



What's your part
in God's story?

Novena

Nine Days of Prayer
for Vocations



Called to follow Jesus

Bible: Read Matthew 28:16-end

'Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. When they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.'

Read the passage through a couple of times. What words stand out to you from this passage? Why are they important for you today?

Reflection:

This scripture passage is often called 'The Great Commission'; Matthew recounts how Jesus was now ready to ascend back to his heavenly home and so he commissions his friends and sends them out into the world to make disciples. Jesus' friends are to continue his earthly work with the heavenly power of his Holy Spirit. They are to travel wherever the Spirit leads and extend the invitation of following Jesus to all.

As we begin this novena (nine days) of prayer for vocations, think today about how you became a disciple of Jesus Christ. Write your story of how you came to follow the Lord Jesus. Who were the people that inspired you on your journey? Who has helped you follow Jesus? Who has helped you grow in the faith? Saint Teresa of Calcutta wrote that, "Vocation is simply a call to belong totally to Jesus Christ, with the conviction that nothing can separate us from his love". This is such a lovely description of what it means to be a disciple and follower of the Lord Jesus. This is our common calling, the vocation that we all share.



Prayer:

Lord Jesus Christ, beautiful saviour, risen and ascended Lord, help me to follow you closely; to be faithful to your teaching and to never be separated from you. In your holy name. Amen.

Prayer topics for an extended prayer time:

Pray in thanksgiving for those whose example has been an inspiration and led you to the Lord Jesus and to grow in your faith.

Pray, forgiving those whose example, words or actions have wounded your faith.

Pray for your church family as you seek to follow the Lord Jesus together.

Pray for those known to you who do not yet share your faith, that the Lord may change their hearts.

Pray about what it means for you to belong totally to Jesus Christ.

If you can, as well as speaking out your prayers to the Lord Jesus, spend a few minutes in silence, listening for his words to you.

Called to be the beloved

Bible: *Read Luke 3:21-23*

'Now when all the people were baptised, and when Jesus also had been baptised and was praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.'

Read the passage through a couple of times. What words stand out to you from this passage? Why are they important for you today?

Reflection:

Before Jesus begins his public ministry, he is baptised by his cousin, John the Baptist, in the river Jordan. At this pivotal moment in his life and ministry, the gospel writers record that Jesus hears the Father's voice. God the Father affirms Jesus as his beloved Son in whom he is well pleased.

Through faith in Jesus Christ, we have become adopted into God's family. You and I have become daughters and sons of God. God calls us his beloved children, and we, through the gift of his Spirit, are able to call him Abba Father: "But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children. And, because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!'" Galatians 4:1 Stop. Pause. Read out these words: "I am God's precious child". Repeat the sentence a few times.



How does it feel to say those words? I am sure that we will all have different emotions and feelings about these words which range from thankfulness to unworthiness, from excitement to doubt. However we are feeling, remember - receive these words as God's divine promise to you.

Meditation:

Put on some peaceful music, light a candle if you would like to. Sit quietly listening to the music.

Imagine God speaking these words to you:
"You are my precious child; with you I am well pleased"
Hold these words in your mind for five minutes or so.

Prayer:

Pray that you would grow in your understanding and knowledge of the truth of this divine promise.

Pray for those who you find difficult to see as God's children.

Called to community

Bible: *Read 1 John 4:7-16*

'Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us.'

'By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and do testify that the Father has sent his Son as the Saviour of the world. God abides in those who confess that Jesus is the Son of God, and they abide in God. So we have known and believe the love that God has for us.'

'God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them.'

Read the passage through a couple of times. What words stand out to you from this passage? Why are they important for you today?

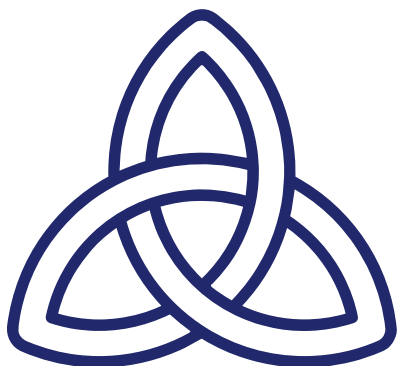
Reflection:

Below are two pictures of a Triquetra or a Trinity knot. It is an ancient symbol from the Celtic tradition that represents the Trinity. There are three arcs joined seamlessly together. It is an illustration of the perfect community of love that exists within the Holy Trinity. Our church communities are called to be a reflection of this heavenly community, places where the divine love is known,

made known and declared in words and deeds. However, living in Christian community is not easy, with any family there are arguments and grumblings.

