

Christmas Novena 2023: Prophetic Witness

During this season of Advent, we are reminded of God's loving fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies in the Incarnation of Jesus.

Even today, the Salesians of Don Bosco are called to be prophetic witnesses as signs and bearers of the love of God for young people.

Each day of the novena, there will be a Messianic prophesy from the Old Testament paired with a short excerpt from "*What kind of Salesians for the youth of today?*" *Post-Chapter Reflection GC 28*.

He said to them, "Today this scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing." (Luke 4: 21)

Day 1 (December 16): A Sign

Scripture: Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign; the young woman, pregnant and about to bear a son, shall name him Emmanuel. (Isaiah 7: 14)

Excerpt: We will give priority to the traits of our charismatic identity as consecrated individuals that make us prophetic signs: a happy life with its roots in the Gospel, a strong faith anchored in God; a communion that makes our community life attractive, a prophetic attitude in the face of injustice and evil, and an outlook of hope along with the desire for conversion.

Please take a moment of silence to pray for your intention.

Day 2 (December 17): The Mouths of Your Children

Scripture: Then for Zion shall come a redeemer,
to those in Jacob who turn from transgression—oracle of the Lord.
This is my covenant with them,
which I myself have made, says the Lord:
My spirit which is upon you
and my words that I have put in your mouth
Shall not depart from your mouth,
nor from the mouths of your children
Nor the mouths of your children's children
from this time forth and forever, says the Lord. (Isaiah 59: 20-21)

Excerpt: In many ways, the young people have shown themselves to be prophets for us: through their presence the Lord continually makes known to us his expectations and his appeals for the renewal of our mission. It is like Don Bosco, who "did not discover his mission in front of a mirror, but in the pain of seeing young people who had no future. The Salesian of the 21st

century will not discover his own identity unless he can suffer with ‘the large numbers of young lads...’

Please take a moment of silence to pray for your intention.

Day 3 (December 18): A Spirit of Wisdom and Understanding

Scripture: But a shoot shall sprout from the stump of Jesse,
and from his roots a bud shall blossom.
The spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him:
a spirit of wisdom and of understanding,
A spirit of counsel and of strength,
a spirit of knowledge and of fear of the Lord,
and his delight shall be the fear of the Lord. (Isaiah 11: 1-3)

Excerpt: Good identification with one’s own vocation and an adequate understanding of the vocation of others are fundamental, in order not to reduce the shared mission to executive collaboration. Salesians who live their specific calling with joy and freshness are capable of an effective and fraternal animating presence and are able to offer the laity emotional and effective support in the difficulties they encounter. The lay people who assume their baptismal call to witnessing to the Gospel with conviction are free from the complex of being relegated to second-degree pastoral services. Together they become an “ecclesial laboratory” and a prophetic sign of communion for the Church and society.

Please take a moment of silence to pray for your intention.

Day 4 (December 19): Among Your Own Kindred

Scripture: A prophet like me will the Lord, your God, raise up for you from among your own kindred; that is the one to whom you shall listen. (Deuteronomy 18: 15)

Excerpt: The prophetic Magisterium of Pope Francis is helping the Church to become increasingly aware that distance from the poor betrays the Gospel and generates many ills in the Christian community. We too feel the need to go deeper into the interpretation of the times we are living in, to the point of recognizing that social phenomena and spiritual challenges, appeals of the young and movements of the Spirit are closely linked, without any possibility of separating them. This was Don Bosco's experience, which made him able to respond to the most urgent needs of his young people and to have them feel the tenderness of God that warms their hearts and instills hope. Where this also happens today, through generous commitment and pastoral creativity, we see a true flourishing of the charism. On the other hand, where communities lose “familiarity” with the poor, religious life becomes lukewarm, risking becoming salt that loses its flavor, a lamp placed under a bushel.

Please take a moment of silence to pray for your intention.

