

Novena to St. Marcellus



Icon of Saint Marcellus located in the Russian Orthodox Church of the Resurrection, [Rabat](#).

St. Marcellus the Centurion, after some years of army service, found he could no longer continue in military obedience. One day in 298, during the reign of the Emperor Diocletian, Marcellus's unit in northern Africa was celebrating the pagan emperor's birthday with a party. Suddenly Marcellus rose before the banqueters and denounced such celebrations as heathen. Casting off his military insignia, he cried out, "I serve Jesus Christ the eternal King. I will no longer serve your emperors and I scorn to worship your gods of wood and stone, which are deaf and dumb idols."

Marcellus was immediately arrested for breach of discipline. At his trial, he admitted that he had done that of which he was accused. He declared that it is "not right for a Christian man, who serves the Lord Christ, to serve in the armies of the world." Found guilty, he was immediately beheaded. According to the ancient testimonies, he died in great peace of mind, asking God to bless the judge who had condemned him.

<http://www.incommunion.org/2007/10/27/saint-marcellus-military-martyr/>



The relics of St. Marcellus are preserved in the high altar in the Basilica of the Sacred Heart on the campus at the University of Notre Dame in South Bend, Indiana. Annually there is a commemoration of this holy martyr on October 30, the anniversary of his execution. What implications might his refusal to use violence in the service of the empire have for Christians today?



Day 1: Conversion

Opening Prayer

Come, Holy Spirit, enlighten our minds. Guide us and guard us as we seek the path of Truth. Form our consciences according to your Truth. Grant us courage to follow this Way of Truth in all seasons regardless of cost. We ask this in the name of Jesus who sacrificed Himself for love of us. Amen.

Read and Reflect

"From that time on Jesus began to proclaim this theme: 'Reform your lives! The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' "

Matthew 4:17

"And we who delighted in war, in the slaughter of one another, and in every other kind of iniquity have in every part of the world converted our weapons into implements of peace - our swords into plough-shares, our spears into farmers' tools - and we cultivate piety, justice, brotherly charity, faith and hope, which we derive from the Father through the crucified Savior."

St. Justin Martyr (103-165)

"Today as then, authentic conversion of hearts represents the right path, the only one that can lead each one of us and all humanity to the hoped-for peace. It is the path indicated by Jesus. He who is the King of the universe did not come to bring peace to the world with an army, but through the rejection of violence. He said so explicitly to Peter in the Garden of Olives: 'Put your sword back into its place; for all who take the sword will perish by the sword' (Mt 26: 52); and then he said to Pontius Pilate: 'If my kingship were of this world, my servants would fight, that I might not be handed over to the Jews; but my kingship is not from the world' (Jn 18: 36)."

Pope Benedict XVI

Silent Prayer

Closing Prayer

St. Marcellus, in obedience to your conscience, you laid down your life to be faithful to Christ and to His Way of Peace. Through your intercession and example, may all Christians come to know and practice the self-sacrificial, nonviolent love of Jesus toward all people. We ask this in the name of Jesus, the Lamb of God. Amen.

St. Marcellus, pray for us!

Notre Dame, Mother of Peace, pray for us!

Day 2: Disarming Peter

Opening Prayer

Come, Holy Spirit, enlighten our minds. Guide us and guard us as we seek the path of Truth. Form our consciences according to your Truth. Grant us courage to follow this Way of Truth in all seasons regardless of cost. We ask this in the name of Jesus who sacrificed Himself for love of us. Amen.

Read and Reflect

"Then Jesus said to him, 'Put your sword back into its sheath, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword.' "

Matthew 26:52

"Christ, in disarming Peter, disarmed every soldier."

Tertullian (c. 160 – c. 220)

"The cruel consequences of religiously motivated violence are only too evident to us all. Violence does not build up the kingdom of God, the kingdom of humanity. On the contrary, it is a favorite instrument of the Antichrist, however idealistic its religious motivation may be. It serves, not humanity, but inhumanity."

Pope Benedict XVI

Silent Prayer

Closing Prayer

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Day 3: Gospel Nonviolence

Opening Prayer

Come, Holy Spirit, enlighten our minds. Guide us and guard us as we seek the path of Truth. Form our consciences according to your Truth. Grant us courage to follow this Way of Truth in all seasons regardless of cost. We ask this in the name of Jesus who sacrificed Himself for love of us. Amen.

Read and Reflect

"When someone slaps you on one cheek, turn and give him the other; when someone takes your coat, let him have your shirt as well." Luke 6:29

"I am a soldier of Christ and it is not permissible for me to fight."

