

# Good Friday prayer offers U.S. Catholics 'moment of unity' amid pandemic

LOS ANGELES (CNS) – When Archbishop Jose H. Gomez of Los Angeles, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, leads U.S. Catholics in prayer on Good Friday, it will be “a special moment of unity” at a time when the nation’s churches are closed due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Archbishop Gomez is scheduled to lead Catholics in praying the Litany of the Sacred Heart at noon (EDT) April 10 from the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels in Los Angeles. The bilingual service will include Scripture readings and a short homily by Archbishop Gomez, followed by the recitation of the litany.

A livestream will be available on the Archdiocese of Los Angeles’ website, [www.lacatholics.org](http://www.lacatholics.org), and on the USCCB Facebook page, [www.facebook.com/usccb](http://www.facebook.com/usccb). The text of Litany of the Sacred Heart can be found in English and Spanish on the Los Angeles archdiocesan website.

“I remember learning, when I was a kid, that beautiful aspiration: ‘Sacred Heart of Jesus, I trust in you,’” Archbishop Gomez told Angelus, the online news outlet of the Los Angeles Archdiocese. “I think it might be beautiful that all of us, in this challenging time, together, go to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, finding peace, and understanding that we have to love one another as Jesus loves us.”

An April 2 USCCB news release announcing the national prayer said: “Praying together as a nation, the archbishop asks that we seek healing for all who are unwell, wisdom for those whose work is halting the spread of coronavirus, and strength for all God’s children.”

Additionally, with special permission received from the Apostolic Penitentiary of the Holy See, a plenary indulgence is available for those who join Archbishop Gomez in praying the Litany of the Sacred Heart on Good Friday.

A plenary indulgence removes all of the temporal punishment due to sins and may be applied to oneself or to the souls of the deceased (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 1471).

To receive this indulgence, the faithful would need to: pray the Litany of the Sacred Heart on Good Friday; be truly repentant of any sins they have committed and receive the sacrament of reconciliation (at the earliest opportunity); and pray for Pope Francis' intentions.

Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus became popular after St. Margaret Mary Alacoque, a 17th-century nun, received a series of visions from Jesus. He told her that he wanted to show humanity his love for them by encouraging a devotion to "the heart that so loved mankind."

Many refused to believe St. Margaret's account of her visions, but her spiritual director, St. Claude de la Colombiere, kept a record of what she had seen. Eventually, the church reviewed these accounts, but it was not until 1899 that Pope Leo XIII approved the Litany of the Sacred Heart of Jesus for public use.

The litany begins, as do others approved by the church, with petitions to the three persons of the Holy Trinity. It contains 33 invocations to the Heart of Jesus, with the response, "Have mercy on us," and closes with the prayer to the Lamb of God.

The image of Christ's heart pierced with thorns, but still burning with love, is widely associated with this devotion.