

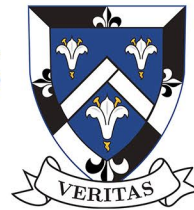


A NOVENA TO  
SAINT MARTIN  
DE PORRES

# A NOVENA TO SAINT MARTIN DE PORRES

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DOMINICAN FRIARS  
FOUNDATION



The ROSARY SHRINE  
of SAINT JUDE

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## **Acknowledgements**

The novena in this book is based on a novena promoted by the Saint Martin de Porres Guild based at Saint Vincent Ferrer Church in New York City. The biography and the stories associated with each day are based on information from a variety of different biographies including:

Ambec, Jacques. *St. Martin de Porres: In the Service of Compassion*. Translated by George Christian. Chicago, Illinois: New Priory Press, 2015.

Cavallini, Giuliana. *St. Martin de Porres: Apostle of Charity*. Translated by Caroline Holland. Charlotte, North Carolina: TAN Books, 1979.

Cushing, Richard. *St. Martin de Porres*. Boston, Massachusetts: St. Paul Editions, 1962.

O'Brien, Mary Elizabeth. *Brother Martin: Servant Leadership in Ministry to the Sick*. Chicago, Illinois: New Priory Press, 2019.

Thompson, Augustine. *Dominican Brothers: Conversi, Lay, and Cooperator Friars*. Chicago, Illinois: New Priory Press, 2017.

## **A Brief Biography**

Saint Martin de Porres was born in late 1579 to Ana Velazquez and Juan de Porres in Lima, Peru. His mother was a freed African slave from Panama while his father was a well-to-do Spaniard.<sup>1</sup> His parents were not married, but they had two children together, Martin and Juana.

Martin was baptized on December 9th, 1579 in Saint Sebastian Church in Lima. Early in his life, Martin, his sister, and his mother were left to support themselves, but Martin's father later took interest in his natural-born son receiving some education.

In his teenage years, Martin took up an apprenticeship as a barber-surgeon. In his time, the person who cut hair and trimmed beards also performed surgeries and prescribed medicines. Martin would use the healing skills learned during these years throughout his life in service to all.

Martin lived in a society obsessed with racial and class distinctions. Martin's mixed race and his socially-advancing education placed him outside of the categories imposed by his society. Martin took advantage of his unique position to build bridges across numerous dividing lines. He served all who were in need, whether rich or poor, African, Native Peruvian, or European.

In 1594, when he was about 15 years old, Martin entered the Dominican Order. On June 2, 1603, some nine years later, Martin made solemn profession.

Martin was known to have a deep and dedicated life of prayer. He prayed the Holy Rosary with great frequency and fervor. He also took on severe penances for his sins and the salvation of others.

Despite his poor upbringing, Martin gained the trust of many generous donors. He channeled their generosity to great effect, founding Lima's first orphanage and its first hospital for abandoned children.

Martin de Porres was, and still is, a great healer. He healed people spiritually and physically, through natural and supernatural means. His healing stretched across racial and class divides and even extended to various domesticated and wild animals.

After a life of prayer, penance, service, and numerous miracles, Martin died on November 3rd, 1639. His funeral was a major event. The Archbishop of Mexico City and the Viceroy of Peru helped carry his coffin. Popular support for his canonization began immediately.

Martin de Porres, though, would not be beatified until 1837 and not canonized as a Saint until 1962.

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<sup>1</sup> Much of the biographical information in this section comes from Father Augustine Thompson's book: Augustine Thompson, *Dominican Brothers: Conversi, Lay, and Cooperator Friars* (Chicago, Illinois: New Priory Press, 2017), 154-59.

Cardinal Cushing's book on Saint Martin de Porres describes him as "modest, yet outstanding in natural attainments; poor, but appealingly generous; lively and buoyant in temperament, yet serious and deeply religious."<sup>2</sup>

Saint Martin de Porres sought to conform himself to Jesus Christ, the servant and healer of all. His life manifested a deep indwelling of the Holy Trinity in his soul. His struggles to provide for unwanted children and to reach across racial and class divides make him especially relevant in our times.

