything would change.

The blind man was a helpless beggar, but he had faith and he would not stop shouting out to Jesus; 'have pity on me.' When he was called forward he immediately threw off his cloak – his guarantee of warmth and shelter – his faith was so strong that something better, something amazing lay ahead.

During this novena to the Sacred Heart, Jesus invites each of us to come to him with our needs, fears, and hopes. Like Bartimaeus, we are called to approach Jesus with boldness and faith, trusting him to heal and change our lives. Over these nine days we imagine ourselves drawing close to Jesus and hearing Him ask the same question: 'What do you want me to do for you?'

DAY 2 – SCRIPTURE

GOSPEL: LUKE 1:39-56

In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfilment of what was spoken to her by the Lord."

And Mary said,

"My soul magnifies the Lord,
and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
for he has looked with favour on the lowliness of his servant.
Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;
for the Mighty One has done great things for me,
and holy is his name.

His mercy is for those who fear him
from generation to generation.

He has shown strength with his arm;
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.

He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,
and lifted up the lowly;

he has filled the hungry with good things,
and sent the rich away empty.

He has helped his servant Israel,
in remembrance of his mercy,

according to the promise he made to our ancestors,
to Abraham and to his descendants forever."

And Mary remained with her about three months and then returned to her home.

DAY 2 – REFLECTION

Mary set out and went with haste.

Mary was pregnant – with God inside her – and she set out on a mighty journey, driven by the needs of her elderly cousin. She didn't hold back or stay indifferent.

This story can draw me out of myself, to wonder about the needs around me. Many people in our world eagerly await visits from those who care about them. The elderly, the sick, the imprisoned, and refugees all need a compassionate glance, a visit from a caring neighbour who puts the needs of others first.

Mary shows us that when Christ is within us, he moves us to be with others in moments of sharing, love and service.

From her meeting with Elizabeth, Mary's Magnificat emerges—a song of hope for the world's transformation. It reminds us that when Jesus is in us we can bring His love to everyone we meet, sparking changing the world, bit by bit, through powerful encounters and acts of service.

As we continue our novena to the Sacred Heart, we ask what act of love and service God might be calling us to do. We ask for the grace to 'set out and go quickly' like Mary our Mother.

DAY 3 – RESPONSORIAL PSALM

PSALM 62:2-6. 8-9. ± V.2

For you my soul is thirsting, O Lord, my God.

O God, you are my God, for you I long;
for you my soul is thirsting.
My body pines for you like a dry,
weary land without water.

For you my soul is thirsting, O Lord, my God.

So I gaze on you in the sanctuary
to see your strength and your glory.
For your love is better than life,
my lips will speak your praise.

For you my soul is thirsting, O Lord, my God.

So I will bless you all my life,
in your name I will lift up my hands.
My soul shall be filled as with a banquet,
my mouth shall praise you with joy.

For you my soul is thirsting, O Lord, my God.

DAY 3 – REFLECTION

Longing for God

“For you, my soul is thirsting, O Lord, my God.”

In the depths of each one of us there is a yearning and longing that only God can satisfy.

When we try to satisfy this hunger with wealth or success – even with relationships – they leave us empty because only in God will our souls find rest.

It is in the tender embrace of the Sacred Heart of Jesus that our deepest longings are fulfilled. In the quiet of prayer, in the surrender of our wills, we encounter the infinite love and mercy of God.

Today we turn to Jesus with open hearts and thirsty souls. Let us drink deeply from the wellspring of his compassion and tenderness. For in him alone will we find true fulfillment, true satisfaction.

DAY 4 – SCRIPTURE

GOSPEL: MARK 14:12-16,22-26

On the first day of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover lamb is sacrificed, his disciples said to him, “Where do you want us to go and make the preparations for you to eat the Passover?” So he sent two of his disciples, saying to them, “Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you; follow him, and wherever he enters, say to the owner of the house, ‘The Teacher asks, Where is my guest room where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?’ He will show you a large room upstairs, furnished and ready. Make preparations for us there.” So the disciples set out and went to the city, and found everything as he had told them; and they prepared the Passover meal.

While they were eating, he took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to them, and said,

“Take; this is my body.” Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, and all of them drank from it. He said to them, “This is my blood of the[a] covenant, which is poured out for many. Truly I tell you, I will never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.”

When they had sung the hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

DAY 4 – REFLECTION

Preparing our hearts for Christ

Before the Last Supper Jesus gave his disciples the task of getting ready. This celebration of this Passover would be like no other - the Eucharist would be instituted on this very night – and it required good preparation. The disciples diligently followed Jesus’ instructions to prepare for the Passover.

