

Our Lady Undoer of Knots

Bringing people closer to Jesus Christ through His Church
Catholic Diocese of Portsmouth



In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus says:

"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. Or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!" (7:7-12.)

In the church, one way of asking God is through a 'Novena.' So, what is a novena? The word "novena" comes from the Latin word, "novem", meaning 'nine.' A novena usually refers to nine days of prayer, asking God for a specific intention, often through a Saint's intercession.

The first novena prayed comes from the Acts of the Apostles, when the Apostles, accompanied with the Blessed Virgin Mary, went to the Upper Room and prayed together for the nine days between Jesus's Ascension and Pentecost. The disciples were awaiting the descent of the Holy Spirit who would dwell within them and shower them with his gifts. Mary who already knew the Holy Spirit most intimately through her immaculate conception. When the Holy Spirit descended upon her and she conceived Jesus in her womb, she also prays with and for the apostles that the Holy Spirit may descend upon them too. In the church, Mary is known as the spouse of the Holy Spirit.

In the same way that the apostles spent nine days preparing for the descent of the Holy Spirit, in the church, it is tradition for the church community to also spend time in prayer praying for the descent of the Holy Spirit in our own lives, our families, the church and the world. The prayer usually begins the day after the feast of Ascension and finishes on the day before Pentecost. This Novena is known as the 'Novena to the Holy Spirit.'

Pope Francis entitled the Jubilee Year of 2025, 'As pilgrims of Hope.' Following the corona virus pandemic, the cost-of-living-crisis, war in Europe and the Middle of East, and other conflicts around the world, Pope Francis saw the year as an opportunity to renew our relationship with God, with each other and the whole of creation. Hope is a theological virtue which sustains us, it stops us from being discouraged, it reminds us that Jesus is always with us, it reminds us to trust in God's providence and his mercy. One way hope is realised is through asking, through prayer, as Jesus instructs us as we have just seen in the Gospel of Matthew. "Our Lady Undoer of Knots" is a Marian devotion and the name of a Baroque painting, representing a popular image of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The painting was painted by Johann Georg Melchior Schmidtner, around 1700 after a couple who were on the verge of divorce prayed to Our Lady to untie all the knots that were causing unrest and discord their marriage.



After 28 days of prayer their marriage was healed. The painting symbolises Mary's role as an intercessor who helps untie the "knots" of the difficulties or challenges we face in our lives. According to St Irenaeus, the devotion portrays the idea that Mary's faith unties the knots of sin and disobedience, echoing the concept that Mary's obedience helped undo the disobedience of Eve in the Garden of Eden. The painting is located in the Perlach Church in Augsburg, Bavaria, Germany and was later popularised by Pope Francis.

In this Jubilee Year, the novena is a great way of asking the Lord to help us to untie the knots we are experiencing in our lives through the intercession of his mother. Those knots could be disagreements between family members or friends, disagreements in the workplace, or difficulties in marriage. In the Book of Leviticus, the Jubilee Year was a time to set prisoners free and release others from the burden of debt (see Leviticus 25.) Through the intercession of his mother, we can also ask the Lord to unite the knots of war and violence in the world, to give aid to victims of natural disasters and famine, and to help us to take be more vigilant of how we use the world's resources so that we may untie the knot of climate change. In the Jubilee Year, the land also lay fallow to allow it soil to recover and grow in richness.

So, during this Jubilee Year, a time of renewal and hope, let's take the opportunity to pray to our Lady through the novena of "Our Lady Undoer of knots", and through the virtue of hope, may our Lord untie the knots we are experiencing in our own lives and those of the world.

The novena can be downloaded at [PrayMoreNovenas.com](https://www.praymorenovenas.com)
<https://www.praymorenovenas.com/mary-undoer-knots-novena>

