
NOVENAS

WHAT IS A NOVENA?

A novena is a prayer to Jesus, to Our Lady, or to one or more of the Angels or Saints, usually requesting a special favor. It is said for nine days, or for sets of nine days.

The Best Way to Pray a Novena

- Pray for nine consecutive days, following the specific intention given for each day or praying for your own intention.
- Set a fixed time for each day to pray to avoid forgetting.
- Find a quiet place to pray to avoid being distracted. You may like to pray the novena as part of a Visit to the Blessed Sacrament.
- Use an image of Jesus Christ, Our Lady or the Angels or Saints to help you contemplate what you are praying about.

NOVENA TO THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

Bl. Pius IX formally instituted the celebration of the Immaculate Conception when he proclaimed this dogma on December 8, 1854. Affirming the constant faith of the Church, he expressed in that definition, the exact meaning of the truth of Mary's Immaculate Conception: that she was conceived free from the stain of Original Sin. This feast has been celebrated in the East, and also in many places in the West, since the eighth century. This privilege of Mary is the most beautiful fruit of her Son's Redemption. Chosen as mother of the Savior, Mary received the benefits of salvation from the moment of her conception. Christ came to take away the sin of mankind; he did not allow it to contaminate Mary. The sanctity of our Blessed Mother is a model for all Christians. We seek her intercession that we may be rid of our sins and achieve sanctity.

FIRST DAY

(NOVEMBER 30)

Mary, the new Eve

Introductory Prayer

Lord God,
may our gifts be sanctified by the Holy Spirit,
who formed the Blessed Virgin Mary
to be a new creation
and sent down upon her
the dew of heavenly grace,
so that her womb might bear
the fruit of our salvation,
Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.

Reading

Gn 3:1–6, 13–15

The serpent was more subtle than any other wild creature that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God say, 'You shall not eat of any tree of the garden'?" And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden; but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden; neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'"

But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, and he ate.

Then the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this that you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent beguiled me, and I ate." The Lord God said to the serpent,

"Because you have done this,
cursed are you above all cattle,
and above all wild animals;
upon your belly you shall go,
and dust you shall eat all the days of your life.
I will put enmity between you and the woman,
and between your seed and her seed;
he shall bruise your head,
and you shall bruise his heel."

Consideration

"Mary, Mother of the Incarnate Word, is placed *at the very center of that enmity*, that struggle, that accom-

panies the history of humanity on earth and the history of salvation itself. In this central place, she who belongs to the 'weak and poor of the Lord' bears in herself, like no other member of the human race, that 'glory of grace' which the Father 'has bestowed on us in his beloved Son,' and this *grace determines the extraordinary greatness and beauty* of her whole being. Mary thus remains before God, and also before the whole of humanity, as the unchangeable and inviolable sign of God's election, spoken of in Paul's letter: 'in Christ... he chose us... before the foundation of the world... he destined us... to be his sons' (Eph 1:4, 5). This election is more powerful than any experience of evil and sin, than all that 'enmity' that marks the history of man. In this history Mary remains a sign of sure hope."³⁸

The Holy Rosary (pp. 411 ff.) may be prayed.

Concluding Prayer

O God, 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,
God, for ever and ever.

38. St. John Paul II, *Mother of the Redeemer*, 11, Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1987.

SECOND DAY

(DECEMBER 1)

Mary, full of grace

Introductory Prayer

O God, who willed that at the message of an Angel
your Word should take flesh
in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary,
grant that we, who pray to you
and believe her to be truly the Mother of God,
may be helped by her interceding before you.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.

Reading

Lk 1:26–33

The angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you!" But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and considered in her mind what sort of greeting this might be.

And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there will be no end."

Consideration

"When we read that the messenger addresses Mary as 'full of grace,' the gospel context, which mingles revelations and ancient promises, enables us to understand that among all the 'spiritual blessings in Christ,' this is a special 'blessing.' In the mystery of Christ she is *present* even 'before the creation of the world,' as the one whom the Father 'has chosen' as *Mother* of his Son in the Incarnation. And, what is more, together with the Father, the Son has chosen her, entrusting her eternally to the Spirit of holiness. In an entirely special and exceptional way, Mary is united to Christ, and similarly she is *eternally loved in this 'beloved Son,'* this Son who is of one being with the Father, in whom is concentrated all the 'glory of grace.' At the same time, she is — and remains — perfectly open to this 'gift from above' (cf. Jas 1:17). As the Council teaches, Mary 'stands out among the poor and humble of the Lord, who confidently await and receive salvation from him.'"³⁹

The Holy Rosary (pp.411 ff.) may be prayed.

Concluding Prayer

O God, 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,
God, for ever and ever.

39. Ibid., 8.

THIRD DAY

(DECEMBER 2)

Mary, the handmaid of the Lord

Introductory Prayer

Lord God,
when your Son came down from heaven,
Mary had conceived him in her heart
before she conceived him in her womb:
grant that by holy and just deeds
we may show forth in our lives the Christ whom
we have received by faith,
and who lives and reigns with you and the Holy
Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Reading

Lk 1:34–38

And Mary said to the angel, "How shall this be, since I have no husband?"

And the angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God. And behold, your kinswoman Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. For with God nothing will be impossible."

**And Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be done to me according to your word."
And the angel departed from her.**

Consideration

"Indeed, at the Annunciation Mary entrusted herself to God completely, with the 'full submission of intellect and will,' manifesting 'the obedience of faith' to him who spoke to her through his messenger. She

responded, therefore, *with all her human and feminine 'I,'* and this response of faith included both perfect cooperation with 'the grace of God that precedes and assists' and perfect openness to the action of the Holy Spirit, who 'constantly brings faith to completion by his gifts.'

"The word of the living God, announced to Mary by the angel, referred to her: 'And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son' (Lk 1:31). By accepting this announcement, Mary was to become the 'Mother of the Lord,' and the divine mystery of the Incarnation was to be accomplished in her: 'The Father of mercies willed that the consent of the predestined Mother should precede the Incarnation.' And Mary gives this consent after she has heard everything the messenger has to say. . . . The mystery of the Incarnation was accomplished when Mary uttered her *fiat*: 'Let it be to me according to your word,' which made possible, as far as it depended upon her in the divine plan, the granting of her Son's desire."⁴⁰

The Holy Rosary (pp. 411 ff.) may be prayed.

Concluding Prayer

O God, 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,
God, for ever and ever.

40. Ibid., 13.

FOURTH DAY

(DECEMBER 3)

Mary, blessed among women

Introductory Prayer

Lord, our God,
Savior of the human family,
you brought salvation and joy
to the house of Elizabeth
through the visit of the Blessed Virgin Mary,
the Ark of the new Covenant.
We ask that, in obedience
to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit,
we too may bring Christ to others
and magnify your name by the praise of our lips
and the holiness of our lives.
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Reading

Lk 1:39–44

In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a city of Judah, and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and she exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! And why is this granted me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For behold, when the voice of your greeting came to my ears, the babe in my womb leaped for joy."

