

# 9 FIRST FRIDAYS DEVOTION

## 1. HOW DID THE FIRST FRIDAY DEVOTION BEGIN?

While some saints referenced the Heart of Jesus in their writings even centuries earlier, in 1673, a French Visitandine (Visitation) nun named Margaret Mary Alacoque had visions of Jesus, wherein he asked the Church to honor His Most Sacred Heart. In particular, Jesus asked the faithful to “receive Communion on the First Fridays, for nine consecutive months.” The request was connected to a specific promise made to all who venerated and promoted devotion to the Sacred Heart. After Margaret Mary’s death, the First Friday practice steadily spread in the Church — endorsed by popes and promoted by saints — but it greatly increased in popularity when Margaret Mary was canonized a saint in 1920 by Pope Benedict XV.

## 2. WHY NINE CONSECUTIVE MONTHS?

The number nine is traditionally associated with a novena and finds its origin in the nine days that the apostles spent in prayer before Pentecost. A novena provides an extended amount of time for preparation and interior renewal.

## 3. WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO DO ON FIRST FRIDAYS?

Go to Mass and receive Holy Communion with the intention of honoring Christ’s Sacred Heart. If you are not in a state of grace, and thus unable to receive, you will also need to go to confession.

## 4. WHAT ARE THE “PROMISES” CONNECTED TO THIS DEVOTION?

Jesus said to St. Margaret Mary, “In the excess of the mercy of my heart, I promise you that my all powerful love will grant to all those who will receive communion on the First Fridays, for nine consecutive months, the grace of final repentance: they will not die in my displeasure, nor without receiving the sacraments; and my heart will be their secure refuge in that last hour.” This means that if a person faithfully receives communion for nine consecutive months on First Fridays, Jesus will grant that person extra graces at the time of their death, making it possible to repent of their sins and receive the last rites (if needed).

This promise is the last of 12 promises connected to the Devotion to the Sacred Heart, particularly attached to the **Enthronement of the Sacred Heart** in one’s home:

- (1) I will give them all the graces necessary in their state of life.
- (2) I will establish peace in their homes.
- (3) I will comfort them in all their afflictions.
- (4) I will be their secure refuge during life, and above all, in death.
- (5) I will bestow abundant blessings upon all their undertakings.
- (6) Sinners will find in my heart the source and infinite ocean of mercy.
- (7) Lukewarm souls shall become fervent.
- (8) Fervent souls shall quickly mount to high perfection.
- (9) I will bless every place in which an image of my heart is exposed and honored.
- (10) I will give to priests the gift of touching the most hardened hearts.
- (11) Those who shall promote this devotion shall have their names written in my Heart.
- (12) I promise you in the excessive mercy of my Heart that my all-powerful love will grant to all those who receive Holy Communion on the First Fridays in nine consecutive months the grace of final perseverance; they shall not die in my disgrace, nor without receiving their sacraments. My divine heart shall be their safe refuge in this last moment.

## 5. ARE THE FIRST FRIDAYS A “TICKET” TO HEAVEN?

It is not as simple as going to Mass for nine months and then clocking out, never going to Mass again and leading a sinful life! The entire purpose of this devotion is to draw a person closer to the heart of Christ. If a person fulfills these obligations with sincere faith, it is natural for he or she to be closer to God and better prepared for death. The moment that this devotion is observed in a superstitious manner, neglecting the need to live a virtuous life, all bets are off and Jesus’ promise is null and void.

Jesus wants us to rest on his heart, like St. John, and the First Friday devotion is an opportunity for us to encounter him more than just on Sundays and to deepen our love of him.

Coming to know, love and trust that we may take rest in the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and place our anxieties within, is what the First Fridays are all about.