May God help us all to learn from His servant Saint Martin de Porres. May we become instruments of God's healing love throughout the world.

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<sup>2</sup> Richard Cushing, *St. Martin de Porres* (Boston, Massachusetts: St. Paul Editions, 1962), 15.

## First Day

### *Saint Martin's Humility*

Saint Martin de Porres' humility came from an appreciation that we owe all that we have to God, our Creator. His humility paved the way for a tender, loving kindness present in his interactions with other friars, the poor, and all those Martin encountered.

### Saint Martin and the Mice<sup>3</sup>

Martin diligently worked to provide habits for the friars, bedding for those in the infirmary, and vestments for Mass. He negotiated good deals with local merchants to get the cloth necessary for these endeavors. He developed a system for all the clothing in his charge, even sewing numbers into the clothing and setting up a cupboard storage system.

One day, Martin and another friar discovered that mice had moved into his cupboards and were ruining the clothing and Martin's hard work. The other friar asked to set out poison for the mice, but Martin refused. Instead, he took up one of the mice in his hands.

At first, the mouse scurried about in his hands. But when Martin began to speak to the mouse, it stopped and listened attentively to Martin. Martin offered a deal. If the mice would move out to live in the corner of the garden, Martin would bring food to them every day after dinner.

Martin set the mouse down on the ground and it went back into the cupboards. Then, all the mice came out at once and followed Martin. They scurried quickly along the ground to keep up with Martin's long strides to the corner of the garden. From then on, Martin was allowed to take some food from the refectory to feed the mice in their corner and the mice never moved back into Martin's cupboards.

### Novena

Saint Martin imitated Our Lord, Who was meek and humble of heart. There was no pride or vanity in his soul. He realized that God is our Creator and that we are but His creatures. He understood that God loves us as children and only wants us to be happy. So he had common sense enough to submit entirely to the Holy Will of God. Let us all imitate Saint Martin by humbly doing the Will of God in all things.

Let us pray...

O Saint Martin, ask Our Lord and His Blessed Mother to give us the grace of true humility that we may not be puffed up with foolish pride, but have sense to be content with the gift that God

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<sup>3</sup> Giuliana Cavallini, *St. Martin de Porres: Apostle of Charity*, trans. Caroline Holland (Charlotte, North Carolina: TAN Books, 1979), 90–92.

gives us. Obtain for us the light of the Holy Spirit that we may understand, as you did, that pride is a deceit of the devil and that only by doing the Will of God can we be really happy. Amen.

Now recite one decade of the Most Holy Rosary.

## Second Day

### *Saint Martin's Love of God*

Throughout Saint Martin de Porres's life, he desired that the love of God transform and elevate all of his actions and desires. By day, he sought union with the Holy Trinity through his ministry to the poor and suffering. By night he sought union with the Holy Trinity through prayer and penance.

### Martin's Mystical Gifts

His nightly prayers grew in fervor throughout his life. Many friars report stumbling upon Martin in the small hours of the morning wrapped in spiritual ecstasy, often levitating above the floor.<sup>4</sup> Martin did not brag about the special spiritual gifts afforded to him. Really not much is known about what Martin said to God other than that he frequently prayed for the remission of sins, the redemption of sinners, and the salvation of the souls in purgatory.

### Novena

Saint Martin's whole soul was filled with the fire of God's love. He knew the Almighty God sent His Only Son into the world to suffer and die on the Cross for our Sins. His heart was stirred with deep affection for so loving a Redeemer, and his whole life gives evidence of his sincere gratitude. May we, too, learn to love Our Savior more and more and show our love by our good works.

Let us pray...

O Saint Martin, why are our hearts so cold and lacking in love for the Son of God, Who became a little Child for our salvation? Why are we so slow to love One Who loved us so much that He gave His life for mankind? Ask God and Our Lady of Sorrows to make us realize that the only way to happiness is by loving and serving God with all our hearts and souls. Amen.

Now recite one decade of the Most Holy Rosary.

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<sup>4</sup> Cavallini, 102.



## Third Day

### *Saint Martin's Love of the Poor*

The divine love present in Saint Martin de Porres's heart shone forth beautifully in his good works for the poor.

