



A Novena to the Immaculate Conception

NINE DAYS WITH THE WOMAN PROMISED FROM THE BEGINNING
NOVEMBER 29 – DECEMBER 7 · HER FEAST, DECEMBER 8

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How to Pray This Novena

A novena is nine days of the same asking. Not nine different prayers, but one request carried patiently, the way a friend is asked again.

Begin on November 29 and end on December 7, the eve of her feast. Each day has a page: a word of Scripture, a short reading, and the prayer of the novena. Say the prayer aloud if you can, and name your intention in the silence the prayer leaves for it.

The nine days run from the first promise made in Genesis to the woman crowned at the end of Revelation. Scripture opens and closes with her, and you are praying the distance between.

If you begin late, begin anyway. Nine days that end after the feast are still nine days.



DAY ONE

The Promise

And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed.

GENESIS 3 : 15

The first promise in Scripture is made to a serpent, and it is a threat. Before any law and before any covenant, God announces a woman who will not belong to the enemy.

Everything the Church later says about this feast is folded into that one sentence, spoken at the worst moment of the story. Ask her today for what was promised there: a will the enemy cannot get hold of.

PRAYER OF THE NOVENA

O God, who by the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary didst prepare a worthy dwelling place for thy Son, we beseech thee that, as by the foreseen death of that same Son thou didst preserve her from all stain of sin, so thou wouldst permit us, purified through her intercession, to come unto thee.

Most pure Virgin, conceived without sin, look upon me who come to thee in this need, and carry to thy Son the thing I now name before thee:

.....
here name your request

O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee. Amen.

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DAY TWO

Full of Grace

Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women.

LUKE 1 : 28

The angel does not use her name. He greets her by what she already is, as though grace were the more exact address.

Luke says she was troubled by the greeting, and not by the angel. Being seen truly is harder than being visited. Ask today for the courage to be told what you are, and to let it stand.

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DAY THREE

The Ark



nd whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?

LUKE 1 : 43

Elizabeth's question repeats David's, almost word for word, when the ark of God came up to the city: how shall the ark of the Lord come to me?

Luke expects you to hear it. The woman carrying the child is the vessel that carried the covenant, and the greeting is the old greeting. Ask her to come the same way into whatever you have left unswept.

PRAYER OF THE NOVENA

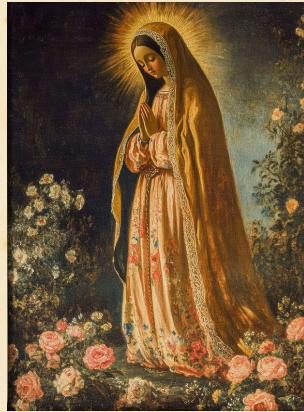
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DAY FOUR

The Bush Unconsumed



nd, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed.

EXODUS 3 : 2

Moses turned aside for it. The fire was not the strange thing in that desert. The strange thing was that it took nothing.

The Fathers saw her in that bush, holding what would have destroyed anything else and standing unharmed. Ask today to carry what you have been given without being burnt down by it.

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DAY FIVE

The Enclosed Garden



garden inclosed is my sister, my spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed.

THE SONG OF SOLOMON 4 : 12

A wall is not a refusal. A garden is walled so that what grows inside is not trampled by whatever happens to wander in.

There is something in you this week that needs a wall, and you probably already know what it is. Ask her for it, and for the sense to know what to keep outside.

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DAY SIX

No Spot in Thee



hou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee.

THE SONG OF SOLOMON 4 : 7

This is the verse the feast is built on, and the Church has sung it of her for fifteen centuries. Murillo painted it more than twenty times.

It is worth saying plainly that the doctrine is not about her being distant. She was kept whole so that she could be near, and she was near at the cross, where almost everyone else had gone. Ask her today for nearness rather than for perfection.

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DAY SEVEN

The Handmaid



ehold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word.

LUKE 1 : 38

She asks a question first, and a practical one: how shall this be? The yes comes after the question, not instead of it.

Whatever you are being asked this week, you are allowed to ask how before you answer. Ask her for the kind of yes that arrives on the far side of the question, and holds.

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DAY EIGHT

My Soul Doth Magnify

My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.

LUKE 1 : 46-47

She sings it while nothing at all is settled: unmarried, pregnant, three days' walk from home, in a country under occupation.

The song does not wait for the situation to improve, and that is the whole of the instruction. Ask today for the ability to say it before the answer comes. There is a reason this is the eighth day and not the ninth.

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DAY NINE

The Woman Clothed with the Sun



*nd there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun,
and the moon under her feet.*

REVELATION 12 : 1

Scripture opens with a woman promised to a serpent and closes with a woman standing above the moon, crowned. The nine days you have prayed run the whole distance between those two sentences.

Tomorrow is her feast. End the novena the way John ends her story: not with the asking, but with the sight of her already answered.

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