



# **NOVENA FOR PEACE AND HEALING IN UKRAINE**



## INTRODUCTION

In anticipation of the second anniversary of the outbreak of violent conflict in Ukraine, Feb. 24, the Knights of Columbus has developed a novena to encourage prayer for, and solidarity with, our 2,700 brother Knights and their families in Ukraine affected by what Pope Francis has decried as “an abhorrent war.”

A Ukrainian young adult who is a friend of the Knights of Columbus developed the reflections contained in this novena. Her perspective illuminates the necessity for prayerful solidarity and the context of the Order’s humanitarian efforts, which has helped more than 1.6 million people. Some 10,000 Knights in Poland and Ukraine have distributed over 7.7 million pounds of food and supplies via Knights of Columbus Charity Convoys, along with 250,000 care packages, 4,000 coats to Ukrainian children, 60,000 rosaries and hundreds of wheelchairs, generators and other essentials.

While praying the novena to mark the anniversary of the conflict is certainly appropriate in its timing, it was written so it could be prayed at any time of the year.

Each day of the novena contains a particular intention that can be tied to a title of Knights of Columbus founder, Blessed Michael McGivney, as found in *A Litany of Blessed Michael McGivney*. After meditating on each day’s theme and reflection, you can end with the following daily prayers:

## DAILY PRAYERS

### **A Prayer for Peace in Ukraine\***

O Lord God of powers, and God of our salvation, O God, who alone works wonders: look down with mercy and compassion on your humble servants, and out of love for mankind listen and have mercy on us and on the land of Ukraine.

Visit your mercies and compassions upon your humble servants, those who protect Ukraine and her much-suffering people, and hear us who fall down before your deep compassion.

For you are the health, victory and salvation of them who put their hope in you, and unto you do we send up glory: to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages.

Amen.

**Our Father...**

**Hail Mary...**

**Glory be...**

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\* Adapted from the Byzantine liturgical tradition (“Prayer Service Sung in Times of War,” in Trebnyk, Book of Needs)

## DAY 1 – WIDOWS

**Blessed Michael McGivney, Defender of the Widow and Orphan, pray for us.**

*Religion that is pure and undefiled before God and the Father is this: to care for orphans and widows in their affliction and to keep oneself unstained by the world.*

James 1:27

**Intention:** For the women who have lost their husbands to the war. May the Lord fill the wounds of their hearts with the oil of grace, particularly the virtues of faith, hope and love.

### **Reflection**

Visiting a Ukrainian cemetery, one will see far too many fresh graves – many of them husbands and fathers whose world turned upside down two years ago, when they became soldiers overnight. Today we pray for their surviving families, especially the widows of war undergoing their new, personal Way of the Cross.

These women spent their days praying for the return of their husbands, while striving to keep their family functioning, even while internally displaced or as refugees. Their children look to them with countless questions about what has happened in their lives, and how they will live now.

Place yourself in one of these widow's positions: what are your needs? What thoughts fill your sleepless nights? What are your prayers – are you still even able to pray?

Amid these women's devastating losses, we pray that God's grace will come into their ache. May they experience signs of his love expressed by those nearby who can offer support. And may they hold on to hope – hope in the Father who protects the widow and the orphan.

### **PETITIONS**

**May widows have the strength to rise after loss and continue to live for all those they love.**

**Let us pray to the Lord. *Lord, hear our prayer.***

**May widows find help and support in moments of trials and always stay close to God.**

**Let us pray to the Lord. *Lord, hear our prayer.***

**Daily Prayers...**

## DAY 2 – ORPHANS

**Blessed Michael McGivney, Defender of the Widow and Orphan, pray for us.**

*You listen, Lord, to the needs of the poor; you strengthen their heart and incline your ear. You win justice for the orphaned and oppressed; no one on earth will cause terror again.*

Ps 10:17-18

**Intention:** For the orphans who lost their parents in the war, that the Lord who hears their cries may help them in all their needs and protect them from all dangers.

### **Reflection**

War robs its youngest victims of their childhood. This is all too evident in Ukraine, where children have fled their homes and said goodbye to friends. They hide during air raids and run for their lives down highways to avoid shelling. All have suffered, but the children who have lost parents are the most vulnerable.