Consideration

"Immediately after the narration of the Annunciation, the evangelist Luke guides us in the footsteps

of the Virgin of Nazareth towards 'a city of Judah' (Lk 1:39). According to scholars, this city would be the modern Ain Karim, situated in the mountains, not far from Jerusalem. Mary arrived there 'in haste,' *to visit Elizabeth* her kinswoman. . . .

"Moved by charity, therefore, Mary goes to the house of her kinswoman. When Mary enters, Elizabeth replies to her greeting and feels the child leap in her womb, and, being 'filled with the Holy Spirit,' she *greet*s Mary with a loud cry: 'Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!' Elizabeth's exclamation or acclamation was subsequently to become part of the *Hail Mary*, as a continuation of the angel's greeting, thus becoming one of the Church's most frequently used prayers. But still more significant are the words of Elizabeth in the question that follows: 'And why is this granted me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?' (Lk 1:43). Elizabeth bears witness to Mary: she recognizes and proclaims that before her stands the mother of the Lord, the mother of the Messiah. The son whom Elizabeth is carrying in her womb also shares in this witness: 'The babe in my womb leaped for joy' (Lk 1:44). This child is the future John the Baptist, who at the Jordan will point out Jesus as the Messiah."⁴¹

The Holy Rosary (pp.411 ff.) may be prayed.

Concluding Prayer

O God, 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

41. Ibid., 12.

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,
God, for ever and ever.

FIFTH DAY

(DECEMBER 4)

Mary, Model of Faith

Introductory Prayer

All-holy Father, eternal God,
in your goodness
you prepared a royal throne for your Wisdom
in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary;
bathe your Church in the radiance of your
 life-giving Word,
that it may press forward on its pilgrim way
in the light of your truth,
and so come to the joy
of a perfect knowledge of your love.
God of wisdom,
in your desire to restore us to your friendship
after we had lost it by sin,
you chose the Blessed Virgin Mary
as the seat of your Wisdom.
Grant through her intercession
that we may seek not the folly of the wise
but the loving service
that marks out the poor in spirit.
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Reading

Lk 1:45-56

[And Elizabeth exclaimed:]

"And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord."

And Mary said,

"My soul magnifies the Lord,
and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
for he has regarded the low estate
of his handmaiden.

For behold, henceforth all generations
will call me blessed;

for he who is mighty
has done great things for me,
and holy is his name.

And his mercy is on those who fear him,
from generation to generation.

He has shown strength with his arm,
he has scattered the proud

in the imagination of their hearts,
he has put down the mighty
from their thrones

and exalted those of low degree;
he has filled the hungry with good things,
and the rich he has sent empty away.

He has helped his servant Israel,
in remembrance of his mercy,
as he spoke to our fathers,
to Abraham and to his posterity for ever."

And Mary remained with her about three months,
and returned to her home.

Consideration

"Elizabeth's words 'And blessed is she who believed' do not apply only to that particular moment of the

Annunciation. Certainly the Annunciation is the culminating moment of Mary's faith in her awaiting of Christ, but it is also the point of departure from which her whole 'journey towards God' begins, her whole pilgrimage of faith. And on this road, in an eminent and truly heroic manner—indeed, with an ever-greater heroism of faith—the 'obedience' which she professes to the word of divine revelation will be fulfilled. Mary's 'obedience of faith' during the whole of her pilgrimage will show surprising similarities to the faith of Abraham. Just like the Patriarch of the People of God, so too Mary, during the pilgrimage of her filial and maternal *fiat*, 'in hope believed against hope.'

"In the expression 'Blessed is she who believed,' we can therefore rightly find *a kind of 'key'* that unlocks for us the innermost reality of Mary, whom the angel hailed as 'full of grace.' If as 'full of grace' she has been eternally present in the mystery of Christ, through faith she became a sharer in that mystery in every extension of her earthly journey. She 'advanced in her pilgrimage of faith,' and at the same time, in a discreet yet direct and effective way, she made present to humanity *the mystery of Christ*. And she still continues to do so. Through the mystery of Christ, she too is present within mankind. Thus through the mystery of the Son the mystery of the Mother also is made clear."⁴²

The Holy Rosary (pp. 411 ff.) may be prayed.

Concluding Prayer

O God, who by the Immaculate Conception
of the Blessed Virgin
prepared a worthy dwelling for your Son,

42. Ibid., 14 & 19.

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,
God, for ever and ever.

SIXTH DAY

(DECEMBER 5)

Mary, co-redemptrix

Introductory Prayer

Lord our God,
in your eternal wisdom
you fill out the passion of Christ
through the suffering that his members endure
in the many trials of this life.

As you gave his mother strength in her agony
to stand by the cross of your Son,
grant that we too may bring loving comfort to others
in their distress of mind or body.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Reading

Lk 2:25–35

Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, looking for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And inspired by the Spirit he came into the Temple; and when the parents brought in the child

Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the law, he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation which thou hast prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to thy people Israel." And his father and his mother marveled at what was said about him; and Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, "Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is spoken against (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that thoughts out of many hearts may be revealed."

Consideration

"A just and God-fearing man, called Simeon, appears at this beginning of Mary's 'journey' of faith. His words, suggested by the Holy Spirit (cf. Lk 2:25–27), confirm the truth of the Annunciation. For we read that he took up in his arms the Child to whom—in accordance with the angel's command—the name Jesus was given (cf. Lk 2:21). Simeon's words match the meaning of this name, which is Savior: 'God is salvation.' Turning to the Lord, he says: 'For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel.' At the same time, however, Simeon addresses Mary with the following words: 'Behold, this Child is set for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is spoken against, that thoughts of many hearts may be revealed'; and he adds with direct reference to her: 'and a sword will pierce through your own soul also.' "Simeon's words cast new light on the announcement that Mary had heard from the angel: Jesus is the

Savior, he is 'a light for revelation' to mankind. Is not this what was manifested in a way on Christmas night, when the shepherds came to the stable (cf. Lk 2:8-20)? Is not this what was to be manifested even more clearly in the coming of the Magi from the East (Mt 2:1-12)? But at the same time, at the very beginning of his life, the Son of Mary, and his Mother with him, will experience in themselves the truth of those other words of Simeon: 'a sign that is spoken against.'

"Simeon's words seem like a *second Annunciation to Mary*, for they tell her of the actual historical situation in which the Son is to accomplish his mission, namely, in misunderstanding and sorrow. While this announcement on the one hand confirms her faith in the accomplishment of the divine promises of salvation, on the other hand it also reveals to her that she will have to live her obedience of faith in suffering, at the side of the suffering Savior, and that her motherhood will be mysterious and sorrowful."⁴³

The Holy Rosary (pp. 411 ff.) may be prayed.

Concluding Prayer

O God, 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,
God, for ever and ever.

43. Ibid., 16.

SEVENTH DAY

(DECEMBER 6)

*Mary, the first of those
who heard the word of God and did it*

Introductory Prayer

Lord our God,
you sent your Son from heaven
into the womb of the Blessed Virgin
to be your saving word and our bread of life:
grant that like Mary we may welcome Christ,
by treasuring his words in our hearts
and celebrating in faith
the deep mysteries of our redemption.
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Reading

Lk 11:27–28

As he said this, a woman in the crowd raised her voice and said to him, “Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts that you sucked!” But he said, “Blessed, rather, are those who hear the word of God and keep it!”

