

# **LISTENING TO JESUS WITH & LIKE MARY**

## **A NOVENA IN PREPARATION FOR THE BIRTH OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY**

The only recorded words in the Gospels that our Blessed Mother spoke to any human being are “Do whatever he tells you” – Jn 2:5. Mary had the right to give this advice, since her own life was summed up and modelled on “let it be done to me according to your word” – Lk 1:38. This year let us celebrate Mamma Mary’s birth by following her example and pondering on the message Jesus gives us in His parables.

Parables are words for action: they challenge us to change ourselves into what God wants of us. We invoke the intercession of our Blessed Mother in our efforts to follow the teachings of Her Son, Jesus.

Day 1: Tuesday August 30 <sup>th</sup>	: Luke 14: 1, 7-14	- A Humble Heart
Day 2: Wednesday August 31 <sup>st</sup>	: Mt 13:1-9	- An Open heart
Day 3: Thursday September 1 <sup>st</sup>	: Mk 4:26-29	- A Patient heart
Day 4: Friday September 2 <sup>nd</sup>	: Mt 21:28-31	- A Committed Heart
Day 5: Saturday September 3 <sup>rd</sup>	: Sundays Readings	- A Caring Heart
Day 6: Sunday September 4 <sup>th</sup>	: Sundays Readings	- A Generous Heart
Day 7: Monday September 5 <sup>th</sup>	: Mt 25:1-13	- A Loving Heart
Day 8: Tuesday September 6 <sup>th</sup>	: Luke 14:25-33	- A Wise Heart
Day 9: Wednesday September 7 <sup>th</sup>	: Luke 15:11-31	- A Forgiving Heart

The parables selected above while giving us a message and direction for daily living also help us reflect on the virtues of our Blessed Mother.

For the activity, each child can be asked to prepare a card in the shape of a heart. Each day at the end of Mass the children can be asked to write down the virtue prayed for that day e.g. humility, openness, patience etc. Simultaneously, a large heart-shaped card can be prepared and placed somewhere in or close to the sanctuary or the backdrop with the theme/virtue of each day mentioned on it.

On the Feast Day, as a symbolic act of promising her that they will practice the virtues prayed for during the novena, children can be asked to place their cards at the feet of Mary. Alternatively, children could also be asked to place their cards on the altar in their respective homes.

Fr Vincent D’Cruz  
Director  
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## **Day 1: Tuesday August 30<sup>th</sup>**

### **Theme: A Humble Heart**

**Introduction:** The world we live in, quite often tells us that we need to seek position and power and status. Jesus, however, teaches us something contrary.

**Readings:** Luke 14: 1, 7-14

### **Homily Hints:**

Pride and status are social issues in any culture, and the ancient Jewish culture was no exception. Status brings power, and power often begets pride. Jesus regards this equation as destructive to spiritual health. Jesus' disciples are marked by humility. Both how we operate socially and whom we invite to dinner indicate the type of person we are. Humility means ignoring rank or class. Jesus' parable (v. 7) shows that he regards humility as fundamental to discipleship. *For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.* Jesus' point is not that we should connive to receive greater honour. Rather, he is saying that honour is not to be grabbed; it is awarded. Jesus is not against giving honour to one who deserves it, but he is against the use of power and prestige for self-glorification. We see this virtue of humility in the person of Mary who was awarded the honour of becoming the Mother of God. God honours the humble, and the highway of humility leads to the gate of heaven. Those who are truly humble persons recognize their desperate need for God, not any right to blessing.

### **Prayer of the Faithful:**

**Cel:** As we bring before the Lord our petitions today, we pray especially for the grace of humility saying **Gracious Father hear our prayer**

1. For the pope, bishops, priests and religious: that imitating the Blessed Virgin Mary, they may always be examples of humility and service for universal Church....let us pray.....
2. For those in positions of authority: that as leaders they may realize their responsibility to serve the people under their care.....let us pray.....
3. For each of us: that we may put aside our pride and egos and practice humble service in the footsteps of our Blessed Mother
4. For all health care workers: that they may continue to find inspiration and strength to selflessly serve the sick and dying.....let us pray.....