Orphanages near the front lines are full of children with missing parents or who are completely alone. Every city in Ukraine has hundreds of families whose children have lost a mother or father to the war. All these children want is to hug them again – to play with them, walk together or just sit next to each other. There are no adequate words to express a child's loss and longing after the death of a parent.

Let us intercede for Ukrainian children that their childhood is protected. And let us especially keep the orphans of this war close to our hearts. The Lord is near to them. May we continue to lift them up in prayer so that His grace envelops his children throughout their whole lives.

### **PETITIONS**

**May the children, whose hearts yearn for their fathers and mothers, feel the unconditional, boundless love of God the Father that supports and guides them in everything.**

**Let us pray to the Lord. *Lord, hear our prayer.***

**May orphans always find people of goodwill who will care for them like family and may their guardian angels help them on their paths of life.**

**Let us pray to the Lord. *Lord, hear our prayer.***

**Daily Prayers...**

## DAY 3 – PARENTS WHO HAVE LOST CHILDREN IN THE WAR

**Blessed Michael McGivney, Friend of the Lonely and Suffering, pray for us.**

*A voice was heard in Ramah, sobbing and loud lamentation; Rachel weeping for her children, and she would not be consoled, since they were no more.*

Mt 2:18

**Intention:** For parents who have lost a son or daughter during the war, may the Lord strengthen their hearts and faith.

### **Reflection**

The terrible reality of war brings together many parents who have lost their children and share a common void in their hearts. This pain can be placed in God's hands, but the longing is constant and unrelenting. Only the fire of God's presence can warm this cold loneliness.

We pray for the parents of children who died on the battlefield, from shelling, or from other violence. We pray for parents whose children are missing. And we mourn with all who experience such burning pain. Even when we are left without words of comfort, we can remain faithful and close to those with such deep wounds.

And we can pray. We pray with the hope of the Creed, in which we profess, "I believe in... life everlasting. Amen." We hold out the flame of hope for the day when all families will be restored to one another – when they will see the horizon of Heaven, and the clear eyes of the one they long for. And on that day, they will once again embrace.

### **PETITIONS**

**May parents who grieve their children feel the Lord's presence as he cries with them, and may he give them the grace to hope in eternal life.**

**Let us pray to the Lord. *Lord, hear our prayer.***

**May our lives, strengthened by the grace of God in our time here on earth, become the beginning of eternal life.**

**Let us pray to the Lord. *Lord, hear our prayer.***

**Daily Prayers...**

## **DAY 4 – EMERGENCY RESPONDERS, MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS AND THOSE THEY CARE FOR**

**Blessed Michael McGivney, Comforter of the Sick and Dying, pray for us.**

*Heal me, LORD, that I may be healed; save me, that I may be saved, for you are my praise.*

Jer 17,14

**Intention:** For those who save lives and those who are wounded, may the Heavenly Doctor bless them with wisdom and grace, healing all wounds.

### **Reflection**

Putting their own lives at risk, wartime doctors and nurses bear witness to great human suffering, while still bringing hope to those who desperately need it. They are present at people's most vulnerable, fear-filled moments, offering great sacrifices to make the impossible possible: to evacuate the wounded in the middle of the night, or to find a way to rush someone to surgery in a bombed-out city.

Picture the tired eyes of emergency responders during their long searches for victims in bombarded buildings. They call out to survivors under concrete rubble and come to burning homes at any time of day, hoping to find someone alive. Those eyes hold out hope amid devastation – they remind us of our humanity, of our loyalty to one another and willingness to sacrifice for each other.

Then there are those who have so far survived war's violence but carry wounds both visible and invisible: bombing victims, those injured or suffering frostbite on the winter battlefield, those in captivity who need medical attention, and all experiencing the psychological effects of trauma. Others have conditions that leave them especially vulnerable to harm: the homebound elderly, sick or disabled who cannot evacuate from the front lines; patients in rehabilitation centers or waiting in hospitals for operations; people whose only home now is a crowded bomb shelter, with nowhere left to go. May all these people feel the Lord's comforting presence.

