

St. Michael's RCIA
Catholic Devotions
Seventh Sunday of Easter
Presented by Michael Fetsko

According to the Catholic Encyclopedia (newadvent.org), devotions are “external practices of [piety](#) by which the devotion of the faithful finds life and expression.” Basically, these are the public or private acts of piety done by individuals or as a group that identify us as Catholic. These are holy acts we can/should do.

There are many different types of devotions, but here are some of the more common:

1. The Rosary. Probably the most popular/well-known devotion. These prayers, said with Rosary beads, are contemplations of the lives of Christ and Mary (Mysteries).
2. Chaplet of Divine Mercy. Saint Maria Fasutina was a Polish nun in the 1930s who received from the Lord a message of mercy that she was told to spread throughout the world. She was asked to become the apostle and secretary of God's mercy, a model of how to be merciful to others, and an instrument for reemphasizing God's plan of mercy for the world. The Chaplet of Divine Mercy that Christ inspired through her is a series of prayers said using ordinary Rosary beads, and the Sunday after Easter is also known as the Feast Day of Divine Mercy.
3. Devotions to Mary. There are many devotions to Mary, our highest saint and most devoted of our church's history. Only the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are above the Virgin Mother. The devotions to her include:
 - a. Apparitions of Mary. Sightings and interactions with Mary have been reported on many occasions over the century. The Church acknowledges their possibility, and a few have stood out as being worthy of reverence. The Church feels that through God all things are possible, and if the focus is on how the apparition brought people closer to Christ and wasn't about glorification of the visionary or someone else, then it's consistent with what we believe. Some of the more revered apparitions:
 - Our Lady of Guadalupe in the 1500s. In Mexico, a peasant worker has a vision of Mary, and when others doubt him, Mary gives him signs that are hard to ignore. In particular, one bishop tells him to have Mary give the worker, Juan Diego, roses to bring back to the bishop even though it was winter. Juan Diego comes back with a cloak full of roses, and his cloak had been transformed into a gleaming vestment. It still hangs at the shrine to Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico and hasn't decayed at all despite being hundreds of years old and made of a materials that should've deteriorated in 25 years.
 - Our Lady of Fatima. The Blessed Mother is seen several times by three peasant cousins in Portugal in 1917. She reveals three secrets about which there has been much

discussion and controversy. The three secrets foretold the imminent end of the first world war (which occurred later that year) and the outbreak of World War II. The third and most controversial secret was given to the Vatican by Sister Lucia, the only one of the three cousins to have survived childhood. Pope John Paul II only recently revealed that the third secret referred to the assassination attempt on him in 1981.

- St. Catherine and the Miraculous Medal. In 1830, Mary appears to a French nun, who sees it as her mission to create and distribute a medal dedicated to the message she heard that night. This is a popular medal, and it's known as the Devotion of the Miraculous Medal.
4. Novena Prayers. "Nine"-ness, a series of prayers configured around the number 9, and they were originally associated with mourning and grief. Now they're prayers asking for a special need or intervention of a saint. One of the more popular novenas is to St. Jude, the patron saint of people in near-desperation – at their last resorts. There is an obligation to "pass it on" when you've prayed a novena and had it granted, so you might see ads in the classifieds in the newspaper thanking St. Jude.
 5. Devotion to the Saints. As we heard in Sunday's readings, Saint Stephen was the first martyr. The earliest Church used to literally pray over the bones of saints and others martyred for the Church. It's like asking a brother or sister to join us in prayer and worship. Saints are people who have lived a holy life and died, and after a long examination for evidence of retained holiness, for evidence that the person was revered after death, and for presence of miracles, there is beatification and, if more than one miracle can be found, canonization. And there are many patron saints based on how the saints lived:
 - St. Blaise: patron saint of the throat
 - St. Anthony: patron saint of lost things
 - St. Lucy: patron saint of the eyes
 - St. Gerard: patron saint of fertility. There is a shrine to St. Gerard at St. Lucy's parish in Newark.
 6. Relics. Relics are physical pieces of holy items that remind us of our faith. The Shroud of Turin is the most well-known relic. It could be a piece of cloth worn by a saint or even a piece of bone or a body part. There is a relic of St. Anne at St. Michael's.
 7. Sacramentals. Things connected to the sacraments. "Holy reminders" such as holy water (a reminder of baptism), rosary beads, funeral prayer cards, crosses, even statues of the Virgin Mary that you might see on a car dashboard.
 8. Pious Actions. Things like crossing ourselves, genuflecting when we enter the sanctuary, crossing the forehead, lips and heart at the Gospel reading.

It's important to note that your devotions are personal. They're your own, and expression of individual faith and relationship with the Lord.