**Cel:** God our loving Father, in Mary you chose the best example of humility for us to follow. May we always do our best to imbibe a humble heart. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

**Novena Prayer (after post-Communion prayer):** Mary our Mother, teach us to be humble. Help us to reach out in humility to everyone around in our own small ways. Inspire us to never let pride get the better of us.

Oh, Virgin Mary, our mother. We humbly beseech you to obtain for me strength and tenderness, knowledge of God's will for me, and the courage to accomplish it always. Mary my mother, today I want to pray especially for the grace of ... (mention your petition) ... Heavenly Mother, take my petition to the heart of your Son Jesus and pray that I may receive the grace necessary to live like your child. I make this prayer through you to your Son Jesus who lives and reigns with the Father and Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever. Amen. (One Our Father, 3 Hail Mary's and Glory Be)

**Activity:** Write the word 'Humility' on the card

## **Day 2: Wednesday August 31<sup>st</sup>**

### **Theme: An Open heart**

**Introduction:** In the midst of a noisy world that presents us varied messages, the gospel of today calls us to be open to the only message important for us – the message that will give us eternal life.

**Readings:** Mt 13:1-9

### **Homily Hints:**

The different kinds of ground on which the seed falls represent the different ways in which the word of God is received. The degree of receptivity and openness to God's Word depends on the individual person and the particular circumstances of his or her life.

If this parable is a seed, what kind of soil are you? What is it that helps you to receive the Word of God as nourishment? Adverse conditions abound: the birds of anxiety; the thin soil of busyness; the thorns of many concerns. What threatens your happiness? What creates good soil for you?

Let anyone with ears listen! This is the challenge Jesus lays down, to listen, to be open to God's Word. In our times this is becoming more difficult, surrounded as we are by so much noise, so many different voices calling for our attention. We have however, Mary as an example of someone who was always open and receptive to God's Word. Let us pray for an open ear and an open heart, for knowing how to seek and let the Word of God yield fruit in our daily life.

### **Prayer of the Faithful:**

**Cel:** God's word is a lamp for our steps and a light for our path. Let us place before Him our petitions then trusting in His word. Our response will be **Lord hear our Prayer**

1. For our Holy Father, bishops, priests and religious: that they may always guide and govern the Church based on the sound principles of faith found in God's word....We pray to the Lord....
2. For each of us who have begun this novena: that we may find solace and strength in the message of the bible and thereby live our lives as children of God....we pray to the Lord.....
3. For our parish community: that even though we have been away from each other for a long time, our bonds of fellowship may always be rooted in the message of gospel.
4. For all those affected by the pandemic: that the Word of God may be a source of solace and consolation in difficult times....we pray to the Lord.....

**Cel:** Thank you loving Father for listening to our prayers. We are confident that you will grant them to us through the intercession of our Blessed Mother.

**Novena Prayer** (after post-Communion prayer): Mary our Mother, teach us to be open to the plan God has for us. Help us to always be able to say yes to that plan. Guide us to always put God and His plan first in our life.

Oh, Virgin Mary, our mother. We humbly beseech you to obtain for me strength and tenderness, knowledge of God's will for me, and the courage to accomplish it always. Mary my mother, today I want to pray especially for the grace of ... (mention your petition) ... Heavenly Mother, take my petition to the heart of your Son Jesus and pray that I may receive the grace necessary to live like your child. I make this prayer through you to your Son Jesus who lives and reigns with the Father and Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever. Amen. (One Our Father, 3 Hail Mary's and Glory Be)

**Activity:** Write the word "Openness" on the card

### **Day 3: Thursday September 1<sup>st</sup>**

#### **Theme: A Patient heart**

**Introduction:** Having everything available at the tap of a finger tip has robbed us of the joy of waiting and led us to becoming impatient. However, waiting and being patient has its own value and the fruit experienced at the end of the wait is so much sweeter and more valued.

