

Novena of the Immaculate

WITH MARY, Weak instruments for the coming of the Kingdom

Kingdom within and outside of us

*Weak Instruments to sow beyond the frontiers with Jesus, the
Apostle of the Father*

**Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate
December 2022**

1st day: Mary, the Holy Virgin

*Free to love without frontiers
Living the internationality as a gift and a richness.*

Preparing the environment: to put in a container the flags of the Countries where we are present and put it at the feet of Mary.

A Marian hymn

Guide: Mary, the Holy Virgin, constantly calls us to a love that makes us neighbour for each man and woman we meet on the paths of mission.

From the letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians 1 Cor 9: 19 -23

Guide: Mary teaches us to live a great interior freedom, which makes us capable to love without frontiers.

1st Reader: living the virginity in our apostolic life means to have within us the gift of a universal love open to all, without distinction of persons, race or culture. On the example of Mary, the Holy virgin, we try to grow evermore in the love and the reception of the other in his/her diversity of language, culture and religious sensibility.

From our Constitutions:

Mary, who is the guide and model of every Christian, is our model and guide in a special way. Belonging to God in a singular way, «she stands out among the poor and humble of the Lord» and offers herself unconditionally to the plan of the Father, sharing completely the life of the suffering servant until his death on the cross. In her we find the inspiration, the strength and the help to live that total belonging to God, which is the principle of every apostolic action.

2nd Reader: The gift of virginity helps us to live the freedom and the detachment from things and persons, arriving in this way, to grasp the essential and to feel the internationality as a richness and a gift offered to each one of us.

From our Constitutions:

We shall welcome the internationality of our Congregation as a gift of the Spirit. Through it we are made more capable of proclaiming the universal love of God which, breaking down all barriers makes all men one in Christ Jesus, in whom there are neither Jews nor Greeks, neither slave nor free. (Const. 50)

A moment of meditative silence

Spontaneous prayers

After each prayer we shall respond: **Holy Virgin, intercede for us.**

Commitment for the day:

We commit ourselves, today, to live the internationality and the interculturality of our communities as a gift and a witness.

Our Father

Let us pray:

O God, who in the Virgin Mary, masterpiece of your Spirit, gave us the first fruits of the new creation, grant us that free from the slavery of sin, we may embrace wholeheartedly the novelty of the Gospel, bearing witness to the command of love with words and works. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever. Amen.

2nd day: Mary, full of Grace.

In more flexible, inserted and joyous presences.

With attitudes of availability and discernment.

A Marian Hymn

Preparing the environment: while singing is going on, a picture of the annunciation is taken to the chapel so that it will remain exposed.

Guide: Like Mary, we too are called to give a joyous testimony.

From the Gospel according to Luke.

Lk 1: 26 – 33

1st Reader: God made an “irruption” in Mary’s life, filling it with grace and joy. In the same way the grace of vocation filled our existence and we received the gift to live in fullness as persons consecrated for the mission. Animated and strengthened by the charismatic gift that characterises us, we are sent by and in the Church to bear witness to the joy of belonging to Christ and of serving him in the poorest, in inserted and flexible communities, committing themselves to live in a simple and sober life style.

Guide: Imitating Mary in her humility allows us also to welcome with gratitude the plan of God upon us and upon our communities.

From the Gospel according to Luke.

Lk 1: 34 -38

2nd Reader:

Just because Mary is full of grace, she is in the state of responding her yes in the humble freedom of the “servant of the Lord”. The utmost humility of Mary consists in the availability to allow God to act in her life: “Let it be with me...”. She accepts that the word pronounced by the angel may be realized in her, with all its consequences. In the Virgin of Nazareth, humility manifests itself in her capacity to recognize herself as the servant of the Lord, in whom God works great things and for this she will be blessed by all generations.

Mary, full of grace, servant totally available to God, is the true woman, full of goodness and beauty.

The foundresses desire deeply to live the same attitude of availability. The search for truth, for the will of God, is a further reason to entrust to Mary and let themselves be guided by her, who with the power of grace, undertook first the long pilgrimage of faith. (To the roots of our Spirituality)

A moment of meditative silence

Spontaneous prayers

After each invocation we shall respond: **Mary, full of Grace, intercede for us.**

Commitment for the day:

Today, we commit ourselves, to live in an attitude of availability and discernment the demands of the community life so that we can grow in the capacity of dialogue and listening to each other.

