

Novena in honour of Our Lady of the Mount 2009

MARY AND THE PRIESTHOOD

On the 19th June, 2009, the feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, our beloved Pope Benedict XVI announced that this year will be the Year of the Priest to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the death of St. John Mary Vianney. This has been very warmly received, especially by priests themselves.

In his Pastoral Letter to Priests, on the occasion of Vianney Day, His Eminence Cardinal Oswald Gracias said: "I am hopeful that all of us at the end of the year will be more "praying" priests, and that this will bear fruit in our ministry." Pope Benedict too when declaring the year said: "To the Most Holy Virgin I entrust this Year for Priests. I ask her to awaken in the heart of every priest a generous and renewed commitment to the ideal of complete self-oblation to Christ and the Church which inspired the thoughts and actions of the saintly Cure of Ars, St. John Mary Vianney."

Mary has a very special relationship with priests. Pope John Paul II was known for his fervent devotion to our Blessed Mother. He realised in a profound manner that Mary is the Mother of the Church and the spiritual Mother in the order of grace of each Christian. But her maternal action and presence is in a particular way inseparable from the life of priests. There exists an essential relationship between the Mother of Jesus and the ministerial priesthood. Therefore every aspect of priestly formation can be referred to Mary, the human being who has responded perfectly than any other to God's call. The virtues of Mary must appear not only in every priest but in every follower of Christ as we are all called to love and give Jesus to the world.

We pray during this Novena and octave that Mary take every priest into her loving care and form them in the image of Jesus and assist all those whom he continues to call.

Novena Prayers:

O Mary, Mother of Jesus and Mother of the Church,
pray for our priests, nurture their growth and accompany them in their ministry.

Help all those called by your Son, Jesus to say a joyful YES, as you did at the Annunciation.

O gracious Mother pray for all our needs... (mention your petition)

Hail Mary...

*V/Mary, Mother of the Word Incarnate,
R/Intercede for us, your beloved children.* (3 times)

Novena, First Day

Friday, 4th September 2009

PRIESTHOOD - CALL TO DISCIPLESHIP

Readings: Exodus 19:3-8a

Psalm 119: O Lord you commanded that your precepts be kept with care
John 2:1-11

A true disciple is one in whom the master's voice echoes and re-echoes in the various circumstances of life. Every aspect of the master's teaching finds express in the life of the disciple. Mary is the ideal disciple of the Lord. The Second Vatican Council calls Mary "the perfect example of the type of spiritual and apostolic life."

Her life on earth was like that of all of us, filled with the cares and conditions that beset our daily lives even today and yet she cooperated with the work of the Saviour with whom she was always intimately united. Mary was a true apostle too. Her intercession with the Lord at Cana; her reaction when Jesus was lost in the Temple' her steadfastness at the foot of the Cross at Calvary all these are genuine marks of what a disciple should be both for priests and the lay faithful.

Novena, Second Day

Saturday, 5th September 2009

PRIESTHOOD A CALL TO TEACH

Readings: Judith 13:18-20, 14:9

**Psalm 1 Sam 2: There is none as holy as the Lord. No rock like our
God**

Luke 1:46-56

Mary was the first teacher of Jesus who taught him about the day to day realities of life which he used in his parables. What Jesus taught two thousand years ago is so relevant today even for the secular world. It is the first task of priests as co-workers of the bishops to teach the Gospel of God to all. Precisely because teaching the Gospel is not merely an intellectual transmission of a message but "the power of God for the salvation of all who believe" (Rm 1, 16), accomplished for all time in Christ, its proclamation in the Church requires authenticity and its effectiveness.

Thus priests as teachers have an important responsibility of shaping the lives of those under their care. With this responsibility comes great pride and joy. Not only priests but all teachers should strive for what can be considered to be a "good teacher" like Jesus who always practiced what he taught. A good teacher encourages all, to do their best while at the same time trying to make learning interesting as well as creative. A positive or negative influence from a teacher can have a great effect on the life of a person. Therefore like Jesus, teachers must always be loving and we can count on Mary to pray for us.