Consideration

“The gospel of Luke records the moment when ‘a woman in the crowd raised her voice’ and said to Jesus: *‘Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts that you sucked!’* (Lk 11:27). These words were an expression of praise of Mary as Jesus’ mother according to the flesh....

“But to the blessing uttered by that woman upon her who was his mother according to the flesh, Jesus replies in a significant way: *‘Blessed, rather, are those who hear the word of God and keep it’* (Lk 11:28). He wishes to divert attention from motherhood

understood only as a fleshly bond, in order to direct it towards those mysterious bonds of the spirit which develop from hearing and keeping God's word....

"Without any doubt, Mary is worthy of blessing by the very fact that she became the mother of Jesus according to the flesh ('Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts that you sucked'), but also and especially because already at the Annunciation she accepted the word of God, because she believed it, *because she was obedient to God*, and because she 'kept' the word and 'pondered it in her heart' (cf. Lk 1:38, 45; 2:19, 51) and by means of her whole life accomplished it. Thus we can say that the blessing proclaimed by Jesus is not in opposition, despite appearances, to the blessing uttered by the unknown woman, but rather coincides with that blessing in the person of this Virgin Mother, who called herself only 'the handmaid of the Lord' (Lk 1:38)....

"If *through faith* Mary became the bearer of the Son given to her by the Father through the power of the Holy Spirit, while preserving her virginity intact, in that same faith she *discovered and accepted the other dimension of motherhood* revealed by Jesus during his messianic mission. One can say that this dimension of motherhood belonged to Mary from the beginning, that is to say, from the moment of the conception and birth of her Son. From that time she was 'the one who believed.' ... Thus *in a sense* Mary as mother became the first 'disciple' of her Son, the first to whom he seemed to say 'Follow me,' even before he addressed this call to the apostles or to anyone else (cf. Jn 1:43)."⁴⁴

The Holy Rosary (pp. 411 ff.) may be prayed.

44. Ibid., 20.

Concluding Prayer

O God, 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,
God, for ever and ever.

EIGHTH DAY

(DECEMBER 7)

Mary, mediatrix of all graces

Introductory Prayer

O God, whose Son, dying on the altar of the Cross,
willed that the Most Blessed Virgin Mary,
whom he had chosen as his Mother,
should be our Mother also,
graciously grant, we pray,
that we, who fly to her protection,
may find comfort by invoking our Mother's name.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.

Reading

Jn 2:1–11

On the third day there was a marriage at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there; Jesus also was invited to the marriage, with his disciples. When the wine failed, the mother of Jesus

said to him, "They have no wine." And Jesus said to her, "O woman, what have you to do with me? My hour has not yet come." His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."

Now six stone jars were standing there, for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to them, "Fill the jars with water." And they filled them up to the brim. He said to them, "Now draw some out, and take it to the steward of the feast." So they took it.

When the steward of the feast tasted the water now become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward of the feast called the bridegroom and said to him, "Every man serves the good wine first; and when men have drunk freely, then the poor wine; but you have kept the good wine until now." This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

Consideration

"Mary is present at Cana in Galilee as the *Mother of Jesus*, and in a significant way she *contributes* to that 'beginning of the signs' which reveal the messianic power of her Son. We read: 'When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine." And Jesus said to her, "O woman, what have you to do with me? My hour has not yet come"' (Jn 2: 3-4). In John's gospel that 'hour' means the time appointed by the Father when the Son accomplishes his task and is to be glorified (cf. Jn 7:30; 8:20; 12:23, 27; 13:1; 17:1; 19:27). Even though Jesus' reply to his mother sounds like a refusal (especially if we consider the blunt statement 'My hour has not yet

come,' rather than the question), Mary nevertheless turns to the servants and says to them: 'Do whatever he tells you' (Jn 2:5). Then Jesus orders the servants to fill the stone jars with water, and the water becomes wine, better than the wine which has previously been served to the wedding guests."⁴⁵

"In this passage of John's gospel we find as it were a first manifestation of the truth concerning Mary's maternal care. This truth has also found expression in the teaching of the Second Vatican Council.... 'Mary's maternal function towards mankind in no way obscures or diminishes the unique mediation of Christ, but rather shows its efficacy,' because "'there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus'" (1 Tm 2:5).... The episode at Cana in Galilee offers us a sort of first announcement of Mary's mediation, wholly oriented towards Christ and tending to the revelation of his salvific power.

"From the text of John, it is evident that it is a mediation that is maternal. As the Council proclaims: Mary became 'a mother to us in the order of grace.' This motherhood in the order of grace flows from her divine motherhood. Because she was, by the design of divine Providence, the mother who nourished the divine Redeemer, Mary became 'an associate of unique nobility, and the Lord's humble handmaid,' who 'cooperated by her obedience, faith, hope and burning charity in the Savior's work of restoring supernatural life to souls.' And 'this maternity of Mary in the order of grace... will last without interruption until the eternal fulfillment of all the elect.'"⁴⁶

The Holy Rosary (pp.411 ff.) may be prayed.

45. Ibid., 21.

46. Ibid., 22.

Concluding Prayer

O God, 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,
God, for ever and ever.

NINTH DAY

(DECEMBER 8)

Mary, Mother of God and our mother

Introductory Prayer

O God, Father of mercies,
whose Only Begotten Son, as he hung upon the Cross,
chose the Blessed Virgin Mary, his Mother,
to be our Mother also,
grant, we pray, that with her loving help
your Church may be more fruitful day by day
and, exulting in the holiness of her children,
may draw to her embrace all the families of the peoples.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.

Reading

Jn 19:23–27

**When the soldiers had crucified Jesus they took
his garments and made four parts, one for each**

soldier; also his tunic. But the tunic was without seam, woven from top to bottom; so they said to one another, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see whose it shall be." This was to fulfill the scripture, "They parted my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots." So the soldiers did this.

But standing by 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 near her, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold, your son!" Then he said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home.

Consideration

"If John's description of the event at Cana presents Mary's caring motherhood at the beginning of Christ's messianic activity, another passage from the same gospel confirms this motherhood in the salvific economy of grace at its crowning moment, namely, when Christ's sacrifice on the cross, his paschal mystery, is accomplished. John's description is concise: '*Standing by 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 near her, he said to his mother: "Woman, behold your son!" Then he said to the disciple, "Behold your mother!" And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home' (Jn 19:25-27)....

"And yet the 'testament of Christ's Cross' says more. Jesus highlights a new relationship between Mother and Son, the whole truth and reality of

which he solemnly confirms. One can say that if Mary's motherhood of the human race had already been outlined, now it is clearly stated and established. It *emerges* from the definitive accomplishment of *the Redeemer's paschal mystery*. The mother of Christ, who stands at the very center of this mystery — a mystery that embraces each individual and all humanity — is given as mother to every single individual and all mankind.⁴⁷

The Holy Rosary (pp. 411 ff.) may be prayed.