**Readings:** Mk 4:26-29

#### **Homily Hints:**

Rome was not built in a day. Jesus brings out the aspect of patient waiting in the process of growth. Nature takes time to mature, the farmer waits patiently and hopefully for his seeds to ripen into harvest. Human beings too take time to grow into mature holy beings. They must make their efforts to blossom and leave the rest to God. The farmer seems inactive during the time when the seeds are growing and maturing, though in fact he is waiting patiently for the right moment to harvest his crop. God too may seem inactive and unconcerned at times, but we need to remember that He is continuously working and knows the right time when to grant our prayers. At the Annunciation, Mary was told that Jesus would be a successor to David's throne. She had to be patient for that promise to be realised. We also pray with Mary for a patient heart.

#### **Prayer of the Faithful:**

**Cel:** As we continue to thank God for the gift of Mary as our Mother, we bring to him our prayers singing, **Lord listen to your children praying.**

1. For the Pope, clergy and religious: that they may always find joy in their vocation and exude that joy in their ministry...we pray...
2. For all of us: that even in the darkest of times we may, like Mary, be able to experience Your presence....we pray...
3. For all humanity: that we may make courageous choices for a simple and environmentally sustainable lifestyle...we pray...
4. For those who find it difficult to be happy: that Mary, who found joy even in the midst of hardships, may be for them an inspiration....we pray....

**Cel:** God our source of eternal joy, we thank you for listening to our prayers through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

**Novena Prayer** (after post-Communion prayer): Mary our Mother, teach us to be patient. Help us realize that God always wishes the best for us and knows when to give it us. Inspire us to be able to fight the temptation of being hasty in our decisions and dealings.

Oh, Virgin Mary, our mother. We humbly beseech you to obtain for me strength and tenderness, knowledge of God's will for me, and the courage to accomplish it always. Mary my mother, today I want to pray especially for the grace of ... (mention your petition) ... Heavenly Mother, take my petition to the heart of your Son Jesus and pray that I may receive the grace necessary to live like your child. I make this prayer through you to your Son Jesus who lives and reigns with the Father and Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever. Amen. (One Our Father, 3 Hail Mary's and Glory Be)

**Activity:** Write the word 'Patience' on the card

## **Day 4: Friday September 2<sup>nd</sup>**

### **Theme: A Committed Heart**

**Introduction:** So often we find ourselves struggling to keep up to the promises we make either to ourselves, others or God. We come to the Eucharist today, asking for a committed heart.

**Readings:** Mt 21:28-31

### **Homily Hints:**

Jesus asks us to think whether our words and actions are in agreement. It is easy to talk, to pronounce and to make statements. It is more difficult to commit time, effort and attention. We profess our faith not only in Sunday words but also in the time we give to working for the reign of God during the week. Jesus values a few small acts more than many fine words.

Jesus is really challenging us in this gospel. Many of us have said yes to God by our baptism and membership of the Church, but can we say that we are always committed in carrying out what God is asking us to do? Do we spend a lot of time praying in church but not doing much loving outside of it? Mary our Mother did not only say “yes” to God’s plan, she committed to be an active participant in that plan.

The gospel reminds us of something we often forget: words can be meaningless. Promises are empty when not followed by committed action. Do I make promises to others that quickly go out the window? My good intentions are no good to the person I intended to help, but didn’t.

### **Prayer of the Faithful:**

**Cel:** Let us now approach God with our prayers and petitions saying, **God of love, hear our prayer**

1. For our Pope, bishops, clergy and religious: that they may be committed to their vocation and believe what they read in the Word of God, teach what they believe and practice what they teach... for this we pray...
2. For all Christian parents: that like Mary, they may set an example for their children and live as committed citizens of both church and country...we pray...
3. For all humans: that we may grow in respect for the law and in so doing commit to creating a society of harmony...we pray...
4. For all of Christians: that we may learn to read, reflect and live the Word of God in our daily lives...we pray...

**Cel:** Heavenly Father, we thank you for the scriptures which enlighten us about your law of love. Help us grow in that love through the intercession of our Blessed Mother and in the name of Jesus our Lord. Amen.

**Novena Prayer** (after post-Communion prayer): Mary our Mother, teach us to be committed. Help us realize that as disciples of Jesus we need to be committed to His teachings. Inspire us to never let fear affect our commitment.

