



# A LENTEN NOVENA FOR OUR PRIESTS

## **Introductory Prayer:**

*Come, Holy Spirit, fill me with your gifts and fruits so that I may better accompany my priests as they lead me to Calvary en route to Resurrection. In this trek into the desert, they will be attacked on all sides, both from within themselves, and from within and outside the Church, as the devil and his minions seek to rob my priests of all that enables them to be the “other Christs” I **need** them to be.*

*This Lent may I find creative and practical ways to help carve out for my priests the time, space, and energy they need to allow them to best deepen their appreciation of their priesthood and better enable them to live it fully for Christ’s sake and for their flocks.*

## **DAY ONE**

O Gracious Captain, my Savior, this Lent grant me the grace to accompany priests into the desert in preparation for the battle for souls, for my soul. May I be a watchman and guard to help prepare them for the conflicts ahead so they can lead their flocks, and me, through death into life. As another Simon of Cyrene, enable me to truly be with my priests on the march to Calvary. Like Simon, I may begin fearfully, but **turn any reluctance into courage and make me ever attentive to how I may assist my priests on this lifelong Way of the Cross.**

## DAY TWO

O Gracious Captain, my Savior, your Cross was heavy, hard, bloody, and rough, but Simon picked it up regardless. Help me realize concretely that splinters, meaning pains, are inevitable if I choose to follow my priests on this journey. Everything that happens to them I will, in some way, be exposed to. If I want to serve you by serving your priests, **don't let me fear the splinters**. I am not expecting a perfect and smooth Cross fit to my liking but one that will force me to die to self and live for others, especially your priests.

## DAY THREE

O Gracious Captain, my Savior, Simon bore the load both with initial reluctance and real ignorance of the reality of what was happening. By journey's end he would know better what you had in mind for him, but he still would not see the concrete fruit of his labors immediately.

**Strengthen my trust** that whatever aid I give my priests will help them whether or not I or anyone else can see it. I want to show them they don't travel to Calvary alone.

## **DAY FOUR**

O Gracious Captain, my Savior, Simon **carried the weight** of the Cross neither willingly nor perfectly at first. You fell again even after he was forced to assist you. Make me able to learn from my mistakes in whatever ways I have failed to support my priests in the past. Help me resolve to redouble my efforts, especially when it is most difficult and unpopular. May my priests have confidence that I will keep trying to help and assist them.

## **DAY FIVE**

O Gracious Captain, my Savior, Simon **supported you as well as your burden**. As your body weakened with each step and the Cross felt correspondingly heavier, he had to hold both you and the wood up. This had to be more than he bargained for when pressed into service. It would have taxed his energies giving him reason to quit. After all, he wasn't the condemned man, just an innocent bystander. But he didn't give up. When it gets very hard, and there is real personal risk involved, to support my priests, Lord, do not allow me to abandon them in their greatest need.

## **DAY SIX**

O Gracious Captain, my Savior, Simon also **absorbed some of the blows and lashes of whips** that assailed you en route to Calvary. Perhaps he contended with rocks and dirt tossed at you as well. He used his body however he could to shield you. In order to protect and shield my priests, I will need to be willing to experience how badly they are treated at times. I need to risk being close to them when others, feeling an unjust condemnation permits open persecution, feel free to attack.

## **DAY SEVEN**

O Gracious Captain, my Savior, Simon, with his ear close to yours as you struggled to carry the Cross, would have **heard and felt all the calumny, slander and insults hurled at you**. Allow me not to fear a common malady in the Church these days: guilt-by-association. If I am to seriously be of service to my priests this Lent, I must place first in my mind that I am serving *other Christs* not *other potential criminals*. The world is out to destroy you and the Church you founded. Since that is ultimately not possible, the world will seek to destroy individual priests of the Church. That is entirely possible. Help me fight that.

## **DAY EIGHT**

O Gracious Captain, my Savior, for all his initial reluctance when pressed into service, Simon of Cyrene, did, in fact, **stay the course and went with you *all the way***. Grant me the strength and steadfastness to do this. Help me be with and support my priests all the way. I will proactively decide at the parish level, physically and spiritually, to walk closely with my priests this Lent, and ever after. The earthly scandal will not end this Easter, this year, or in my lifetime. But Easter and Paschal tide will remind me that the goal is still indeed Eternal Life. I need your priests if I am to have Eternal Life. Increase my gratitude for them.

## **DAY NINE**

O Gracious Captain, my Savior, this Lent, **I want to be as close to you as Simon was**. In the Passion narrative and the devotion of the Stations of the Cross, Simon is the one physically closest to Jesus. Even his Mother, Mary, though completely united with him spiritually as no one else could be, could not be arm in arm with him beneath the weight of that wood like Simon. Simon's labor and anguish were being changed by divine illumination as he carried the weight without rebelling. Help me to move beyond human logic, if necessary, being faithful to God's call to see where I can help my priests best.

## CONCLUDING PRAYER

*Holy Spirit, this Lent show me how to follow and accompany Jesus Christ, the High Priest, to Calvary and what I can learn from his first priests.*

*Help me remember that my priests - like those very first priests - are also merely human like me. Like me, they can fall. Grant me the strength and courage to help them back up.*

*The Apostles were uncertain, afraid, and unsure but they followed as you set your face toward Jerusalem. They were overcome by events: they betrayed, denied, and fled you, their Master. But, save one, they returned. They could not comprehend the victory hidden in the defeat of the Cross. But with and through Mary, they would learn to forever see in it the sign of conquered death and evil. She demonstrated how to stand beneath it as you opened your pierced Heart to heal all mankind and see, viscerally, defeat turned to victory.*

*In the anxieties and unknowns of life, teach me, no matter what, to follow you, my Master, my Lord, my God and my King, especially when you lead me to Golgotha. Give me hope, even without sensing it, that this is the only road to Resurrection.*

## Suggestions to accompany Novena

- + Be Simon for as many priests as you can
- + Go to adoration regularly, go to confession weekly, go to Mass daily.
- + Pray the rosary with awareness that this is a concrete, powerful way to help my priests
- + Pray the Stations of the Cross frequently and 'be Simon' for all 14 stations (meaning go all the way this Lent)
- + Free up the priest so he can attend to what really matters in his ministry: the things only an ordained priest can do
- + Make it a point to commit to personally and publicly grow in your Catholic faith
- + Thank your priest **personally** for his ministry
- + Really, really, REALLY, **REALLY** start living the Gospel truth. In doing so, your priest will see that the love of his life (Jesus and His Church) is yours too and he will not feel alone. At least one member of his flock "gets it".

*This beautiful Novena reflection was created for the Knights of Columbus by the Handmaids of Precious Blood, New Market, Tennessee. [www.nunsforpriests.org](http://www.nunsforpriests.org)*