St. Martin of Tours (315-397)

"This Gospel passage is rightly considered the magna carta of Christian non-violence. It does not consist in succumbing to evil, as a false interpretation of 'turning the other cheek' (cf. Lk 6:29) claims, but in responding to evil with good (cf. Rom 12:17-21) and thereby breaking the chain of injustice." Pope Benedict XVI

Silent Prayer

Closing Prayer

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Day 4: The New Commandment

Opening Prayer

Come, Holy Spirit, enlighten our minds. Guide us and guard us as we seek the path of Truth. Form our consciences according to your Truth. Grant us courage to follow this Way of Truth in all seasons regardless of cost. We ask this in the name of Jesus who sacrificed Himself for love of us. Amen.

Read and Reflect

"I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another. This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." John 13:34-35

"If you enroll as one of God's people, heaven is your country and God your lawgiver. And what are his laws? You shall not kill. You shall love your neighbor as yourself. To him that strikes you on the one cheek, turn to him the other also."

St. Clement of Alexandria (C. 150- C. 215)

"Jesus promised he would give everyone 'rest', but on one condition: 'Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart'. What is this 'yoke' which lightens instead of burdening, which instead of oppressing, uplifts? The 'yoke' of Christ is the law of love; it is his commandment which he bequeathed to his disciples. The true remedy for humanity's wounds, both material — such as hunger and injustice in all its forms — and psychological and moral, caused by a false well-being, is a rule of life based on fraternal love, whose source is in the love of God. For this reason it is necessary to abandon the way of arrogance, of violence used to obtain ever more powerful positions, to assure oneself of success at any price." Pope Benedict XVI

Silent Prayer

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Day 5: Conscience

Opening Prayer

Come, Holy Spirit, enlighten our minds. Guide us and guard us as we seek the path of Truth. Form our consciences according to your Truth. Grant us courage to follow this Way of Truth in all seasons regardless of cost. We ask this in the name of Jesus who sacrificed Himself for love of us. Amen.

Read and Reflect

"We must obey God rather than men."

Acts 5:29

"Dion the Proconsul: 'Serve or you will die.'

St. Maximilian: 'I will never serve. You can cut off my head, but I will not be a soldier of this world, for I am a soldier of Christ.'

Dion: 'What has put these ideas into your head?'

St. Maximilian: 'My conscience and He who has called me...'" Acts of St. Maximilian

"Over the pope as expression of the binding claim of ecclesiastical authority, there stands one's own conscience which must be obeyed before all else, even if necessary against the requirement of ecclesiastical authority. This emphasis on the individual, whose conscience confronts him with a supreme and ultimate tribunal, and one which in the last resort is beyond the claim of external social groups, even the official church, also establishes a principle in opposition to increasing totalitarianism".

Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger

Silent Prayer

Closing Prayer

St. Marcellus, in obedience to your conscience, you laid down your life to be faithful to Christ and to His Way of Peace. Through your intercession and example, may all Christians come to know and practice the self-sacrificial, nonviolent love of Jesus toward all people. We ask this in the name of Jesus, the Lamb of God. Amen.

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Day 6: Love of Enemies

Opening Prayer

Come, Holy Spirit, enlighten our minds. Guide us and guard us as we seek the path of Truth. Form our consciences according to your Truth. Grant us courage to follow this Way of Truth in all seasons regardless of cost. We ask this in the name of Jesus who sacrificed Himself for love of us. Amen.

Read and Reflect

"To those who hear me, I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you: bless those who curse you and pray for those who maltreat you."

Luke 6:27-28

"Murder, considered a crime when people commit it singly, is transformed into a virtue when they do it en masse."

St. Cyprian (200-258)

"Love of one's enemy constitutes the nucleus of the 'Christian revolution', a revolution not based on strategies of economic, political or media power: the revolution of love, a love that does not rely ultimately on human resources but is a gift of God which is obtained by trusting solely and unreservedly in his merciful goodness. Here is the newness of the Gospel which silently changes the world! Here is the heroism of the 'lowly' who believe in God's love and spread it, even at the cost of their lives."

Pope Benedict XVI

Silent Prayer

Closing Prayer

St. Marcellus, in obedience to your conscience, you laid down your life to be faithful to Christ and to His Way of Peace. Through your intercession and example, may all Christians come to know and practice the self-sacrificial, nonviolent love of Jesus toward all people. We ask this in the name of Jesus, the Lamb of God. Amen.

