

# NOVENA TO THE CANADIAN MARTYRS

*With short readings*



## DAY ONE

Reading from “The Love of Christ” by Pierre Chastelain, S.J.  
*Spiritual father of the Huron mission from 1636 to 1650.*

“Lord Jesus, we are all very small in stature and unable to see you, even in passing, because of the crowd. We must climb above the crowd if we wish to see you pass. We must leave, at least for some time during the year, the crowd of men and mount the tree of contemplation, so that for a few days we may see you more clearly. The crowds of the highways prevent our smallness from catching sight of you – a sight that in our passage through this life is necessary from time to time. It is necessary for your glory, for the good of our neighbor, and even for our own welfare. Furthermore, the tumult of secular activities presses on the weakness of our human spirit so strongly that it impedes our seeking light and truth. ... Lord Jesus, if I am held by my office and my duty to live a life in public, produce in me, then, a life not only private but at the same time truly hidden. Develop in me your twofold spirit, my Jesus, my Father, human and divine, interior and exterior. Make your life twofold in me; and if I must perform my duty in public, grant that my intention may remain hidden. Light my lantern, Lord, and illuminate my shadows that I may place within you my hidden places, my retreat. While, also, I am acting in public, may you place your tabernacle and mine in the center and very depths of my heart, for you live most freely in our depths.”

*Fr. Pierre Chastelain, S.J. (1606-1684) lived with the Hurons for 14 years, survived the Iroquois invasion and returned to Quebec in 1650, where he was a friend of the mystics St. Marie de l'Incarnation and Bl. Catherine de St. Augustin.*

### **Prayer to St. Joseph**

O God, who in your special Providence deigned to choose blessed Joseph to be the spouse of your holy Mother, grant, we beseech you, that we may deserve to have him as our intercessor in heaven whom we venerate on earth as our protector; You who live and reign world without end. Amen.

### **Prayer to Our Lady**

Glorious Queen of Martyrs, to whom the early missionaries of this country were so devoted and from whom they received so many favours, graciously listen to my petition. Ask your Divine Son to remember all they did for his glory. Remind him that they preached the Gospel and made his holy name known to thousands who had never heard of him, and then for him had their apostolic

labours crowned by shedding their blood. Exercise your motherly influence as you did at Cana, and implore him to grant me what I ask in this novena, if it be according to his holy will. Amen

### **Novena Prayer**

O God, who by the preaching and the blood of your blessed Martyrs, John and Isaac and their companions, consecrated the first fruits of the faith in the vast regions of North America, graciously grant that by their intercession the flourishing harvest of Christians may be everywhere and always increased. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

### **Prayer of Petition**

O God, who inflamed the hearts of your blessed Martyrs with an admirable zeal for the salvation of souls, grant me, I beseech you, my petitions and all the requests recommended here today, so that the favours obtained through their intercession may make manifest before all the power and the glory of your name. Amen.

St. Jean de Brébeuf, pray for us.  
St. Isaac Jogues, pray for us.  
St. Gabriel Lalemant, pray for us.  
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St. Joseph, patron of Martyrs, pray for us.  
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## DAY TWO

Reading from a letter by St. Jean de Brebeuf to the Jesuits in France:

“What satisfaction to pass these rapids and to climb these rocks for him who has before his eyes our loving Savior, harassed by his tormentors and ascending Calvary laden with his Cross. For him who thus considers the Crucified One constantly, the discomfort of the canoe very easy to bear. What consolation! (I must use such terms, since that is the only way I give you joy.) What consolation it is to see yourself abandoned on the road, languishing with sickness and untended by anyone, even dying from hunger in the woods, and so being able to say to God: “My God, it is to do your holy will that I am reduced to the state in which you see me.” Above all, you can then consider yourself like that God-man who, as he was expiring on the Cross, cried to his Father: “My God, my God, why do you abandon me?” (Mt 27:46). And if, in the midst of all these hardships, God should preserve you in health, no doubt you will arrive happily in the Huron country with these holy thoughts. “He whom the grace of God carries, travels sweetly.”