#### Saint Martin's Service During an Epidemic<sup>5</sup>

A great epidemic of measles broke out in Lima during Martin's time. The disease brought with it a very high fever and a delirium that would drive some of those afflicted into madness. 60 of the friars of his monastery came down with the disease. Martin, without hesitation, attended to all the needs of the sick.

One of the friars who had fallen ill lost an appetite for food. Martin, knowing that he could recover if he would start eating, asked him if there was anything he desired to eat. The friar named a specific fruit. Only after Martin appeared with the fruit and nursed him back to health did the friar realize that the fruit he asked for did not exist in the Lima market and was out of season. Martin never disclosed how he managed to come by a supply of the fruit.

#### Saint Martin's Service to a Poor Immigrant<sup>6</sup>

One day Martin discovered in the churchyard of the monastery a poor, 14-year-old immigrant from Spain who was alone, hungry, and listless. Martin took him to get food and clothing and offered to continue to help him if he would learn a trade.

The poor immigrant boy, named John, did not know what trade to learn, so he decided to learn how to be a barber from Martin. Martin patiently trained him, and after John mastered the craft, he decided to stay on to help Martin with his assistance to the poor.

John proved to be a kind and prudent man. Martin gave him the task of aiding families from high social classes who had fallen on hard times and were too embarrassed to ask for help. John proved to be helpful in carefully assisting those in this socially delicate situation.

### Novena

Saint Martin was called "The Father of the Poor." He saw in the poor, the sick, and the dying the children of God, and he helped them in a thousand practical ways. He studied medicine so that he might know how to cure the sick. Every day he distributed alms to the poor. He built an orphanage for children. Let us imitate the charity of Saint Martin that God may bless us as He blessed him.

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<sup>5</sup> Cavallini, 77-79.

<sup>6</sup> Cavallini, 123-24.

Let us pray...

O Saint Martin, teach us to be generous with the gifts that God has given us. Make us sympathetic towards those who are suffering and afflicted. Pray to Our Redeemer and to Our Lady of Mercy that our hearts may not be hardened by sin and selfishness, but that we may always be kind and generous to our neighbors because they are the children of Our Heavenly Father. Amen

Now recite one decade of the Most Holy Rosary.

## **Fourth Day**

### *Saint Martin's Faith*

Saint Martin de Porres spent most of his time when he was not in prayer attending to the needs of the poor and the friars. However, that did not seem to stop Martin from possessing a surprising knowledge of theology and philosophy.

#### Saint Martin Resolves a Dispute Among Students<sup>7</sup>

On one occasion, two Dominican student brothers were arguing about some issue in metaphysics. As the noise of their discussion began to escalate, Martin peaceably inquired as to what was the matter at hand. Having heard the topic, he replied with the specific passage in Thomas Aquinas's *Summa Theologiae* that answered the dispute.

Perhaps Martin was looking through books in the library in his little free time, but many of his contemporaries figured that given Martin's intense schedule of prayer and work, God may have given him special gifts of infused knowledge.

#### Novena

Saint Martin had a lively faith in all the teachings of the Catholic Church because he knew that it was founded by Jesus Christ, the Son of God, Who can neither deceive nor be deceived. God rewarded Saint Martin's humble faith by enlightening his mind so that he could understand the mysteries of our Holy Religion. May God give us the grace always to believe the truths which He has revealed.

Let us pray...

O Saint Martin, we need strong faith in God and His Holy Church, especially in these days when so many people have turned against religion. Bring to a knowledge and love of the true Church all non-Catholics that they may find the way to salvation and happiness. Ask Christ and Our Lady of Good Counsel to make us faithful soldiers of Jesus Christ in life and death. Amen

Now recite one decade of the Most Holy Rosary.

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<sup>7</sup> Cavallini, 67–69.

## Fifth Day

### *Saint Martin's Confidence in God*

Saint Martin de Porres's confidence in God cleared all obstacles to serving God and neighbor from his heart.

### Saint Martin's Desire to Go to the Missions

In the late 1500s and early 1600s, the ability of Christians to enter into China and Japan increased somewhat. This gave Martin dreams of traveling to the Far East, spreading the gospel, ministering to those in need, and then laying down his life as a martyr for Jesus Christ.