Concluding Prayer

O God, 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,
God, for ever and ever.



47. Ibid., 24.

NOVENA TO OUR LADY OF STUDENTS, MOTHER OF FAIR LOVE

The *Novena to Our Lady of Students, Mother of Fair Love*, is inspired by St. Josemaria Escriva who said: "An hour of study, for a modern apostle, is an hour of prayer" (*The Way*, no. 335).

The purpose of praying this devotion is to learn from Our Lady how to be a good student and to develop and maintain good habits in daily life; how to grow spiritually and learn to navigate in troubled waters; and how to be the person God wants you to be.

This novena includes a daily intention and resolution. You can choose to pray for them all or just focus on one throughout the novena. The novena can be repeated several times throughout the year, on your own or with friends and family.

FIRST DAY

Intention

As a student, I want Our Lady to teach me how to pray and keep my faith, my Catholic identity. I recognize that one of the challenges I need to overcome is the fear of being misjudged or rejected by those around me because I want to be a true Christian and show my love for God.

Gospel

"The kingdom of God is in the midst of you" (Lk 17:21).

Consideration

"The only fear I can imagine is that of turning away from Love. God Our Lord certainly does not want us to be inhibited, timid or lukewarm about our dedication to him. He wants us to be daring, courageous

and refined... 'I searched for my heart's love, but found him not' (Sg 3:1). This can happen, if one has not yet fully understood what it means to love God. "Then our hearts can be swayed by things which do not lead to Our Lord and so we lose sight of him. At other times it may be Our Lord who hides himself. He knows the reason why. In such cases, he will be encouraging us to seek him more earnestly and, when we find him, we shall be able to cry out with joy, 'I took hold of him and I will never let him go' (Sg 3:4)" (St. Josemaria Escriva, *Friends of God*, no. 277).

Resolution

From now on, I will set a fixed time when I am going to pray every day — either some minutes of mental prayer or the Rosary.

Concluding Prayer

My Immaculate Mother Mary, you received the Word of God, Jesus Christ, in your womb and so became the Mother of God, the Throne of Glory and the Seat of Wisdom. Obtain for me the grace to enjoy my prayer, my study, and my work because they are the ways in which I can show my love for God.

May my study bring me closer to you and your divine Son Jesus every day. Help me never to forget to offer it to you, as I do now, so that every hour I study may truly be an hour of prayer.

Help me, Mother Mary, to fulfill the resolution of this day so that I may be properly prepared for my mission in life, that I may be sanctified by my actions and attain the happiness of loving you forever in Heaven.

I also entrust to you those who are sick or suffering, that through your motherly care they may come closer to God. Amen.

You can now pray the *Hail Mary* (p. 60), *Memorare* (p. 453), or *We Fly to Your Patronage* (p. 416).

SECOND DAY

Intention

As a student, I want Our Lady to teach me how to be a good son or daughter, always praying for my family, especially in difficult situations and in times of illness. I recognize that one of the challenges I need to overcome is falling into the temptation of anger, stress, frustration, and lacking charity and love.

Gospel

“Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit” (Jn 12:24).

Consideration

“The commandment to love our parents belongs to both natural law and to divine positive law, and I have always called it a ‘most sweet precept’. Do not neglect your obligation to love your parents more each day, to mortify yourself for them, to pray for them and to be grateful to them for all the good you owe them” (St. Josemaria Escriva, *The Forge*, no. 21).

Resolution

Out of love for God, I will do two or three little things to show my love for my parents, siblings, and friends, offering this sacrifice for their salvation.

Concluding Prayer

Pray the *Concluding Prayer* as on the First Day, p. 505.

You can now pray the *Hail Mary* (p. 60), *Memorare* (p. 453), or *We Fly to Your Patronage* (p. 416).

THIRD DAY

Intention

As a student, I want Our Lady to teach me how to practice good habits and virtues like honesty, loyalty, and integrity, to attract others to God. I recognize that one of the challenges I need to overcome is my own selfishness — the attitude that “I always have to feel good.”

Gospel

“Well done, good and faithful servant: you have been faithful over a little, I will set you over much; enter into the joy of your master” (Mt 25:21).

Consideration

“It is God waiting for us, God who loves man, who searches us out, who loves us just as we are — limited, selfish, inconstant, but capable of discovering his infinite affection and of giving ourselves fully to him” (St. Josemaria Escriva, *Christ Is Passing By*, no. 151).

Resolution

I will pray the *Angelus* (or *Regina Cæli*) at midday from now on, contemplating Our Lady’s greatest privilege of being the Mother of God and asking her to teach me to help others by my own good example.

Concluding Prayer

Pray the *Concluding Prayer* as on the First Day, p. 505.

You can now pray the *Hail Mary* (p. 60), *Memorare* (p. 453), or *We Fly to Your Patronage* (p. 416).

FOURTH DAY

Intention

As a student, I want Our Lady to teach me the value of having a good conscience, being without sin, hating whatever offends God, and to help me not to die in sin ("... pray for us now and at the hour of our death"). I recognize that one of the challenges I need to overcome is not fully recognizing and avoiding sin.

Gospel

"The eye is the lamp of the body. So if your eye is sound, your whole body will be full of light; but if your eye is not sound, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!" (Mt 6:22–23).

Consideration

"Are you trying to make sincere resolutions? Ask Our Lord to help you to take a tough line with yourself, for love of him; to help you apply, with all naturalness, the purifying touch of mortification to everything you do. Ask him to help you to spend yourself in his service, silently and unnoticed, like the flickering lamp that burns beside the Tabernacle. And if you can't think of anything by way of a definite answer to the divine guest who knocks at the door of your heart, listen well to what I have to tell you. Penance is fulfilling exactly the timetable you have fixed for yourself, even though your body resists or your mind tries to avoid it by dreaming up useless fantasies.

"Penance is getting up on time and also not leaving for later, without any real reason, that particular job that you find harder or most difficult to do" (St. Josemaria Escriva, *Friends of God*, no. 138).

Resolution

From now on, as a preparation for making a good monthly confession, I will make a daily examination of conscience by asking myself simply: "What did I do to please God? What did I do that was not pleasing to God? What will I do better tomorrow?"

Concluding Prayer

Pray the *Concluding Prayer* as on the First Day, p. 505.

You can now pray the *Hail Mary* (p. 60), *Memorare* (p. 453), or *We Fly to Your Patronage* (p. 416).

FIFTH DAY

Intention

As a student, I want Our Lady to help me set priorities for each day, developing and keeping a plan for daily life including prayer, time for my studies and other important things, avoiding laziness, and making decisions with freedom of spirit. I recognize that in order to do this I need to simplify my life and set priorities every day — always keeping God first.

Gospel

"No-one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God" (Lk 9:62).

