



24 December 2021 CHRISTMAS NOVENA – Ninth Day Year C

THE DAWN FROM ON HIGH WILL BREAK UPON US!

Welcome to our last Mass of the Novena in preparation for Christmas! A good number of us have persevered throughout the nine days, while others have joined the big group once again after a certain interval

The Lord welcomes us all with fatherly love, even as He expects that we make a final effort to intensify our immediate preparation to welcome Jesus in our hearts and in our families.

On this last day of the Novena let us extend our concern and love to the immense family of mankind, especially those who find themselves immersed in the darkness of suffering caused by wars, natural disasters or sickness, or separation from their loved ones. Together with our personal needs, let us present to the Lord also the needs and aspirations of all people of goodwill. May His light and peace come to all mankind.



INTRODUCTORY RITES

Entrance Antiphon
(To be recited only when no Entrance Hymn is sung.)

Behold, when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son into the world.

Greeting

P –Grace, peace, and light from God our Father, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit be with you all!
All –And with your spirit!

Penitential Act

P –On this last day of our Novena we thank the Lord for the many graces He has granted us, and once again we ask for His mercy and forgiveness. (Pause)

P –Lord Jesus, you are the fulfillment of the Fa-

ther’s promise and of mankind’s expectation.
Lord, have mercy!

All –Lord, have mercy!

P –Lord Jesus, you come to bring the peace and justice of God’s Kingdom.
Christ, have mercy!

All –Christ, have mercy!

P –Lord Jesus, you come to reconcile us with the Father and with one another. Lord, have mercy!

All –Lord, have mercy!

P –May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins and bring us to everlasting life.

All –Amen!

Gloria

All –Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to people of good will. We praise you, we bless you, we adore you, we glorify you, we

give you thanks for your great glory, Lord God, heavenly King, O God, almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son, Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us; you take away the sins of the world, receive our prayer; you are seated at the right hand of the Father, have mercy on us. For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen!

Collect (Opening Prayer)

P –Come quickly, Lord Jesus, do not delay! We entrust ourselves to your love: strengthen us by your coming

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and raise us up, you who live and reign with the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever.
All—Amen!

LITURGY OF THE WORD 

1st Reading 2 Sm 7:1-5.8-11.16

God is never outdone in generosity. To David who intended to build in honor of the Lord a perishable temple, God promises a lasting dynasty. The Messiah/Savior, whose birth we are about to commemorate, is the perfect fulfillment of that promise.

R —A proclamation from the Second Book of Samuel

When King David was settled in his palace, and the Lord had given him rest from his enemies on every side, he said to Nathan the prophet, “Here I am living in a house of cedar, while the ark of God dwells in a tent!” Nathan answered the king, “Go, do whatever you have in mind, for the Lord is with you.”

But that night the Lord spoke to Nathan and said: “Go, tell my servant David, ‘Thus says the Lord: Should you build me a house to dwell in? It was I who took you from the pasture and from the care of the flock to be commander of my people Israel. I have been with you wherever you went, and I have destroyed all your enemies before you. And I will make you famous like the great ones of the earth. I will fix a place for my people Israel; I will plant them so that they may dwell in their place without further disturbance. Neither shall the wicked continue to afflict them as they did of old, since the time I first appointed judges over my people Israel. I will give you rest from all your enemies. The Lord also reveals to you that he will establish a house for you. And when your time comes and you rest with your ancestors, I will raise up your heir after you, sprung from your loins, and I

will make his Kingdom firm. I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me. Your house and your kingdom shall endure forever before me; your throne shall stand firm forever.’”

The Word of the Lord!
All—Thanks be to God!

Responsorial Psalm Ps 89

R —*For ever I will sing the goodness of the Lord!*

R. M. Velez



* The favors of the Lord I will sing forever; through all generations my mouth shall proclaim your faithfulness. For you have said, “My kindness is established forever”; in heaven you have confirmed your faithfulness. **R.**

* “I have made a covenant with my chosen one, I have sworn to David my servant: Forever will I confirm your posterity and establish your throne for all generations.” **R.**

* He shall say of me, “You are my father, my God, the Rock, my Savior.” Forever I will maintain my kindness toward him, and my covenant with him stands firm. **R.**

Gospel Acclamation

All—Alleluia! Alleluia!

O Radiant Dawn, splendor of eternal light, sun of justice: come and shine on those who dwell in darkness and in the shadow of death.

Alleluia! Alleluia!