We will be disciples when we emulate their obedience and readiness to do as Jesus asks. We can make good preparations so that our hearts are ready to receive Jesus truly present in the Eucharist. Preparing our hearts to receive Jesus entails examining our lives, repenting of sin, and cultivating a spirit of gratitude and reverence.

Jesus gives himself to us in the Eucharist as spiritual nourishment because he loves us. And in receiving the Eucharist we surrender to Jesus so that he can transform us from within, strengthening us to live as God intended.

DAY 5 – RESPONSORIAL PSALM

PSALM 91: 1-2,

My God, in you I trust.

You who live in the shelter of the Most High,
who abide in the shadow of the Almighty,
will say to the LORD, "My refuge and my fortress;
my God, in whom I trust."

My God, in you I trust.

Those who love me, I will deliver;
I will protect those who know my name.
When they call to me, I will answer them;
I will be with them in trouble.

My God, in you I trust.

I will rescue them and honour them.
With long life I will satisfy them,
and show them my salvation.

My God, in you I trust.

DAY 5 – REFLECTION

What does it mean to trust in the Sacred Heart of Jesus?

Trusting in the Sacred Heart of Jesus means finding safety and comfort in the love that never lets us down. It's like finding shelter in a strong, protective place, knowing that no matter what happens, we're held tight by divine care.

When we say, "My God, in you I trust," it's like telling God, "I believe in your love, and I know you're always there for me." It is another way of saying that we don't have to face life's ups and downs alone because God is with us, listening to our prayers and sticking by our side through thick and thin.

Trusting in God's Sacred Heart isn't just about words—it's about feeling His love in our lives. It's about knowing that when we're in trouble, God is there to help us out and bring us through. We believe that His love is so strong that it can even give us everlasting life.

DAY 6 – FIRST READING

2 PETER 3:11-15, 17-18

Since all these things are to be dissolved in this way, what sort of persons ought you to be in leading lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set ablaze and dissolved, and the elements will melt with fire? But, in accordance with his promise, we wait for new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness is at home.

Therefore, beloved, while you are waiting for these things, strive to be found by him at peace, without spot or blemish; and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation. So also our beloved brother Paul wrote to you according to the wisdom given him,

You therefore, beloved, since you are forewarned, beware that you are not carried away with the error of the lawless and lose your own stability. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.

DAY 6 – REFLECTION

The call to holiness

Holiness isn't about perfection — it's about a journey, a movement in which we allow God to make us ever more like Himself. It's about living in a way that reflects the love, joy, and mercy of our God.

Peter reminds us that everything will eventually be dissolved and disappear; so, what sort of people ought we to be? This question pierces through the distractions of daily life, challenging us to live with intentionality and purpose, to pursue lives marked by goodness and godliness.

In a world where values shift like sand, the call to holiness stands as a beacon of hope and possibility. It's a reminder that amidst life's uncertainties, we can anchor ourselves in the unchanging love and truth of God, growing ever closer to Him and becoming more like Him with each step of our journey.

DAY 7 – FIRST READING

2 TIMOTHY 1:1-3, 6-12

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God..., to Timothy, my beloved child: grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. I am grateful to God whom I worship with a clear conscience, as my ancestors did when I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day.

For this reason I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands; for God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline.

Do not be ashamed, then, of the testimony about our Lord or of me his prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel, relying on the power of God, who saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works but according to his own purpose and grace. This grace was given to us in Christ Jesus before the ages began, but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. For this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher, and for this reason I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know the one in whom I have put my trust, and I am sure that he is able to guard until that day what I have entrusted to him.

DAY 7 – REFLECTION

Rekindle the Gifts of God

Many of us spend a lot of time feeling troubled about something in our past or full of worry about what might happen in the future. When we are burdened by our fears, we need to listen to what St Paul said. He had fierce struggles in his life but found strength for everything in his faith.

Paul tells Timothy—and us—that God didn't give us a spirit of fear, but one of power, love, and self-control. This means we have what it takes to move forward confidently, despite whatever difficulties we're facing. Confronting our past struggles doesn't mean getting stuck in them. It's about learning from them, growing stronger, and trusting that God can turn even our hardest times into something good.

When we recognise the gifts that we have been given we re-ignite God's life within us. Then we can use those gifts to help others and fulfil God's plan for our lives. No matter where we are on life's journey we have the possibility of re-igniting our love for God by using the gifts he has given us.

Indeed, we should take the advice of Mother Teresa;

“Do not let the past disturb you, just leave everything in the Sacred Heart and begin again with joy.”

DAY 8 – SCRIPTURE

GOSPEL: MARK 12:28-34

One of the scribes came near and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, he asked him, "Which commandment is the first of all?" Jesus answered, "The first is, 'Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.' The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." Then the scribe said to him, "You are right, Teacher; you have truly said that 'he is one, and besides him there is no other'; and 'to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the strength,' and 'to love one's neighbour as oneself;—this is much more important than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." When Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." After that no one dared to ask him any question.