Consideration

"Christian life can never be reduced to an oppressive set of rules which leave the soul in a state of exasperation and tension. Rather, it accommodates itself to individual circumstances as a glove fits the hand, and it says that, as well as praying and sacrificing ourselves constantly, we should never lose our supernatural outlook as we go about our everyday tasks, be they big or small. Remember that God loves his creatures to distraction" (St. Josemaria Escriva, *Friends of God*, no. 137).

Resolution

I will begin each of my days offering my day and placing everything I do in God's hands through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary (see *Morning Offering*, p. 62). I can also write a plan for the day to include the following: prayer, study, sports, rest, etc.

Concluding Prayer

Pray the *Concluding Prayer* as on the First Day, p.505.

You can now pray the *Hail Mary* (p.60), *Memorare* (p.453), or *We Fly to Your Patronage* (p.416).

SIXTH DAY

Intention

As a student, I want Our Lady to teach me to be pure of heart, acting in a way that gives witness to the appropriate use of my emotions, my body, my feelings, so I will not have any regrets at the end of the day, and will not give in easily to temptations. I recognize that one of the challenges I need to overcome is my own uncontrolled passions and wanting pleasure for my senses. Especially when dealing with the opposite sex, I know that a clean, healthy relationship is the true way to joy.

Gospel

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Mt 5:8).

Consideration

"We all know by experience that we can be chaste, living vigilantly, frequenting the sacraments and stamping out the first sparks of passion before the fire can spread. And it so happens that among the chaste are found the finest men in every way. And among the lustful predominate the timid, the selfish,

the treacherous and the cruel — characters of little manliness” (St. Josemaria Escriva, *The Way*, no. 124).

Resolution

I will end every day with three *Hail Marys*, petitioning Our Lady for the virtue of purity for myself, my friends, and my family, so that we see the value of living chastely and starting over again when necessary.

Concluding Prayer

Pray the *Concluding Prayer* as on the First Day, p.505.

You can now pray the *Hail Mary* (p.60), *Memorare* (p.453), or *We Fly to Your Patronage* (p.416).

SEVENTH DAY

Intention

As a student, I want Our Lady to teach me how to really enjoy life; to help me be objective in my studies and fulfill the goals that I have for every day, including setting daily hours for study and for rest. I recognize that one of the challenges I need to overcome is doing things out of a sense of guilt or peer pressure, not out of love, and then pretending to be happy.

Gospel

“Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom his master has set over his household, to give them their food at the proper time? Blessed is that servant whom his master when he comes will find so doing! Truly I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions” (Mt 24:45).

Consideration

“An hour of study, for a modern apostle, is an hour of prayer” (St. Josemaria Escriva, *The Way*, no. 335).

“Please don’t forget that the important thing does not lie in doing many things; limit yourself, generously, to those you can fulfill each day, whether or not you happen to feel like doing them. These pious practices will lead you, almost without your realizing it, to contemplative prayer. Your soul will pour forth more acts of love, aspirations, acts of thanksgiving, acts of atonement, spiritual communions. And this will happen while you go about your ordinary duties, when you answer the telephone, get on to a bus, open or close a door, pass in front of a church, when you begin a new task, during it and when you have finished it: you will find yourself referring everything you do to your Father God” (St. Josemaria Escriva, *Friends of God*, no. 149).

Resolution

When I study I will place a small crucifix on the desk and write down the intentions for which I want to offer my studies. I will offer them again every time I find my intention deviating towards myself.

Concluding Prayer

Pray the *Concluding Prayer* as on the First Day, p. 505.

You can now pray the *Hail Mary* (p. 60), *Memorare* (p. 453), or *We Fly to Your Patronage* (p. 416).

EIGHTH DAY

Intention

As a student, I want Our Lady to teach me how to be a true friend so my friendships will last, like the friendship of Christ; a friendship that never betrays and is not selfish. I recognize that one of the challenges I need to overcome is the ambition to be successful at any cost, putting aside other people and my Christian vocation.

Gospel

"No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends" (Jn 15:13).

Consideration

"For this world of ours to set its course in a Christian direction—which is the only one worthwhile—we have to exercise loyal friendship with all men, based on a prior loyal friendship with God" (St. Josemaria Escriva, *The Forge*, no. 943).

"Those who have met Christ cannot shut themselves in their own little world: how sad such a limitation would be! They must open out like a fan in order to reach all souls. Each one has to create—and widen—a circle of friends, whom he can influence with his professional prestige, with his behavior, with his friendship, so that Christ may exercise his influence by means of that professional prestige, that behavior, that friendship" (St. Josemaria Escriva, *Furrow*, no. 193).

Resolution

I will say the *Memorare* (p. 453) prayer to Our Lady asking her to help me, members of my family, and my friends who are experiencing difficulties in practicing the Catholic Faith.

Concluding Prayer

Pray the *Concluding Prayer* as on the First Day, p. 505.

You can now pray the *Hail Mary* (p. 60), *Memorare* (p. 453), or *We Fly to Your Patronage* (p. 416).

NINTH DAY

Intention

As a student, I want Our Lady to teach me how to be a real witness of my Catholic faith and to accept the

challenge of formation, being open to receiving the formation that I need, even though it takes time out of my day, so that I can help evangelize the world. I recognize that one of the challenges I need to overcome is my tendency to feel overwhelmed and to procrastinate, wasting time.

Gospel

"Mary kept all these things, pondering them in her heart" (Lk 2:19).

Consideration

"You imagined the beauty of dying like a grain of wheat in that nation, now so arid, which in time will yield enormous crops of wheat. I think that those ambitions are good. But for now, dedicate yourself to the small task and great mission of every day: to your study, your work, your apostolate, and above all, to your formation. This, since you still need to do so much pruning, is neither a less heroic nor a less beautiful task" (St. Josemaria Escriva, *Furrow*, no. 617).

Resolution

Peacefully, I will recognize in myself those bad habits and addictions that are difficult to overcome, making me lazy, discouraged, and neglectful of my studies. I will choose one (or two) that I can change by developing a good habit to combat it.

Concluding Prayer

Pray the *Concluding Prayer* as on the First Day, p. 505.

You can now pray the *Hail Mary* (p. 60), *Memorare* (p. 453), or *We Fly to Your Patronage* (p. 416).

NOVENA TO OUR LADY, UNDOER OF KNOTS

"The knot of Eve's disobedience was loosed by the obedience of Mary. For what the virgin Eve had bound fast through unbelief, this did the virgin Mary set free through faith." (St. Irenæus, *Against Heresies*, Book III, Chapter 22, no. 4)

The Blessed Virgin Mary wants to "untie the knots" of sin in order to grow in love for God.

This may be prayed when you feel helpless and need to rely more heavily on divine assistance. To be said each day for nine days.

- Make Sign of the Cross.
- Say the Act of Contrition (p. 74.)
- Pray the Rosary (pp. 411 ff.)
- Finish with the following prayer:

Dearest holy Mother, most holy Mary,
you undo the knots that suffocate your children;
extend your merciful hands to me.

I entrust to you today this knot
and all the negative consequences
that it provokes in my life.

I give you this knot that torments me
and makes me unhappy
and so impedes me from uniting myself to you
and your Son Jesus, my Savior.