Despite Martin's fervent desire to demonstrate his deep love of God through the ultimate sacrifice, he did not get the opportunity. However, God may have allowed Martin to minister in places throughout the world through the miracle of bilocation. Various reports suggest that Martin may have visited Algeria, the Philippines, and China.<sup>8</sup> A man named Francisco de Montoya saw Martin ministering to the Christian slaves in Algeria. When Francisco came to Peru, he recognized Martin and asked him about his ministry in Algeria to which Martin replied evasively. Another man who had spent a long time in China visited Peru and found that Martin knew even more than he did about the customs practiced by the Chinese.

### Novena

Saint Martin firmly relied on the goodness and promises of God. He hoped, through the grace of God and the merits of Jesus Christ, one day to obtain an eternal reward. We know that Saint Martin's trust in God was not in vain. We, too, are confident that God will forgive us our sins if we are truly sorry and that He will give us everlasting life if we serve Him faithfully by obeying His commandments.

Let us pray...

O Saint Martin, help us to have a great confidence in Almighty God. Make us understand that He is One Friend Who will never desert us as long as we are true to Him. Keep us from foolishly presuming that we will be saved without cooperating with Grace, but keep us also from despair, which forgets the mercy of God. Ask the Child Jesus and His dear Mother to increase in our hearts faith, hope, and charity. Amen.

Now recite one decade of the Most Holy Rosary.

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<sup>8</sup> Jacques Ambec, *St. Martin de Porres: In the Service of Compassion*, trans. George Christian (Chicago, Illinois: New Priory Press, 2015), 31–32.

## Sixth Day

### *Saint Martin's Devotion to Prayer*

Saint Martin de Porres's desire for union with God impelled him to fervent prayer even as a child.

### Saint Martin's Childhood Vigils<sup>9</sup>

After learning his trade as a teenager, Martin was capable of bringing in a significant income. However, he refused to take payment from the poor, and when he did accept money from others, much of it went to helping the poor in Lima.

Martin's love of God was so great, even as a child, that he desired to dedicate his night times to prayer even after working many hours during the day for the benefit of the poor.

To facilitate his nighttime vigils, though, he needed some candles. Not having much money left after his charitable giving, he resorted to begging his family's landlady for the stubs of candles that she would otherwise throw away.

His landlady was curious what he was doing with all her candle stubs, so she decided to spy on him. She peered through the keyhole of his room to find him motionless, on his knees with arms outstretched in the form of a cross, praying silently to Jesus Christ.

The experience had a profound effect on her, and she began to tell her friends about Martin, some of whom even came to spy on him themselves. Martin, though, was seemingly unaware of their indiscretions.

### Novena

Saint Martin kept his mind and heart always lifted up to the Creator of all things. His prayer came from the depths of his soul. It did not come just from his lips. He turned to God to adore Him, to thank Him, and to ask Him for help. Saint Martin prayed with humility and perseverance, and God was pleased to answer his prayers in miraculous ways. He will pray for us before the Throne of God in Heaven.

Let us pray...

O Saint Martin, help us to realize that Christ really meant what He said when He promised "Ask, and it shall be given to you: seek, and you shall find." Make us faithful in attending Holy Mass and other devotions held in church. Remind us to say our daily prayers to obtain the blessing of God. Ask the Queen of the Most Holy Rosary to give a share in the treasures of the Holy Rosary. Amen.

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<sup>9</sup> Cavallini, *St. Martin de Porres*, 9.

Now recite one decade of the Most Holy Rosary.

## Seventh Day

### *Saint Martin's Spirit of Penance*

Martin took on difficult penances for the purification of his soul, in reparation for his sins and those of others, and for the poor souls in purgatory.

#### Saint Martin's Penitential Life<sup>10</sup>

Martin's diet consisted largely of water and sweet potatoes, a staple of the region. He gave up eating meat. He slept on wooden boards, took the discipline three times a night, and wore an iron chain around his waist. These penances inspired by God's grace, helped conform him to Jesus Christ crucified.

