

GROWING IN THE SCHOOL OF PRAYER

A NOVENA IN PREPARATION FOR THE BIRTH OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY BASED ON THE OUR FATHER

As we move closer to the Jubilee of 2025, Pope Francis wants 2024 to be dedicated to prayer. He encourages people to persevere in prayer, emphasizing how constant prayer transforms not only the person, but also the wider community, even where evil seems to have the upper hand. In the Year of Prayer 2024, we are called to prepare for the Jubilee of 2025, accompanied by the Holy Father's teachings on prayer. Through his reflections on several occasions and especially in the cycle of "Catechesis on Prayer", given between May 6, 2020, and June 26, 2021, Pope Francis reminds us that prayer is an intimate dialogue with the Creator, a dialogue that starts from the human heart and reaches the merciful "Heart" of God, that can transform our lives. Prayer is that dialogue with God which our Blessed Mother took recourse in throughout her life and hence becomes our model in. Thus, imitating our Blessed Mother, prayer should be the spiritual breath of life for each of us her children.

In the Our Father, our Lord Jesus introduces the apostles and all of us Christians, to what can be considered the "model of all prayer" – the *School of Prayer*. During these days of our preparation for the birth of our Blessed Mother, we will reflect on the Lord's Prayer which in the words Tertullian is the 'synthesis of the whole Gospel'.

Day 1: Friday August 30 th	: Mt 6:7-13	- Introduction to the Lord's Prayer
Day 2: Saturday August 31 st	: Sunday's Readings	- Our Father who art in Heaven
Day 3: Sunday September 1 st	: Sunday's Readings	- Hallowed be Thy Name
Day 4: Monday September 2 nd	: Luke 17:20-21	- Thy Kingdom come
Day 5: Tuesday September 3 rd	: Lk 22:39-43	- Thy Will be done on Earth....
Day 6: Wednesday September 4 th	: Jn 6:31-35	- Give us this day our daily bread
Day 7: Thursday September 5 th	: Mt 18:15-22	- Forgive us....as we forgive....
Day 8: Friday September 6 th	: John 17: 15-16	- Lead us not into temptation but...
Day 9: Saturday September 7 th	: Sunday's Readings	- For the kingdom, the power...Amen

The Gospel readings selected above give us a message and direction for daily living also help us reflect on the meaning of each petition of the Our Father. The *homily hints* are excerpts taken from Pope Francis' Catechesis on the Lord's Prayer (Dec 2018-May 2019). Priests may choose any other resource to expound on the daily themes.

For the activity, each child can be asked to prepare a 'linked wall hanging of the Our Father' (see appendix for example). Each day at the end of Mass the children can be asked to creatively and colourfully write down the theme of the day e.g. our Father who art in Heaven, on a 4"x4" or 6"x4" piece of card/chart/construction paper. On the feast day they can get their wall hanging artworks to be blessed as a sacramental which they can take back home and hang at their family Altar or any appropriate place in the house. Children can be given the freedom to be as creative as they want to. Alternatively, parishes are free to use their own creative ideas for the activity in relation to the themes.

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Director
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Day 1: Friday August 30th

Theme: Introduction to the Lord's Prayer

Introduction: For a Christian, prayer should be the spiritual breath of life that never ceases. Lived in this way the life of prayer accompanies every action of life. As we begin this prayerful and prayer-filled nine-day journey, we ask our blessed Mother to intercede for us that prayer may truly become the hallmark of our daily living.

Readings: Mt 6: 7-13

Homily Hints: The Gospels have consigned to us very lively portrayals of Jesus as a *man of prayer*. Jesus prayed. Despite the urgency of his mission and the pressure from the many people making demands on him, Jesus feels the need to withdraw in solitude and pray. Jesus prayed with intensity in public moments, sharing the liturgy of his people, but also seeking withdrawn places, away from the turbulence of the world, places that allowed him to dwell in the privacy of his soul. Jesus prayed like all men and women in the world pray. Yet his way of praying also contained a mystery, something that certainly did not escape the eyes of his disciples, since the Gospels contain that plea that was so simple and immediate: “*Lord, teach us to pray*” (Lk 11:1). They see Jesus praying and they want to learn how to pray: “*Lord, teach us to pray*”. And Jesus does not refuse, he is not possessive of his intimacy with the Father, but rather, he came precisely to introduce us to this relationship with the Father. And thus, he becomes the teacher of prayer to his disciples, as he undoubtedly wants to be so for all of us. We too should say: “*Lord, teach me to pray. Teach me*”. Even if we may have been praying for many years, we still must learn! And we do not even know whether the prayers that we address to God are effectively those that he wants to have addressed to him. Therefore, on beginning our novena in preparation for the feast of the birth of Mary, the most beautiful and just thing that we all must do is to repeat the disciples’ appeal: “*Teacher, teach us to pray!*”.