### **PETITIONS**

**May medical workers and emergency responders have strength and endurance to continue to serve those in their care with love.**

**Let us pray to the Lord. *Lord, hear our prayer.***

**May the sick and wounded receive quick help, so that they experience complete healing.**

**Let us pray to the Lord. *Lord, hear our prayer.***

**Daily Prayers...**

## DAY 5 – VETERANS

**Blessed Michael McGivney, Instructor of Christian Patriotism, pray for us.**

*They will fight against you, but not prevail over you, for I am with you to deliver you.*

Jer 1:19

**Intention:** For those forever changed by the crucible of war, that the Lord may heal their wounds, restore their strength and fill them with the breath of new life.

### **Reflection**

For veterans, going through war and returning home is like purification by fire. They have undergone a great internal change, and the brotherhood and shared struggles they experienced is something that will remain with them their whole lives. Even after they come home, for many, their hearts remain in the intensity of war. Whatever their new surroundings – a hospital bed, a rehabilitation center, their homes or work – that is their new battleground, and they continue to need our prayers.

When veterans feel the pain of isolation or difficulty reintegrating into civilian life, let us hold them close in prayer, so they remember they are never truly alone. May the service members who risked their lives out of love for their homes and communities feel the prayers of those they sought to defend and those they have never met across the world. May they be filled with God's supernatural peace, higher than all understanding and human weakness.

### **PETITIONS**

**May all veterans returning from the war find a fulfilling place in civilian life, as well as meaningful relationships, understanding and gratitude in their communities.**

**Let us pray to the Lord. *Lord, hear our prayer.***

**May the Lord heal veterans' physical, psychological, moral and spiritual wounds and open their hearts to help others.**

**Let us pray to the Lord. *Lord, hear our prayer.***

**Daily prayers...**

## DAY 6 – ALL THOSE WHO HAVE DIED DURING THE WAR

**Blessed Michael McGivney, Conformed to Christ Crucified, pray for us.**

*No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends.*  
John 15:13

**Intention:** For those who have died during the war, that the Lord will receive their souls into his loving arms.

### **Reflection**

Billboards throughout Ukraine are filled with photos of the fallen: smiling faces of teachers, musicians, doctors, IT specialists, engineers and others – husbands, fathers, sons – who sacrificed their lives for their homeland and their families. Then there are the civilians who died when war came to their city, their apartment building, their neighborhood. Children killed by rockets and artillery, grandparents who died in their sleep in a drone attack. Members of the Knights of Columbus are among the fallen, along with their families. No one is untouched by loss.

Love compelled men and women to risk their lives for others – whether as soldiers, as medics, as aid workers or in other capacities that placed them in harm's way. Love gives those left behind a reason to live. It is what helps us take courage and persevere when the trial seems unending. Ukrainians have a saying: "Heroes do not die!" This has a profound meaning for us as Christians.

Our loved ones have passed from life to Life. This does not take away our grief and longing, but it reminds us to strive for Heaven and to pray for those who have died, that we may be reunited in God's Kingdom. It reminds us that we have all come from the arms of Love, and it is to that same, merciful embrace we entrust our loved ones who have died.

May we trust in God's enveloping love around all who grieve, and in his mercy for those who have fallen. May the Lord give them eternal memory in his kingdom of everlasting peace!

### **PETITIONS**

**May the souls of the deceased be at peace in God's kingdom of light, where there is no darkness or sighing, and where they are fully alive.**

**Let us pray to the Lord. Lord, hear our prayer.**

**May God give the gift of conversion and repentance to all in danger of sudden death.**

**Let us pray to the Lord. Lord, hear our prayer.**

**Daily prayers...**



## DAY 7 – INTERNALLY DISPLACED PEOPLE AND REFUGEES

**Blessed Michael McGivney, Pastor of Immigrants, pray for us.**

*And she gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.*

Luke 2:7

**Intention:** For all forced to leave their homes, that they may have trust and confidence in God's care of them, and that they may feel at home with God wherever they are now.

### **Reflection**

When the first explosions rang out, there was still hope that it would pass very quickly. But with each new report and air alarm signal, it became clear: the most important thing to preserve was life. And so many women, children, and elderly people embarked on a long, difficult journey full of uncertainty. Parents with many children, grandmothers with their grandchildren, teenagers, and other family groups made up the millions of people who just days before had completely different lives.