Novena, Third Day

Sunday, 6th September 2009

PRIESTHOOD A CALL TO LISTEN

Readings: Isaiah 35:4-7

Psalm 145: My soul give praise to the Lord.

Mark. 7:31-37

In our Gospel today there is a man who is deaf and Jesus heals him. Jesus' ministry fulfils the prophecy of Isaiah in our first reading : ...the eyes of the blind shall be opened, the ears of the deaf unsealed...(Isa 35:5) Our modern world has become deaf to the words of Jesus, as deaf as the man in the Gospel, but it is not a physical deafness, it is a spiritual deafness caused by sin. We have become so used to sin that we take it as normal and we have become deafened and blinded to Jesus and his call to us.

It does not seem that we are listening to the words Jesus but we are going the way of the world and are becoming deaf to the his words. The deaf man in the Gospel was healed by Jesus, and Pope John Paul II, in his encyclical *Evangelium Vitae*, writes of Jesus' ministry in beautiful words that are so full of meaning for today's Gospel : All who suffer because their lives are in some way "diminished" thus hear from him the "good news" of God's concern for them, and they know for certain that their lives too are a gift carefully guarded in the hands of the Father (§32)

We suffer and are diminished through sin but Jesus has good news for us, that our lives are a gift carefully guarded in the hands of our Father. May our ears be always open to hear God's voice. Let us learn from Mary who always listened to God and followed his will. Every action of hers was possible because she paid attention to what is important. We pray that all our priests listen to the promptings of the Spirit.

PRIESTHOOD - A CALL TO BE FAITH FILLED

Readings: Judith 13:14, 17-20

Psalms 27 - You are my help, my saving God.

Luke 1: 27-28

Mary is our model for living in faith. Christ's earthly life was entirely taken up in obedience to his Father. Mary's life was totally bathed in the radiance of faith. St. Alphonsus, quoting Suarez, tells us, "Mary had more faith than all. She saw her Son in the crib of Bethlehem, and believed Him the Creator of the world. She saw Him fly from Herod, and yet believed Him the King of kings. She saw Him born, and believed Him eternal. She saw Him poor and in need of food, and believed Him the Lord of the universe. She saw Him lying on straw, and believed Him omnipotent. She observed when He did not speak, and she believed His infinite wisdom. She heard Him weep, and believed Him the joy of paradise. Finally, she saw Him in death, despised and crucified, and although faith wavered in others, Mary remained firm in the belief that he was God.

What does it imply to be 'faith-filled'? It means ultimately to entrust oneself wholly to the divine Word. Our Lady's faith was nourished more and more; it grew as the mystery of her Son revealed itself step by step. She was gently and constantly shown that she needed greater faith; she longed and prayed and meditated for it and she received it from the bounty of God. Faith is accepting the truth. I know the end result of a spiritual problem because God makes it known to me, but I remain ignorant of the process of its accomplishment. Faith according to the letter to the Hebrews, "can guarantee the blessings that we hope for, or prove the existence of the realities that at present remain unseen" (Heb. 11:1) We pray that all our priests be inspired by the faith of Mary.

MARY, MOTHER OF PRIESTS

Readings: Romans 8: 28-30
Psalm 12: I exult for joy in the Lord
Matthew 1: 18-23

Mary has a very special relationship with priests. Pope John Paul II was known for his fervent devotion to our Blessed Mother. There exists an essential relationship between the Mother of Jesus and the ministerial priesthood. In a General Audience in 1993 and elsewhere, John Paul II developed a very profound theology of this relationship between Mary's divine motherhood and Christ's priesthood from which we learn that to pray for priests means to turn to Mary.

By her fiat in answer to the message of the Angel Gabriel, Mary consented to become the Mother of the Eternal High Priest, Jesus Christ. Mary stands behind him and dedicates herself totally to His priestly mission as Mediator and Redeemer of all. Her dedication, however, did not end with Jesus' death on the cross. This bond continues and is extended throughout the centuries between Mary and every priest who participates in the ministerial priesthood of Christ. As Mother of Christ, Mary is in a special way the Mother of each and every priest. She takes each priest into her care, just as she cared for Jesus.