Naturally we find some people within the community of faith easier to love than others. Yet as one former bishop of Bradford once said: "There is no way of belonging to Christ except by belonging gladly and irrevocably to that marvellous and extraordinary ragbag of saints and fatheads who make up the one holy catholic and apostolic church."

Put on some soothing music. Use some colouring pencils to colour in the Trinity knots below. As you colour, pray for those in your church who you find easy to love and those who you find difficult.



Called to love

Bible: *Read 1 Corinthians 13:4-8*

'Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends.'

Read the passage through a couple of times. What words stand out to you from this passage? Why are they important for you today?

Reflection:

In the Gospel of John, we read that Jesus said to his friends: "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another". A key aspect of our vocation, our common calling, is to apply this teaching to every aspect of our life. To love those we encounter through our work, our leisure, our home and family life, our church. To love those who we haven't even met yet and who are strangers to us but in need of help. What does that mean? What does that look like? Mother Teresa wrote that it means 'doing beautifully the work that I have been given to do, by doing simply that which God has entrusted to me, in whatever form it may take'. What work have you been given to do? Being a parent, a sibling, a godparent, a friend, a work colleague, a neighbour, a member of your church - all of these roles, and many others, are key aspects of our vocation, of what it means for us to follow Jesus, to love one another as he loves us.



Activity:

Make a list of all your connections to others, for example, parent, brother, friend...

Meditation:

Find a photo of your family, or of your friends or of your church family. Light a candle and put on some peaceful music. As you listen to the music, hold these various groups of people to God. Think about your relationship with these people, give thanks for all that is good and positive, for the many blessings you receive through these relationships. There may well be some relationships that are not so good - pray for them, hold them before God and ask how these relationships can be improved.

Called equally

Bible: Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-26

'For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptised into one body – Jews or Greeks, slaves or free – and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot were to say, 'Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body', that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear were to say, 'Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body', that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many members, yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you', nor again the head to the feet, 'I have no need of you.' On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and those members of the body that we think less honourable we clothe with greater honour, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect; whereas our more respectable members do not need this. But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honour to the inferior member, that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together with it.'

Read the passage through a couple of times. What words stand out to you from this passage? Why are they important for you today?

Reflection:

Through our baptism, each one of us is a member of the body of Christ. As St Paul clearly states in his letter to the Corinthians, no member of the body



is more important than the other. All are vitally important to the proper and healthy functioning of the body. Of course, the ministries within the church are diverse but none is more important than the other, all are needed for the flourishing of the body of Christ. Sometimes we find ourselves thinking: "I'm not good enough to do that!" or "she's much holier than I am, that's why God has asked her to do that". Often, we are our own worst enemy, our negative view of ourselves or our low self-esteem and lack of confidence become obstacles to us moving forward into all that God has called us to. Today, choose not to listen to those negative voices that are often part of our own narrative, listen instead to the still small voice of God that whispers to your heart that you are a precious adopted daughter or son of the living God, his beloved child, called to love and serve him.

Prayer: *choose one of the following*

- Play some relaxing music. As the music plays, think about those who belong to your church community. As you call to mind the different names and faces, think about what they have been called to within the life of the church. What are their ministries? How do they serve God? Pray for them.
- Grab a piece of paper and draw a floor plan of your church. Picture a typical Sunday morning. Mark the pew/chair where you sit, write your name on that space. Who sits near you? Write their names too. We are creatures of habit and tend to sit in the same seats each week. How many of the church family can you place in their seats? Make up a simple prayer to pray for your church family. Do you know everyone's name? If not, why don't you introduce yourself next time you see them?

Called to serve the church

Bible: *Read Romans 12:1-13*

'I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God – what is good and acceptable and perfect.

For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgement, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness.

Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honour. Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers.'

Read the passage through a couple of times. What words stand out to you from this passage? Why are they important for you today?



Reflection:

Here is another passage from Paul's letters where he refers to the church as the body. Once again, he reiterates that each member of the body is called to a different ministry, but that each member of the body is connected to the other members. The themes of unity, equality and diversity are key in our understanding of what it means to be the body of Christ.

How has God called you to serve him in the church? This is not the time for negativity, there is no place for comments like 'I haven't got a ministry', 'I'm not good enough to do that' or 'so and so is so much better than me because she does this'. Remember we are all loved equally, and all called to serve him.

Remember the person that offers a warm welcome to a new person who sits next to them in the pew is as important and valued as the one who leads the service or preaches. Think about what you do in church, however small or insignificant you think it is, remember it is of great value to God.

Prayer:

Light a candle, put on some gentle music. Read the scripture passage again if it will help focus your prayers. Sit for a few moments in silence.

Think about this question: What you are doing now to serve the Lord in your church? Pray for all those involved in that ministry whatever that is, from arranging the flowers, making the refreshments to preaching on a Sunday and then, in the silence, offer this next prayer to the Lord: "Do you want me to do anything else for you, Lord? I am ready to do what you would want me to do, make it known to me Lord, in Jesus' name. Amen"

Wait in the silence for a few minutes.

Do you feel that God has spoken to you? In the days ahead, look and listen for God's answer to your prayer, he might speak to you through a friend, stranger, your parish priest, the scriptures... the list is endless...

Called to shine like bright stars

Bible: *Read Philippians 2:12-18*

'Therefore, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed me, not only in my presence, but much more now in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure.'

'Do all things without murmuring and arguing, so that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, in which you shine like stars in the world. It is by your holding fast to the word of life that I can boast on the day of Christ that I did not run in vain or labour in vain. But even if I am being poured out as a libation over the sacrifice and the offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you – and in the same way you also must be glad and rejoice with me.'

Read the passage through a couple of times. What words stand out to you from this passage? Why are they important for you today?

Reflection:

St Paul, writing to his beloved congregation at Philippi, has started this chapter of this letter with the beautiful hymn of Christ's humility where he praises the self-emptying of the Lord Jesus, who though he was God became as one of us to save us. He then exhorts the church to have this same mind and attitude.



He asks them not to have an attitude of self-ambition or conceit but to demonstrate the same humility that Jesus showed.

In this part of the chapter, he asks them to give up arguing and murmuring and be blameless and innocent children of God, shining like stars in the world. Our words and actions have an impact in the world. Our comments on social media, our gossip with a friend over the phone, our murmurings and grumbings have an effect. We are called to shine like bright stars for Jesus Christ, so that the light given off by our words and deeds points people to Jesus. Do our words and deeds, our presence at the school gate and on our social media accounts, cause us to shine like bright stars? Our vocation is to live for him, like a spotlight, to enable him to shine through our words and deeds.

Prayer:

Where do you spend your time? Where do you go? What do you do? Who do you mix with? Think about these questions for a few minutes. If it helps, draw a simple map of the places you go and the people you see in a typical week. Hold them to God in the silence. If you know any particular needs that they might have then pray for that too.

Called to work for justice

Bible: *Read Micah 6:6-8*

'With what shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old?

Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?'

Read the passage through a couple of times. What words stand out to you from this passage? Why are they important for you today?

Reflection:

A key aspect of our vocation, our common calling, is to look outwards, beyond ourselves to the wider picture. Our calling to love and follow the Lord Jesus does not just have implications for us and for those in our immediate family and close friendship circle. We are connected through our faith and common humanity to everyone in our community and wider world.



What do we know about the persecuted church?

What more is God asking of us? How is he asking us to broaden our perspective to look outwards beyond ourselves to the needs of others?

Prayer:

Perhaps pray this prayer outdoors; in the garden, the park or at the beach?

Take some time in silence to take in and appreciate the beauty of creation and give God thanks.

"Lord, you have provided for us a world of beauty and plenty.

Open our hearts to the needs of our suffering brothers and sisters around the world, help us to treat our environment with respect and to provide for the needs of others. Amen."

Called to say 'yes' to God

Bible: Read Luke 1:26-38

'In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, 'Greetings, favoured one! The Lord is with you.' But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.' Mary said to the angel, 'How can this be, since I am a virgin?' The angel said to her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God.' Then Mary said, 'Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.' Then the angel departed from her.'

Read the passage through a couple of times. What words stand out to you from this passage? Why are they important for you today?

Reflection:

In the whole of our scriptures, is there a more powerful and beautiful reply to God's call: ***Then Mary said, 'Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.'*** These powerful words are her 'yes' to the question that God was asking her through the angel's message. Mary listens to what God is



asking of her and responds with an open and willing heart even though she knows that stepping out in faith with God into the unknown future is full of risk. Because Mary responded in the way that she did, God was able to accomplish great things.

Have you enjoyed praying this vocation's novena? What has been the highlight for you? Has God been speaking to you through the Bible reading and prayers? What has he been saying?

Prayer:

Pause for a few moments of reflection and sit with the question: What is God asking of me? Is he calling me to step out into some new ministry or adventure for him?

Pray for other people that you know are joining in this novena too. If you feel that God has spoken to you through these nine days of prayer, why don't you have a chat with a friend about it or your priest at church? As we finish these nine days of prayer, we offer all that we have learnt, read, prayed and discovered to him in the words of these two prayers:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning is now and shall be for ever. Amen.



Called: Novena – Nine Days of Prayer for Vocations

This prayer resource has been developed based on material
from the diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich.

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