*St. Jean de Brébeuf (1593-1649) went to Canada in 1625 and remained there for the rest of his life, except for three years when all missionaries were exiled to France. He learned the language, culture and spirituality of the Wendat (Huron) people with depth and facility, composed a dictionary and had a catechism translated from French into Wendat. Due to his height and strength, they called him “Echon”, meaning “he who carries heavy loads”. During an Iroquois attack on the Wendat village of St. Louis, he was captured along with St. Gabriel Lalement, and taken to the village of St. Ignace where he was tortured and died on March 16, 1649.*

### **Prayer to St. Joseph**

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## DAY THREE

Reading from the spiritual journal of St. John de Brébeuf, 1640.

“On the eve of my retreat, after examen, while I was making my confession and later as I was saying my penance, two suns appeared, shining with the utmost brilliance, and in between them was a cross. All four arms of the cross seemed to be of the same length and width, but I did not see what it was made of. On the upper portion there seemed, if I am not mistaken, to be a likeness of our Lord Jesus Christ. Later I wondered if perhaps it was a representation of the Blessed Virgin. It was then that I realized in my soul that I was called particularly to the cross and to mortification. The next day, February 12, the opening day of the Spiritual Exercises, while I was forcing myself to live in God with no other thought but love and was trying to drive from my mind all earthly things, the result was that I was troubled by various distractions and filled with unrest. I seemed to hear a voice within me say: “Turn to Jesus Crucified, and let him be both the basis and source of your contemplation.” Thereupon I felt myself drawn to Christ as to a magnet.”

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## DAY FOUR

Reading from the journal of St. Gabriel Lalement, found after his death:

“My God and my Savior, it is my duty to fulfill the obligations I have toward you. You put aside your satisfactions, honors, comfort, joys indeed, your very life in order to save me, a poor creature. Is it not, then, only reasonable that I should follow your example and abandon all these things for the salvation of souls that you claim as yours, souls that have cost you your Blood, which you have loved even to death, and of which you have said, “Inasmuch as you did this to one of these least brethren of mine, you did it to me.” (Mt 25:40)?

Indeed, even though I were not moved by a spirit of gratitude to make to you this holocaust of myself, I would do so with all my heart in consideration of the grandeur of your adorable Majesty and of your infinite goodness, which deserves that we sacrifice ourselves in your service and generously lose ourselves in the faithful accomplishment of what he judges to be your will concerning us, through the special inspirations that it pleases you to give us for your greater glory.

Finally, if it is reasonable for someone inspired by love to wish to give this satisfaction to Jesus Christ – although at the risk of a hundred thousand lives (if he had that many) and with the loss of everything that is sweetest and most agreeable to nature – you, my soul, will never find anyone more deeply obliged to undertake it than yourself. Courage, then, my heart! Let us blessedly lose ourselves in giving this satisfaction to the Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ. He deserves it, and you cannot refuse it to him if you do not wish to live and die ungrateful to his love.

*St. Gabriel Lalement (1610-1649) was nearly denied permission to go to Canada because of his frail health, and had been in Wendake (Huronie) for only six months when he was captured. He was taken with Brébeuf to St. Ignace, where he died the next morning, March 17, 1649.*

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## DAY FIVE

Reading from a letter by St. Isaac Jogues to his Mother,

“My dear and honored mother:

Certainly I would be failing in the first and most essential duty of a devoted son toward a good mother if, when ready to set sail, I should not bid you a last farewell. ...

Please try also to contribute something to the success of our trip by your prayers, and even more than these, by the generous submission of your will to the divine will. We must always seek to accommodate our desires to the desires of the divine Goodness, which can only be very sacred and highly respected by us, since they come from a heart most desirous of our good.

I am sure, as I have already told you many times, that if you accept this little sorrow as you should, it will be an act extremely pleasing to God, since, for his love, not only would it be right for you to give one son, but all your other sons, and even life itself, should that be necessary. For a little worldly gain, some men cross the sea and endure at least as much as we do, but for the love of God, we are unwilling to offer what these men do for their worldly affairs.

Farewell, my dearest Mother. Thank you for the great love you have always given me and especially for the tender devotion shown at our last meeting. May God reunite us in his holy paradise if we do not ever again see each other here on earth.