I run to you, Mary, Undoer of Knots,
because I trust you
and I know that you never despise a sinning child
who comes to ask you for help.

I believe that you can undo this knot
because Jesus grants you everything.

I believe that you want to undo this knot
because you are my Mother.

I believe that you will do this
because you love me with eternal love.

Thank you, dear Mother.

Mary, Undoer of Knots, pray for me. Amen.

NOVENA TO ST. JOSEMARIA ESCRIVA TO FIND EMPLOYMENT

This may be prayed on the first nine days on which
you are looking for a new or different job.

DAY 1

May our Lord God guide me in the effort to seek work
and bless me, enabling me
to obtain honest, dignified, and steady employment;
and then help me to see my job
as a path to holiness and a service to others,
where God my Father awaits me at every moment,
asking me, in each situation, to imitate Jesus
when he worked as a carpenter in Nazareth.

DAY 2

May our Lord God grant me the grace to get a job quickly,
which will provide security for my family.
At the same time, may he help me to understand
that what gives value to any honest work
is the love with which I do it:
love for God, in the first place,
to whom I can offer up my work;
and love for my neighbor,
whom I wish to serve and be useful to.

DAY 3

May I get a stable and suitable job,
with the help of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary.
And when, through God's goodness, I am working,
may I learn to use my time as the treasure it is,
and make the effort to improve in the virtue of order,
so as to work more punctually, intensely, and constantly,
without disorder or delays.
May I achieve this by following a well-structured plan,
which allows for me to spend
the appropriate amount of time on each of my duties:
spiritual life, family life, professional life, and social relations,
in a balanced way.

DAY 4

With Our Lady's help,
may I not take long to resolve the problem of my unemployment.
And when I start my new job,
may God help me to work well,
with the greatest possible perfection.
May I never work carelessly,
but be convinced that work done badly cannot be sanctified,
because it lacks love,
and love alone enables any human action
to be pleasing to God.

DAY 5

May God grant me the joy of getting a job,
at which I can be useful and develop my abilities.
And if, for the moment,
the job were to be below my level of competence
and my legitimate aspirations,
may I not belittle it.
Rather, while seeking something more appropriate,
may I carry it out in a fully responsible way,
giving it the same value as Jesus gave his work at Nazareth.

DAY 6

May God grant me an honest and dignified job,
and open the eyes of my soul to understand
that he is always at my side.

So as not to lose sight of this marvelous reality,
may I make the effort

to stay in God's presence during my work,
using as a discreet "reminder" a small crucifix,
or a small picture of Our Lady
or of some Saint to whom I have devotion,
positioned where I can see it often,
without attracting unnecessary attention.

DAY 7

With Our Lady's help,

may I find the job I am looking for.

And when I devote myself fully to this new work,
may God help me to develop the Christian virtues
and to mature spiritually through the work I do.

May I seek to be patient and understanding,
both towards my managers

and towards my colleagues and subordinates.

May I be simple and humble,
avoiding vanity and exhibitionism.

In a word, may I do everything with purity of heart.

DAY 8

May God our Lord grant me the job
which I ask him for with so much faith.

And may he infuse in my soul
the desire to make of my work,

not a self-centered activity geared to my own interests,
but a service that is open and useful to many,
done in the certainty that this ideal of service to others
will give a new, higher, and more joyful meaning to my life.

DAY 9

May God, through Our Lady's mediation, make me find a good job in which I can grow professionally and give the best of myself.

And may he make me see in the area of my work, a wide field for the apostolic mission that God entrusts to all the baptized, using the opportunities he offers me to help my colleagues, friends, and clients discover the marvels of the Christian faith.

NOVENA FOR A HAPPY AND FAITHFUL MARRIAGE

Reflections from St. Josemaria Escriva

St Josemaria Escriva (1902–1975), priest and founder of Opus Dei, believed that “those who are called to the married state will, with the grace of God, find within their state everything they need to be holy, to identify themselves each day more with Jesus Christ, and to lead those with whom they live to God.”

The *Novena for a Happy and Faithful Marriage* is inspired by St. Josemaria's desire to help all married couples, and those preparing for marriage, to find meaning and encouragement in their vocation through a commitment to daily prayer and friendship with God, especially when facing inevitable difficulties and times of trial.

The novena reflections are all taken from the homily by St. Josemaria Escriva, “Marriage: A Christian Vocation,” published in the book *Christ Is Passing By* (Scepter Publishers, 1974).

FIRST DAY
THE VOCATION TO MARRIAGE:
A SUPERNATURAL CALLING

Reflection

“Christian marriage is not just a social institution, much less a mere remedy for human weakness. It is a real supernatural calling. A great sacrament, in Christ and in the Church, says St. Paul. At the same time, it is a permanent contract between a man and a woman. Whether we like it or not, the sacrament of matrimony, instituted by Christ, cannot be dissolved. It is a permanent contract that sanctifies in cooperation with Jesus Christ. He fills the souls of husband and wife and invites them to follow him. He transforms their whole married life into an occasion for God’s presence on earth” (St. Josemaria Escriva, *Christ Is Passing By*, no. 23).

Prayer for the Day

For the Married:

Lord Jesus Christ, You have elevated the covenant of marriage between man and woman to the dignity of a sacrament, making of our relationship a true pathway to holiness. Help us never to lose sight of the holiness of our bond. You will that husband and wife should image Your own spousal relationship with the Church. May we always reflect the beauty of that relationship by the holiness of our lives and our fidelity to each other. Amen.

For the Engaged:

Lord Jesus Christ, help us to appreciate how great the calling to marriage is, as we together prepare for the great sacrament (cf. Eph 5:32). Grant that we might seek to reflect the love that You have for Your

Church by our sincere and sacrificing love for each other. May we be pure in our hearts, chaste in our bodies, and generous in our service to one another, so that our love for each other may truly imitate the love with which You laid down Your life for Your bride, the Church. Amen.

Concluding Prayer (Prayer for the Family)

O God our Loving Father, Creator of all things, you sent your Son, Jesus Christ, our Redeemer, into the home of Mary and Joseph forming the Holy Family of Nazareth; inspire us by their example to imitate their selfless charity in our family life.

Through the intercession of St Josemaria, help our families to be united in the heart of Christ, enjoying a loving communion with each other, recognizing and upholding the sacredness of marriage, generously welcoming the gift of life, and valuing the inestimable gift of each family member.

Help us to dedicate ourselves in generous service to our families and to reflect the love that Christ had for Mary and Joseph, making our family a true domestic Church with Christ at its center.

Teach us to find Christ in the crosses that occur in family life and help us to find joy in them and unite them to him.

Watch over and protect our family so that each member will be faithful to the Gospel and never stray from the path of holiness. We ask you, through the intercession of St. Josemaria, to grant us the favor of (make your request). Amen.

Jesus, Mary, and Joseph,
we give our hearts and souls to you.

