

“UNDER THE GREAT PROTECTION OF MARY”

(Msgr. Balconi)

Novena of the Immaculate 2019

The celebration of the novena of the Immaculate unites us in the same "place", that is "under the high protection of Mary" who protects us and sustains us in prayer and in the work of evangelization.

This year we want to emphasize in a special way the **power of her intercession** that is rooted in total self-forgetfulness and in her unconditional response to the grace of God.

With her, we will hear the cry of the world, day after day, keeping in mind certain situations of need or particular commitment in the service of life and evangelization. In listening to the word of God, we will safeguard all this through the heart of Mary. We will join in her prayer intercession, learning to lead everything and everyone to Jesus.

The generous and fervent prayer shortens the distance between us and allows us to plead, thank, and intercede with one heart and one soul for the coming of the Kingdom. The cry of the world, brought in prayer, will help us to actualize concretely, a missionary conversion.

Each community can choose when to live together **this special moment of intercession**, letting themselves be guided by simple suggestions proposed for each day.

Each day of the Novena is subdivided in following moments:

- *Let us listen to the cry of the world:* presentation of a particular situation
- *Let us enter into the Word, encountering Mary*
- *Let us respond with intercession,* praying together for the situation presented, according to the sentiments, the intentions, the heart of Mary.

The creativity on the part of all will help to find the way to prepare the chapel or the environment of prayer well and to accompany the different moments of the theme of the day with prayers, silence, typical songs and suitable signs.

1st day: 29 November

- *Let us listen to the cry of the world:*

Life situations where love is lacking: The son who has gone astray, the spouse who betrayed, the old man who lost his sense, the sick member in the family, the friend who abandoned, the unemployed who is desperate, the young man robbed of his dreams ...

- *Let us enter into the Word, encountering Mary*
Attention to where joy and love are lacking.
“They have no wine...”

“When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him: **“They have no wine”** (Jn 2:3)

Mary takes part in the feast the wholly, converses, eats, has fun, but at the same time she observes what is happening around her, and her careful and discreet observation allows her to see what no one sees, that is, the wine is finished. Mary realizes with the attention of the friendly heart. She feels that every crisis and every party affects her, but above all, that which concerns every person, and she expresses it to her son: “They have no wine”, they, the spouses. In fact, she does not say: “There is no more wine” in its impersonal form. She seems to say: first people, then things. Not the bread, the meat, not the necessary; at Cana, there is no wine: something not essential, or rather not necessary except at the feast. Wine is the symbol of love: love is missing. Mary realizes it first, because she knows love better than anyone, because she is soaked with it. Cana and the role of Mary reveal a God who is attentive to gratuitousness; an attentive God, intent on your happiness.

- *The response of intercession and of life*

REFRAIN: Mary, see that no one lacks the abundance of life and joy.

Let us pray:

O God, in the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin you have prepared a worthy dwelling place for your Son, and in anticipation of his death you preserved her from every stain of sin, grant us also, through her intercession, to come to meet you in holiness and purity of spirit. Through our Lord ...

2nd day - 30 November

- *Let us listen to the cry of the world:*

Migration is a worldwide phenomenon affecting millions of people. Unfortunately, in recent years, it is transformed into human trafficking, for the benefit of those who see a source of income even in their brother's flesh. The frontiers thus become the place of exchange and fear.

In front of the suffering of these brothers, some choose indifference, which is more accommodating than solidarity; others open their hearts and homes.

- *Let us enter into the Word, encountering Mary*
A home that welcomes.
“He came to her...”

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. **And he came to her** and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." (Lk 1:26-28)

"The angel came to her" in her home. The metaphor of the house helps us to move from the building to the interiority of those who live there. The house was actually Mary herself. The house is the place where the owner receives his guest. The house is the place where unity is made between what is inside and what is outside, through welcoming and hospitality. Welcoming is the verb that generates life; to welcome is our task, our very human mission, because man becomes what he welcomes. Man becomes what lives there. True life is being inhabited by God. In the announcement of the angel, Mary discovers that her authenticity lies in the transition from existing for herself to existing for the other; from the self to the discovery of the hospitable self, the self which owes everything to the other and which finds its identity in being for the other.

- *The response of intercession and of life*

REFRAIN: Mother of humanity, present to Christ every need of your Children.

Let us pray:

O God, in the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin you have prepared a worthy dwelling place for your Son, and in anticipation of his death you preserved her from every stain of sin, grant us also, through her intercession, to come to meet you in holiness and purity of spirit. Through our Lord ...

