

# **Pandemic Wisdom from the Saints: A Novena for Vocations**



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# Introduction

These are strange times. COVID-19 has upended the normal routine for most. Thousands are dying from the virus throughout the world. Panic and fear are rampant. The economy seems to be on the brink of collapse. Difficult times for sure.

We can find ourselves in the voice of Frodo in the early pages of J.R.R. Tolkien's masterpiece *The Fellowship of the Ring*:

“I wish it need not have happened in my time” said Frodo.

“So do I,” said Gandalf, “and so do all who live to see such times. But that is not for them to decide. All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given us.”<sup>1</sup>

During many difficult moments over the past 2,000 years, there have been Catholic men and women who made the choice to use well the time given them. Pandemics are nothing new if one looks over the broad course of world history. Deadly diseases have wreaked havoc frequently throughout history. In each of these periods, there were Christians who did not shy away from the unique challenges of the times, boldly answering God's call to serve.

Examining the lives of these saints, we discover that in times of epidemics God offers special graces to those who are open to them. This novena reflects on some of the many holy men and women who embraced their vocation when epidemics were ravishing populations and destroying lives. There is much spiritual wisdom we can learn from these priests, deacons, religious sisters and brothers, married persons, and single persons, who all persevered in living their faith during dark eras of history.

Pope Benedict XVI once said: “God's presence is always seen especially clearly in the saints. Their witness to the faith can also give us the courage to begin afresh today.”<sup>2</sup> We are not alone as we face grave challenges today. Many saints confronted similar ills in the past. They can teach us how to discover God's presence in our trials. Their legacy of perseverance brings us hope. Now in heaven, they are cheering us on by their prayers. They are interceding for us, praying that we will be open to God's will as we decide what to do with the time that is given us.

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<sup>1</sup> J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, HarperCollins 2004, page 67.

<sup>2</sup> Pope Benedict XVI, *Homily at Cathedral Square*, September 24, 2011. Available online: [http://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/homilies/2011/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_hom\\_20110924\\_domplatz-erfurt.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/homilies/2011/documents/hf_ben-xvi_hom_20110924_domplatz-erfurt.html)

# What Is A Novena?

A novena is a nine-day period of prayer, emphasizing a particular intention or spiritual theme. In fact, the word novena comes from the Latin word for “nine” (*novem*). Biblically, we find precedent in the New Testament as Jesus’ disciples were praying together for nine days when the Holy Spirit came upon them at Pentecost (see Acts 1-2).

The novena in these pages will focus our attention on saints who faced the effects of pandemics in their own lives. We can learn from their spirituality how to stay focused on Jesus and what he is asking of us during these challenging times. In particular, this novena invites us to pray for greater openness to God’s call and to support each other in following our vocation.

Each day of the novena includes a short biography of a saint (or group of saints), a few questions for reflection and meditation, and a closing prayer.

While this novena can be prayed at any time, it would be fitting to pray it in the days leading up to the World Day of Prayer for Vocations, celebrated this year on May 3, 2020. Thus, the novena would be prayed April 24 – May 2, 2020. Another timely possibility would be to pray the novena in the days following the World Day of Prayer for Vocations, beginning the novena on May 4, 2020 and finishing on May 12, 2020.

- Day 1: Saint Giuseppe Moscati
- Day 2: Saint Maria Goretti
- Day 3: Blessed Francis Xavier Seelos
- Day 4: Saint Marianne Cope
- Day 5: The Martyrs of Alexandria
- Day 6: Saint Catherine of Siena
- Day 7: Saint Aloysius Gonzaga
- Day 8: Saint Kateri Tekakwitha
- Day 9: Saint Francisco and Saint Jacinta Marto

**“Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us rid ourselves of every burden and sin that clings to us and persevere in running the race that lies before us while keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus, the leader and perfecter of faith.”**

Hebrews 12:1-2

This novena is intended for private devotional use.

## **Saint Giuseppe Moscati**



Giuseppe Moscati was a physician in Naples, Italy. He provided expert care for patients, while always treating them with deep compassion. He was a dedicated researcher who spent long hours after his hospital shifts teaching medical students and seeking medical break-throughs to help his suffering patients.

Just three years after Giuseppe had finished medical school, Mount Vesuvius erupted in a deadly manner. It was April 1906. Elite members of society fled for their own safety. Dr. Moscati stayed behind in Naples to organize the evacuation of the hospitalized, especially the disabled. His labors saved many lives.