SECOND DAY

THE SACREDNESS OF MARRIAGE: ONE FLESH OF TWO BODIES

Reflection

"Marriage is a sacrament that makes one flesh of two bodies. Theology expresses this fact in a striking way when it teaches us that the matter of the sacrament is the bodies of husband and wife. Our Lord sanctifies and blesses the mutual love of husband and wife. He foresees not only a union of souls but a union of bodies as well. No Christian, whether or not he is called to the married state, has a right to underestimate the value of marriage" (St. Josemaria Escriva, *Christ Is Passing By*, no. 24).

Prayer for the Day

For the Married:

Lord Jesus Christ, as spouses we are no longer two, but one flesh. As we are united in body, may we always be united in heart, mind, and spirit as well: seeking to grow in holiness together, seeking to give ourselves more to You as we give ourselves to each other. May we cherish each other's bodies as Your temple, never dishonoring the place where You are most pleased to dwell. Amen.

For the Engaged:

Lord Jesus Christ, as we prepare to be united as two in one flesh, grant that we might grow in mutual respect and understanding of each other. Help us to deepen our union of mind and heart, so that we will better appreciate our union of body as the privileged expression of that spiritual union which Your Spirit accomplishes in us. Amen.

Concluding Prayer

Pray the *Concluding Prayer* as on the First Day, p. 521.

THIRD DAY

HUSBAND & WIFE ARE CALLED TO HOLINESS

Reflection

"Husband and wife are called to sanctify their married life and to sanctify themselves in it. It would be a serious mistake if they were to exclude family life from their spiritual development. The marriage union, the care and education of children, the effort to provide for the needs of the family as well as for its security and development, the relationships with other persons who make up the community, all these are among the ordinary human situations that Christian couples are called upon to sanctify.

"They will achieve this aim by exercising the virtues of faith and hope, facing serenely all the great and small problems which confront any family and persevering in the love and enthusiasm with which they fulfill their duties. In this way they practice the virtue of charity in all things. They learn to smile and forget about themselves in order to pay attention to others. Husband and wife will listen to each other and to their children, showing them that they are really loved and understood. They will forget about the unimportant little frictions that selfishness could magnify out of proportion. They will do lovingly all the small acts of service that make up their daily life together" (St. Josemaria Escriva, *Christ Is Passing By*, no. 23).

Prayer for the Day

For the Married:

Lord Jesus Christ, You provide us with many opportunities in married life to grow in holiness by growing in charity. Grant that we might never overlook these occasions for growth, especially when they

challenge us. May we never tire in our daily struggle to accept all things, the great and small trials as well as the greater and lesser joys, as ways in which we might praise You and deepen our share in Your Cross and Resurrection. Amen.

For the Engaged:

Lord Jesus Christ, we are preparing to enter into married life, where times of joy are often mingled with moments of sorrow and difficulty. Grant that we may see all of these occasions as opportunities to grow in holiness and fidelity. By striving now to accept all things for love of You, may we strive ever more zealously to pursue holiness when we are united together in You. Amen.

Concluding Prayer

Pray the *Concluding Prayer* as on the First Day, p.521.

FOURTH DAY

THE SACREDNESS OF HUMAN LOVE: LIVING CHASTITY IN MARRIAGE

Reflection

“Human love — pure, sincere and joyful — cannot subsist in marriage without the virtue of chastity, which leads a couple to respect the mystery of sex and ordain it to faithfulness and personal dedication. I have never talked about impurity, and I have always avoided falling into a distasteful and meaningless casuistry. But I have spoken many times, as I have to do, about chastity, purity and the joyful affirmation of love.

“When there is chastity in the love of married persons, their marital life is authentic; husband and wife are true to themselves, they understand each other and develop the union between them. When

the divine gift of sex is perverted, their intimacy is destroyed, and they can no longer look openly at each other."

"This is the context in which we must see the Christian doctrine on sex. Our faith does not ignore anything on this earth that is beautiful, noble and authentically human. It simply teaches us that the rule of our life should not be the selfish pursuit of pleasure, because only sacrifice and self-denial lead to true love" (St. Josemaria Escriva, *Christ Is Passing By*, nos. 25, 24).

Prayer for the Day

For the Married:

Lord Jesus Christ, we thank you for the gift of human sexuality and the power you have given us to cooperate in bringing new life into this world. Help us to see our intimacy as a privilege. Help us to see each other as Your gift to us. Grant that we may have the courage to struggle against our selfish impulses so that our love may be truly a gift of self, a chaste and pure love, that only seeks the good of the other. Amen.

For the Engaged:

Lord Jesus Christ, help us to prepare for a chaste married life by living chastity right now. As we work toward self-mastery, let us never lose sight of the beautiful gift of pure married love. Let us always remember that the quality of our married love depends upon our willingness to sacrifice ourselves for each other. Beginning now, give us strength to deny ourselves so that we can affirm the great dignity of the love to which You call us. Amen.

Concluding Prayer

Pray the *Concluding Prayer* as on the First Day, p.521.

FIFTH DAY

SELF-GIVING & BEING OPEN TO CHILDREN

Reflection

"A married couple should build their life together on the foundation of a sincere and pure affection for each other, and on the joy that comes from having brought into the world the children God has enabled them to have. They should be capable of renouncing their personal comfort; and they should put their trust in the providence of God."

"People who are constantly concerned with themselves, who act above all for their own satisfaction, endanger their eternal salvation and cannot avoid being unhappy even in this life. Only if a person forgets himself and gives himself to God and to others, in marriage as well as in any other aspect of life, can he be happy on this earth, with a happiness that is a preparation for, and a foretaste of, the joy of heaven" (St. Josemaria Escriva, *Christ Is Passing By*, nos. 25, 24).

Prayer for the Day

For the Married:

Lord Jesus Christ, You will that children be the precious fruit of married love. We praise and thank you for the irreplaceable gift of new human life. May we always accept as a unique blessing each child that You wish to give us, seeing in them a sign of Your trust in our loving care. Grant that we might never allow fear or selfishness to restrict our openness to new life, but trusting in Your goodness and mercy, may we receive with gratitude and generosity the new lives that You entrust to us. Amen.

For the Engaged:

Lord Jesus Christ, we ask You to prepare us for parenthood by enlarging our hearts. Deepen our love and generosity so that we will gratefully receive the children whom You wish to give us. Prepare us to make the necessary sacrifices that will not only ensure their wellbeing, but assure them that they are loved by You through our loving care. Amen.

Concluding Prayer

Pray the *Concluding Prayer* as on the First Day, p.521.

SIXTH DAY

SUFFERING & FORGIVENESS

Reflection

"As long as we walk on this earth, suffering will always be the touchstone of love. If we were to describe what occurs in the married state, we could say that there are two sides to the coin.

"On the one hand, there is the joy of knowing that one is loved, the desire and enthusiasm involved in starting a family and taking care of it, the love of husband and wife, the happiness of seeing the children grow up.

"On the other hand, there are also sorrows and difficulties—the passing of time that consumes the body and threatens the character with the temptation to bitterness, the seemingly monotonous succession of days that are apparently always the same.