Our Father

Let us pray:

As it was your will, heavenly Father, that, at the angel's message, your Word should be conceived by the Blessed Virgin Mary, grant that, as we believe her to be truly the Mother of God, so may we be helped by her intercession. We make our prayer through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever. Amen.

3rd day: Mary, all beautiful

*Women of communion, who draw together communities
Journeying towards the Holiness lived as beauty.*

*Preparing the environment: To adorn the image of Mary with
flowers or other decorations*

A Marian Hymn

Guide: the beauty of Mary is the fruit of a deep interior life and of an intense communion with God. The beauty of Mary attracts, her holiness and motherly sweetness facilitate getting closer to her. We can imitate her as a woman of communion, who generates communion and gathers around herself the Christian community.

1st Reader:

One aspect which particularly speaks to us today, in a certain sense still for its feminine dimension, is the beauty of Mary (VC 28). *Tota pulchra*, all beautiful, all holy: a **sanctity** understood as beauty and

harmony of the whole being attracts us. “in the variety of vocations, that *beauty* - not merely physical, but above all spiritual - which God bestowed from the very beginning on all, and in a particular way on women” (Letter to the women, of John Paul II).

Msgr. Balconi in one of his letters chose to talk of Mary in her beauty, writing: “I started to reflect from a point which is generally neglected or skipped, almost with some fear”, and intended “to contemplate the Virgin on an aspect that is rather new, ... all human”, “enough just to move the heart and the will. Our Lady is all beautiful”. It is an aspect to which today we are more sensitive and which implies appreciation of the whole person, including the bodily dimension. (To the roots of our spirituality)

Guide: Holiness makes us beautiful in the eyes of God and of our neighbours. Beauty draws harmony, order, capability of entering into relationship with the others with respect and thoughtfulness. These are values that should characterise our being women who live in community.

2nd Reader : From our Constitutions:

The primary condition for our community life is a sincere attitude of faith and humility. By it we learn to accept ourselves serenely and welcome each sister appreciating her personal talents; it enables us to listen with mutual respect and regard and renders us attentive to and concerned about the needs of others. Thus it fosters true interpersonal relationships marked by simple and understanding cordiality that blooms in trust and hope. (Const. 51)

A moment of meditative silence

Spontaneous prayers

After each invocation we shall respond: **Mary, all beautiful, intercede for us.**

Commitment for the day:

Today, we commit ourselves to perceive what is “beautiful” in us and around us living in an constant attitude of gratefulness to God for the countless gifts received and given.

Our Father

Let us pray:

O God, who in your only Son established the door of life and salvation, through the motherly intercession of Mary grant us to persevere in your love until we reach the threshold of the heavenly city. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever. Amen.

4th day: Mary, disciple of the Son

*Able to answer to the new poverties
Listening and obeying to the Word*

Preparing the environment: to prepare previously some paper foot prints on thin cardboard that will be handed out before starting the prayer.

A Marian Hymn

Guide: Mary, missionary disciple, followed her Son from Cana to the Cross, and this silent and suffered following made her nearer and more attentive to the needs of the brothers. As Sister and Mother of the humankind, she continues walking with us, constantly pointing to Christ, her Son.

From the Gospel according to John Jh 2: 1-11

Guide: The example of Mary invites us to notice, in the realities where we are inserted, the true needs of the brothers and sisters and to make missionary choices that respond to today's new poverties.

1st Reader:

As of Mary, so we can say of every woman: "Especially in giving themselves to others each day, women fulfil their deepest vocation. Perhaps more than men, women acknowledge the person, because they see persons with their hearts.... they try to go out to them and help them" (Letter to the women by Pope John Paul II). *To see, to*

meet the need, to be of help: these aspects which we feel more and more important for our mission shines also at **Cana**, where Mary, disciple among the disciples, the first disciple, (RMa 20), inviting to do what the Son says, provides for all the joy of good wine. At Cana already we see the new meaning of Mary's maternity taking shape (RMa 21). It is the mother attentive to all, who knows what is lacking and who "places herself between her Son and mankind in the reality of their wants, needs and sufferings", as a mother who "can point out to her Son the needs of mankind" (RMa 21), and intercedes for all. In this way Mary inspires us in the difficult discernment of missionary choices, because she teaches us to see what is lacking, according to the demands of places and times, to say to her Son, to follow his Word, to bring more joy at the table of the world. (To the roots of our spirituality)

Guide: Now, we invite each sister to observe a moment of silence; after that, each sister can write on the foot print she received, a passage from the Bible or an attitude which she feels as requested from God for a greater following.