Gospel Lk 1:67-79

The birth of John the Baptist is the last step that announces the imminent coming of the Messiah. We are all invited to share in the happiness of Elizabeth and Zechariah and to proclaim with them the faithfulness of the Lord.

P —The Lord be with you!

All—And with your spirit!

P —A proclamation from the holy Gospel according to Luke

All—Glory to you, O Lord!

Zechariah, the father of John, filled with the Holy Spirit, prophesied, saying: “Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel; for he has come to his people and set them free. He has raised up for us a mighty Savior, born of the house of his servant David. Through his prophets he promised of old that he would save us from our enemies, from the hands of all who hate us. He promised to show mercy to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant. This was the oath he swore to our father Abraham: to set us free from the hand of our enemies, free to worship him without fear, holy and righteous in his sight all the days of our life. You, my child, shall be called the prophet of the Most High, for you will go before the Lord to prepare his way, to give his people knowledge of salvation by the forgiveness of their sins. In the tender compassion of our God, the dawn from on high shall break upon us, to shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death, and to guide our feet into the way of peace.”

The Gospel of the Lord!
All—Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ!

Homily

Prayer of the Faithful

P —As we are about to celebrate the Birthday of the Lord, let us open our hearts in gratitude for this great gift and pray together:

All—Come, Lord Jesus!

C —Come, Lord Jesus, and fill with your blessing the entire Church, the Holy Father, and all our religious leaders. We pray! **R.**

C —Come, Lord, and give wisdom to our cultural and political leaders that they

may lead our country to days of sincere cooperation and solidarity. We pray! **R.**

C –Come, Lord, and bring your peace to nations at war, to groups that are divided by conflicts of interests, to families dismembered by jealousy and unfaithfulness. We pray! **R.**

C –Come, Lord, to our land, and be the comfort of those who suffer or feel neglected, despised or oppressed. We pray! **R.**

C –Come, Lord, to our parish community and enable us to live this coming Christmas with the disposition of Mary Most Holy and St. Joseph. We pray! **R.**

C –Come, Lord, to our families and to each of us, and bring us your forgiveness, your joy, your peace. We pray! **R.**

C –Let us pray in silence for our personal intentions. (Pause) We pray! **R.**

P –Come, Lord Jesus, we need you. You are our only hope. You are our only Savior. You are our everything, for you live and reign forever and ever. **All–Amen!**



Preparation of the Gifts

P –Pray, brethren . . .
All–May the Lord accept the sacrifice at your hands, for the praise and glory of his name, for our good and the good of all his holy Church.

Prayer over the Offerings

P –Graciously accept, O Lord, the gifts we offer, that our partaking of them may free us from sin and purify our hearts for the glorious coming of your Son, who lives and reigns for ever and ever. **All–Amen!**

Preface of Advent II

P –The Lord be with you!

All–And with your spirit!

P –Lift up your hearts!

All–We lift them up to the Lord!

P –Let us give thanks to the Lord our God!

All–It is right and just!

P –It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation, always and everywhere to give you thanks, Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God, through Christ our Lord.

For all the oracles of the prophets foretold him, the Virgin Mother longed for him with love beyond all telling, John the Baptist sang of his coming and proclaimed his presence when he came.

It is by his gift that already we rejoice at the mystery of his Nativity, so that he may find us watchful in prayer and exultant in his praise.

And so, with Angels and Archangels, with Thrones and Dominions, and with all the hosts and Powers of heaven, we sing the hymn of your glory, as without end we acclaim:

All–Holy, holy, holy . . .

Memorial Acclamation

P –The mystery of faith!

All–When we eat this Bread and drink this Cup, we proclaim your Death, O Lord, until you come again!



All–Our Father . . .

P –Deliver us, Lord . . .

All–For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and for ever.

Sign of Peace

Breaking of the Bread

All–Lamb of God . . .

Communion

P –Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who takes

away the sins of the world. Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

All–Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.

Communion Antiphon

(To be recited only when no Communion Hymn is sung.)

Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel! He has visited his people and redeemed them.

Prayer after Communion

P –You have renewed us, Lord, by these wonderful gifts. As we prepare for the mystery of Christ’s birth, grant that we may rejoice in his gift of eternal life.

We ask this in the name of Jesus our Lord.

All–Amen!



P –The Lord be with you.

All–And with your spirit!

P –Bow your heads and pray for God’s blessing. (Pause)

–For nine days you have been preparing for the commemoration of the Lord’s birth. May he reward you for your efforts and fill you with his grace.

All–Amen!

P –May he remove from your hearts all fears and anxieties.

All–Amen!