Prayer of the Faithful:

Cel: As we bring before the Lord our petitions today, we pray especially for the grace to call upon Him as Father 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 humble prayer 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 prayer in the footsteps of our Blessed Mother
4. For all health care workers and care-givers: 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 have given us a model of prayer. May we always do our best to imbibe a prayerful heart. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Post-Communion prayer

Novena Prayer: (after post-Communion prayer): God our heavenly Father, the day of our salvation dawned when the blessed virgin gave birth to your son, Christ our Lord, who released us from the ancient curse and made us blessed. As we celebrate her nativity and join now in constant prayer with her, we implore you to heal the sick, to comfort the sorrowful, to pardon sinners and to grant our special petition (*mention your personal request*)

You deigned to do great things for the Virgin Mary and brought her body and soul to the glory of heaven. Fill the hearts of your children with the hope of Christ’s glory. We make this prayer through the intercession of our Blessed Mother, in the name your Son who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever. Amen

Announcements, if any.

Recessional Hymn.

Activity for Children explained.

Day 2: Saturday August 31st

Theme: Our Father who art in Heaven

Introduction: Prayer is the living relationship of the children of God with their Father. As we focus on our theme for today, we ask our blessed Mother to intercede for us that we may never shy away from calling God, 'abba' – daddy.

Readings: Sunday's Readings

Homily Hints:

Jesus invites his disciples to approach God and to confidently address several requests to him: first in regard to him and then in regard to us. There is no preamble to 'Our Father'. Jesus does not teach formulas for one to 'ingratiate oneself' to the Lord, but instead invites us to pray to Him by knocking down the barriers of awe and fear. He does not tell us we should address God by calling him 'Almighty', 'Most High', [by saying,] 'You, who are so distant from us, I am a wretched man': no, he does not say this, but simply 'Father', with total simplicity, as children address their father. And this word, "Father", expresses confidence and filial trust. God is the Father who has immense compassion for us and wants his children to speak to him without fear, directly calling him 'Father'. For a Christian, praying is simply saying 'Abba'; it is saying 'Dad', saying 'Papa', saying 'Father' but with a child's trust. None of us has had perfect parents, no one; as we, in turn, will never be perfect parents or pastors. We all have shortcomings, everyone. For this reason, when we speak of God as 'father', as we consider the image of our parents, especially if they loved us, at the same time we must go further. Because God's love is that of the Father '*who art in Heaven*', according to the expression that Jesus invites us to use: he is the total love that we can savor only imperfectly in this life. The expression "in Heaven" is not intended to express a distance, but rather a radical difference of love, another dimension of love, a tireless love, a love that will always be there, that is always at hand. It is enough to say "Our Father who art in heaven", and that love comes.

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.

Post-Communion prayer

Novena Prayer: (after post-Communion prayer): God our heavenly Father, the day of our salvation dawned when the blessed virgin gave birth to your son, Christ our Lord, who released us from the ancient curse and made us blessed. As we celebrate her nativity and join now in constant prayer with her, we implore you to heal the sick, to comfort the sorrowful, to pardon sinners and to grant our special petition (*mention your personal request*)

You deigned to do great things for the Virgin Mary and brought her body and soul to the glory of heaven. Fill the hearts of your children with the hope of Christ's glory. We make this prayer through the intercession of our Blessed Mother, in the name your Son who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever. Amen

Announcements, if any.

Recessional Hymn.

Activity for Children explained.

Day 3: Sunday September 1st

Theme: Hallowed be Thy Name

Introduction: In our journey of rediscovering the “Our Father”, today we shall delve deeper into the first of his seven invocations, namely, “hallowed be thy name”. We ask our blessed Mother to intercede for us that our prayer may transform us into tabernacles of God’s holiness.

Readings: Sunday’s Readings

Homily Hints:

In this request — the first one! “*Hallowed be thy name!* — one feels all Jesus’ admiration for the beauty and greatness of the Father, and the wish that everyone recognizes and love him for what he truly is. And at the same time there is the supplication that his name be sanctified in us, in our family, in our community, in the entire world. It is God who sanctifies, who transforms us with his love, but at the same time we too, with our witness, manifest God’s holiness in the world, making his name present. God is holy, but if we, if our life is not holy, there is great inconsistency! God’s holiness must be reflected in our actions, in our life. How can we ensure that?