Oh, Virgin Mary, our mother. We humbly beseech you to obtain for me strength and tenderness, knowledge of God’s will for me, and the courage to accomplish it always. Mary my mother, today I want to pray especially for the grace of ... (mention your petition) ... Heavenly Mother, take my petition to the heart of your Son Jesus and pray that I may receive the grace necessary to live like your child. I make this prayer through you to your Son Jesus who lives and reigns with the Father and Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever. Amen. (One Our Father, 3 Hail Mary’s and Glory Be)

**Activity:** Write the word ‘Commitment’ on the card

## **Day 5: Saturday September 3<sup>rd</sup>**

### **Theme: A Caring Heart**

**Introduction:** Concern and care are two hallmarks of a disciple. Mary cared not only for Jesus or the couple of Cana, or the apostles after Jesus' death, but she also continues to care for us every day. It is no wonder then that our blessed Mother, is often venerated as a person who cares for us. Today, we ask for the gift of a heart that cares.

### **Readings, & Liturgy of 23<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time**

**Homily Hints:** The Second Reading of today portrays a marvellous caring image of Paul. While being under house arrest himself, Paul is trying to figure out a way to send Onesimus, a runaway slave, back to his Christian master. Paul writes to Philemon, speaking of Onesimus as his own child and asks Philemon to receive Onesimus not as a slave but as a brother. Himself in the bondage of house arrest, Paul is concerned and cares for the well-being of Onesimus.

### **Prayer of the Faithful:**

**Cel:** God does make a way where there seems to be no way. With faith and confidence therefore, we come once again to place our petitions saying, **Father of all, hear our prayer**

1. For our pope, bishops, priests and clergy: that they may always stand for justice and the rights of those who are marginalized and discriminated against....we pray...
2. For Social workers: that they may continue to be find the strength and inspiration to reach out to the lost and the last of society...we pray....
3. For our SCCs: that we may become truly caring and embracing of people from all backgrounds, castes, creed and orientations...we pray...
4. For migrants and refugees: that they may find hope and courage and not despair in tough situations...we pray....

**Cel:** Give us O Lord the same strength which you blessed Mary with to face the trials and sufferings in our life. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

**Novena Prayer** (after post-Communion prayer): Mary our Mother, teach us to develop a caring heart. Help us to be attentive to and care for those who need it. Inspire us to never let selfishness get the better of us.

Oh, Virgin Mary, our mother. We humbly beseech you to obtain for me strength and tenderness, knowledge of God's will for me, and the courage to accomplish it always. Mary my mother, today I want to pray especially for the grace of ... (mention your petition) ... Heavenly Mother, take my petition to the heart of your Son Jesus and pray that I may receive the grace necessary to live like your child. I make this prayer through you to your Son Jesus who lives and reigns with the Father and Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever. Amen. (One Our Father, 3 Hail Mary's and Glory Be)

**Activity:** Write the word 'Care' on the card

## **Day 6: Sunday September 4<sup>th</sup>**

### **Theme: A Generous Heart**

**Introduction:** Generosity comes from the fact that one is satisfied with having God in their life. We are called as disciples to give generously of our time, possessions and even our relationships for the Kingdom of God.

### **Readings, & Liturgy of 23<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time**

**Homily Hints:** Through the twin parables and Gospel of today, Jesus clarifies that he does not want people to rush into an instant commitment to being His disciples. Everyone wanting to be a follower of Jesus needs to understand their own capabilities and the cost of discipleship. This cost of discipleship which consists of a faithful following of Jesus is met only through a generous heart that is not attached to power, position, relationships, security, money etc. We see this generosity in the life of Mary who was willingly ready to give off whatever little she had in order to be an instrument in God's plan. We pray that we too may imitate her and heed the call of her Son.

### **Prayer of the Faithful:**

**Cel:** The scriptures tell us that our God is a God of justice who always stands by the innocent. Let us bring our petitions now to this just God who we believe in saying, **God of justice, hear our prayer.**

1. For the Pope, bishops, clergy and religious: that following the footsteps of Mary they may ensure that the Church always stands by the innocent by speaking up against injustice... we pray...
2. For world leader: that they may use their power to bring about a just society...we pray...
3. For those who fight for justice: that they may draw strength and inspiration from Mary to continue their mission of bringing justice to those falsely implicated...we pray...
4. For ourselves: that we may never shy away from speaking for justice and standing by the innocent... we pray...