A moment of meditative silence

Guide: Through the simple sign of putting at the foot of the altar the foot print we received, we manifest our desire of following Christ in whatever He asks of us, in an attitude of obedience to the Word.

Meditative Song

Commitment for the day:

Today, we commit ourselves to reserve some more time for the listening to the Word of God.

Our Father

Let us pray:

Lord our God, who made out of the Virgin Mary the model of those who welcome your Word and put it into practice, open our heart to the beatitude of listening and by the strength of your Spirit grant that we too become the holy place where your Word of salvation today is

fulfilled. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever. Amen.

5th day: Mary, woman of frontier

*With a sincere desire of mobility
Able to overcome the generational and
cultural frontiers*

Preparing the environment: We can write on small pieces of paper the missionary and community frontiers we are called to face.

A Marian Hymn

Guide: As missionaries, we are continually called to overcome personal, generational, communitarian and geographic frontiers. Wishing to live deeply the interior and exterior itinerancy, that urges us to go always “elsewhere”, overcoming every kind of differences, let us look at Mary as the woman able to overcome all the “frontiers”.

From the Gospel according to Luke

Lk 1:39-45

1st Reader:

Woman missionary in journey, moved by the Spirit who leads her without delay to Elizabeth, Mary takes Jesus made flesh in her. The first missionary journey that the Gospel describes is hers and it leads to an encounter between two women, who have in their womb the new life.

The feminine dimension of our being missionaries is made clear in the light of the meeting between Mary and Elizabeth. Here are some aspects: the availability to go to meet the need; to go out of oneself and enter into the house of the other; the readiness to serve; the joyful concern; the gaze of grateful faith.

Besides, in the journey with Jesus in her womb, Mary is the “first tabernacle” and she is the evangelizer who evangelizes with her very being. This uniqueness gives us a new gaze, a woman’s gaze, with

which to look at the Eucharist and the witness of life, to live as she lived and to bring life in the world. (To the roots of our spirituality)

2nd Reader: Mary hurried to the house of Elizabeth. In a hurry because there is an urgency in going and a joy in encountering.

Mary, a young woman, overcomes the frontiers of her own reality, leaves the comfort of her house in order to go and meet her cousin. In the encounter of the two women we can see also the encounter between two generations, two different feelings that do not annul but accomplish one another and exult with joy because they carry within them the life, The joy of the encounter is changed in an overjoyed proclamation of salvation.

3rd Reader: The text of the Visitation invites us also to reflect on the life of our international and inter-generational communities. Mary, the model for each Missionary Sister of the Immaculate, becomes in this way a strong stimulus to overcome ourselves in order to enjoy the presence of the other who becomes for us an opportunity of growth and a continuous gift.

A moment of meditative silence

Spontaneous prayers

After each invocation we shall respond: **Mary, woman of frontier, intercede for us.**

Commitment for the day:

Today, we commit ourselves to go towards the other with an attitude of listening and welcoming which opens us to a deeper communion with God and the Sisters.

Our Father

Let us pray:

O God, Saviour of all the peoples, who, through the blessed Virgin Mary, arc of the new covenant, has brought in the house of Elizabeth the salvation and the joy, grant us that docile to the action of the Spirit we may bring Christ to our brothers and magnify your name with hymns of praise and the holiness of life. We ask this through

our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever. Amen.

6th day: Mary, guardian of the life

*Sent to take care of the life in all its dimensions
To keep the life in our communities*

Preparing the environment: Prepare round the altar or the image of Mary symbols or images that represent the guarded or threatened life, taking into consideration the reality of the place where we are inserted.

Initial Hymn.

Guide: As consecrated women we bring to fulfillment our vocation when we feel we can generate and accompany, in faith, new children of God, new disciples of Christ.

From the letter of Saint Paul to Romans Rom 8: 18 -25

1st Reader: in many human situations, life is still threatened. The globalised world, the culture of death that dominates in today's society transform life in an object of trade, submit it to the market laws that give priority to the profit and consumerism rather than to the person and value that it carries within just for the fact that it exists.

As consecrated women we are invited to take care of life in all its dimensions.

2nd Reader:

A slow journey of maturation leads Giuseppina Rodolfi to the conviction that it was possible to live as a woman apostle, "going where the priest cannot go, saying what the priest cannot say or what it is not suitable for him to say, in a word co-operating with his work for the sanctification of souls", to give to everyone "the word of love". The awareness of being missionary women continues to grow

today in us and it leads us to live our spirituality with feminine sensitivity and intelligence.