#### Novena

Saint Martin was a brave man. He was not afraid of hard work. He did not weakly seek for comforts as we so often do. Even though he labored so hard, he was glad to do severe penances for his sins and for the salvation of souls. If so holy a man did penances, how much more should we, who have seriously offended Almighty God by our sinfulness!

Let us pray...

O Saint Martin, from you we learn how to be courageous and valiant. From your life we learn to avoid idleness and self-seeking. Give us some of that spirit of penance which you had, so that we may be brave in the struggle with temptations. Ask Jesus Crucified and Mary, the Queen of Martyrs, to give us the grace to fight the good fight for victory. Amen.

Now recite one decade of the Most Holy Rosary.

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<sup>10</sup> Cavallini, 29–35.

## **Eighth Day**

### *Saint Martin's Reward*

#### Saint Martin's Holy Death<sup>11</sup>

Martin often contended with an illness accompanied by a fever, in the autumn. In 1639, Martin came down with the illness that he knew would be his last. Although Martin first laid down on his usual bed of boards, the prior ordered him moved to a regular bed in the infirmary.

In the infirmary, there was an altar with a tabernacle that reserved the sacrament for when the time came for the last rites. Before Martin's final struggle with the pains of the illness, he saw Mary, the Mother of God, Saint Dominic, and Saint Vincent Ferrer by the altar.

Soon his final struggle with the severe pain of the fever set in. In this final contest, Martin asked for nothing but his crucifix which he held in front of himself, frequently kissing it with tender care in the midst of great agony.

A priest faithfully attended the bedside of Martin, ready to signal the brethren to assemble for Martin's last moments. Twice, the priest was ready to give the signal only to be stopped by a motion of Martin's arm. The third time, Martin permitted the signal to be given.

Wooden clappers rang out down the corridors and through every corner of the monastery. All the brethren assembled, overflowing the room and spilling out into the hall. Many knelt down and wept.

Father John, a dear friend of Martin, desired that Martin would look upon him one last time. He prayed silently for this favor. Martin opened his eyes one last time, looked toward Father John and smiled. John wiped the sweat pouring down Martin's face with his handkerchief, saving the handkerchief as a relic and a reminder of a friend.

Closing his eyes and laying his head down, Martin then heard the friars start chanting the *Salve Regina* one last time. In this moment, peace came over Martin's face. Perhaps Martin was recalling all of the most beautiful moments of his life: the nightly vigils, the chanting of the psalms, the solemn Masses.

Following the *Salve Regina*, the friars began to sing the *Credo* in harmony, combining sublime beauty with the strength and triumph of the Holy Creed of the Church Fathers. It was during this last proclamation of the Holy Catholic Faith that the crucifix slipped from Martin's hands and fell to his chest as he gave up his spirit. Martin passed on to his eternal reward on November 3rd, 1639, which we now celebrate as his feast day.

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<sup>11</sup> Cavallini, 187–96.



## Novena

Saint Martin died a holy and peaceful death. He had spent his life in doing good as a humble Brother of the Dominican Order. But he that humbles himself shall be exalted. Soon his heroic life became known all over the world, and on May 6, 1962, Pope John XXIII solemnly declared Martin de Porres a Saint of God.

Let us pray...

O Saint Martin, you have been raised up by Almighty God to show us the way to our true home. You have given us the good example and the encouragement that we need. We now realize from your life that all we have to do to win the reward of glory is to love and serve the Merciful God. May we ever be humble that we, too, may be exalted unto everlasting life. Amen.

Now recite one decade of the Most Holy Rosary.

## Ninth Day

### *Saint Martin's Miracles*

Saint Martin de Porres has had an extraordinary number of miracles attributed to his intercession, starting within days of his death and continuing to modern times. The Church, though, sets a high standard for the miracles that can be used in the canonization process of a saint.

Saint Martin de Porres had four miracles officially recognized by the Church during his canonization process.

#### Healing of the Eye of Elvira Moriano<sup>12</sup>

The first was the healing of Elvira Moriano of Lima, Peru. Elvira accidentally dropped an earthen dish while carrying a home medical remedy such that a shard of the pot hit her in the eye in just such a manner that her entire eye was destroyed. The surgeon who came to attend to Elvira said that there was nothing that could be done.