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.

Post-Communion prayer

Novena Prayer: (after post-Communion prayer): God our heavenly Father, the day of our salvation dawned when the blessed virgin gave birth to your son, Christ our Lord, who released us from the ancient curse and made us blessed. As we celebrate her nativity and join now in constant prayer with her, we implore you to heal the sick, to comfort the sorrowful, to pardon sinners and to grant our special petition (*mention your personal request*)

You deigned to do great things for the Virgin Mary and brought her body and soul to the glory of heaven. Fill the hearts of your children with the hope of Christ’s glory. We make this prayer through the intercession of our Blessed Mother, in the name your Son who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever. Amen

Announcements, if any.

Recessional Hymn.

Activity for Children explained.

Day 4: Monday September 2nd

Theme: Thy Kingdom Come

Introduction: Our life and quality of prayer should result in the Kingdom of God becoming a reality. Let us ask our blessed Mother to intercede for us that through our prayer we may become participants in the mission of establishing God's kingdom.

Readings: Luke 17:20-21

Homily Hints:

When we pray the "Our Father", the second request we address to God is "Thy kingdom come" (Mt 6:10). After praying for the sanctification of his name, the believer expresses the desire that His Kingdom may come soon. The signs of the coming of this Kingdom are multiple, all of them positive. Jesus begins his ministry by caring for the sick, both in body and in spirit, for those who were socially excluded — lepers, for example — and sinners who were looked upon with scorn by everyone. Thy kingdom come", Christians persistently repeat when they pray the "Our Father". Jesus has come; but the world is still marked by sin, inhabited by many people who suffer, by people who do not want to reconcile and do not forgive, by war and many forms of exploitation. All these facts are proof that Christ's victory has not yet been completely attained. We sometimes ask ourselves: why is this Kingdom so slow to come about? Thy kingdom come!". Let us sow this word in the midst of our sins and our shortcomings. Let us give it to the people defeated and bent by life, to those who have tasted hatred more than love, those who have lived aimless days without ever understanding why.

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.

Post-Communion prayer

Novena Prayer: (after post-Communion prayer): God our heavenly Father, the day of our salvation dawned when the blessed virgin gave birth to your son, Christ our Lord, who released us from the ancient curse and made us blessed. As we celebrate her nativity and join now in constant prayer with her, we implore you to heal the sick, to comfort the sorrowful, to pardon sinners and to grant our special petition (*mention your personal request*)

You deigned to do great things for the Virgin Mary and brought her body and soul to the glory of heaven. Fill the hearts of your children with the hope of Christ's glory. We make this prayer through the intercession of our Blessed Mother, in the name your Son who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever. Amen

Announcements, if any.

Recessional Hymn.

Activity for Children explained.

Day 5: Tuesday September 3rd

Theme: Thy Will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven

Introduction: Prayer opens our hearts and wills to the working of God in our lives. On this fifth day of our novena we ask our blessed Mother to intercede so that we may always be found doing the will of our heavenly Father.

Readings: Lk 22:39-43

Homily Hints: The “Our Father” is a prayer which kindles in us the same love as Jesus’ love for the Father’s will, a flame that spurs us to transform the world with love. The Christian does not believe in an inescapable “fate”. There is nothing unplanned in Christian faith. Rather, there is a salvation waiting to manifest itself in the life of each man and woman, and to be fulfilled in eternity. When we pray, we believe that God can and wants to transform reality by overcoming evil with good. It makes sense to obey and to surrender oneself to this God, even at the hour of the most difficult trial. When we pray this particular petition in the Our Father, we express a strong wish to do God’s will. We unite our will to His will even though we are weak and imperfect.

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.

Post-Communion prayer

Novena Prayer: (after post-Communion prayer): God our heavenly Father, the day of our salvation dawned when the blessed virgin gave birth to your son, Christ our Lord, who released us from the ancient curse and made us blessed. As we celebrate her nativity and join now in constant prayer with her, we implore you to heal the sick, to comfort the sorrowful, to pardon sinners and to grant our special petition (*mention your personal request*)

You deigned to do great things for the Virgin Mary and brought her body and soul to the glory of heaven. Fill the hearts of your children with the hope of Christ’s glory. We make this prayer through the intercession of our Blessed Mother, in the name your Son who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever. Amen

Announcements, if any.

Recessional Hymn.

Activity for Children explained.

Day 6: Wednesday September 4th

Theme: Give us this day our daily bread

Introduction: The prayer of supplication reflects our vulnerability and dependency. We ask our blessed Mother to intercede that our supplications become a time of intimate communion with God leading us to trust Him ever more deeply.