Please remember me to my dear brothers and sisters, to whose prayers and to yours I recommend myself with all the affection of my heart.

Yours devoted son and obedient servant  
In the Lord,  
Isaac Jogues.  
Dieppe, April 6, 1636”

*St. Isaac Jogues (1607-1646) came to Canada in 1636 with St. Charles Garnier, and worked among the First Nations for six years, overseeing the building of the St. Marie mission.*

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## DAY SIX

Reading from a letter by St. Isaac Jogues to his Mother,

“Dear Mother:

Peace and grace of Our Lord!

As only one opportunity of writing to you is offered every year, and even that one is uncertain and subject to change, I cannot let it pass without performing my duty toward so good a mother. I feel sure that you will be happy to know of the special providence that divine Goodness has exercised over me since granting me the grace of coming to this Huron country. ...

Can we think the life of man better employed in any other labor than this good work? What can I say? Would not all the labors of a thousand men be well rewarded in the conversion of one single soul to Jesus Christ? I have always felt a great love for this kind of life, for such an excellent profession, for one so closely akin to that of the apostles. Had I to work for this happiness alone, I would exert myself to the utmost to obtain this favor, and I would be more than willing to give a thousand lives for it.

I beg you, dear Mother, if you receive this letter, by the tender love of Jesus Christ, to thank God for me for this extraordinary favor – a favor so earnestly wished for and craved by so many servants of God endowed with qualities far above those I possess. Always keep in mind, also, that everything we do must be done for God, for his glory; that all earthly things are capable of absorbing our souls completely but can never satisfy them.

Only God is important; therefore, all our love, our confidence, our affections, our thoughts, our desires, our ambitions all, I repeat must be completely consecrated to him. You are now at an age and in a position of life that demands greater detachment from worldly concerns and closer union with God through prayer, more devout exercises of piety, more frequent reception of the sacraments – all of them so many channels by which God communicates to us the abundance of his grace. I have no doubt that you will make good use of these means in the near future to obtain for yourself the sovereign good of man, which is God. These are the wishes and desires you should have, now more than ever. These same wishes

and desires are made daily for you, dear Mother, at the altar, at Holy Mass, by your devoted servant and son in Our Lord,

Isaac Jogues, of the Society of Jesus

Ontario, country of the Hurons, June 11, 1637

P.S. Please tell my brothers and sisters that I love them dearly in our Lord and that I pray to him daily for them at Holy Mass.”

*In 1642, while returning from a trip to Quebec on the St. Lawrence River, Jogues was captured by an Iroquois war party, and taken to their country along with St. René Goupil. His fingers were severely mutilated, and he suffered great physical and mental deprivation.*

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## DAY SEVEN

A reading from a letter of St. Isaac Jogues to his superior,  
On the death of St. René Goupil:

“We left Three Rivers on the first of August, the day after the feast of our holy Father Saint Ignatius. On the second, we met the enemy, who, separated into two bands, were awaiting us with the advantages of superior numbers and attacking from the land. We were not only separated in our scattered, flimsy birch-bark canoes, but we were also in danger of overturning into the water.

Almost all the Hurons had fled panic-stricken into the woods, leaving us alone and unprotected. Immediately we were seized. It was then that Goupil manifested his unusual virtue. As soon as he realized that we were prisoners, he said to me: “Oh, my dear Father, God be blessed! He has permitted this; he has willed it – may his holy will be done! I love it, I desire it, I cherish it, I embrace it with all my heart!” In the meantime, while the enemy were still pursuing the fugitives, I heard his confession and gave him absolution, not knowing what might happen to us as a result of our capture. When our attackers returned from the chase, they fell upon us... He endured all this pain with patience and courage. His presence of mind in so grievous a situation was particularly apparent in this, that he aided me wherever he could, despite his own intense pain, in the instruction of the Huron captives who were not Christians.

... Covered with wounds as he was, he carefully dressed those of the other prisoners, nor did he neglect any of the enemy who had received some wound in the fight. ...

