



# Novena to the Immaculate Conception

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"Mary said, 'Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word.' Then the angel departed from her." Luke 1: 38



# Our Lady asks in order to understand God

## Gospel of Luke 1: 34-35:

"But Mary said to the angel, 'How can this be, since I have no relations with a man?' And the angel said to her in reply, '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.'"

## A reflection from Pope Francis:

"Mary as a good mother teaches us to be, like her, capable of making definitive decisions... in the full freedom with which she said 'yes' to the plan God had for her life... Let us not be afraid of life commitments, commitments that take up and concern our entire life! In this way our life will be fruitful! And this is freedom: to have the courage to make these decisions with generosity."

## A personal reflection:

Reflect on how Our Lady's openness to God's will can inspire you to embrace the challenges faced by the Pope's Missions in 1,150 territories, including places where the Church is young or poor, and where Christianity is persecuted. Consider the sacrifices made by missionaries and pray for their strength. Reflect on how you can support these missions, both spiritually and materially.



# And she replied: Be it done to me as you wish

## Gospel of Luke 1: 38:

"Mary said, 'Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word.' Then the angel departed from her."

## A reflection from Pope Francis:

"Today is the right day to thank the Lord and to ask ourselves: am I a man or woman of 'yes' or a man or woman of 'no'? Or am I a man or woman who looks away, so as not to respond?" May the Lord grant us the grace to take this path of men and women who knew how to say 'yes'."

## A personal reflection:

In moments of silence and meditation, think about the resilience and faith of missionaries and persecuted Christians worldwide. Reflect on how, like Mary, you can be a source of hope and support for them. Consider actions you can take to aid these brave individuals working in challenging environments. And Jesus, who is God and Man, is conceived in her womb.



# And Jesus, who is God and Man, is conceived in her womb

## Gospel of Matthew 1:20-21:

"Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home. For it is through the Holy Spirit that this child has been conceived in her. She will bear a son and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

## A reflection from Pope Francis:

"(Our Lady) tells us to do what she did: not to squander the gift you have received, but to treasure it in your heart so it can grow and bear fruit, with the help of the Holy Spirit. In this way, each of you, for all your limitations and failings, can be a witness to Christ wherever you live: at home, in your parishes, in your associations and groups, and your places of study, work, service, entertainment... wherever God's providence will lead you."

## A personal reflection:

Reflect on Mary's role as a nurturer and guide. Think about the ways you can nurture hope and provide support in your community and for the people of Nicaragua. Ponder on how small acts of kindness and support can uplift the spirits of those who tirelessly work as missionaries in challenging conditions.



# Mary wraps Jesus in swaddling clothes when he is born in Bethlehem

## Gospel of Luke 2: 1-7

"And Joseph too went up from Galilee from the town of Nazareth to Judea, to the city of David that is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, to be enrolled with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. While they were there, the time came for her to have her child, and she gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn."

## A reflection from Pope Francis:

"Mary saw many difficult moments in her life, from the birth of Jesus, when 'there was no place for them in the inn', to Calvary. And like a good mother she is close to us, so that we may never lose courage before the adversities of life, before our weakness, before our sins: she gives us strength, she shows us the path of her Son."

## A personal reflection:

Consider Mary's journey and the hardships she faced, akin to the struggles faced by missionaries and persecuted Christians. Reflect on how you can embody her strength and compassion in your support for these causes. Contemplate on ways to provide warmth and solace to those who suffer.





# Our Lady fulfills the laws given by God

## Gospel of Luke 2: 22, 34-35:

"When the days were completed for their purification according to the law of Moses, they took him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord... Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, 'Behold, this child is destined for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be contradicted, and you yourself a sword will pierce'."

## A reflection from Pope Francis:

"Mary is the Mother of Yes. Yes to God's dream, yes to God's care, yes to God's will. It was a yes that, as we know, was not easy to live. A yes that bestowed no privileges or distinctions. Simeon told her in his prophecy: 'a sword will pierce your heart' (Lk 2:35) and indeed it did. That is why we love her so much. We find in her a true Mother, one who helps us to keep faith and hope alive in the midst of complicated situations."

## A personal reflection:

Think about Mary's enduring faith amid trials, as reflected in the challenges of missionaries and persecuted Christians. Reflect on how you can strengthen your commitment to supporting these causes. Contemplate ways in which you can contribute to the missions, providing both spiritual and material support.



# Our Lady ponders what Jesus does in her heart

## Gospel of Luke 2: 43, 48-51:

"After they had completed its days, as they were returning, the boy Jesus remained behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it." "When his parents saw him, they were astonished, and his mother said to him, 'Son, why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been looking for you with great anxiety.' And he said to them, 'Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?' But they did not understand what he said to them. He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them; and his mother kept all these things in her heart." "Mary helps us to understand what it means to be a disciple of Christ... Her first act was to listen to God... She followed Jesus, listening to every word that issued from his lips. She kept all those things in her heart and became the living memory of the signs worked by God's Son to awaken our faith. But it is not enough simply to listen. That is certainly the first step, but listening then needs to be translated into concrete action."

## A personal reflection:

As you reflect on Mary's contemplative nature, consider how you can be more attentive to the needs of others, especially in the mission territories and places of persecution. Think about how you can actively participate in supporting missionary efforts and advocating for the oppressed. Mary notices the needs of others, with Jesus.



# Mary notices the needs of others, with Jesus

## Gospel of John 2: 1-5:

"On the third day there was a wedding in Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and his disciples were also invited to the wedding. When the wine ran short, the mother of Jesus said to him, 'They have no wine.' [And] Jesus said to her, 'Woman, how does your concern affect me? My hour has not yet come.' His mother said to the servers, 'Do whatever he tells you'."

## A reflection from Pope Francis:

"Dear friends, we have come to knock at the door of Mary's house. She has opened it for us, she has let us in and she shows us her Son. Now she asks us to 'do whatever he tells you'. Yes, Mother, we are committed to doing whatever Jesus tells us! And we will do it with hope, trusting in God's surprises and full of joy. Amen."

## A personal reflection

Reflect on Mary's awareness and responsiveness to others' needs. Consider how you can apply this attentiveness to the needs of missionaries and persecuted Christians worldwide. Think about ways to actively engage in supporting their missions, both spiritually and through acts of service.





# Jesus gives us his Mother

## Gospel of John 19: 25-27

"Standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary of Magdala. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple there whom he loved, 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 home."

## A reflection from Pope Francis

"Mary... is the Mother who patiently and lovingly brings us to God, so that he can untangle the knots of our soul by his fatherly mercy. We all have some of these knots and we can ask in our heart of hearts: What are the knots in my life? 'Father, my knots cannot be undone!' ... All the knots of our heart, every knot of our conscience, can be undone. Do I ask Mary to help me trust in God's mercy, to undo those knots, to change? She, as a woman of faith, will surely tell you: 'Get up, go to the Lord: he understands you'."

## A personal reflection

In your nightly prayers, include intentions for the well-being of missionaries and persecuted Christians worldwide. Reflect on the unconditional love and protection Mary offers, and how you can emulate this through your actions and support for these causes.



# Jesus takes his Mother, body and soul, to heaven

## Revelation 12: 1:

"A great sign appeared in the sky, a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars."

## A reflection from Pope Francis:

"Mary's journey to heaven began with the 'yes' spoken in Nazareth in response to the Heavenly Messenger's announcement of God's will to her. And in reality it is just like this: every 'yes' to God is a step toward Heaven, toward eternal life. Because this is what the Lord wants: that all his children may have life in abundance! God wants us all with him, in his house!"

## Prayer from Pope Francis to the Immaculate Conception on December 8, 2022:

I bring you the thanks and supplications of all your children, near and far. From Heaven where God has welcomed you, you see earthly things far better than we do; but as Mother you listen to our invocations to present them to your Son, to His Heart full of mercy. First of all I bring you the filial love of countless men and women, not only Christians, who nourish for you the greatest gratitude for your beauty, full of grace and humility: for in the midst of so many dark clouds you are a sign of hope and consolation. A personal reflection As the Novena concludes, think of tangible ways you can continue to support missionary work and the well-being of persecuted Christians. Reflect on the acts of service, prayer, and advocacy you can offer. Consider committing to ongoing prayers for peace and support for missionaries, embodying the spirit of service and compassion.