Reading: Jn 6:31-35

Homily Hints: Today we move on to analyze the second part of the “Lord’s Prayer”, in which we present our needs to God. This second part begins with a word with the scent of daily life: *bread*. Jesus’ prayer begins with a compelling request, which quite resembles a beggar’s plea: “Give us our daily bread!”. This prayer comes from an evident fact that we often forget, which is to say that we are not self-sufficient beings, and that we need to nourish ourselves every day. Jesus teaches us to ask the Father for our daily bread. And he teaches us to do so united with many men and women for whom this prayer is a plea — often stifled within — which accompanies the anxiety of each day. How many mothers and how many fathers, even today, go to sleep with the torment of not having enough bread for their own children tomorrow! The bread a Christian requests in prayer is not “mine”, but “ours”. This is what Jesus wants. He teaches us to request it not only for ourselves but for the world’s entire fraternity. If one does not pray in this way, the “Our Father” ceases to be a Christian prayer. If God is our Father, how can we present ourselves to him without taking each other by the hand?

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.

Post-Communion prayer

Novena Prayer: (after post-Communion prayer): God our heavenly Father, the day of our salvation dawned when the blessed virgin gave birth to your son, Christ our Lord, who released us from the ancient curse and made us blessed. As we celebrate her nativity and join now in constant prayer with her, we implore you to heal the sick, to comfort the sorrowful, to pardon sinners and to grant our special petition (*mention your personal request*)

You deigned to do great things for the Virgin Mary and brought her body and soul to the glory of heaven. Fill the hearts of your children with the hope of Christ’s glory. We make this prayer through the intercession of our Blessed Mother, in the name your Son who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever. Amen

Announcements, if any.

Recessional Hymn.

Activity for Children explained.

Day 7: Thursday September 5th

Theme: Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us

Introduction: The “Lord’s Prayer” we are reflecting upon over the past days, today enters the sphere of our relationships with others. We ask our blessed Mother to intercede so that our prayer may make us ever ready to ask forgiveness and forgive others.

Readings: Mt 18:15-22

Homily Hints:

Jesus teaches us to ask the Father: “forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors” (Mt 6:12). Just as we need bread, we also need forgiveness; this too, this every day. We are all debtors before God: we have received everything from him, in terms of nature and grace. On close reflection, the invocation could well be limited to this first part; that would have been nice. But instead Jesus joins it to a second expression that forms one with the first. The vertical relationship with benevolence on God’s part refracts and is called to translate into a new relationship with our brothers and sisters: a horizontal relationship. The two parts of the invocation are linked together with a stern conjunction: we ask the Lord to forgive our debts, our sins, ‘*as*’ we forgive our friends, the people who live with us, our neighbours, the people who have done something bad to us. God gives every Christian the grace to write a story of good in the life of his or her brothers and sisters, especially of those who have done something regrettable or wrong. With a word, an embrace, a smile, we can pass on to others the most precious thing we have received. What is the most precious thing we have received? Forgiveness, which we too must be able to give to 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.

Post-Communion prayer

Novena Prayer: (after post-Communion prayer): God our heavenly Father, the day of our salvation dawned when the blessed virgin gave birth to your son, Christ our Lord, who released us from the ancient curse and made us blessed. As we celebrate her nativity and join now in constant prayer with her, we implore you to heal the sick, to comfort the sorrowful, to pardon sinners and to grant our special petition (*mention your personal request*)

You deigned to do great things for the Virgin Mary and brought her body and soul to the glory of heaven. Fill the hearts of your children with the hope of Christ’s glory. We make this prayer through the intercession of our Blessed Mother, in the name your Son who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever. Amen

Announcements, if any.

Recessional Hymn.

Activity for Children explained.

Day 8: Friday September 6th

Theme: Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil

Introduction: Our Heavenly Father always protects His children. We ask our blessed Mother to intercede that we may always be found steadfast in faith especially in moments of weakness and tribulations.

Readings: John 17:15-16

Homily Hints:

The “Our Father” begins in a calm manner: it makes us desire that God’s great plan be fulfilled in our midst. It then casts a gaze on life and makes us ask ourselves what we need each day: “daily bread”. Then the prayer turns to our interpersonal relationships, often tarnished by selfishness: we request forgiveness, and we commit to bestow it. But it is with this penultimate invocation that our dialogue with the heavenly Father gets, so to speak, to the heart of the drama: that is, to the matter of the contrast between our freedom and the pitfalls of evil. As we know, the original Greek expression contained in the Gospels is difficult to render in an exact manner, and all the modern translations are somewhat weak. But we can agree unanimously on one element: however one understands the text, we have to exclude the possibility that God is the protagonist of the temptations that loom over mankind’s journey. This penultimate invocation reminds us that in all our trials and tribulations, our Father is with us just as He was with Jesus – He never abandons His children.