At every Eucharist, therefore, we should entrust our priests to her maternal care: the celebrant, our Pastor, our Bishop, fallen priests, holy priests, over-burdened priests, despairing priests, all priests. We pray that Mary take them into her loving care and form them in the image of Jesus.

As we celebrate her birthday, our best gift to her could be adopting her virtues and collaborating with our priests to give Jesus to the world.

Novena, Sixth Day

Wednesday, 9th September 2009

PRIESTHOOD - A CALL TO CELEBRATE SACRAMENTS

Readings: Sirach 51:13-18, 20-22

Psalm 19: Your words, Lord, are spirit and life.

Matthew 12:46-50

All the Sacraments were instituted by Jesus Christ. Every Sacrament is also an encounter with Jesus Christ. As Our Mother, Mary helps us to receive them worthily. One of the main tasks for priests is to administer the sacraments. The Latin word sacramentum means "a sign of the sacred." The seven sacraments are ceremonies that point to what is sacred, significant and important for Christians. They are special occasions for experiencing God's saving presence. That's what theologians mean when they say that sacraments are at the same time signs and instruments of God's grace.

If you learn more about the sacraments, you can celebrate them more fully. The seven sacraments Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Communion, Confession, Marriage, Holy Orders, and the Anointing of the Sick are the life of the Catholic Church. The CCC (1210) state that the seven sacraments touch all the stages and all the important moments of Christian life: they give birth and increase, healing and mission to the Christian's life of faith. There is thus a certain resemblance between the stages of natural life and the stages of the spiritual life.

Mary supported her Son through every stage of his life and now as our mother supports the faith of her children, and so we ask that we who believe that she is the Mother of God may receive the help of her prayers so that every Sacrament will be an encounter with her Son Jesus.

Novena, Seventh Day

Thursday, 10th September

2009

PRIESTHOOD A CALL TO HUMBLE SERVICE

Readings: Galatians 4: 4-7

Psalm 131: In you, O Lord, I have found my peace

Luke 2: 41-52

The whole life of Mary was lived in perfect humility. She came and went without dramatic gestures. And yet, she was bringing to effect the most awesome happening in history. Her glory, while filling us with wonder and joy, at times would put a great distance between her and us such that we would hardly dare hope to reach her. But her humility brings her very close to us. She becomes like one of our family in the ordinary chores of life, despite the 'purity' that constitute her real stature.

The little that we read of her in Scripture we see her in 'humble service' towards those in need i.e. her cousin Elizabeth, the couple in Cana etc. By placing humility as the foundation of our Christian life, we can progress in virtue. As a tree is stronger in its branches in proportion to the depth and vitality of its roots, so the Christian will be fruitful in his spiritual life in proportion to his humility. Let us collaborate with our priests and serve one another with humility just like Mary did.

Novena, Eighth Day

Friday, 11th September 2009

PRIESTHOOD A CALL TO SHEPHERD THE FLOCK

Readings : 2 Cor 5:17-21

Psalm 103: O Bless the Lord, my soul

John 19:25-27

One of the wonderful expressions of Jesus loving us is, like the Good Shepherd who is ready to die for his sheep. Jesus our Good Shepherd loves us and we need to experience that love. St. John: not fewer than sixty-seven times (and forty in the Gospel) invites us to "remain in God's love" so as to be able, really and practically, to love our neighbour. We can find no surer way of augmenting our own happiness than by helping to give happiness to others. The more effective cure for our states of depression, of anxiety, of inner void and distress is to busy ourselves with relieving the misery around us. Joy is not to be found by lording it over others, but rather by serving them. How true it is that in giving, we are also receiving.