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Day 7: Forgiveness

Opening Prayer

Come, Holy Spirit, enlighten our minds. Guide us and guard us as we seek the path of Truth. Form our consciences according to your Truth. Grant us courage to follow this Way of Truth in all seasons regardless of cost. We ask this in the name of Jesus who sacrificed Himself for love of us. Amen.

Read and Reflect

"All bitterness, fury, anger, shouting, and reviling must be removed from you, along with all malice. And be kind to one another, compassionate, forgiving one another as God has forgiven you in Christ. So be imitators of God, as beloved children, and live in love, as Christ loved us and handed himself over for us in a sacrificial offering to God for a fragrant aroma."
Ephesians 4:31-5:2

"Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. Lord, do not hold this sin against them."

St. Stephen, first martyr

"The first of Jesus' words from the Cross, spoken almost at the very moment when the act of crucifixion was being carried out, is a plea for the forgiveness of those who treat him thus: 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do' (Lk 23:34)."

Pope Benedict XVI

Silent Prayer

Closing Prayer

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Day 8: The Peace of Christ

Opening Prayer

Come, Holy Spirit, enlighten our minds. Guide us and guard us as we seek the path of Truth. Form our consciences according to your Truth. Grant us courage to follow this Way of Truth in all seasons regardless of cost. We ask this in the name of Jesus who sacrificed Himself for love of us. Amen.

Read and Reflect

"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give it to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid." John 14:27

"The Church is an army of peace which sheds no blood."
St. Clement of Alexandria (C. 150- C. 215)

"Christ's proposal is realistic because it takes into account that in the world there is too much violence, too much injustice, and therefore that this situation cannot be overcome except by countering it with more love, with more goodness. This 'more' comes from God: it is his mercy which was made flesh in Jesus and which alone can 'tip the balance' of the world from evil to good, starting with that small and decisive 'world' which is the human heart."
Pope Benedict XVI

Silent Prayer

Closing Prayer

St. Marcellus, in obedience to your conscience, you laid down your life to be faithful to Christ and to His Way of Peace. Through your intercession and example, may all Christians come to know and practice the self-sacrificial, nonviolent love of Jesus toward all people. We ask this in the name of Jesus, the Lamb of God. Amen.

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Day 9: Peacemaking

Opening Prayer

Come, Holy Spirit, enlighten our minds. Guide us and guard us as we seek the path of Truth. Form our consciences according to your Truth. Grant us courage to follow this Way of Truth in all seasons regardless of cost. We ask this in the name of Jesus who sacrificed Himself for love of us. Amen.

Read and Reflect

"Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called children of God." Matthew 5:9

"In peace, not in war, we are trained." St. Clement of Alexandria (C. 150- C. 215)

"Above all we want to make the voice of Jesus...heard. He was always a man of peace. It could be expected that, when God came to earth, he would be a man of great power, destroying the opposing forces. That he would be a man of powerful violence as an instrument of peace. Not at all. He came in weakness. He came with only the strength of love, totally without violence, even to the point of going to the Cross. This is what shows us the true face of God, that violence never comes from God, never helps bring anything good, but is a destructive means and not the path to escape difficulties. He is thus a strong voice against every type of violence. He strongly invites all sides to renounce violence, even if they feel they are right. The only path is to renounce violence, to begin anew with dialogue, with the attempt to find peace together, with a new concern for one another, a new willingness to be open to one another. This...is Jesus' true message: seek peace with the means of peace and leave violence aside." Pope Benedict XVI

Silent Prayer

Closing Prayer

St. Marcellus, in obedience to your conscience, you laid down your life to be faithful to Christ and to His Way of Peace. Through your intercession and example, may all Christians come to know and practice the self-sacrificial, nonviolent love of Jesus toward all people. We ask this in the name of Jesus, the Lamb of God. Amen.

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This Novena to St. Marcellus was produced by the Notre Dame PeaceNet which is an organization of members of the Notre Dame and St. Mary's communities originally brought together almost 20 years ago through the efforts of Frank Carver ND'44 to institute a chair in nonviolence at the university.

The mission of the Notre Dame PeaceNet today is to continue to promote Gospel nonviolence within the Notre Dame family so that the university will demonstrate in concrete ways, both on campus and in its curriculum, a commitment to Gospel nonviolence and ultimately sever all ties with the military-industrial complex.

“God of perfect peace, violence and cruelty can have no part with you. May those who are at peace with one another hold fast to the good will that unites them; may those who are enemies forget their hatred and be healed. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son Who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.”

(Mass for Peace and Justice – Roman Missal)

Additional copies of the novena may be obtained by contacting the Notre Dame PeaceNet or by going to www.ndpeacenet.org and downloading it.