When a cholera epidemic broke out in 1911, local government officials put Dr. Moscati in charge of designing and implementing a response. He researched the disease, conducted health inspections to reduce the spread, all while spending countless hours caring for the sick himself. During this time period, he also provided free medical care in the poorest and roughest neighborhoods as was his custom throughout his career.

Dr. Moscati led an extremely busy professional life while embracing his call to the single life. Despite the intensity of his schedule, he started every day by attending Mass. He credited regular Mass attendance as the secret force behind his ability to

give himself so generously in service to those in need. He was canonized a saint in 1987. His feast day is November 16.

### **Questions for Reflection**

Dr. Giuseppe Moscati made time for regular prayer and attending Mass even though he had a very busy schedule. His participation at the Mass empowered him to imitate Jesus' lifestyle of sacrificial love. How can you be more attentive in your participation at Mass when the stay at home order ends and public Masses resume? What can you do now to grow in your understanding of the meaning contained in the prayers and ritual actions of the Mass?

Many medical workers today make sacrifices like Saint Giuseppe to serve patients who are ill, especially those suffering from COVID-19. Who are the doctors, nurses, and other medical care providers you know who you should pray for today? Are there practical ways you can show them support as they go about their exhausting work?

### **Prayer**

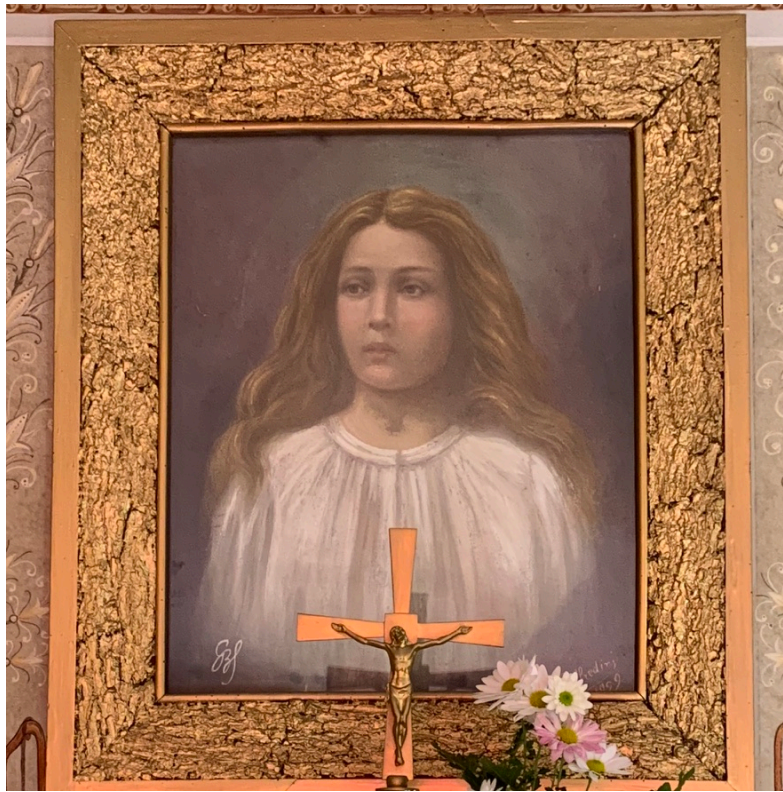
Lord God,

You gave Saint Giuseppe Moscati strength through prayer and reception of the Eucharist to serve the sick with charity. Inspire doctors and healthcare workers to assist the ill with compassion. Give them wisdom as they seek new medical technologies to help the most vulnerable. May all of us answer your call to serve others with generosity, no matter how stressful or difficult the situation might be. Inspire us to imitate Saint Giuseppe's tireless dedication to serving others in our own vocation.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Saint Giuseppe Moscati, pray for us!

## Saint Maria Goretti



Maria Goretti was just nine years old when her father died during a malaria epidemic. This lengthy outbreak killed 15,000-20,000 persons per year in the impoverished coastal region of Italy where the Goretti family lived and worked as sharecroppers. Maria quickly took on a parental role for her younger siblings, so her mother Assunta could work in the fields to support their family. Unfortunately, these circumstances left Maria vulnerable to harassment by a young neighbor, Alessandro Serenelli. On July 5, 1902, Alessandro made an advance towards Maria and she refused, saying: "It is a sin! God does not want it!" Filled with frustration and rage, Alessandro attacked and stabbed her fourteen times.