3rd day: 1 December

- *Let us listen to the cry of the world:*

The Document on Human Brotherhood comes to light in Abu Dhabi; a vibrant appeal to strengthen interreligious dialogue and promote mutual respect to block the road for those who blow on the fire of conflict of civilizations.

- *Let us enter into the Word, encountering Mary*

*Towards the other.
"set out and went with haste..."*

In those days Mary **set out and went with haste** to a Judean town in the hill country, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord." (Lk 1:39-45)

In that journey with haste, Mary weaves in her womb the flesh of the Word. She goes, bringing the Word. Origen designates this going, pregnant with God, on the roads of the world, as the supreme image of every believer: to bring the Word, the mission of every baptized person, to bring the one who takes you, to be on the journey with the Word towards all humanity. In their meeting, Mary and Elizabeth understand each other even before they speak. The two women enter into immediate harmony, in mutual resonance, like

the two strings of a lute. God awaits us in positive and strong relationships, encourages us in our fabric of affections, is present in dialogues, in meetings, in attentive reciprocity, you feel it in the undeserved tenderness that illuminates the house, is attentive to you and listens to you.

- *The response of intercession and of life*

REFRAIN: *Mary, sustain our journey*

Let us pray:

O God, in the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin you have prepared a worthy dwelling place for your Son, and in anticipation of his death you preserved her from every stain of sin, grant us also, through her intercession, to come to meet you in holiness and purity of spirit. Through our Lord ...

4th day: 2 December

- *Let us listen to the cry of the world:*

Children exposed to violence and sexual and psychological abuse; children who do not have the opportunity to grow well-nourished and healthy; children subjected to child labour who seek food in waste bins; children who lack love in rich societies due to the absence of parents occupied in overwork.

- *Let us enter into the Word, encountering Mary*

Care of life.

“Wrapped him in bands of cloth...”

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and **wrapped him in bands of cloth**, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. (Lk 2:1-7)

The mother is like an altar on which is deposited, like a tabernacle that preserves, a sanctuary that contains the son. The house on which the star has stopped brings together the child and the mother; the mother is in turn a home that welcomes, that houses the child. Seekers find a child wrapped in an embrace. The mother is the embrace that makes us live. The little one will live only if he is loved, only if he is taken care of. Jesus lives because of his mother's love. From this embrace will come, together with faith, such strength to live. Every little man has as much strength as the embrace that holds him and brings him into existence. Fear not, Mary, the child will live for your love! And even now God lives for our love, it is up to us to help him incarnate.

- *The response of intercession and of life*

REFRAIN: *Mary, sweet heavenly Mother, in you we put our trust*

Let us pray:

O God, in the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin you have prepared a worthy dwelling place for your Son, and in anticipation of his death you preserved her from every stain of sin, grant us also, through her intercession, to come to meet you in holiness and purity of spirit. Through our Lord ...

5th day: 3 December

- *Let us listen to the cry of the world:*

The people among whom we live or have lived: all the faces we remember, their expectations of good, the projects of each one, their hopes, the relationships they live ... all the peoples who await the Gospel of Jesus.

- *Let us enter into the Word, encountering Mary*

*The gifts of the wise men from the orient.
“They saw the child with Mary his mother ...
They offered him gifts of gold frankincense and myrrh”*

When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, **they saw the child with Mary his mother**; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, **they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.** (Mt 2: 9-11)

God starts again from Bethlehem, becoming a child. That child, not only made himself a child; not only did he become man, that man; but made himself universal flesh. Since then the closeness is absolute, there is a fragment of Logos in every flesh, there is something of God in every man, there is a bit of holiness and a lot of light in every life. Incarnation is not over, God "intervenes" even in my life, intervenes in the concreteness of my gestures, and inhabits my words so that they may perfume that comes down, and then the blood that runs down.

- *The response of intercession and of life*

REFRAIN: Mary, the first missionary, help us to give Jesus to the world.

Let us pray:

O God, in the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin you have prepared a worthy dwelling place for your Son, and in anticipation of his death you preserved her from every stain of sin, grant us also, through her intercession, to come to meet you in holiness and purity of spirit. Through our Lord ...

6th day: 4 December

- *Let us listen to the cry of the world:*

The division in the human family, families in crisis, in religious families, in civil society; divisions, rivalries, difficulty to see things from the point of view of others.