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.

Post-Communion prayer

Novena Prayer: (after post-Communion prayer): God our heavenly Father, the day of our salvation dawned when the blessed virgin gave birth to your son, Christ our Lord, who released us from the ancient curse and made us blessed. As we celebrate her nativity and join now in constant prayer with her, we implore you to heal the sick, to comfort the sorrowful, to pardon sinners and to grant our special petition (*mention your personal request*)

You deigned to do great things for the Virgin Mary and brought her body and soul to the glory of heaven. Fill the hearts of your children with the hope of Christ’s glory. We make this prayer through the intercession of our Blessed Mother, in the name your Son who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever. Amen

Announcements, if any.

Recessional Hymn.

Activity for Children explained.

Day 9: Saturday September 7th

Theme: For the Kingdom the Power and the Glory are yours, now and forever, amen.

Introduction: Through the words of our theme for today we celebrate the source and summit of our prayer – the glory of God. We ask our blessed Mother to intercede that we may always imitate her in giving glory to God.

Readings: Sunday's Readings

Homily Hints: The final doxology takes up again the first three petitions to our Father: the glorification of His name, the coming of his reign and the power of his saving will. But these prayers are now proclaimed as adoration and thanksgiving as in the liturgy of heaven (cf Rev 1:6;4:11;5:13). Christ the Lord, restores to the Father, the titles of kingship, power and glory usurped by the ruler of this world. By the final "Amen" we express our 'fiat' concerning the seven petitions: "So be it."

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.

Post-Communion prayer

Novena Prayer: (after post-Communion prayer): God our heavenly Father, the day of our salvation dawned when the blessed virgin gave birth to your son, Christ our Lord, who released us from the ancient curse and made us blessed. As we celebrate her nativity and join now in constant prayer with her, we implore you to heal the sick, to comfort the sorrowful, to pardon sinners and to grant our special petition (*mention your personal request*)

You deigned to do great things for the Virgin Mary and brought her body and soul to the glory of heaven. Fill the hearts of your children with the hope of Christ's glory. We make this prayer through the intercession of our Blessed Mother, in the name your Son who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever. Amen

Announcements, if any.

Recessional Hymn.

Activity for Children explained.

MARY – MODEL OF PERFECT PRAYER!
Liturgy for feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary
Day of the Girl-child

Suggested ritual: Children could enter in procession carrying their ‘Our Father wall hangings’. Few older children could carry in procession a decorated statue of our blessed Mother and place it at the foot of the altar/sanctuary.

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. We remember especially in prayer the girl-child today as we observe the birth of Mary our blessed Mother.

Readings: of the Sunday.

Homily Hint: The life of Mary was and is a life of prayer. “By pronouncing Her “fiat” at the Annunciation and giving Her consent to the Incarnation, Mary was already collaborating with the whole work Her Son was to accomplish. She is our mother. “Mary is the perfect Orans (pray-er), a figure of the Church. When we pray to Her, we are adhering with Her to the plan of the Father, who sends His Son to save all men. Like the beloved disciple we welcome Jesus’ mother into our homes, for She has become the mother of all the living. We can pray with and to Her.

The prayer of the Church is sustained by the prayer of Mary and united with it in hope. Because of Mary’s singular cooperation with the action of the Holy Spirit, the Church loves to pray in communion with the Virgin Mary, to magnify with Her the great things the Lord has done for Her, and to entrust supplications and praises to Her. That is why the Magnificat, or the Cantic of Mary, is the song that Mary prayed while visiting Elizabeth.

After the Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus Christ, Mary waited with the other disciples for God to send the Holy Spirit: “All these were constantly devoting themselves to prayer, together with ... Mary the Mother of Jesus” (Acts 1:14). This expectant waiting for the Holy Spirit’s transforming work is the model for the contemplative life of prayer.

Mary’s Prayer teaches us to stay afloat in the ocean of life, with all of its undertows. I am the handmaiden of the Lord; let it be to me according to your Word” (Luke 1:38). This is Mary’s “Fiat”, Her “Yes” to the Lord. It was spoken from a heart filled with pure love for God.

Prayers of the Faithful:

Cel: On this joyful day when we celebrate the birth of Mary, we remember that she ushered in a 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 it is in heaven. Amen.

APPENDIX

Sample linked-wall hanging.