Staying close to home, internally displaced people plunged into the trials of finding a place to live or work while battling homesickness. Refugees rushed like a wave to neighboring countries. Oh, how great God's blessing was in all those good people who opened their hearts and homes to those fleeing war! That witness of evangelical openness and the welcoming warmth of family will remain in the memories of forced travelers for the rest of their lives. That hospitality and compassion helped them survive.

The daily suffering of all forcibly resettled people is in their longing for relatives still living under occupation, in their desire to return home, in their desire to find themselves. All the trials they face every day, all the difficulties of adaptation, and the pain of their hearts call us to prayer. May we be faithful in our spiritual support.

### **PETITIONS**

**May the Lord strengthen the spirits of all refugees and exiles from war, giving them confidence that he is with them in every moment of life.**

**Let us pray to the Lord. *Lord, hear our prayer.***

**For all good Samaritans, that they may have the strength to overcome cynicism and weariness as they assist refugees and displaced persons.**

**Let us pray to the Lord. *Lord, hear our prayer.***

**Daily Prayers...**

## DAY 8 – THOSE IN CAPTIVITY

**Blessed Michael McGivney, Companion to the Imprisoned, pray for us**

*Be mindful of prisoners as if sharing their imprisonment, and of the ill-treated as of yourselves, for you also are in the body.*

Heb 13:3

**Intention:** For all those in captivity, that the Lord may give them endurance, help them remember they are not forgotten and strengthen their hearts in hope.

### **Reflection**

Extended captivity brings so much suffering. For the prisoners, it is the suffering of cold, hunger, torture and inhumane conditions. For those living in occupied territory, it is enduring the constant threat that they could be imprisoned or killed, or that their homes or parishes may be taken by the invading army. For prisoners' relatives, it is the unknown – the uncertainty that their loved ones are even alive. Only the Lord can ease this deep suffering.

To offer daily prayer faithfully for prisoners is to give them strength and the light of God's hope. Let's be persistent in prayer for all awaiting release, all who have lost hope and all who believe in miracles. Freed captives have said they felt prayer during their imprisonment. Let us cover every single captive under the protection of the Most Holy Mother of God and lift up their families who cry and pray for them at home.

### **PETITIONS**

**May the Lord heal and embrace all captives in his fatherly care, so that they do not become victims of violence, retribution or revenge.**

**Let us pray to the Lord. *Lord, hear our prayer.***

**May captives be released as soon as possible, and may their hearts be filled with confidence that the Lord is with them, even amid the greatest darkness.**

**Let us pray to the Lord. *Lord, hear our prayer.***

**Daily Prayers...**

## DAY 9 – YOUNG PEOPLE

**Blessed Michael McGivney, Father to the Young, pray for us.**

*“Ah, Lord GOD!” I said, “I do not know how to speak. I am too young!”  
But the LORD answered me, Do not say, “I am too young.” To  
whomever I send you, you shall go; whatever I command you, you shall  
speak. Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you.*

Jer 1:6-8

**Intention:** For Ukrainian youth and their future, that the Lord may fill their hearts with courage and solidarity to stand together in overcoming evil with good and bearing one another's burdens.

### **Reflection**

Young people during the war have grown up faster. This stage of life is a time of open hearts, dreams for the future and hope amid the most difficult trials. Yet in Ukraine today, many of them witness more funerals than weddings. But their will to live and their hope for God's support help them look to the future with confidence.

They need our prayers that they will be filled with courage and perseverance, that they will entrust their worries, fears and sufferings to the Lord. We long for their young lives to thrive, kindled with the flame of solidarity, despite so much resistance from opposing winds.

May Ukraine's youth honor the lives of those who have died with the choices they make each day: the choice to continue to live in freedom and responsibility, to rebuild a civilization of love. May the Lord grant his faithful the grace to pray for the conversion of all people, including the perpetrators of evil, so that our hearts may reflect the Gospel and be steadfast in charity.

We pray that the Lord richly blesses all young people and preserves their dreams. And we look forward to a future that embodies their ideals.

### **PETITIONS**

**May the Lord fill the hearts of young people with faith and the courage to live in solidarity with one another.**

**Let us pray to the Lord. *Lord, hear our prayer.***

**That young people take responsibility for building a better life here on earth.**

**Let us pray to the Lord. *Lord, hear our prayer.***

**Daily Prayers...**



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