Maria died from her wounds at a hospital in the nearby town of Nettuno. She was just 11 years old. Before she died, Maria said she forgave Alessandro.

He was arrested, convicted, and sentenced to prison for 30 years. In prison, he was known for his cruel, bitter, and violent personality.

Six years into his prison sentence, Alessandro's personality began to change when he realized that Maria had forgiven him. Overwhelmed by the generosity of her act,

Alessandro became a devout Christian. After his release from prison, Alessandro knocked on the door of Maria's mother, Assunta Goretti, on Christmas day in 1934 and asked Assunta to forgive him. She said that since Maria had forgiven him and God had forgiven him, she forgave him as well.

This mother's act of forgiveness was incredibly heroic. After Alessandro murdered Maria, the rest of Assunta Goretti's children were placed in foster care or adopted by other families since Assunta could not care for them and work full time. Practically speaking, Alessandro had not only killed Assunta's daughter, he had taken her entire family away from her.

Maria's mother and Alessandro were present in Rome on Saturday June 24, 1950 when Pope Pius XII canonized Maria a saint. Alessandro spent his life after prison living with a religious community of Franciscans, praying and serving the Church. The feast day of Saint Maria Goretti is July 6.

### **Questions for Reflection**

Saint Maria Goretti was quick to forgive someone who hurt her deeply. Who do I need to forgive? Are there relationships in my own life that have become strained, especially because of challenges associated with the COVID-19 epidemic and spending more time at home with family members or roommates than normal?

Both Maria Goretti and her mother had many reasons to be bitter. Life had been unfair to them in numerous ways. Yet, they did not give into self-pity. They did not give up. They kept on living. When do you feel sorry for yourself the most? What recent situations have tempted you to become resentful or bitter? Have you asked Jesus for help with these struggles?

### **Prayer**

Lord God,  
You gave Saint Maria Goretti the grace to forgive heroically.  
Help us to forgive those who have hurt us.  
Grant us fortitude to avoid self-pity and despair.  
Give strength to those struggling in their vocation.  
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen  
Saint Maria Goretti, pray for us!

## **Blessed Francis Xavier Seelos**



Ordained a priest in 1844, Father Seelos served at various parishes throughout the East Coast and the Midwest as a member of the Redemptorist community in the United States. In addition to mentoring seminarians for several years, he also spent a portion of his priesthood travelling throughout the United States preaching parish missions. He was an excellent preacher and his joyful personality helped many people find their way back to the Sacrament of Confession. Father Seelos spent endless hours in the Confessional and thousands of people experienced God's mercy there through his gentleness. Father Seelos emphasized the importance of daily prayer, and the need to prioritize prayer even more than usual in times when we are busy, facing difficult temptations, or feel weak in faith.

During the Mass declaring Father Seelos "blessed", Pope John Paul II said this:

In the various places where he worked, Father Francis Xavier brought his enthusiasm, spirit of sacrifice and apostolic zeal. To the abandoned and the lost he preached the message of Jesus Christ, "the source of eternal salvation" (Heb 5: 9), and in the hours spent in the confessional he convinced many to return to God. Today, Blessed Francis Xavier Seelos invites the members of the Church to deepen their union with Christ in the sacraments of Penance and the



Eucharist. Through his intercession, may all who work in the vineyard for the salvation of God's people be encouraged and strengthened in their task.<sup>3</sup>

### **Questions for Reflection**

Father Seelos taught that prayer is even more important than normal when we are stressed, overwhelmed, or doubting. How can you make more time for prayer in your daily routine as you face challenges created by COVID-19? What deeper questions have surfaced in your soul as you experience fear and anxiety because of this pandemic?

Teaching seminarians had an important place in the ministry of Father Seelos. How can you support the men from our diocese who are currently studying to become priests?

### **Prayer**

Lord God,

You called Blessed Francis Xavier Seelos to serve the people of the United States with kindness and zeal. Inspire many men in our diocese to become priests. Strengthen seminarians to persevere in answering God's call. Grant these men the grace to become effective preachers, gentle confessors, and joyful missionaries, especially to the poor and the forgotten. May their ministry help us experience your divine mercy in our lives.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Blessed Francis Xavier Seelos, pray for us!