P –May he confirm you in your faith and hope.

All–Amen!

P –May almighty God bless you: the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

All–Amen!

P –Go in peace to love and serve the Lord in your neighbor.

All–Thanks be to God!

ZECHARIAH, THE TROUBADOR OF GOD'S FAITHFULNESS

Zechariah had lived his life with the unfulfilled hope of enjoying the blessing of a large family like the majority of the Jews. But, as he was advancing in age, he **saw himself and his barren wife Elizabeth "condemned" to spend their last years of life in loneliness and neglect. Little did Zechariah know that all was part of a wise and wider plan.**

His experience of a divine revelation in the Temple had done nothing to improve his disposition. If anything, it had made things worse, especially when he found himself unable to speak and communicate in a normal manner.

Things had begun to change for the better with the visit of Mary, the young in-law from Nazareth who had come to visit his wife Elizabeth. Her three-months' stay with them had a tremendous impact on Zechariah. Although unable to speak, he benefited a lot from the presence and the words of Mary, and especially from learning that she was carrying the long-awaited Messiah.

Things were finally beginning to fall in place in the confused mind of the old man. And **when finally he was able to hold in his arms his newborn child and got the chance to name him John**, Zechariah's happiness grew so full as to shatter even the last impediment that had kept him isolated. Overcoming his dumbness, he burst into a song of praise that expressed also the feelings of all those present. Having seen fulfilled two of the promises made by the angel in the temple – the conception and birth of a son from his barren wife, in

spite of the old age of both, as well as his ability to speak – he now was able to look with firm hope to the fulfillment of the other promises made by God through the prophets along the centuries. **Zechariah felt he had become a new man – a man totally renewed in his mind and in his heart.**

Having personally experienced that nothing is impossible to God, he felt so sure that all the promises of old concerning the Messiah would definitely come true that he sang of their fulfillment using the ("prophetic") past tense:

**"He has come to His people and set them free.
He has raised up for us a mighty Savior,
born of the house of His servant David."**

(See today's Gospel.)

Clearly, Zechariah is not speaking here of his newborn baby boy, but of the One whose way his son, John, will prepare – **the Messiah of God**. He, and none other, is the one who sets God's people free. He is the Savior of all mankind, the one who fulfills God's promise to Abraham. He is "the dawn from on high who will break upon us, to shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death" and will "guide our feet into the way of peace."

On the eve of the commemoration of the fulfillment of these promises, we should learn from Zechariah to **trust God in Whose hands are the destinies of all peoples and Who never lets down those who put their faith in Him.**

Jess P. Balon

Advent/Christmas Trivia

THE WONDER OF THE BELEN

Historians are unanimous in attributing the realistic representation of the Christmas event to **St. Francis of Assisi**.

He had recently been to the Holy Land where he had visited Bethlehem and Jerusalem. After his return to Assisi, his heart was still afire with the deep spiritual experiences he had undergone in visiting the sites connected with the life of Jesus.

Several days before the Christmas celebration of 1223, the Saint planned to lead the people of **Greccio** (a village near Assisi) to re-live the touching event of the Birth of our Lord not just by hearing the singing of the Gospel account, but also by reenacting it. In order to do that, he asked a friend of his, John, to prepare all that was supposed to have been in the Grotto of Bethlehem when Jesus was born.

On Christmas Eve, everybody and everything were in place: the woman and the man who were supposed to play the role of Mary and Joseph; some shepherds with several sheep and lambs; an ox, a donkey, and a manger filled with soft hay. The manger, however, was conspicuously empty! John had not been able to find any mother who would lend her baby!



Surprisingly, the absence of the baby did not disturb Francis.

During the Mass, as he was proclaiming the Gospel, the people saw a beautiful baby resting peacefully in his arms. When he finished the proclamation of the Gospel narrative, he gently laid the baby in the manger to the delight of all. The charm of that scene was unforgettable.

From that year on, reenactments of the Nativity scene became common in a growing number of churches. Eventually, reproductions of the different characters in small statues made the scene of the Nativity permanent throughout the Christmas season. In time, small **Belens** could be seen not just in churches but also in public places and even in private homes.

For centuries this beautiful reconstruction of the Nativity scene was a common sight during the Christmas season in all Catholic countries. It is only in the 20th century, especially through the aggressive commercialization of Christmas, that the **Belen** has been partly overshadowed by the Christmas Tree. Sadly, in some places it has even been replaced by the Christmas Tree altogether.

It is time we rediscover this great treasure and give it the primacy it deserves.



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