

# Saint Rafqa Novena for the Sick and Suffering

14 March – 22 March



@livingmaronite

## **SAINT RAFQA PRAYER**

We ask you, Saint Rafqa, to spread joy in our world and comfort those who are suffering. Teach us to pray with faith in Jesus Christ. Medicine was unable to cure you, so you healed the sick by enduring sorrow and sharing in the Mystery of Redemption with Our Lord Jesus Christ.

We ask you to intercede for all the sick, to fill our hearts with joy and love and to guide us to follow in your example.

May we glorify with you, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit forever. Amen.

### **DAY ONE (for the sick)**

Glory to you, God the Father, who called Saint Rafqa to monastic life, you were for her both father and mother. Glory to you, Christ the Son, who made Rafqa a messenger of suffering, redemption and happiness. All thanks to the Holy Spirit, who strengthened Rafqa's patience and perseverance.

Lord, through the intercession of Saint Rafqa, answer our prayers.

Today we pray for all those who are suffering from illness.

We glorify you with Saint Rafqa; the Father, Son and Holy Spirit all days of our lives, forever. Amen.

(Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be, and Saint Rafqa Prayer)

### **DAY TWO (for those that are far)**

Glory to you Lord Jesus, who embraced Saint Rafqa with tenderness and nourished her life with the Eucharist. You filled her with joy and peace and made her body and soul a spiritual temple. In her monastic life she was a true messenger of the Gospel and did good works.

Lord, through the intercession of Saint Rafqa, we pray for all those who are far from the Church at this moment, like the prodigal son may they find their way back to you.

We glorify you with Saint Rafqa; the Father and Son and Holy Spirit, all days of our lives forever. Amen.

(Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be, and Saint Rafqa Prayer)

### **DAY THREE (for the persecuted)**

Holy Spirit you made Saint Rafqa an example for us in bearing the cross. Like Saint Paul who said “I only know Jesus crucified”, she has become a patron for human suffering. Make us worthy Lord to bear our cross as Rafqa did, by uniting our suffering with your suffering. Wise Spirit, in this Maronite jubilee year of martyrdom, through the intercession of Saint Rafqa, grant peace for all those around the world who are persecuted for their faith

We glorify you with Saint Rafqa; the Father and Son and Holy Spirit all days of our lives forever. Amen.

(Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be, and Saint Rafqa Prayer)

#### **DAY FOUR (for the faithful departed)**

Jesus Christ our God, Rafqa lost her loving mother at a young age. You gave her your own mother, the Virgin Mary. Lord, Rafqa is an example for faithful Maronite’s and gives hope to all those suffering including the elderly, blind, sick, widowed and orphaned. Lord through the intercession of Saint Rafqa we pray for all the faithful departed who have not yet reached your heavenly kingdom.

We glorify you with Saint Rafqa; the Father and Son and Holy Spirit all days of our lives forever Amen.

(Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be, and Saint Rafqa Prayer)

#### **DAY FIVE (for the Church)**

Heavenly Spouse, who took the heart of Rafqa while she was young. She saw in you beauty and happiness. Rafqa never ceased to teach and spread the joy of the Gospel. Through Rafqa, you planted in the hearts of the young your message and teachings.

Lord through the intercession of Saint Rafqa we pray for your Church, the Bride, that it may work to spread the joy of the Gospel throughout the world.

We glorify you with Saint Rafqa, the Father and Son and Holy Spirit all days of our lives forever Amen.

(Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be, and Saint Rafqa Prayer)

#### **DAY SIX (for the victims that have been abused in the Church and their families)**

Jesus, you guided and protected Saint Rafqa during her trials. She heard you calling her to join in your suffering through sacrifice. Rafqa joined the Order of the Maronite Sisters and was an example to her sisters to live a prayerful and humble life. Grant Lord, through Saint Rafqa's intercession, strength and purity to the laity and religious. Lord through the intercession of Saint Rafqa send to your Church faithful servants. Through the intercession of Saint Rafqa, we pray for those that have been abused in the Church and their families. We glorify you with Saint Rafqa; the Father and Son and Holy Spirit all days of our lives forever Amen.

(Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be, and Saint Rafqa Prayer)

### **DAY SEVEN (for those suffering with addiction)**

Saint Rafqa, you asked the Lord Jesus to share in his sufferings and your request was granted. You lost your sight, became paralyzed and shared in Christ's passion for twenty-nine years. You remained patient and thankful to God, constantly repeating the words: "Jesus with your suffering, and your crown of thorns I accept". You accepted your suffering with a smile and remained joyful and thankful to God for allowing you to suffer with him.

Saint Rafqa we pray for all those who are suffering with addiction, that your example may inspire them and that like you they may join their suffering with Christ's.

Saint Rafqa, we give praise with you to the glory of Christ all the days of our lives and, forever. Amen.

(Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be, and Saint Rafqa Prayer)

### **DAY EIGHT (for suffering women)**

Saint Rafqa, friend of the Cross and participant in the crucifixion through good works. Endure with us in our suffering and pain in these days and in the future. You are the messenger of sacrifice and joy, of goodness and love. During this Lenten season let us remember the cross of salvation given for the sake of all humanity. We join our suffering with the suffering of Christ and pray for the intention of women who are suffering from violence, abuse trafficking, girls who are denied education and women forced into marriage. Amen.

(Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be, and Saint Rafqa Prayer)

**DAY NINE (for all those suffering in our families, our country and the world)**

Saint Rafqa, a true student and partner of the crucified Christ. You accepted to be a servant of Christ. We ask Lord Jesus, through the intercession of Saint Rafqa, we pray for the suffering in our families, our country and throughout the world, including victims of war, illness and those living in the abyss of their own sin. May Saint Rafqa be a beacon of hope for them. Give us the blessings that we ask for and we praise you in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Amen.

(Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be, and Saint Rafqa Prayer)



## **The Life of Saint Rafqa**

### **Feast day 23 March**

Rafqa was born in Lebanon on 29 June 1832, on the feast of Saint Peter and Paul. She was named Boutrossieh (the feminine name of Peter). Her mother died when she was 7 years old, and her father struggled financially. He sent Boutrossieh away to work as a servant for 4 years in Damascus. When she returned home she found her father had remarried.

At 14, her stepmother and her aunty were arranging for her to marry, but she did not want to marry. She wished to become a nun and went straight to the Convent of Our Lady of Liberation at Bikfaya. Her father and stepmother tried to persuade her to come back home, but she refused and asked the mistress of novices to excuse her from seeing them and she agreed. They returned home and never saw her again.

On 9 February 1855, on the feast of Saint Maroun, Boutrossieh commenced her novitiate (the period of training and preparing someone for the religious institute) at the convent in Ghazir. She took her temporary vows on 19 March 1862. She was assigned to be in charge of the kitchen service in the Jesuit school in Ghazir, where she spent seven years. In 1860, some Jesuit priests invited Boutrossieh and another nun to assist them in their mission in Deir El Kamar. It was a time of civil unrest. One day while walking the streets, she noticed a little Maronite boy being chased by soldiers, wanting to kill him. Boutrossieh hid him under her religious robe. Civil unrest made it dangerous to remain and forced Boutrossieh back to Ghazir. She established a school at the request of Antoun Issa, he wanted her to come to his town to educate the girls. This school grew to have up to 60 girls, and Boutrossieh stayed there for 7 years, fulfilling this mission.

After the Marian Order where Boutrossieh belonged was dissolved, she entered the convent of Saint Simon in Ayto. In 1872 she took her perpetual vows of obedience, chastity and poverty and took the name Rafqa after her mother. She was an example to her fellow sisters, always in prayer and silent in hard work. The sisters worked manual labour, harvesting vegetables and grain, they also cultivated silkworms and sewed vestments for the churches. After

14 years at this convent Rafqa felt that she was called to bigger sacrifices. She asked to be closer to God and to share in Jesus' passion. God answered her prayers immediately. That night she felt a terrible headache which quickly spread to her eyes. She suffered this way silently for 12 years, and it caused her to lose her sight. Her superior sent her to be examined by many doctors, all which concluded they could not do anything to help her. An American physician was consulted and he decided that surgery was necessary for Rafqa. Rafqa refused aesthetic, and offered up the pain. During the surgery the doctor accidentally pulled her whole eye out. Rafqa didn't complain, instead she continued to pray, repeating "I join my sufferings to yours, my Jesus." Rafqa even thanked the doctor after his mistake. The pain was in her left eye, and surgery did not help, gradually she became blind and her eyes continued to haemorrhage. She did not let this suffering isolate her from the other sisters. Rafqa continued to work, spinning wool and cotton and knitting stockings for the other sisters and participating in prayer.

One day Rafqa commented to the Mother Superior of great pain in her waist. Her body was weakening and she was eventually bedridden, although she was still able to use her hands and she thanked God for this as she used her hands to work.

Rafqa died on 23 March 1914, and was buried in the convent's cemetery under the oak trees. She was beatified on 10 June 2001 by Pope John Paul II.

We remember a remarkable woman, who lived a humble life. Although she suffered, she never complained and continued to give thanks for the opportunity to share in Christ's passion. We ask for the intercession of Saint Rafqa for all those who are suffering, may the Lord comfort them. Like St Rafqa may we be able to join our suffering with Jesus' suffering on the cross.



Novena will be said with the English Rosary at  
Our Lady of Lebanon co-Cathedral, Harris Park at the following time

Monday & Tuesday 8pm  
Wednesday 6.25pm followed by 7pm English Mass  
Thursday 7.30pm followed by Adoration  
Saturday 7.30pm  
Sunday 6.15pm followed by 7pm English Mass

Mass for the Feast of St Rafqa  
7pm Vigil Wednesday 22 March 2017  
Our Lady of Lebanon Co-Cathedral

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