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<sup>3</sup> Pope John Paul II, *Homily of the Holy Father*, April 9, 2000. Available online: [https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/homilies/2000/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_hom\\_20000409\\_beatifications.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/homilies/2000/documents/hf_jp-ii_hom_20000409_beatifications.html)

## Saint Marianne Cope



Sister Marianne Cope was 45 years old when a call changed her life forever. She was a successful hospital administrator, having built and supervised large hospitals in New York. Known as an expert in modern medical strategies, her hospitals were renowned for both their cleanliness and technology. She also held the most prominent leadership role in her Franciscan community.

However, a letter arrived from a leper colony in Hawaii, asking for religious sisters to care for infected patients. Most religious superiors throughout the country did not even bother acknowledging the request. They could not imagine sending their sisters to such a disease-infested, lonely, distant place. Sister Marianne was different. To her, this request was a call from God. She decided to leave behind her prestigious positions in New York and go to Hawaii herself with a small group of sisters.

Sister Marianne knew she was giving up a lot by making this commitment. Her friends and family. Her important connections. The successful hospital system she had worked so hard to build. She would never return to New York, spending the rest of her life thousands of miles away on a remote island, caring for persons with Hansen's Disease.

Upon her arrival on the island, Sister Marianne revolutionized care for patients. She quickly instituted new protocols for hygiene and cleanliness. She instructed patients how to stop spreading disease. These interventions greatly reduced the spread of contagions.

Furthermore, Sister Marianne recognized that the disfiguring epidemic left residents with low self-esteem. The cold, institutional feel of the crowded facilities also deepened their sadness. Sister said her mission was “to help put a little more sunshine into their dreary lives”. She brought more beauty into their lives by redecorating hospital rooms, re-landscaping properties, and replacing uncomfortable and unsightly patient gowns with bright and fashionable attire. These practical details enabled the patients to rediscover their humanity and brightened their morale.

After several decades of caring for lepers, Sister Marianne died on August 9, 1918. Neither she nor the sisters working with her ever contracted the contagious disease. Her prayerful charity inspired deeper faith in the quarantined children, women, and men she served. She was canonized a saint on October 21, 2012. The feast day of Saint Marianne Cope is January 23.

### **Questions for Reflection**

Saint Marianne found creative ways to bring beauty and “sunshine” into the lives of the quarantined and ill. What creative ways can you share joy with others? How can you show kindness and support to the quarantined, socially isolated, or lonely? What talents has God given you to use in your vocation to serve others?

Diligent hygiene and modern medical technology were fundamental aspects of Sister Marianne’s ministry. How have you altered your lifestyle to keep others safe during the COVID-19 pandemic? Have you offered these inconveniences to God as acts of charity to help the most vulnerable members of society?

### **Prayer**

God our Father,  
You called Saint Marianne Cope to serve the socially isolated, lonely, and diseased. Inspire our creativity during the current epidemic to reach out to those who are suffering. Give us courage to embrace our vocation and follow your plan wherever it might lead us. Raise up many religious sisters to serve in our diocese. We ask this through your Son, Jesus. Amen.  
Saint Marianne Cope, pray for us!

## The Martyrs of Alexandria



During the years 249-262 AD, hundreds of thousands of people died from a pandemic that swept through the Roman empire. During its peak, 5,000 people were dying per day in the larger cities of the empire. One such city was Alexandria in northern Africa.

Most people in the city were not Christian, so fear of contagion led people to abandon their family members, friends, or roommates when they became ill. They literally pushed them out into the streets to die alone. Bodies of the dead piled up with no one making any attempt to give them a dignified burial.

Shock spread among the non-Christians in Alexandria when word got out that a group of people were going about the city, voluntarily serving the infected. Everyone else was running away from the sick and abandoning them, but these people were reaching out to the ill. They nursed the sick and comforted the dying. They buried the dead whose bodies had been abandoned on the streets. These bold volunteers were Christians: priests, deacons, and several lay persons. Many of these Christian volunteers contracted the virus as they cared for the suffering. While most names of these volunteers are not known, they were quickly considered “martyrs of charity” by those who survived the pandemic. Their feast day in the Catholic calendar is February 28.

Many people during the COVID-19 epidemic have followed in the footsteps of these martyrs of charity. Healthcare workers have risked contamination to provide care to the ill and the dying. Funeral workers have provided the deceased with dignified

burials. Many Christians have gone out of their way to provide practical assistance to those in need.