**Cel:** Heavenly Father, we make these prayers through the intercession of Mary in the name of Jesus Christ your Son our Lord. Amen.

**Novena Prayer** (after post-Communion prayer): Mary our Mother, teach us to be generous disciples of your Son. Help us to give even off the little we may have.

Oh, Virgin Mary, our mother. We humbly beseech you to obtain for me strength and tenderness, knowledge of God's will for me, and the courage to accomplish it always. Mary my mother, today I want to pray especially for the grace of ... (mention your petition) ... Heavenly Mother, take my petition to the heart of your Son Jesus and pray that I may receive the grace necessary to live like your child. I make this prayer through you to your Son Jesus who lives and reigns with the Father and Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever. Amen. (One Our Father, 3 Hail Mary's and Glory Be)

**Activity:** Write the word 'Generosity' on the card

## **Day 7: Monday September 5<sup>th</sup>**

### **Theme: A Loving Heart**

**Introduction:** Love it was that made us and it was love that saved us. How true are the words of this hymn. We are called to love like God loves us. Love is to be the basis for all our actions and words.

**Readings:** Mt 25:1-13

### **Homily Hints:**

The parable opens with a familiar phrase, “The kingdom of heaven will be like this.” The kingdom is like the whole scene portrayed by this parable where some bridesmaids are prepared for the groom and enjoy the banquet and others are excluded by their own lack of preparation. The teaching of the wise and foolish maids builds on the previous teaching of the wise and foolish servants. Both parables illustrate the need to live in a manner that expects the return of the Lord, even when the return is delayed.

The parable is summed up in verse 13. The imperative often translated as “keep awake” might best be rendered, “be vigilant.” In this parable, the bridegroom’s arrival was certain. The uncertainty of the timing illustrates the need for constant vigilance.

When we are expecting the arrival of very close loved one, we always ensure that we are ready and awake. Can we say the same when it comes to living out the message of the Gospel? If we really love God, what stops us from loving others? It is through our love for God and our love for others that we will gain access to the Kingdom and the Banquet that has been prepared for us. It is only when we truly love that we will go to any extent to love others.

### **Prayer of the Faithful:**

**Cel:** The Spirit that came down on Mary and the apostles at Pentecost is the same Spirit that prompts us to call upon God our Father in prayer saying, **Lord hear our prayer.**

1. For the pope, bishops, clergy and religious: that the decisions they take to govern the flock entrusted to them may always be guided by the Motherly advice of Mary and inspired by the Holy Spirit... we pray...
2. For those in positions of authority: that they may always be open to the Spirit of God to direct and influence their decision making...we pray...
3. For all of us who have participated in this novena: that following the example of our Blessed Mother, we may always take recourse to and trust in the Word of God through the inspiration and grace of the Holy Spirit.
4. For our personal and community need: (mention specific needs of the parish community)... we pray...

**Cel:** Heavenly Father, you give us Mary as a model of true discipleship and a believer in the promises you make to us in the scriptures. May we, like her, always be able to stand firm on your word and live a life pleasing to you. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

**Novena Prayer** (after post-Communion prayer): Mary our Mother, teach us to love. Help us to learn to love like Jesus. Inspire us to break barriers of caste and class and live as loving children of God.

Oh, Virgin Mary, our mother. We humbly beseech you to obtain for me strength and tenderness, knowledge of God’s will for me, and the courage to accomplish it always. Mary my mother, today I want to pray especially for the grace of ... (mention your petition) ... Heavenly Mother, take my petition to the heart of your Son Jesus and pray that I may receive the grace necessary to live like your child. I make this prayer through you to your Son Jesus who lives and reigns with the Father and Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever. Amen. (One Our Father, 3 Hail Mary’s and Glory Be)

**Activity:** Write the word ‘Love’ on the card



## **Day 8: Tuesday September 6<sup>th</sup>**

### **Theme: A Wise Heart**

**Introduction:** A Christian disciple is called to be discerning at every moment in life. Discernment is the ability to judge well and has its roots in using the gift of wisdom. Mary as a disciple of Jesus, led a life of discernment through the gift of wisdom.