When we entered the first village, where we were treated so cruelly, he showed an extraordinary patience and gentleness. He had fallen under the shower of blows from clubs and iron rods with which they attacked us, and unable to rise again by his own strength, he was carried half-dead to the center of the village and placed on the platform to which we others had already been taken. He was in so pitiful a condition that he would have inspired compassion in cruelty itself. He was all bruised from the blows, and in his face nothing but the whites of his eyes could be distinguished. But the more disfigured he was, that much more beautiful was he in the sight of angels and men and that much more like to him

of whom it is said: “We saw him, as it were a leper, in whom there was no beauty nor comeliness.”

*St. René Goupil (1608-1642) was a donné or layman who had given himself to serving the Jesuit mission in Canada. While they were captives, he asked Jogues to be received into the Society of Jesus as a religious brother, and professed his vows to him shortly before his death. Because of this, Goupil is considered a Jesuit saint. He was killed by a blow to the head and died in the arms of Jogues.*

### **Prayer to St. Joseph**

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## DAY EIGHT

A reading from the writings of St. Isaac Jogues, visions, 1642-43

*While a prisoner of the Iroquois*

“On another occasion, hidden in my retreat in the woods, with the snow piled high about me and my body tormented by hunger, cold, and nakedness, considered the scum of the earth, the vilest of men by my captors, I endured intense agonies also in my soul because of all my sins and culpable negligences. All the bitter pangs of death and the terrors of Hell invaded my heart at the thought that my captors were about to kill me, as they had so often threatened. The following then transpired, bringing me peace:

Very distinctly, I heard a voice that proved to me how false this distress of my heart really was and advised me to think of God only in his goodness (cf. Wis 1:1) and to cast all my anxiety on him (cf. I Peter 5:7). I heard also those words that I had noted long ago in the letters of Saint Bernard to his monks: ‘Serve God in that charity and love that casts out fear; such love does not seek any reward.’ These two counsels were given to me very opportunely, for my soul was burdened with an excessive fear – not a filial, but a servile fear. I did not have sufficient confidence in God. Besides, I was lamenting because I was being hurried to judgment, in the middle of my life, as it were, without having paved the way with any good works. ...

This advice indeed reanimated my sorrowing soul and stirred up within me a burning love of God. That fire of love was so vehement that in the fervor of my soul, even before I had returned to myself, I added to what had been told me, using once more the words of Saint Bernard: ‘It is not unjust that he claims our life for himself since he gave up his own for us.’ After this, God so greatly enlarged the soul of his servant that I could even joyfully return to the village where I firmly believed I would be beaten to death as soon as I entered.”

*Jogues remained a prisoner of the Iroquois for one year, from the time of his capture on August 3, 1642, to his escape with the help of the Dutch in August 1643. A ship took him back to France, arriving on Christmas Day. Pope Urban VIII considered Jogues “a living martyr” and gave him a dispensation to say Mass with missing digits and a mutilated hand. After a year and a half, he returned to Canada in 1644.*

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## DAY NINE

Reading from a letter of St. Isaac Jogues to a fellow Jesuit.

*Three Rivers, September 25, 1646*

“It is thought necessary to send a priest among the Iroquois in order to preserve the new peace agreement and to learn quietly what can be done for their instruction [in the faith]. I have reason to believe that I shall be sent, because I have some slight knowledge of the country.

I shall be held responsible for any and all incidents between the Iroquois and the French, the Algonquins, and the Hurons. But what of it? My hope is in God, who really has no need of us for the accomplishment of his designs. All we need do is try to be faithful to him and not spoil his work by our own weaknesses.

I hope that you will obtain for me this favour from Our Lord and also, that after having led so slothful a life until now, I may begin to serve him better.

My heart tells me that if I have the blessing of being sent on this mission, *Ibo et non redibo*: I shall go and shall not return. I shall be happy if Our Lord wills to finish the sacrifice where he began it. May the little blood that I shed in that land be a pledge of what I am willing to give him from all the veins of my body and from my heart. Indeed, that nation is as “a spouse of blood to me” (Ex 4:25). May our good Master, who has acquired that nation by his Blood, open to it, if he will, the door of his Gospel, as well as to the other four nations, its allies and neighbors. Farewell, dear Father; beg God to unite me inseparably to him.”