### **Questions for Reflection**

The martyrs of Alexandria volunteered to serve the ill and dying not for the sake of recognition or affirmation. Their service work was not a resume-builder. It was not a publicity stunt. They did it for Jesus who said: “Whatever you did to these least brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me” (Matthew 25:40). How is Jesus asking you to serve in humble, hidden ways that probably won’t receive recognition or affirmation from others?

Every vocation is a call to serve other people. Who are the “martyrs of charity” you have met in your own life? How do they inspire you? How can you follow their example of generosity?

### **Prayer**

Lord God,

You raised up the Martyrs of Alexandria to serve their suffering brothers and sisters. Enflame our hearts with the same charity, to serve even when we will not be thanked, to sacrifice even when we will not be recognized, to do good even when you will be the only one who notices.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Martyrs of Alexandria, pray for us!

## Saint Catherine of Siena



During Catherine's childhood, the Black Plague ravaged Europe. Over sixty percent of the population died from this pandemic. During these scary years, Catherine's parents instilled in her the importance of daily prayer, giving to those in need, and speaking charitably about others in all situations. Her parents taught her not to be judgmental of others, especially since it is difficult to know what someone else is going through. Gossip is a waste time, since that energy could be spent serving other people in need.

The Black Plague returned to Catherine's homeland in 1374. At this point in her life, Catherine was involved in important Church and civil affairs in Italy. While most persons with status fled the city of Siena, she threw herself into serving those affected by the deadly disease. Catherine organized a group of volunteers to nurse the ill and she also located clergy to provide sacraments for the sick. Some of the gravely ill said Catherine's prayers healed them as she cared for them. Several patients reconciled with God as they were dying because of Catherine's encouragement. She also helped arrange proper burials for the dead.

During this deadly outbreak, two of Catherine's brothers and her sister Lisa died. The epidemic also killed several of her nieces and nephews. Catherine grieved deeply for these family members, especially the children.

After the outbreak, many people were without work and food was scarce as the economy struggled to recover. Catherine spent much time feeding the poor and encouraging them not to give up hope.

Saint Catherine's feast day is April 29.

### **Questions for Reflection**

Saint Catherine's parents taught her many important lessons as they raised her during an epidemic. These lessons greatly influenced her future. What important lessons did you learn from your parents during your childhood? What important lessons are you learning during the COVID-19 epidemic that will influence your future? What wisdom are you sharing with others during this pandemic?

Saint Catherine believed deeply in the Resurrection, but she still grieved the deaths of family members with great sadness and many tears. Her faith allowed her to embrace her grief and not run away from it. How have you experienced grief in your life? Are there times when you avoided this grief or tried to numb this grief in unhealthy ways? Who is grieving right now and could use some extra support from you?

### **Prayer**

Lord God,  
You raised up Saint Catherine as a leader within the Church to serve people in need. Inspire us to serve others. Help our families grow in wisdom during this epidemic. Give us patience to learn from each other. May Christian parents in our diocese guide their children to be open to whatever vocation God has chosen for them. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.  
Saint Catherine of Siena, pray for us!

## Saint Aloysius Gonzaga



Aloysius was born into a very influential Italian family. His family was entangled in wealthy Italian social circles where promiscuity, materialism, selfishness, and vanity were the norm. As a child and then a teenager, most of the adults he knew were engaging in greedy business dealings, tangled romantic affairs, unapologetically selfish political maneuverings, and senseless violence. The graphic details of these situations make even the juiciest stories of Hollywood gossip from our time seem very tame.

Furthermore, clergy were scandalously interwoven into this culture of selfishness. Some clerics were among the worst when it came to greed, vanity, lust, and dishonesty. In fact, several of Aloysius' extended family members were among the clergy enmeshed in scandals.

Aloysius was raised and mentored to carry on the worst of family legacies. He was on track to take a lead role in the drama of immorality many members of his prestigious family helped to perpetuate. Yet, at a certain point in his life, Aloysius dared to be different. Aloysius chose to go against the status quo of sinful, egotistical behavior that surrounded him.

He chose to follow God's commandments. He made time for daily prayer. He volunteered to serve people in need. All while also carefully navigating the drama and the messy situations that his family and peers continually were creating by their preposterous lifestyles. He eventually left the riches of his family behind and managed to join the Jesuits, despite criticism from family members.