DAY 8 – REFLECTION

To love with all our hearts

During these nine days of prayer, we're aiming for something big: to grow as a diocese where we love God with everything we've got. Jesus made it clear: loving God and loving others are the things that truly matter.

This isn't just about saying the right words; it's about really connecting with God, pouring out our hearts to Him. It's about letting that love change how we live, think, and act.

When we love God with all we've got, it changes us. And when we love others, we're showing the world what God's love looks like in action.

Together, as a diocese, we're on a pathway to become a community overflowing with love. Let's open up to God's love, let it shape us, and then spread that love everywhere we go.

DAY 9 – SCRIPTURE

GOSPEL: JOHN 19:31-37

Since it was the day of Preparation, the Jews did not want the bodies left on the cross during the sabbath, especially because that sabbath was a day of great solemnity. So they asked Pilate to have the legs of the crucified men broken and the bodies removed. Then the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other who had been crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. Instead, one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once blood and water came out. He who saw this has testified so that you also may believe. His testimony is true, and he knows that he tells the truth. These things occurred so that the scripture might be fulfilled, "None of his bones shall be broken." And again another passage of scripture says, "They will look on the one whom they have pierced."

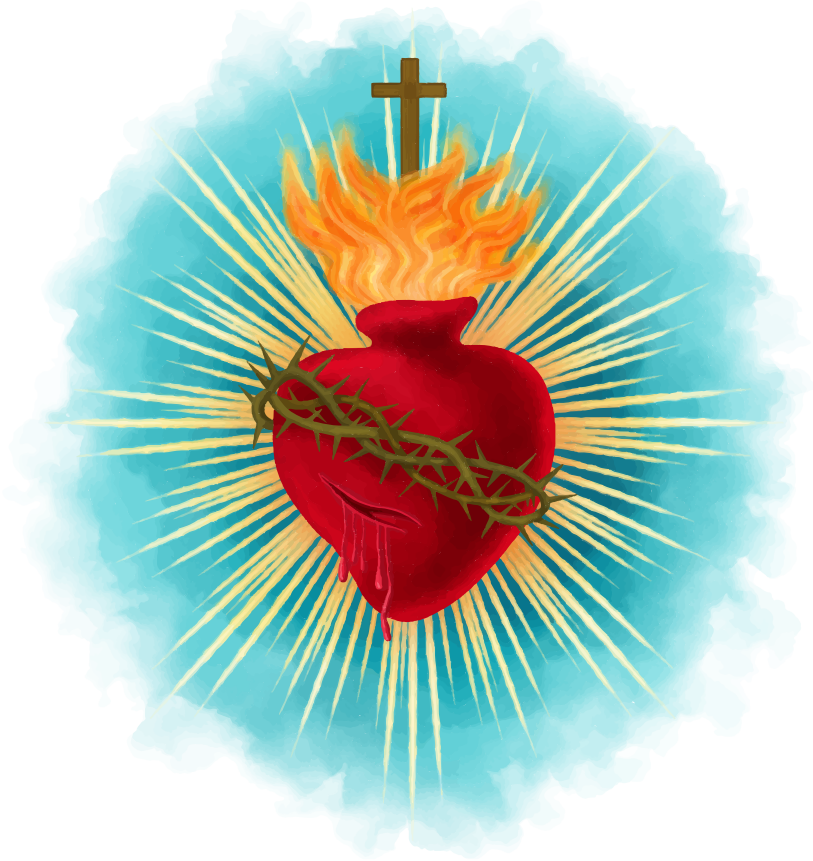
DAY 9 – REFLECTION

The One they have pierced

How strange it is that in the midst of these gory details – legs deliberately broken, and a body stabbed with a spear – the most powerful symbol of the reality of God is given to us. It is of the nature of God's love that he pours himself out, holding nothing back. 'God so loved the world that he gave his only Son ...' Then, God's Son gave himself entirely out of love for us.

Here in John's Gospel, we have an eyewitness who wants us to appreciate the significance of the flow of blood and water from the pierced heart of Jesus.

Today we are invited to contemplate this scene and accept that it happened out of love for us. We have been washed clean by Jesus in the waters of baptism. Moreover, he wants to nourish us with his very own life. Today, we commit ourselves anew to letting him live in us so that we will truly be the Body of Christ in the world.



Acknowledgements: Scripture passages from New Revised Standard Version Bible: Catholic Edition, copyright © 1989, 1993 the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission.

Image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus printed with permission from the artist Cameron Smith © Smith Catholic Art. All rights reserved. © Diocese of Down & Connor 2024.