Love for beauty and sensibility for harmony, is also a different gaze on creation. God created a world of beauty and harmony and keeps it alive, blesses it and provides the world with every good thing. The respect for creation is based on this certainty and draws from the respect for life and human dignity. The urgency to work for justice and peace among the peoples accompanies itself to the need of defending the garden of creation.

To be missionary women like Mary means to take care of the life, in every form, especially the fragile and endangered life; to travel and to help others to travel along the path of solidarity; to contribute in favour of a world of peace and justice; to educate ourselves and to educate others to the responsibility taken up towards oneself, towards others and towards the creation. (To the roots of our Spirituality)

Guide. We invite each sister to be silent for a short time and to reflect in order to answer the following question:

- *Also in our community often we are not able to take care of life. We undermine the existence of the other and of the Spirit, in us and in our fraternal life.*
- *How can we grow in the capacity of taking care of the life of the other and of the Spirit who lives in us?*

Sharing or spontaneous prayers

After each invocation we shall respond: **Mary, guardian of the life, intercede for us.**

Commitment for the day:

Today, we commit ourselves to pay a particular attention for the creation and its preservation, using the natural goods with responsibility (Water, light, recycling the rubbish, awareness in using the paper, a particular attention to be given to trees and green spaces, etc.)

Our Father

Let us pray:

O God of infinite wisdom, you have chosen the one who is sublime among the humble and the poor of Israel, the Blessed Virgin Mary, as the Mother of the Saviour, grant us that welcoming with living faith your Word we may learn to put our hope of salvation only in you. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

7th day: Mary, Mother of the Church

Inserted in a local Church

We pray for and with the Church

Preparing the environment: put at the foot of Mary some photos or images of biblical clubs, Christian communities gathered for the catechesis or other ecclesial moments.

Entrance song

Guide. Today we pray for the local Church in which we are inserted, for the ecclesial groups we accompany and their Pastors. Mary, Mother of the Church, has always been a “sure harbour” in the life of the apostles after Jesus’ death.

From the Acts of the Apostles Acts 1: 12 -14

1st Reader:

Mary who had taken care of the fragile life of the Word made flesh in her womb and followed Him as Mother and disciple, now takes care of the fragile life of the nascent Church, which by the action of the Spirit at Pentecost is born before her eyes. It is another beginning and another maternity. With the love of a Mother, she takes care of the brothers and sisters of her Son. Through her prayers and her discreet presence she accompanies the ecclesial community when it begins its mission. (To the roots of our Spirituality)

2nd Reader: From our Constitutions:

The desire to serve God and the Church with total disinterestedness, having no other ambition except to spread God's Kingdom. This desire should lead us to make the anxieties and needs of the Church our own, to adhere to her teachings and above all to love her with the same love as Christ who has sacrificed Himself for her. (Const. 10)

Spontaneous prayers

(The theme of the prayers should be mainly the events and realities linked to the universal and local Church where we are present.)

After each invocation we shall respond: **Mary, Mother of the Church, intercede for us.**

Commitment for the day:

Today we commit ourselves to pray the rosary with a particular intention for the needs of the Universal Church.

Our Father

Let us pray:

Omnipotent and merciful God, who in Mary, the first-born of redemption, make the living image of your Church shine, grant your people to keep their gaze fixed on her in order to walk on the footprints of the Lord until they reach to the fullness of that glory which already foretasted in the contemplation of the Virgin Mother. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

8th day: Mary, Queen of the Apostles

*We proclaim the Word that saves
Feeling as an apostolic body*

Preparing the environment: put near the altar or Mary's image the phrase "Thy Kingdom Come!" written in different languages and the names of the different organisms of the Institute.

Initial Hymn

Guide: The definition of Mary as Queen of the Apostles, so dear to our Institute, acquires, today, a special meaning and enriches our prayer with a great confidence in the Sweet Mother who accompanies our footsteps.

From the Acts of the Apostles Acts 2: 1 -13

Guide: Also at this moment so important for the nascent Church Mary is present, as sure guide and source of hope.