**Readings:** Luke 14:25-33

### **Homily Hints:**

The Gospel is much more than an ethical message about a particular, Christian, way of life. It is about Jesus, his own person and the Kingdom he came to proclaim. Here he shows how radical are his demands on those who choose to follow him. We ask for a heart of a real disciple of Jesus, loving him above all else.

Discernment is a word we keep hearing, and we can run the risk of getting used to it and lose its impact. Jesus is asking us to be wise and discerning in our choices - enthusiasm is not enough for it can easily fizzle away. Following Jesus is a demanding way of life, so we should think well before embarking on this road; otherwise, we might face disillusionment. We ask for the grace of a discerning wise heart. At almost every moment we are faced with choices. How often do we choose the path of discipleship based on a wise decision? A true disciple does not simply drift unreflectively through life but is aware of the seriousness of the commitment

### **Prayer of the Faithful:**

**Cel:** Placing our faith in the promises of God we stand now and pray for the intentions of the church, the world and our personal petitions singing, **Hear us O Lord, Hear our prayer O Lord**

1. For the pope, bishops, clergy and religious: That even in the midst of counter-gospel messages, they may stand firm and lead the Church toward knowing God's plan of salvation for all... we pray...
2. For all Christians: That moments of suffering and doubt in faith, may not lead them to despair but purify and strengthen their faith in God...we pray...
3. For those seeking clarity in life: That by reflecting on the Word of God, they may be led to realise their calling and mission in life... we pray...
4. For all of us: That even in the darkest of storms we may not lose sight of Jesus and always live in the realization of His presence among us....we pray....

**Cel:** May your Word, O Lord, always be a guide to enlighten the darkest of moments when we feel lost and abandoned. We make this prayer through Christ our Lord. Amen.

**Novena Prayer** (after post-Communion prayer): Mary our Mother, teach us to be wise. May we always be guided by the Holy Spirit to use the gift of Wisdom before we act or say anything. As you helped Jesus grow in wisdom, help us your dear children as well.

Oh, Virgin Mary, our mother. We humbly beseech you to obtain for me strength and tenderness, knowledge of God's will for me, and the courage to accomplish it always. Mary my mother, today I want to pray especially for the grace of ... (mention your petition) ... Heavenly Mother, take my petition to the heart of your Son Jesus and pray that I may receive the grace necessary to live like your child. I make this prayer through you to your Son Jesus who lives and reigns with the Father and Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever. Amen. (One Our Father, 3 Hail Mary's and Glory Be)

**Activity:** Write the word 'Wisdom' on the card

## **Day 9: Wednesday September 7<sup>th</sup>**

**Theme:** A Forgiving Heart

**Introduction:** Forgiveness is an unmerited gift from a generous and loving God. Just as we are called to love because loved us first, we are also called to forgive, because God forgives.

**Readings:** Luke 15:11-31

**Homily Hints:** If we have known the God who like the father in today's parable runs down the road to meet us and embrace us when we have come straggling home, soiled with sin and guilt; then we may be able to find within ourselves the same capacity for generosity, compassion and forgiveness towards those who have wronged us. But if we have not yet discovered this extravagant loving forgiveness of God in our own lives, we may (like the unforgiving creditor in Matthew 18:23-35) find it difficult to extend mercy toward those who have offended or hurt us. Forgiveness is a gift of love which we receive from God, and can then pass on to others. In the gospel of Matthew, Peter asks Jesus how often he is supposed to forgive. Jesus' response to Peter's question tells us that we have to forgive without counting the number of times. Ask yourself When and how often have you received the gift of forgiveness in your life? Can your experience of the extravagant loving forgiveness of God help you forgive others?

### **Prayer of the Faithful:**

**Cel:** God our ever-loving Father provides for our every need. With this assurance we come before Him time and again with our prayers and petitions singing, **Hear us O Lord, Hear our prayer O Lord.**

1. For our Holy Father the Pope, bishops, clergy and religious: that heeding the advice of our Blessed Mother and prompted by the Holy Spirit, they may always "do whatever" Jesus would want of them...we pray...
2. For couples especially in difficult Marriage situations: that like the couple at Cana, they may find solace and reconciliation in the intercession of our Blessed Mother...we pray...
3. For all our families: that like Mary, we too may be alert and sensitive to the needs of others... we pray...
4. For all Christians: that through our participation in the Sacraments we may experience a renewal of life...we pray....

**Cel:** Father God, we praise and bless you for all that you do and provide for us. We ask you to grant the petitions we have just made through Christ our Lord. Amen.

**Novena Prayer** (after post-Communion prayer): Mary our Mother, teach us to be forgiving. Help us to forgive those who may have hurt us. Inspire us to practice forgiveness rather than to hold grudges.

Oh, Virgin Mary, our mother. We humbly beseech you to obtain for me strength and tenderness, knowledge of God's will for me, and the courage to accomplish it always. Mary my mother, today I want to pray especially for the grace of ... (mention your petition) ... Heavenly Mother, take my petition to the heart of your Son Jesus and pray that I may receive the grace necessary to live like your child. I make this prayer through you to your Son Jesus who lives and reigns with the Father and Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever. Amen. (One Our Father, 3 Hail Mary's and Glory Be)

**Activity:** Write the word 'Forgiveness' on the card

# **MARY – SYMBOL OF HOPE FOR THE GIRL-CHILD!**

## **Liturgy for feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary**

### **Day of the Girl-child**

**Prior Arrangements:** A short video film could be prepared showcasing Girl-achievers from the parish (any girl/woman who has excelled in academics/sports/etc).

**Introduction:** Worldwide statistics tell us that one in every four girls is unemployed, uneducated, or untrained as compared to one in every ten boys. Even though the Day of the Girl Child acknowledges the importance, power, and potential of adolescent girls, at the same time we are called to remember gender-based challenges that little girls face around the world, including child marriages, poor learning opportunities, violence, and discrimination. May the virtues that we have prayed for during each day of our novena, help us build a world that is free of atrocities and rejection for the girl-child.

**Readings:** Mi 5:2-5a OR Rom 8:28-30                      Ps 13: 6-7a                      Mt 1:1-23

**Homily Hint:** Mary through her life exhibited all the qualities and virtues that we have been praying for and reflecting over during our novenas. Through her discipleship and willingness to be part of God's plan she joins the list of women mentioned in the genealogy we hear in today's gospel. Of course, her role was much more precious and significant and hence from the moment of her conception, God enveloped her in His grace. The role of women in human history is as important as that of their male counterparts right from the moment of their conception and as girl-children. As co-creators they serve to fulfil God's plan. Even Jesus through His earthly ministry sought to give equality of status to women. However, as we heard in the introduction to today's mass, the girl-child is seldom given equal importance even in an advanced age like ours. In the person of Mary, we not only have a model to imitate but we also have a symbol of hope for all girl-children all over. Let us through Mary's intercession continue to listen to Jesus' teachings and make every effort to live them out.

#### **Prayers of the Faithful:**

**Cel:** On this joyful day when we celebrate the birth of Mary, we remember that she ushered in ray of hope for all humanity. Let us bring forward our prayers and petitions especially for girl-children everywhere and place them before God saying, **Through the intercession of Mary our Mother, Lord hear our prayer**

1. That the Pope, bishops, clergy and religious may actively support and encourage the empowerment and protection of girl-children....we pray...
2. That in our country, age-old harmful attitudes and prejudices toward the girl-child may cease thus giving a new lease of equality in growth to girl-children... we pray...
3. That unfair gender practices such as female foeticide and infanticide, trafficking and dowry deaths may cease and those perpetrators be brought to justice... we pray....
4. That our own families and parish community may always be welcoming of girl children and speak up discrimination of any type ... we pray...

**Cel:** Loving God, we ask you to accept these petitions we make through the intercession of Mary our Mother. Grant them to us so that your Kingdom of equality and justice may truly become a reality here on earth as is it is heaven. Amen.