"We would have a poor idea of marriage and of human affection if we were to think that love and joy come to an end when faced with such difficulties. It is precisely then that our true sentiments come to the surface. Then the tenderness of a person's gift of

himself takes root and shows itself in a true and profound affection that is stronger than death" (St. Josemaria Escriva, *Christ Is Passing By*, no. 24).

Prayer for the Day

For the Married:

Lord Jesus Christ, You permit suffering to be a part of every human life, but You will that our afflictions be fruitful and redemptive. Help us to receive the trials and sufferings of our married life in a truly Christian spirit: as a way of making up for our sins and of bringing down many graces upon ourselves and others. May we, as husband and wife, be present to each other during times of suffering; may we never willingly cause each other to suffer. But grant that we might be strong with the strength of Your love, persevering and growing in our love until death. Amen.

For the Engaged:

Lord Jesus Christ, we ask You to prepare us for the self-giving that marriage will ask of us. We know that our married life will be joyful and fulfilling only to the extent that we model our love on Your self-sacrificing love. Especially in times of trial and hardship, may we embrace the difficulties that You permit with a spirit of love and courage. Enlighten our minds and strengthen our hearts to receive all of the sufferings of married life with confidence in Your providence and mercy. Amen.

Concluding Prayer

Pray the *Concluding Prayer* as on the First Day, p. 521.

SEVENTH DAY
CREATING A BRIGHT HOME
THROUGH FAITH & AFFECTION

Reflection

"When I think of Christian homes, I like to imagine them as being full of the light and joy that were in the home of the Holy Family. The message of Christmas is heard in all its forcefulness: 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will.' 'And may the peace of Christ triumph in your hearts,' writes the Apostle. It is a peace that comes from knowing that our Father God loves us, and that we are made one with Christ. It results from being under the protection of the Virgin, our Lady, and assisted by St. Joseph. This is the great light that illuminates our lives. In the midst of difficulties and of our own personal failings, it encourages us to keep up our effort.

"Every Christian home should be a place of peace and serenity. In spite of the small frustrations of daily life, an atmosphere of profound and sincere affection should reign there together with a deep-rooted calm, which is the result of authentic faith that is put into practice" (St. Josemaria Escriva, *Christ Is Passing By*, no. 22).

Prayer for the Day

For the Married:

Lord Jesus Christ, grant that our home may be a place of peace, a place where You are always welcome, a place where charity and understanding are never absent. You call us to make our home a bright and cheerful place by taking advantage of every opportunity, both small and great, to serve each other. Help us to build up our home and our relationships

by this attentive and constant love, loving one another as You have loved us. Amen.

For the Engaged:

Lord Jesus Christ, help us to be devoted to Our Lady and St. Joseph, who will teach us how to make our future home into a place where You are pleased to dwell. The Psalm tells us: "If the Lord does not build the house, those who build it labor in vain" (Ps 127:1). May we always allow You to build up our family and home life by accepting from Your hand all of the opportunities You give us to serve each other and grow in mutual love. Amen.

Concluding Prayer

Pray the Concluding Prayer as on the First Day, p.521.

EIGHTH DAY CREATING A CHEERFUL HOME — FRIENDSHIP WITH YOUR CHILDREN

Reflection

"Listen to your children. Give them your time, even the time that you have reserved for yourselves. Show them your confidence; believe whatever they tell you, even if sometimes they try to deceive you. Don't be afraid when they rebel, because, at their age, you yourselves were more or less rebellious. Go to meet them half-way and pray for them. If you act in this Christian manner, they will come to you with simplicity, instead of trying to satisfy their legitimate curiosity by taking it to some rough or vulgar friend. Your confidence, your friendly dealings with your children, will receive an answer in their sincerity in dealing with you. Then, even if there are quarrels and lack of understanding, they will never amount

to much; and this is what peace in the family and a truly Christian life mean.

"At the same time, they [parents] should help their children to direct their efforts and to carry out their projects properly, teaching them to consider things and to reason them out. It is not a matter of imposing a line of conduct, but rather of showing the human and supernatural motives for it. In a word, parents have to respect their children's freedom, because there is no real education without personal responsibility, and there is no responsibility without freedom" (St. Josemaria Escriva, *Christ Is Passing By*, nos. 29, 27).

Prayer for the Day

For the Married:

Lord Jesus Christ, children are Your gift to us. Grant that we might receive them gratefully as gifts, while especially striving to remain open to how You speak to us through them. With both their strengths and weaknesses, help us to embrace them with love and patience, accepting them as You also mercifully accept us. May we teach and correct them lovingly, always remembering that we have the responsibility of forming them in the freedom of the children of God. Amen.

For the Engaged:

Lord Jesus Christ, help us to appreciate deeply our status as adopted children of God. Help us to call upon God as Our Father with great tenderness and confidence. By learning to treasure our own dignity as God's children, we will also know better how to love and form the children that You wish to give us, in the same Spirit that has made us all Your brothers

and sisters, and sons and daughters of the Heavenly Father. Amen.

Concluding Prayer

Pray the *Concluding Prayer* as on the First Day, p. 521.

NINTH DAY

UNITED WITH CHRIST:

BECOMING SOWERS OF PEACE & JOY

Reflection

“Couples should be convinced that they are really and truly called to take part in the fulfillment of God’s plan for the salvation of all men. For this reason, there is perhaps no better model for a Christian couple than that of the Christian families of apostolic times: the centurion Cornelius, who obeyed the will of God and in whose home the Church was made accessible to the gentiles; Aquila and Priscilla, who spread Christianity in Corinth and Ephesus, and who cooperated in the apostolate of St Paul; Tabitha, who out of charity attended to the needs of the Christians in Joppe.

“And so many other homes and families of Jews and Gentiles, Greeks and Romans, in which the preaching of our Lord’s first disciples began to bear fruit—families who lived in union with Christ and who made him known to others; small Christian communities which were centers for the spreading of the Gospel and its message; families no different from other families of those times, but living with a new spirit, which spread to all those who were in contact with them.

"This is what the first Christians were, and this is what we have to be: sowers of peace and joy, the peace and joy that Jesus has brought to us" (St. Josemaria Escriva, *Christ Is Passing By*, no. 30).

Prayer for the Day

For the Married:

Lord Jesus Christ, You will that our marriage be truly apostolic, that is, a relationship so loving and joyful that we naturally reach out to others in order to share what You have given us. Grant us true joy in You; grant us true joy in each other; grant us Your peace. Then we will more fully live the sacrament of holy matrimony, the more we draw souls to You by the witness of our married love, which is a true reflection of the surpassing love that You have for Your bride, the Church. Amen.

For the Engaged:

Lord Jesus Christ, You call us to live a life of Christian witness in the world, reflecting the joy and peace that comes from belonging to You and to Your Church. Grant that our married love may radiate outward to many souls, inspiring them to come to You and to the Church. May we prepare for this by living authentically Christian lives right now — lives of generosity, self-restraint, and purity — so that by our example, the light of the Gospel may shine brightly before all. Amen.

Concluding Prayer

Pray the *Concluding Prayer* as on the First Day, p. 521.