*In the spring of 1646, Jogues returned to Iroquois territory with the donné Jean de Lalande, to act as the French ambassador to the Mohawk. His ambassadorship was intended to maintain the peace reached in 1645 between the Iroquois and the French, the Huron and the Algonquin.*

*On 18 October 1646, members of an anti-treaty faction within the Mohawk community killed Jogues with a tomahawk blow; they killed Lalande the next day. They threw their bodies into the Mohawk River, where they were never recovered.*

*In June 29, 1930, Jean de Brébeuf, Gabriel Lalement, Charles Garnier, Antoine Daniel, Noël Chabanel, Isaac Jogues, René Goupil and Jean de Lalande were canonized saints of Catholic Church. They are the first and only martyred saints of North America.*

### **Prayer to St. Joseph**

O God, who in your special Providence deigned to choose blessed Joseph to be the spouse of your holy Mother, grant, we beseech you, that we may deserve to have him as our intercessor in heaven whom we venerate on earth as our protector; You who live and reign world without end. Amen.

### **Prayer to Our Lady**

Glorious Queen of Martyrs, to whom the early missionaries of this country were so devoted and from whom they received so many favours, graciously listen to my petition. Ask your Divine Son to remember all they did for his glory. Remind him that they preached the Gospel and made his holy name known to thousands who had never heard of him, and then for him had their apostolic labours crowned by shedding their blood. Exercise your motherly influence as you did at Cana, and implore him to grant me what I ask in this novena, if it be according to his holy will. Amen.

### **Novena Prayer**

O God, who by the preaching and the blood of your blessed Martyrs, John and Isaac and their companions, consecrated the first fruits of the faith in the vast regions of North America, graciously grant that by their intercession the flourishing harvest of Christians may be everywhere and always increased. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

### **Prayer Of Petition**

O God, who inflamed the hearts of your blessed Martyrs with an admirable zeal for the salvation of souls, grant me, I beseech you, my petitions and all the requests recommended here today, so that the favours obtained through their intercession may make manifest before all the power and the glory of your name. Amen.

St. Jean de Brébeuf, pray for us.

St. Isaac Jogues, pray for us.

St. Gabriel Lalemant, pray for us.

St. Antoine Daniel, pray for us.

St. Charles Garnier, pray for us.

St. Noël Chabanel, pray for us.

St. René Goupil, pray for us.

St. Jean de Lalande, pray for us.

St. Joseph, patron of Martyrs, pray for us.

Holy Mary, Queen of Martyrs, pray for us.

# PRAYER OF JOSEPH CHIWATENWHA

*As recorded in the original Wendat language in the Jesuit Relations of 1641*

“You are great in voice, God. Behold, now I know you. It is providential that now I know you. You are the one who skillfully made this earth and sky. You are the one who made we who are called humans.

Just as we are great in voice concerning the canoes and houses that we have made, so you are great in voice concerning we whom you have made. It is of little importance that we are great in voice concerning all the things we possess for only a short time. We are great in voice concerning a canoe we have made and a house that we have made. It is a short time that we are great in voice. You are forever great in voice concerning we who are called humans. Would it be unimportant, then, that you are great in voice while we still live and are extremely great in voice when we die? You alone are completely great in voice. No other is with you.

You, we should greatly fear; you we should greatly love because you have great power and it is very true that you greatly love us. It is very true that others, humans and spirits, do not have power here. They do not have power, spirits, and they also do not love us.

I would now give great thanks that you have wished, “He should know me.” You very greatly love us. Behold, I now offer myself to you as a calming gift, I who dwell here. Behold, I now make you very great in voice, I who dwell here. Think of me, I who dwell here.”

*Joseph Chiwatewha was among the first of the Wendat to convert to the Christian faith, along with his wife Marie Annetta and his older brother. Joseph was the first Wendat to do the Spiritual Exercises, the retreat of St. Ignatius of Loyola. Admired by all the Jesuits, he became an ardent catechist and missionary to his people. He was ambushed and killed near his fields in 1640. Pope John Paul II said that Joseph was “of great importance to the Church” and that he and his family “lived and witnessed to their faith in a heroic manner.”*