Let us learn from our Lady the quality of generosity of heart, of kindness. Mary's first act after the Annunciation was one of love, when she went on a long and strenuous journey to visit and assist her cousin Elizabeth. We have but one short lifespan in which to prove our love for God by employing it to serve our neighbour. Let us collaborate with our priests and reach out to the lost, lapsed, confused and those who need help and like Jesus the Good shepherd love them.

Novena, Ninth Day

Saturday, 12th September 2009

PRIESTHOOD A CALL TO SILENCE AND PRAYER

Readings: Ecclesiasticus: 24:1-3, 8, 12, 19-22

**Psalm 147 - Glorify the Lord, Jerusalem, Zion, offer praise to your God
Luke 10:38-42**

Our Lady's internal silence allowed her to live in the intimacy of her spirit. The Gospel recalls that she pondered in her heart on the mysteries of the incarnation. She did not feel the need to run away from truth, to distract her with conversation; but she was able to be in silence and prayer. Internal silence is far from being indifferent. Not only is it necessary for a sober understanding of us, but it is most efficacious in our life with others. Who can measure the silence of Christ when He came face to face with His enemies? His silence created an atmosphere pregnant with truth, which the enemies sought to undo by their clamour. A lie requires many words in its own defence. Truth is like a silent light; it needs no clumsy structures about, it simply is.

Silence is the language of those who possess God. Three things in the world evoke silence: Fear, beauty and encounter with God. Fear paralyses into silence all that does not immediately contribute to self-preservation. Beauty makes words superfluous but encounter with God creates in the deep of the soul the silence of adoration. When Paul attempted to communicate his vision and experience of God, he had to admit that human words were utterly inadequate (cf. 2 Cor. 12:4). Our Lady's union with God was the most intimate union possible on earth. The silence of this intimacy shows the dynamism of love itself, the most profound activity of a listening heart. It is through silence that one can experience fruitfulness in prayer. Let silence and prayer be a day to day activity so that we are able to understand and follow God's will.

Feast Day

Sunday, 13th September 2009

OUR LADY OF THE MOUNT

Readings: Micah 5:1-4

Psalms 12: I exult for joy in the Lord.

Matthew 1:18-23

With the birth of Mary a new age looms on the horizon: the dawn of hope and salvation for all the world. We are filled with joy on this feast of our Blessed Mother whose maternal presence in our lives is a source of joy, blessing, strength and consolation. Now in the glory of heaven, she cares for the pilgrim Church with a mother's love. As the Church has reflected on the person and life of Mary, it has come to a deeper realization of what it is to follow Christ. In fact, the early Church saw her as the model the ideal Christian who faithfully follows the Lord in word and action.

Devotion to Our Lady of the Mount goes back many centuries. There is evidence dating back to the 17th C of a shrine in honour of Our Blessed Mother on this hill which was a centre of pilgrimage. The present structure was erected in 1904 and in 1954 was raised to the status of a Minor Basilica. This holy place dedicated to Our Lady brings together peoples of various faiths, united by their devotion to her. As we honour her on this festive occasion, may we always remember that the best form of devotion to Mary is for us to imitate her life and her virtues.

We pray that under her maternal care, we may follow more closely in the footsteps of her Son and be fashioned into the image of Christ.

Our Lady of the Mount, be with us now and always!

Feast Day

Sunday, 13th September 2009

OCTAVE WEEK

Monday, 14th September 2009

MARY AT THE CROSS

Mass : Triumph Of The Cross

Tuesday, 15th September 2009

MARY, MOTHER OF SORROWS

Mass: Our Lady of Sorrows

Wednesday, 16th September 2009

MARY QUEEN OF THE FAMILY

Mass Text : Our Lady of Nazareth

Thursday, 17th September 2009

MARY AND THE WOMAN OF TODAY

Mass Text: Mary, Queen of Apostles

Friday, 18th September 2009

MARY AND THE YOUTH OF TODAY

Mass Text: The Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Saturday, 19th September 2009

MARY AND VOCATIONS

Mass: Mary and the Annunciation of the Lord

Sunday, 20th September 2009

MARY, QUEEN OF PEACE

Mass: Mary, Queen of Peace