Day 5 (December 20): Vision and Prophecy

Scripture: “Seventy weeks are decreed
for your people and for your holy city:
Then transgression will stop and sin will end,
guilt will be expiated,
Everlasting justice will be introduced,
vision and prophecy ratified,
and a holy of holies will be anointed. (Daniel 9: 24)

Excerpt: “Don Bosco” says the Pope once more, “not only did not choose to separate himself from the world to seek holiness, but he let himself be challenged by it and chose how and which world to live in”. Taking up the mission as a formative principle requires developing the shepherd's gaze and the courage of the prophet who knows how to be with poor young people and to dream of a different world with them and for them. Hence “the mission inter gentes is our best school: beginning with this we pray, reflect, study and rest” (from Pope Francis’ Message to GC28).

Please take a moment of silence to pray for your intention.

Day 6 (December 21): He Shall Be a Son to Me

Scripture: Moreover, the Lord also declares to you that the Lord will make a house for you: when your days have been completed and you rest with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring after you, sprung from your loins, and I will establish his kingdom. He it is who shall build a house for my name, and I will establish his royal throne forever. I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me. (2 Samuel 7:11-14)

Excerpt: We must seriously take up our prophetic service. Our specific contribution is to be an icon of Jesus’ lifestyle, totally consecrated to the Father and his Plan for humanity: the Kingdom. Therefore, we are expected to be signs and witnesses of God’s fatherly presence – a gentle presence capable of a tender gaze and with arms thrown wide open especially to the poorest, to our young people – making our brotherliness a reality, making it attractive, alluring, and living with simplicity and moderation.

Please take a moment of silence to pray for your intention.

Day 7 (December 22): To the Ends of the Earth

Scripture: But you, Bethlehem-Ephrathah
least among the clans of Judah,
From you shall come forth for me

one who is to be ruler in Israel;
Whose origin is from of old,
from ancient times.
Therefore the Lord will give them up, until the time
when she who is to give birth has borne,
Then the rest of his kindred shall return
to the children of Israel.
He shall take his place as shepherd
by the strength of the Lord,
by the majestic name of the Lord, his God;
And they shall dwell securely, for now his greatness
shall reach to the ends of the earth:
he shall be peace. (Micah 5: 1-3)

Excerpt: We live in times when we have to face reality with a renewed mentality which allows us to “cross borders”. In a world where borders are more and more “a defense against others”, the prophecy of our life as Salesians of Don Bosco also consists in this: in showing that for us there are no borders. The only reality we respond to is: God, the Gospel and the mission that has been entrusted to us. It is precisely for this that our international and intercultural communities have great prophetic value today, without hiding the fact that building fraternity in different situations requires a vision of faith and personal engagement.

Please take a moment of silence to pray for your intention.

Day 8 (December 23): With Eyes Unveiled

Scripture: The oracle of one who hears what God says,
and knows what the Most High knows,
Of one who sees what the Almighty sees,
in rapture and with eyes unveiled.
I see him, though not now;
I observe him, though not near:
A star shall advance from Jacob,
and a scepter shall rise from Israel, (Numbers 24: 16-17)

Excerpt: Our world, the Church and the young along with their families, need us today as they did yesterday, in order to continue on their journey of fidelity to the Lord Jesus. They need us as significant and courageously prophetic individuals. May the Lord grant us this gift. Mediocrity and fears would allow us to offer little to the young, and this little would not be able to transform their life and fill it with meaning.

Please take a moment of silence to pray for your intention.

Day 9 ((December 24): The Zeal of the Lord of Hosts Will Do This

Scripture: For a child is born to us, a son is given to us;
upon his shoulder dominion rests.

They name him Wonder-Counselor, God-Hero,
Father-Forever, Prince of Peace.

His dominion is vast
and forever peaceful,

Upon David's throne, and over his kingdom,
which he confirms and sustains

By judgment and justice,
both now and forever.

The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this! (Isaiah 9: 5-6)

Excerpt: Taking up the mission as a formative principle requires developing the shepherd's gaze and the courage of the prophet who knows how to be with poor young people and to dream of a different world with them and for them.

Please take a moment of silence to pray for your intention.