In 1591 an epidemic broke out in Rome. Over 60,000 people in Italy would die over the course of a year from the disease. Aloysius begged for alms to aid the ill and their families. He found himself deeply repulsed by the nasty symptoms of the diseased. The sights and odors were absolutely disgusting. Yet, he personally fed, nursed, and comforted them anyway. Eventually, Aloysius would fall ill as he served those suffering from the epidemic, dying on June 21, 1591. He was 23 years old. His feast day is June 21.

### **Questions for Reflection**

Saint Aloysius did not find serving the ill to be attractive to him or desirable, but he discerned that God was asking him to serve these suffering people anyway. Is there a type of service you dismiss too quickly simply because it seems unpleasant or unattractive? Are there particular aspects of a vocation which involve sacrifice that God might be asking you to make?

One of Saint Aloysius Gonzaga's favorite prayers was very simple. He would frequently pray: "Lord, guide me!" Where in your life do you need the Lord's guidance and wisdom the most right now?

### **Prayer**

Lord God,  
Saint Aloysius Gonzaga brought renewal and purification to your Church through his holiness of life and charity to the sick and dying. Lord, guide me to know my vocation and help me to live it with enthusiasm. Give me the grace to serve you faithfully even when sacrifice is required of me.  
May my life reflect the purity and dedication of Jesus, your Son. Amen.  
Saint Aloysius Gonzaga, pray for us!

## Saint Kateri Tekakwitha



When she was just four years old, her parents and little brother died in a smallpox epidemic in upstate New York. Kateri barely survived the virus, which left her face disfigured and her eyesight ruined. Because of the epidemic, her tribe (the Mohawks) burnt down their entire village in attempts to stop the contagion from spreading further. Kateri moved with them to a new area under the guidance of her uncle. Since he was opposed to Christianity, Kateri had to wait until age 19 to be baptized. She chose the name Catherine for her baptismal name, after Saint Catherine of Siena.

While other members of her tribe ridiculed her for being Catholic, Kateri passionately lived her faith. She found much peace praying in the solitude of the woods. While her past had left her deeply scarred, both physically and emotionally, Kateri found comfort in time spent alone with God in prayer. As hostile treatment by her family

and neighbors verged towards violence, Kateri escaped to a Catholic community 200 miles away, near Montreal. There she continued to actively practice her faith, teaching children how to pray, and caring for the infirm and elderly members of the community. She died at age 24 in 1680, and was declared a saint in 2012. Her feast day is July 14.

### **Questions for Reflection**

Saint Kateri lived her faith passionately even though she was not always supported by her friends and family members. How is God calling you to practice your faith even when it might not be popular with your peers?

Saint Kateri had to adjust to a “new normal” after the epidemic destroyed her family and her village. How will you need to adjust to a new normal as the COVID-19 situation unfolds? What virtues and spiritual practices will you need to adopt in order to embrace this new normal with patience? How will you integrate prayer into your new routine to find inner peace like Saint Kateri?

### **Prayer**

Lord God,

You gave Saint Kateri peace through her union with you in prayer.

Give us the same peace during these challenging days.

May the wounds we carry motivate us to seek you out more diligently in daily prayer.

Grant us the grace to accept change patiently and to be open to your plan even when it is different than our own. May we find stability in your unchanging truth and love, as we follow your will and obediently accept our vocation in the Church.

We ask this in the name of Jesus, your Son. Amen.

Saint Kateri Tekakwitha, pray for us!

## **Saint Francisco and Saint Jacinta Marto**



Just over one hundred years ago, a deadly virus spread throughout the world spreading death, fear, and panic. In 1918 and 1919 the Spanish flu virus infected about 500 million people, one-third of the world population. About 50 million people died during the pandemic, including 675,000 in the United States. During this pandemic, most churches, businesses, and schools closed for several weeks in the United States.

Two siblings from the small village of Fatima, Portugal were among the many who died from the virus. Francisco Marto was 10 and Jacinta Marto was 9 years old. In their brief lives, their spirituality had drawn worldwide attention and inspired many to return to the practice of the Catholic faith.

Along with their cousin Lucia, they asked their local community in 1917 to gather monthly on a rocky cove where they encountered the Blessed Virgin Mary as they prayed the Rosary. At first, the villagers treated their request with deep skepticism and hostility, but large crowds eventually formed for these special moments of prayer. Some attended out of curiosity. Others out of genuine spiritual desire. Over 70,000 were present for the final gathering and experienced a supernatural “miracle of the sun” with the sun seemingly dancing in the sky on October 13, 1917.