- *Let us enter into the Word, encountering Mary*

*A family put to the test.
“Child, why have you treated us like this?”*

After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. When his parents saw him they were astonished; and his mother said to him, **“Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety.”** He said to them, **“Why were**

you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" But they did not understand what he said to them. (Lc 2, 47-50)

Like all children, Jesus is moving away from home. Mary and Joseph, like many others, perhaps like all parents, feel that in the end the children are not ours, they belong to God, to the world, to their mission, to their loves, to their vocation, to their dreams, even to their limits. Holy family yet in crisis, where children and parents do not understand each other. From this holy yet imperfect family, holy yet limited, comes down as a blessing, a consolation, a comfort for all our families with all their limitations. Not even the best of families has been exempt from mutual misunderstanding. But here's the difference. Mary asks: "Why did you do this?" It opens a dialogue, but a calm dialogue, without resentments, without accusations, which knows how to question and listen, and knows how to accept even an incomprehensible response. And there is a son who in turn listens, answers, questions. The beauty of those two verbs, listening and questioning, had grown in that house.

- *The response of intercession and of life*

REFRAIN: *Mary, help us to live a missionary fraternity that radiates the joy of the Gospel*

Let us pray:

O God, in the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin you have prepared a worthy dwelling place for your Son, and in anticipation of his death you preserved her from every stain of sin, grant us also, through her intercession, to come to meet you in holiness and purity of spirit. Through our Lord ...

7th day: 5 December

- *Let us listen to the cry of the world:*

The missionaries of the Immaculate: With Mary, remain under the cross and host the wounds, the thirst, the cry of the brothers.

Le missionarie dell'Immacolata: con Maria stanno sotto la croce e ospitano le ferite, la sete, il grido dei fratelli.

- *Let us enter into the Word, encountering Mary*

Universal motherhood.

"Woman here is your son!... Here is your mother!"

Meanwhile, standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, "**Woman, here is your son.**" Then he said to the disciple, "**Here is your mother.**" And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home. (Jn 19: 25-27)

When everything dies, when everything turns black on Golgotha, Jesus pronounces words of life. He says "mother", says "son". Speaks of generation and affection, and life that continues to flow.

When Jesus says: "Behold your son", he indicates whoever walks beside us in life. When he adds: "Here is your mother" indicates anyone who has helped us one day, helped us to live, countless little mothers of our life, the many good Samaritans, whoever, even now support us in life.

Motherhood is hospitality that starts on a pilgrimage towards the brothers and sisters. Heal others and your wounds will be healed. Enlighten others and you will be enlightened (Is 58). Quench others and your thirst will be quenched. Our vocation is that of Mary herself, a universal motherhood: to guard, protect, care for, love.

- *The response of intercession and of life*
REFRAIN: Mary, help us to contemplate with you the face of your Son.

Let us pray:

O God, in the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin you have prepared a worthy dwelling place for your Son, and in anticipation of his death you preserved her from every stain of sin, grant us also, through her intercession, to come to meet you in holiness and purity of spirit. Through our Lord ...

8th day: 6 December

- *Let us listen to the cry of the world:*
The prayer intentions of Pope Francis, his joys and concerns for the church and for the world

- *Let us enter into the Word, encountering Mary*
Mary, praying woman: around her the Church grows.
“Constantly devoting themselves to prayer, together with certain women and Mary, the mother of Jesus”

Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away. When they had entered the city, they went to the room upstairs where they were staying, Peter, and John, and James, and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James son of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. All these were **constantly devoting themselves to prayer, together with certain women, including Mary the mother of Jesus**, as well as his brothers. (At 1, 12-14)

The experience of home as a common home becomes a model for the construction of a world made of community; the experience of the common home as a place of prayer becomes a transformation of the group, from a psychological and emotional community to a spiritual community. There is no Church without common prayer. What happens in that house will be decisive for the future of the Church, which is decisive for understanding the world and building a story. The Church rises from the house. The new vision of the world and of human relations now receives its essential physiognomy in the house of Jerusalem.

In the book of Acts, Luke emphasizes the virtue of perseverance: "they were assiduous"; "They were persevering". Perseverance is a new virtue, humble, not sensational. In the upper chamber of prayer, unanimous and persevering, Mary is a presence that creates community and perseverance, which creates the capacity to be always disciples. Perseverance is the humble and very strong seal of hope. To be vigilant one must remain in continuous loving alarm.

- *The response of intercession and of life*
REFRAIN: Mary, Mother of the evangelizing Church, orient every service of ours to the gospel

Let us pray:

O God, in the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin you have prepared a worthy dwelling place for your Son, and in anticipation of his death you preserved her from every stain of sin, grant us also, through her intercession, to come to meet you in holiness and purity of spirit. Through our Lord ...

9th day: 7 December: Celebration of first Vespers of the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception