

NOVENA TO THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION 2015

INTRODUCTION

In preparation for the Jubilee Year of Mercy we turn to the “Mother of Mercy,” the Immaculate Conception. May her maternal care accompany throughout this Extraordinary Jubilee, which opens on her feast day, December 8. “May the sweetness of her countenance watch over us in this Holy Year, so that all of us may rediscover the joy of God’s tenderness. No one has penetrated the profound mystery of the incarnation like Mary. Her entire life was patterned after the presence of mercy made flesh. The Mother of the Crucified and Risen One has entered the sanctuary of divine mercy because she participated intimately in the mystery of His love. Chosen to be the Mother of the Son of God, Mary, from the outset, was prepared by the love of God to be the Ark of the Covenant between God and man. She treasured divine mercy in her heart in perfect harmony with her Son Jesus. Her hymn of praise, sung at the threshold of the home of Elizabeth, was dedicated to the mercy of God which extends from “generation to generation” (Lk 1:50). We too were included in those prophetic words of the Virgin Mary. This will be a source of comfort and strength to us as we cross the threshold of the Holy Year to experience the fruits of divine mercy.” (Bull of Indiction Misericordiae Vultus, [MV] 24)

PRAYER

To be prayed before each reading.

Immaculate Virgin, chosen among all women to be the mother of our Savior, faithful servant of the mystery of Redemption, intercede for us that we may know how to respond to Christ’s call. May each of us follow him along the road of life that leads to eternal union with the Holy Trinity. Share with us your maternal concern for all people, and your live hope for our sanctification. May all creation celebrate with you, O Mother of God, tenderness of the Holy Spirit, in praise of the infinite love and mercy of God. Amen.

Day 1 - Called to be a sign of the rich mercy of the Father.

MV #1

Jesus Christ is the face of the Father’s mercy. These words might well sum up the mystery of the Christian faith. Mercy has become living and visible in Jesus of Nazareth, reaching its culmination in him. The Father, “rich in mercy” (Eph 2:4), after having revealed his name to Moses as “a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness” (Ex 34:6), has never ceased to show, in various ways throughout history, his divine nature. In the “fullness of time” (Gal 4:4), when everything had been arranged according to his plan of salvation, he sent his only Son into the world, born of the Virgin Mary, to reveal his love for us in a definitive way. Whoever sees Jesus sees the Father (cf. Jn 14:9). Jesus of Nazareth, by his words, his actions, and his entire person[1] reveals the mercy of God.

How can I show the mercy of the Father?

+ Sacred Heart of Jesus, have mercy on us.
Mother of Mercy, pray for us.

Day 2 - Called to discover the joy of God's tenderness.

MV #2

We need constantly to contemplate the mystery of mercy. It is a wellspring of joy, serenity, and peace. Our salvation depends on it. Mercy: the word reveals the very mystery of the Most Holy Trinity. Mercy: the ultimate and supreme act by which God comes to meet us. Mercy: the fundamental law that dwells in the heart of every person who looks sincerely into the eyes of his brothers and sisters on the path of life. Mercy: the bridge that connects God and man, opening our hearts to the hope of being loved forever despite our sinfulness.

When have I experienced the tenderness of God?

+ Sacred Heart of Jesus, have mercy on us.
Mother of Mercy, pray for us.

DAY 3 - Called to counsel the doubtful

MV #6

...(T)he mercy of God is not an abstract idea, but a concrete reality with which he reveals his love as of that of a father or a mother, moved to the very depths out of love for their child. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that this is a "visceral" love. It gushes forth from the depths naturally, full of tenderness and compassion, indulgence and mercy.

Am I available to listen and let myself be led by the light of the Lord, in order to give good counsel to those in doubt?

+ Sacred Heart of Jesus, have mercy on us.
Mother of Mercy, pray for us.

Day 4 - Instruct the ignorant

MV # 12

The Spouse of Christ must pattern her behaviour after the Son of God who went out to everyone without exception. In the present day, as the Church is charged with the task of the new evangelization, the theme of mercy needs to be proposed again and again with new enthusiasm and renewed pastoral action. It is absolutely essential for the Church and for the credibility of her message that she herself live and testify to mercy. Her language and her gestures must transmit mercy, so as to touch the hearts of all people and inspire them once more to find the road that leads to the Father.

Do I make time to give witness to and teach the love of God manifest in my Catholic faith?

+ Sacred Heart of Jesus, have mercy on us.
Mother of Mercy, pray for us.

Day 5 - Admonish the sinner

MV # 8

The calling of Matthew is also presented within the context of mercy. Passing by the tax collector's booth, Jesus looked intently at Matthew. It was a look full of mercy that forgave the sins of that man, a sinner and a tax collector, whom Jesus chose – against the hesitation of the disciples – to become one of the Twelve. Saint Bede the Venerable, commenting on this Gospel passage, wrote that Jesus looked upon Matthew with merciful love and chose him: miserando atque eligendo.

Without personal judgement or lack of respect, do I offer words of truth to those who are far from the Lord or making sinful decisions?

+ Sacred Heart of Jesus, have mercy on us.
Mother of Mercy, pray for us.

Day 6 - Comfort the sorrowful

MV #9

As we can see in Sacred Scripture, mercy is a key word that indicates God's action towards us. He does not limit himself merely to affirming his love, but makes it visible and tangible. Love, after all, can never be just an abstraction. By its very nature, it indicates something concrete: intentions, attitudes, and behaviours that are shown in daily living. The mercy of God is his loving concern for each one of us. He feels responsible; that is, he desires our wellbeing and he wants to see us happy, full of joy, and peaceful. This is the path which the merciful love of Christians must also travel. As the Father loves, so do his children. Just as he is merciful, so we are called to be merciful to each other.

Do I seek to be aware of when and how the Lord consoles me, so that I can offer the same consolation to my brothers and sisters?

+ Sacred Heart of Jesus, have mercy on us.
Mother of Mercy, pray for us.

Day 7 - Forgive all injuries

MV #9

Jesus affirms that mercy is not only an action of the Father, it becomes a criterion for ascertaining who his true children are. In short, we are called to show mercy because mercy has first been shown to us. Pardoning offences becomes the clearest expression of merciful love, and for us Christians it is an imperative from which we cannot excuse ourselves. At times how hard it seems to forgive! And yet pardon is the instrument placed into our fragile hands to attain serenity of heart. To let go of anger, wrath, violence, and revenge are necessary conditions to living joyfully. Let us therefore heed the Apostle's exhortation: "Do not let the sun go down on

your anger" (*Eph 4:26*). Above all, let us listen to the words of Jesus who made mercy an ideal of life and a criterion for the credibility of our faith: "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy" (*Mt5:7*)

Do I offer and ask forgiveness for every offense?

+ Sacred Heart of Jesus, have mercy on us.
Mother of Mercy, pray for us.

Day 8 - Bear wrongs patiently

MV #7

"For his mercy endures forever." This is the refrain that repeats after each verse in Psalm 136 as it narrates the history of God's revelation. By virtue of mercy, all the events of the Old Testament are replete with profound salvific import. Mercy renders God's history with Israel a history of salvation. To repeat continually "for his mercy endures forever," as the psalm does, seems to break through the dimensions of space and time, inserting everything into the eternal mystery of love. It is as if to say that not only in history, but for all eternity man will always be under the merciful gaze of the Father.

Do I value the diversity of the gifts given to those who are closest to me?

+ Sacred Heart of Jesus, have mercy on us.
Mother of Mercy, pray for us.

DAY 9 - Pray for the living and the dead.

MV #22

The Church lives within the communion of the saints. In the Eucharist, this communion, which is a gift from God, becomes a spiritual union binding us to the saints and blessed ones whose number is beyond counting (cf. *Rev* 7:4). Their holiness comes to the aid of our weakness in a way that enables the Church, with her maternal prayers and her way of life, to fortify the weakness of some with the strength of others. Hence, to live the indulgence of the Holy Year means to approach the Father's mercy with the certainty that his forgiveness extends to the entire life of the believer

Do I gratefully offer prayers of intercession for the departed and the needs of all people, recognizing the communion of saints?

+ Sacred Heart of Jesus, have mercy on us.
Mother of Mercy, pray for us.

Conclusion

MV #15

We cannot escape the Lord's words to us, and they will serve as the criteria upon which we will be judged: whether we have fed the hungry and given drink to the thirsty, welcomed the stranger and clothed the naked, or spent time with the sick and those in prison (cf. *Mt* 25:31-45). Moreover, we will be asked if we have helped others to escape the doubt that causes them to fall into despair and which is often a source of loneliness; if we have helped to overcome the ignorance in which millions of people live, especially children deprived of the necessary means to free them from the bonds of poverty; if we have been close to the lonely and afflicted; if we have forgiven those who have offended us and have rejected all forms of anger and hate that lead to violence; if we have had the kind of patience God shows, who is so patient with us; and if we have commended our brothers and sisters to the Lord in prayer. In each of these "little ones," Christ himself is present. His flesh becomes visible in the flesh of the tortured, the crushed, the scourged, the malnourished, and the exiled... to be acknowledged, touched, and cared for by us. Let us not forget the words of Saint John of the Cross: "as we prepare to leave this life, we will be judged on the basis of love".[12]

*Translation of *Misericordiae Vultus* from
www.vatican.va

*Compiled by the Father Kolbe Missionaries of
the Immaculata, www.kolbemission.org/en