The young children encouraged people to rediscover their Catholic faith. To simplify their lives by focusing more on prayer and penance. They spoke directly about the dangers of procrastination and putting off opportunities for spiritual conversion. As the deadly virus spread through Portugal, Francisco and Jacinta practiced what they had preached. They accepted the possibility that they might die from the virus, and spiritually prepared themselves for the possibility of death.

They eventually caught the virus and suffered greatly. Yet, they did not complain. They said they were offering up their sufferings for the conversion of sinners. They treated their suffering as a prayer, an act of love. They united themselves with Jesus on the Cross who offered his painful sufferings as an act of love for humanity. They chose to suffer and die as Jesus did, praying and loving. Francisco died at home on April 4, 1919. Jacinta underwent several interventions at hospitals, including a surgery without anesthesia, and then died alone in a children's hospital on February 20, 1920. They were both canonized saints on May 13, 2017. The site where the children prayed the Rosary with large crowds is now the Shrine of Our Lady of Fatima in Portugal, visited by millions of pilgrims each year. Their feast day is February 20.

### **Questions for Reflection**

Saint Francisco and Saint Jacinta spoke about the importance of not procrastinating and being ready to face death at any moment. What areas of your life need conversion? What important changes have you been putting off in your life that you should start making today?

These two young saints inspired the faith of many even though they were just children. Are there times when you use your age as an excuse not to follow inspirations from God? What other excuses stop you from following what you know of God's plan for your life?

### **Prayer**

Lord God,

You chose Saint Francisco and Saint Jacinta to help many people rediscover the Catholic faith. Use our example and prayers to inspire others to return to the practice of the faith. May this time of pandemic inspire many to conversion. Be especially near the dying, that they might experience your mercy through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Saint Francisco and Jacinta Marto, pray for us!

# Resources

Saint Giuseppe Moscati

-Biographical article:

<https://www.catholiceducation.org/en/faith-and-character/faith-and-character/joseph-moscati-saint-doctor-and-miracle-worker.html>

Saint Maria Goretti

-Resource website:

<https://mariagoretti.com/who-is-st-maria/>

Blessed Francis Xavier Seelos

-Cause for canonization website:

<http://www.seelos.org>

Saint Marianne Cope

-Biographical video:

<https://www.pbs.org/video/wcny-series-marianne-cope-saint-central-new-york/>

- Biographical article:

[http://w2.vatican.va/news\\_services/liturgy/saints/ns\\_lit\\_doc\\_20050514\\_molokai\\_en.html](http://w2.vatican.va/news_services/liturgy/saints/ns_lit_doc_20050514_molokai_en.html)

The Martyrs of Alexandria

-Biographical article:

<http://faith.nd.edu/?sid=1210&gid=609&pgid=18324&cid=36028&ecid=36028&crd=0&calpgid=10817&alcid=24284>

Saint Catherine of Siena

-Biographical resource:

<https://www.catholicculture.org/culture/liturgicalyear/calendar/day.cfm?date=2019-04-29>

Saint Aloysius Gonzaga

-Biographical article:

<https://www.ignatianspirituality.com/ignatian-voices/16th-and-17th-century-ignatian-voices/st-alloysius-gonzaga-sj/>

Saint Kateri Tekakwitha

-Biographical article:

<http://saintsresource.com/kateri-tekakwitha>

Saint Francisco and Saint Jacinta Marto

-Biographical articles:

<https://denvercatholic.org/francisco-jacinta-marto-great-saints-changed-history/>

<https://www.loyolapress.com/catholic-resources/saints/saints-stories-for-all-ages/blesseds-francisco-and-jacinta-marto/>

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Page 1 – Author’s original photo at Our Lady, Queen of the Most Holy Rosary Cathedral, Toledo, Ohio (USA).

Page 6 – Author’s original photo at *La Tenda del Perdono*, Nettuno (Italy).

Page 14 – Saint Catherine of Siena. Photo courtesy of Corpus Christi University Parish, Toledo, Ohio (USA). Used with permission.

Page 18 – Saint Kateri Tekakwitha. Photo courtesy of Corpus Christi University Parish, Toledo, Ohio (USA). Used with permission.

For more information on priesthood in the Diocese of Toledo  
or more prayer resources,  
please visit:

<https://toledopriesthood.org>