

Immaculate Conception Novena 2024



Daily prayer taken from *In Dialogue with the Lord*. Day 1 reading taken from *Spes Non Confundit*: Bull of Indiction of the Ordinary Jubilee of the Year 2025 by Pope Francis. All other readings taken from Pope Francis's general audience on May 10, 2017.

Each day, please read the daily reading and then pray the following prayer followed by Mary Help of Christians, pray for us.

Daily Prayer:

Let us look to Mary, our hope, as we unite our hearts to hers in faithful anticipation and contemplation of God's coming among us.

Lord, almighty God and Father, you inspired the Virgin Mary to embrace her vocation fully as the mystical dawn of redemption. Through her cooperation, you fulfilled your promise of salvation.

Grant that we, through her intercession, may likewise embrace all that you call us to be.

Give us robust faith as we await the coming of your Kingdom, confident hope to prepare your ways, and selfless love to render generous service to those you entrust to our care. Amen.

Day 1: Mary born of hope

Hope finds its supreme witness in *the Mother of God*. In the Blessed Virgin, we see that hope is not naive optimism but a gift of grace amid the realities of life. Like every mother, whenever Mary looked at her Son, she thought of his future. [...] At the foot of the cross, she witnessed the passion and death of Jesus, her innocent son. [...] In the travail of that sorrow, offered in love, Mary became our Mother, the Mother of Hope. It is not by chance that popular piety continues to invoke the Blessed Virgin as *Stella Maris*, a title that bespeaks the sure hope that, amid the tempests of this life, the Mother of God comes to our aid, sustains us and encourages us to persevere in hope and trust.

Day 2: Mary who is courageous

Mary experienced more than one night on her journey as mother. Since her first appearance in the narrative of the Gospels, her figure stands out as if she were a character in a drama. It was not easy to respond with a “yes” to the Angel’s invitation: yet she, a woman in the flower of her youth, responds with courage, despite knowing nothing of the fate that awaits her. In that instant Mary appears to us as one of the many mothers of our world, courageous to the extreme when it comes to welcoming, in one’s own womb, the history of a new man to be born.

Day 3: Mary who contemplates

That “yes” is the first step in a long list of examples of obedience — a long list of examples! — that will accompany her journey as a mother. Thus, Mary appears in the Gospels as a silent woman, who often does not understand all that is happening around her, but who contemplates each word and each event in her heart.

Day 4: Mary who listens

In this disposition there is a beautiful sample of Mary’s psychology: she is not a woman who is depressed by the uncertainties of life, especially when nothing seems to be going the right way. Nor is she a woman who protests violently, who curses life’s fate, which often shows us a hostile face. She is instead a woman who listens: do not forget that there is always a great connection between hope and listening, and Mary is a woman who listens.

Day 5: Mary who empathizes

Mary welcomes life as it is conveyed to us, with its happy days, but also with its tragedies that we would rather not have met. Until Mary’s supreme night, when her Son is nailed to the wood of the cross.

Until that day, Mary had nearly disappeared from the Gospel accounts: the sacred writers suggest this slow eclipsing of her presence, her remaining silent before the mystery of a Son who obeys the Father. However, Mary reappears precisely at the crucial moment: when a large number of friends disperse out of fear. Mothers do not abandon, and in that instant at the foot of the Cross, none of us could say which was the cruelest passion: be it that of an innocent man who dies on the gallows of the Cross, or the agony of a mother who accompanies the final moments of her son’s life.

Day 6: Mary who is present

The Gospels are laconic and extremely discrete. They record Mary’s presence with a simple verb: she was “standing by” (Jn. 19:25). She stood by. They say nothing of her reaction: whether she wept, whether she did not weep ... nothing; not so much as a brushstroke to describe her anguish: these details would be tackled later by the imagination of poets and painters offering us images that have entered the history of art and literature. But the Gospels only say: she was “standing by”. She stood there, at the worst moment, at the cruelest moment, and she suffered with her son. She “stood by”.

Mary “stood by”; she was simply there. Here again the young woman of Nazareth, hair now grayed with the passage of time, still struggling with a God who must only be embraced, and with a life that has come to the threshold of the darkest night. Mary “stood by” in the thickest darkness, but she “stood by”. She did not go away. Mary is there, faithfully present, each time a candle must be held aflame in a place of fog and haze.

Day 7: Mary who serves

She does not even know the future resurrection her Son was opening at that instant for us, for all of mankind: she stands there out of faithfulness to the plan of God, whose handmaid she proclaimed herself to be on the first day of her vocation, but also due to her instinct as a mother who simply suffers, each time there is a child who undergoes suffering. This is the suffering of mothers: we have all known strong women who have faced their children's suffering!

Day 8: Mary who waits

We will find her again on the first day of the Church; she, *mother of hope*, in the midst of that community of such fragile disciples: one had denied, many had fled, all had been afraid (cf. Acts 1:14). She simply stood by, in the most natural of ways, as if it were something completely normal: in the first Church enveloped in the light of the Resurrection, but also in the trepidation of the first steps that had to be taken in the world

For this reason, we all love her as Mother. We are not orphans: we have a Mother in heaven who is the Holy Mother of God. Because she teaches us the virtue of waiting, even when everything seems to lack meaning: she is ever confident in the mystery of God, even when he seems to have eclipsed himself due to the evil of the world.

Day 9: Mary who bears hope

In the most difficult moments, may Mary, the Mother that Jesus gave to all of us, always support our steps, may she always say to our hearts: "Arise! Look forward, look to the horizon", because she is the Mother of Hope.