



## Novena of Grace 2021

**Readings:** Isaiah 49: 8-15 | Psalm 145: 8-9, 13cd-14, 17-18 | John 5: 17-30

**Grace:** We pray for the grace to comfort and show mercy with the heart of a mother.

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### Called to Love

In this last day of our Novena together, I am reminded of my co-presenters' strong reflections. Pete's message that God's mercy always reigns, and Corbin's reminder to check our sometimes inevitable Pharisee lens at the door. God does not judge. God is here to save, not to condemn.

In the Gospel today, Jesus is divine and human. The Son does nothing without His Father. "Hear my Word and believe in the one who sent me." Telling us to get with the program of GOD!! Jesus is clear that "I seek the will of the one who sent me." Lots of parental titles used in these readings.

In today's first reading in Isaiah, there are some images and thoughts about how God expresses love and tenderness for us. It is a comforting message. The Lord tells us, "I have kept you." God will make a highway level and cut a road through all the mountains... Salvation is yours! God will make a way. The Lord comforts people and shows mercy like a mother.

God's love never ends.

I lived and raised my son in the Central Area of Seattle near Garfield High School. There was a park and a library in walking distance, a selling point when I purchased a home there. There was a combination of single-family dwellings, apartments and condos in the thriving neighborhood. My son rode his bike and we often walked along the tree-lined streets and sidewalks. We had a neighborhood Block Watch that met monthly, so I knew just about every resident in a two-block radius.

One summer evening when we were enjoying sun tea at one of our meetings, someone asked about a vacant lot across the street. The neighborhood (folklore) story that was shared was harrowing and powerful all at the same time. One of the longstanding neighbors shared that the owner of the property will not sell as they see the lot as a memorial plot for the death of a child in the 1950's. Apparently, there was a horrible house fire and an eleven-year-old was in the house alone. The Fire Department had not



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arrived, but the police had, and a frantic mother was outside screaming that her daughter was inside this fully engulfed house and she ran toward the house to try to enter it. As the Fire Department arrived and neighbors gathered, the police had to handcuff her to the police car door handle. She screamed and cried as the house structure fell apart from the ravaging flames. As the firefighters attempted to go in to save the child, to no avail, the mother moved the heavy police vehicle twenty feet to try to get to the house, even though it was in vain.

This story stuck with me. She never stopped trying to save her. She never stopped loving her daughter!

We do not know when this pandemic will end and we may yearn for some semblance of normalcy as our lives are disrupted. On some level, we understand that our world, our lives, may never be the same. As I teach my students on a Zoom screen - who may be struggling socially, emotionally with anxiety and feelings of isolation in this distance learning and hybrid learning environment - I continue to nurture them and love them as best I can, like a mother, never giving up on them.

For those of you who are parents, guardians, foster parents, godparents, those aunts and uncles who are always there, or any of you who have a young person in your life or in your heart - you know this kind of unconditional love God holds up to us as an example.

Though my own son is grown, can a mother ever stop loving her child? Even as they grow out of our nest, we still want to help them. Our biggest concern is their well-being, as I have witnessed from many of the parents in the Prayers of the Faithful during this Novena.

God is working in the background, feeding, enabling, comforting, nurturing us ...and trying to save us...sometimes from ourselves...from our spiritual blindness, our contempt, our apathy, our lack of empathy for those suffering..

Give us strength to return to Love. God is drawing us closer. "I WILL NEVER forget you," God says to us daily. The Lord is gracious and merciful to us.

Barbara Henderson  
Day 9 | March 17, 2021



## **Novena of Grace 2021**

**Reflection Question:** *As I experience this life in a pandemic, how might I, as a believer, bring others to hope, grace and love like a mother?*