News of the accident spread through Lima and reached Martin's old monastery, the Monastery of the Holy Rosary where Elvira's son was a novice. The prior had pity on the novice's mother and sent a relic of Saint Martin. When the relic was held to the eye of Elvira, her eye was regenerated and she was able to see again perfectly.

#### Healing of the Head Fracture of Melchior Varanda<sup>13</sup>

The second miracle approved by the Church was the healing of Melchior Varanda. Melchior was the son of a slave who worked at the house of a lady named Agnes Vidal. Melchior was two years old when one day, when playing outside of the sight of those in the house, he fell 18 feet from a balcony hitting his head on the street below.

A doctor came at once, but he said that he was powerless to do anything and recommended that they pray to Saint Martin de Porres for a miracle. The lady of the house, Agnes, ran to get a picture of Saint Martin. The picture was held to the head of the little boy, and by the next day he was completely healed of his head fracture.

#### Healing of the Intestines of Dorothy Caballero Escalante<sup>14</sup>

The Church approved a third miracle in the healing of Dorothy Caballero Escalante, an elderly widow in Paraguay. Dorothy suddenly fell ill with an intestinal blockage. The doctors said that the only solution was a surgical procedure, but given her condition, they would not risk such an operation.

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<sup>12</sup> Cavallini, 223–24.

<sup>13</sup> Cavallini, 224–26.

<sup>14</sup> Cavallini, 228–29.

Unfortunately, within a week, Dorothy was on the verge of death. Her daughter, who lived in Buenos Aires, received word of her mother's condition and quickly rushed to be at her side. The daughter fervently prayed to Martin de Porres for her mother to be healed as she hurriedly packed her bags, travelled to the airport, and flew to Paraguay.

Upon reaching the threshold of her mother's house, her fervent prayers of supplication turned into exclamations of thanksgiving as she found her mother had been instantly cured.

#### Healing of the Foot of Anthony Cabrera Perez<sup>15</sup>

The fourth miracle occurred in 1956 on the Canary Islands. Anthony Cabrera Perez was a four year old boy who enjoyed climbing. One day, when climbing on a wall under construction, a 70-pound stone gave way and fell onto Anthony's foot. The damage was so severe, that despite every effort of the doctors, nothing could be done to mend the foot. Gangrene began to spread up the foot so the doctors resolved to amputate the foot entirely.

A family friend came from Madrid to comfort the family. He brought with him a picture of Martin de Porres and implored them to pray for the healing of their child. Anthony's mother, father, and the superior of the hospital stayed into the evening praying for the healing of Anthony, passing the picture of Martin over his foot. That very night, Anthony's foot was completely healed.

#### Involvement of Dominicans from the United States in Saint Martin's Cause

Giuliana Cavallini, biographer of Saint Martin de Porres, mentions three groups in the United States that played a key role in his canonization. The Dominican Sisters of Sparkill, New York, The Dominican Sisters of the Perpetual Rosary in Union City, New Jersey, and the Dominican Friars of the Province of St. Joseph.<sup>16</sup>

#### Novena

Saint Martin performed many miracles during his life and after his holy death. We can go to him with confidence for he will grant our petitions if they are for the good of our souls. His heart is very big, and he loves to help mankind in every way. We have only to tell him our troubles and to ask him to help us. If we do our part, we can be sure that our dear friend, Saint Martin, will do his.

Let us pray...

O Lord Jesus Christ, Who inflamed the heart of Saint Martin with an ardent love of the poor and Who taught him the wonderful joy of true humility and the wisdom of always submitting to God's Holy Will, grant that, like him, we may be ever truly humble of heart and full of Christ-like charity for suffering humanity. We thank You for having raised Blessed Martin to the High Dignity

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<sup>15</sup> Cavallini, 229–30.

<sup>16</sup> Cavallini, 227–28.

of Sainthood that, by imitating the holy life and enjoying the powerful help of this great saint, the whole world may be drawn nearer to You, the Savior of the human race, Who live and reign with God the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit forever. Amen.

Now recite one decade of the Most Holy Rosary.