1st Reader:

On the occasion of the Marian year (1953) Msgr. Balconi writes: "Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate have the real need, much more than others, to have for themselves and to know to point out to others that the Virgin is a source of comfort and refuge in times of trials and pain". "You are missionaries and you have for your primary goal the expansion of the Kingdom of Christ and the conversion of souls ... You will see that your work is made easier, if recourse to the Virgin will be your usual method". Therefore he exhorts them enthusiastically to "entrust to Mary their apostolate" to find in her courage and strength, intelligence and love, generosity and sacrifice "for the great aspiration of their heart which is the expansion of the Kingdom of Christ in souls".

It is an invitation to recognize Mary, Queen of the Apostles, as a special protectress of the missionary work.

To entrust to Mary Immaculate, Queen of the Apostles, the nascent Congregation, to invite both men and women missionaries to have trust in the help of Mary, are only some signs of the certainty that the foundresses had in order to count on her intercession and her company, to obtain from the Spirit the strength and courage to fulfill the missionary mandate. For this, Mary will be always honoured and welcomed in the life of every Missionary Sister of the Immaculate. (To the roots of our Spirituality)

Guide: We are gathered round Mary as a single apostolic body waiting for the Spirit, who is the protagonist of the Mission. As a body which has many parts, so our missionary family, international and multicultural, journeys safely looking at Jesus, the Sower and the seed, and entrusts itself to Mary, Star of the sea, sure of her protection and intercession.

Spontaneous prayers

After each invocation we shall respond: **Mary, Queen of the Apostles, intercede for us.**

Commitment for the day:

Inspired by the Evangelical phrase “the harvest is plentiful but the labourers are few”, today we commit ourselves to pray and offer small sacrifices for the missionary vocations.

Our Father.

Let us pray:

O God, you gave the Holy Spirit to the Apostles as with one mind they were praying with Mary the Mother of Jesus; grant us, under her motherly care, to serve you faithfully and to spread, by word and example, the glory of your Name. We ask this through the same Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever. Amen.

9th day: Mary Immaculate, sign of hope

We are signs of hope among the peoples

Let us trustfully abandon ourselves in the hands of the Immaculate

Preparing the environment: put around the image of the Immaculate candles or lamps in the colours of the five Continents.

A Marian Hymn (while singing, the lamps or candles will be lit)

Guide: Gathered in one missionary family we are sent to be sign of hope. Weak instruments of a great opera, started in the year 1936 and carried on up to now, we proclaim, in the places where we are sent, the Word which saves. Mary, Mother and Mistress, show us the way.

From the Book of Revelation. Rev 12: 1 -2

1st Reader:

The Immaculate, all beautiful, moulded by the love of God to be the dwelling place of his Son, is the first proclamation of hope, *proclamation of the salvation*, given to man fallen into sin. She is the Woman through whom the promise of redemption is introduced into the world. This is the most inspiring aspect for us, who are called to continue the proclamation of salvation in the world. The Immaculate is therefore the model of our missionary consecration.

Her fidelity is the guarantee of our fidelity and it fills us with trusting hope (3). She teaches us to let ourselves be interiorly transformed by the Word of God listened to and treasured, in order to be prepared to give witness, to proclaim and to serve. (to the roots of our Spirituality)

Guide: At the end of the Novena let us pray together this prayer entrusting once again ourselves to Mary, our Mother and Mistress:

O Immaculate Mary, Queen of the Apostles,

our Mother and Intercessor,

prostrating before your altar

we solemnly proclaim you today Queen and Mother

of our small religious family.

Deign, most Holy Virgin,

to take under your protection this new Congregation:

grant it life and development,

so to promote the expansion of the Kingdom of God on earth.

Take us under your protection,

weak instruments of this great work,

be our Mother and Teacher,

take care of us and consider us at your disposal

according to the divine pleasure.

Give us humble and generous hearts,
prepared for any sacrifice for God's glory
and the salvation of whole humanity
and grant us the spirit of meditation, prayer,
and union with God and conformity with His Divine plans.

Bless, o dear Mother, the aspirants:

bestow strength and generosity on them
so that they can overcome any difficulty
which could hinder in the fulfilment of their vocation.

Yes, dear Immaculate Mother, we are going to make you loved
and likewise Your Divine Son.

In return for this, let us love you fervently,
and let no one among us sadden you by sinning,
and let Jesus look down lovingly
at our small family consecrated to you.

Let us pray:

Father, who by the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin
prepared a worthy dwelling for your Son, grant, we pray,
that, as you preserved her from every stain by virtue of the Death of
your Son, which you foresaw, so, through her intercession,
we, too, may be cleansed and admitted to your presence.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with
you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.
Amen.