



Novena To St. Sebastian

NOVENA TO ST. SEBASTIAN January 12 – 20, 2018

Friday: First Day: “Love your enemies. Pray for those who persecute you.”

St. Sebastian lived in the early days of the church, when to be a Christian often meant to stand up for your faith and eventually to die for it. We know that he was born of Christian parents and that he passed the days of his childhood under the instruction of pious parents. God had His own plans for the child, who was to become the strong support and guide of his fellow Christians during the turbulent times of the persecution to come, when he was to be privileged to die as martyr for Christ. But also for all times he was to serve to the Christian world as shining example of a fearless life of faith. God so willed it that as a soldier in the Roman army he attracted the attention and good pleasure of the emperor and being of noble extraction he was raised to the rank of an officer in the palace guard.

We pray for all the members of our parish and their families.

Prayer: Holy Martyr, St. Sebastian, no greater gift could be given you than the gift of faith. Sanctified in baptism you grew in holiness from the days of your childhood. So much has God loved you that He made you a pillar of strength in the early church. Strengthen my faith, that it may become the source of energy for a good Christian life and that I too may be a good example to those around me. Amen.

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be.

Saturday: Second Day: “Blessed are the pure of heart. They shall see God.”

When the Roman empire showed signs of imminent collapse, emperor Diocletian, thinking of how to stem the tide, resolved to exterminate the Christians, as he believed them to be the cause of its ruin. It was one of the most savage and best planned persecutions which struck at all social classes of the people; many of the noble families were dragged before the judges. Among others also Marcus and Marcellinus, friends of the emperor and of Sebastian, were thrown into prison. Sebastian visited them, comforting and encouraging them and their companions, all suffering for the faith, so much that they looked forward with joy for the day when they could suffer death “for the Name of Christ.” Our Lord, pleased by his service spoke to him the following words: “Sebastian, I came to tell you how much I am delighted for what you are doing to My beloved disciples; I promise to be with you always till you are united with Me in glory.” Greatly comforted Sebastian continued his work of mercy and led many to glorious martyrdom.

We pray for all the members of our parish who no longer worship with us.

Prayer: O glorious St. Sebastian, fearless Confessor of Christ and Consoler of those who were going to lay down their life as witnesses to their faith, pray for us. Help us to never be lukewarm in living our faith. May we never tire of living wholeheartedly as the disciples of Jesus. Help all the members of our parish to deepen their living of the Christian faith. Help me, dear Saint, and Patron to be an example of a holy and loving life. Amen.

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be.

Sunday: Third Day: “You are the light of the world. A city built on a hilltop cannot be hidden.”

With great courage Sebastian preached the faith in the troubled times of persecution to Christians and non-Christians alike. Moved by the encouraging words of this Christian soldier many were converted and baptized, others, by the astounding miracles Sebastian performed before their eyes. Not alone that he cured their bodily ailments; he convinced them to be baptized, to become Christians and to live a good Catholic life. He had refused to hide his faith and soon he was accused of being a Christian and arrested. The emperor would not believe when the news was broken to him. “Sebastian? that flawless officer and soldier? He cannot, he must not be a Christian. If, however it was true, I would easily change his mind. . .” - “Yes, Lord,” Sebastian, the captain of the palace guard said, “it is true, I am a Christian” when confronting the emperor. “What evil do you find in it? I always have been a Christian.” “Tell me,” the emperor responded, “I speak as a friend to a friend - what do you want me to do for you? Is it wealth, honor, higher rank? You have it; only relinquish that foolish faith in Christ.” Sebastian answered: “O Lord, what a trifling thing you offer; I am richer than you can make me; the greatest honor was bestowed upon me by being made a Christian.” The emperor, seeing his love spurned, raged in fury. He ordered him to be stripped of his insignia, thrown into prison, and to be killed by being shot with arrows. Hearing these words Sebastian rejoiced, his face shining with inexpressible delight: he could die for Christ.

We pray for an increase in vocations to the priesthood and religious life.

Prayer: O St. Sebastian, to countless people you have shown the way to Christ. Christians, enlightened by your words, gladly sacrificed earthly life and worldly honor, that they may gain Life Eternal. You withstood the emperor in defense of Christian truth. You despised the treasures of the world to gain the everlasting joys of heaven: obtain for me the grace that I may grow ever stronger in my faith and never put my trust in material things. May I always place the following of Christ above all earthly honors or material comforts. Amen.

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be.

Monday: Fourth Day: Blessed are those who are persecuted for what is right. Theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.

Sebastian was marched off and out of the city by the soldiers to suffer the punishment decreed upon him by the emperor. He had made his choice for a greater Lord than Diocletian, to Whom he had sworn allegiance in baptism and for Whom he was going now to shed his blood. Horrified, the crowd witnessed the bloody spectacle, and like a flash of lightning it came upon them: here stands a valiant soldier, who has better arms to wield, who fights his battle for victory; a hero whose head will wear the crown of glory.

We pray for the sick and housebound of our parish.

Prayer: Holy Martyr, St. Sebastian, great was your love of Christ, when for His sake you were ready to suffer and die. Obtain for me from Jesus, our Divine Victim Who offered His body an oblation for the salvation of our souls, pardon for my sins. May I also in all truthfulness be able to say with St. Paul: “I live; now not I, but Christ lives in me;” Christ poor and despised, Christ hated and persecuted, Christ suffering and crucified, may He live in me henceforth, as He has lived in you Sebastian, His holy Martyr. Amen.

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be.

Tuesday: Fifth Day: I am the light of the world. Anyone who follows me will have the light of life. The executioners had done their work and left the place, leaving behind, tied to the tree the apparently lifeless body of their victim. But Sebastian wasn't dead yet. In the dark of the night an angel descended and consoled the brave soldier of Christ, who again had regained

consciousness. The angel called out into the night to attract the attention of people living in the neighborhood. A Christian lady, Irene by name, hastened to snatch the body of the holy martyr, still alive. Hurriedly she cut the ropes with which the soldiers had tied the body to the trunk of the tree, wrapped her cloak around him and supporting him she managed to bring him to her house. There she tended his wounds and took good care of him till he was cured. Greatly moved by the story of the angel which Sebastian told to the lady, they both gave thanks to the Lord for the wonderful manifestation of divine love and mercy.

We pray for all in our community who live with addiction, mental illness or disability.

Prayer: O glorious St. Sebastian, Pride of our holy Church: I praise the Lord Who has glorified you, His holy Martyr, in order to build up the faith in the hearts of Christians. From your place of glory look down upon me, so weak in my living of my faith. Pray to Jesus for me that I may walk with unbending strength of will on the path of genuine Christian teachings and never fail to serve my brothers and sisters in imitation of Christ. Make me to see the light the truth that makes us free. Help me cultivate the spiritual life with Christ, and through Christ, and in Christ, here on earth, and forever in heaven. Amen.

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be.

Wednesday: Sixth Day “Take up your cross every day and follow me.”

The emperor thought that Sebastian was dead. He rejoiced in the thought that he felled a strong pillar of the church of Christ. Imagine therefore his surprise and terror when, not long after, he stood before him, his wounds perfectly healed and his body restored to health and vigor.

“What,” he said, not fully trusting his eyes, “are you not Sebastian, whom I had ordered to be killed by arrows, for stubbornly adhering to that foolish Christian belief? How do you dare to appear before me now?” Sebastian said, “The Lord Jesus gave me back again the life which you tried to take from me, so that you be given fresh proof of the truth that there is but one Lord and that your gods are false and powerless.” Hearing these words, the emperor raged in anger and cried out to his soldiers: “Take this proud wretch, who dares to speak thus to me. Torture him, flog him, and kill him for sure.” Sebastian answered: “Know, my lord, that your tortures will be welcome to me; they will not make me relinquish my faith and betray Christ Who loved me and freed me from the slavery of sin and death. I shall not stop to preach Him and would gladly give one thousand lives for Him, if I had them.”

We pray for all in our parish who are living through financial difficulty and all who are anxious about the future.

Prayer: St. Sebastian, Martyr and Patron of our Parish, fearlessly you appeared before the emperor who now hated you so much; but you tried again to preach to him the truth about the Kingdom of God so that he might see and believe and bend his knees to worship the one, true God. Come to my aid in this confusing world of so many different voices and opinions and help me cling to Christ, my Lord, and to defend His holy Gospel by living it as fully as I can until the last day of my life. Holy Patron, assist me as I try to follow Jesus in the challenges of each day.

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be.

Thursday: Seventh Day “Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

For a second time Sebastian was fastened to the trunk of the tree; for a second time, the executioners did their bloody work on the soldier-martyr. Aside from humiliations heaped upon this high-ranking officer the torture was indescribable. With crude clubs they beat him, till pieces of flesh fell from his body. Then they shot him again with arrows. With astounding humility and patience Sebastian suffered this inhuman treatment, praying all the while for his torturers and for the victory of the cause of Christ. That Christ may live in the hearts of all people, he offered Him his life. The Lord accepted this selfless offering; He took the precious life of His martyr to make him live forever with Him in heavenly glory.

We pray for all in our parish who find themselves far from their homeland and families.

Prayer: Holy Patron of our Parish, St. Sebastian, I rejoice in your unending happiness. Compassionately look down upon me, as I pass through this world of temptations. When I look back upon my life I am disheartened by my frequent failures. Holy Martyr, obtain pardon for my sins against my Christian vocation; for having lived carelessly, neglectfully; for choosing comfort and the admiration of those around me over the following of Christ. Help me by your powerful intercession to live my life to God's glory, that I may be found worthy of sharing with you the unending joys of heaven. Amen.

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be.

Friday: Eighth Day “Blessed are those who mourn. They shall be comforted.”

“The blood of the martyrs is the seed of Christians.” This mysterious saying is almost as old as the church. While living, Sebastian through his words and miracles led many to the font of baptism and fanned in the hearts of many the desire to die for Him. The miracle of conversion to the true faith was still more multiplied after his death. The emperor learned of it and conscious of his powerlessness ordered that the corpse of the martyr be thrown into a foul-smelling pit, where the bodies of dead animals were thrown, to prevent the Christians from paying their martyr reverence and respect. However, this intention of the emperor was foiled, as the corpse, when being flung downward was caught by a protruding branch of a tree. The news of it was brought by Sebastian himself that very night to a pious lady, St. Lucina, whom he begged to go and fetch the body and bury it in the catacombs at the feet of the princes of the Apostles, Saints Peter and Paul. On this spot was built later the church of St. Sebastian, where the relics of this martyr of Christ are kept till now.

We pray for all who are involved in our parish school, pupils, staff and families.

Prayer: Holy Martyr, St. Sebastian, glorified by the holy lives of so many whom you have inspired to follow you to martyrdom, I resolve today to follow and to undergo voluntarily the martyrdom of dying to myself, that Christ may live in me and in the hearts of my brothers and sisters. Continue your sanctifying apostolate from heaven and shield us against the many temptations that surround us, so that the number of those who love Christ may increase. Keep us, O holy Martyr and powerful Protector, from pestilence and contagious diseases of body and soul. Amen.

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be.

Saturday: Ninth Day “I have come that you may have life, life in abundance.”

Diocletian goes down in history as a great emperor; but to the Christian true glory does not lie in earthly power. St. Sebastian remains in eternity a hero, whom God has crowned with glory. He is not dead and remembered only by name, as Diocletian is, but he lives in the Church, he lives in the hearts of the Christians who venerate him. To his honor churches and altars have been erected all over the world. Diocletian once believed he could stamp out the memory of Sebastian. God stood in the way of his evil plans and sided with Sebastian, His martyr, whom He honored and crowned with glory.

We ask God's blessing on our parish.

We pray for the intentions of all who have prayed this novena in honor of St. Sebastian.

Prayer: St. Sebastian, holy Patron, in heavenly glory and joy do not forget us, who carry on the mission of Christ through the Church. Grant that I may cling to Jesus Christ with my whole heart. Obtain for me on this last day of the novena a deeper love of God, my Lord and King, that I may serve Him with generosity of heart and with submission to His most holy will. Amen.

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be.

Adapted from St. Sebastian, Liverpool, England
<http://www.sebosw.org/-novena-st-sebastian.html>