

Novena
to the
Immaculate
Heart of
Mary

2022



Introduction

The XXVI General Chapter adopted this commitment: “To intensify the Cordimarian dimension of our spirituality: confession of God, revolution of tenderness (cf. EG 88, 288), hope of peoples and dream of a new world. We will creatively practise the devotions of our tradition and of our peoples” (QC 47). Inspired by this commitment, the General Prefecture of Spirituality and Community Life has called together eight missionaries, representative of the different geographical areas of the Congregation, to form a commission to prepare novenas to the Heart of Mary for the six-year period. The aim is not to set aside the formulas proposed in the Spiritual Directory (cf. nn. 147-148), but to offer an alternative inspired by the Cordimarian features highlighted in ‘*Querida Congregación*’ (cf. QC 47).

In the first year, the novena is centred on the confession of God, which is the first Cordimarian aspect highlighted in the Chapter Declaration. This confession is embodied in the Magnificat of Mary. Already in *Missionarii Sumus* the following was said:

“We gratefully acknowledge that the Lord has generously blessed us. Although sin has continued and continues to exist among us, the signs of his grace have been and are much more numerous. United with Mary, we wish to extend his Magnificat because the Mighty One has done great works.” (MS 36)

The Magnificat is a hymn that reflects the spirituality of the poor of YHWH. It is like a canticle that evokes the exploits of the divine arm and traces the features of God as manifested in his historical actions. Focused on the Lord’s prominence, it overlooks the human cooperation that he has brought about. Each day of the

Mary confesses and magnifies God
in the Magnificat

novena, following step by step the development of the Gospel canticle, we will stop at one of those features or facets that point to the divine identity revealed in his salvific dispensation.

The outline of the novena has four parts. In the introductory part we find a monition, a hymn (each community can choose a suitable one), a greeting and the opening prayer. The second focuses on the proclamation of a biblical text, followed by a brief moment of contemplative silence. The third part, entitled “Meditating with Mary and about Mary,” offers some brief reflections on the theme of the novena and two complementary texts (either from Fr. Claret’s writings or from other authors), which can illuminate the reflections. In the last part, you will find the prayers, the Our Father, the concluding prayer (which will be the same for all nine days), the blessing and the final hymn. Each community can use this material as they see fit, trying to adapt it to their needs.



1. Introduction

Opening monition: The Magnificat, more than a “hymn to joy” and to the Creator, is a hymn to the God of joy and Saviour. Mary’s heart is filled with the joy of the messianic times that are no longer just a promise, but a presence; they bring not a passing state of euphoria, but lasting joy; for, in the fullness of time, God has sent his Son, born of woman. This Son is forever the Emmanuel: the God-with-us.

Hymn.

Liturgical greeting.

Prayer: God and Father, we remember Mary, who received the joyful announcement of the angel; grant to all of us who call ourselves sons of her heart the grace to communicate the joy of the gospel, so that the encounter with Jesus may free us from sin, sadness, inner emptiness, and isolation. Through our Lord Jesus Christ.

2. We listen to the Word of God

Luke 2:6-14

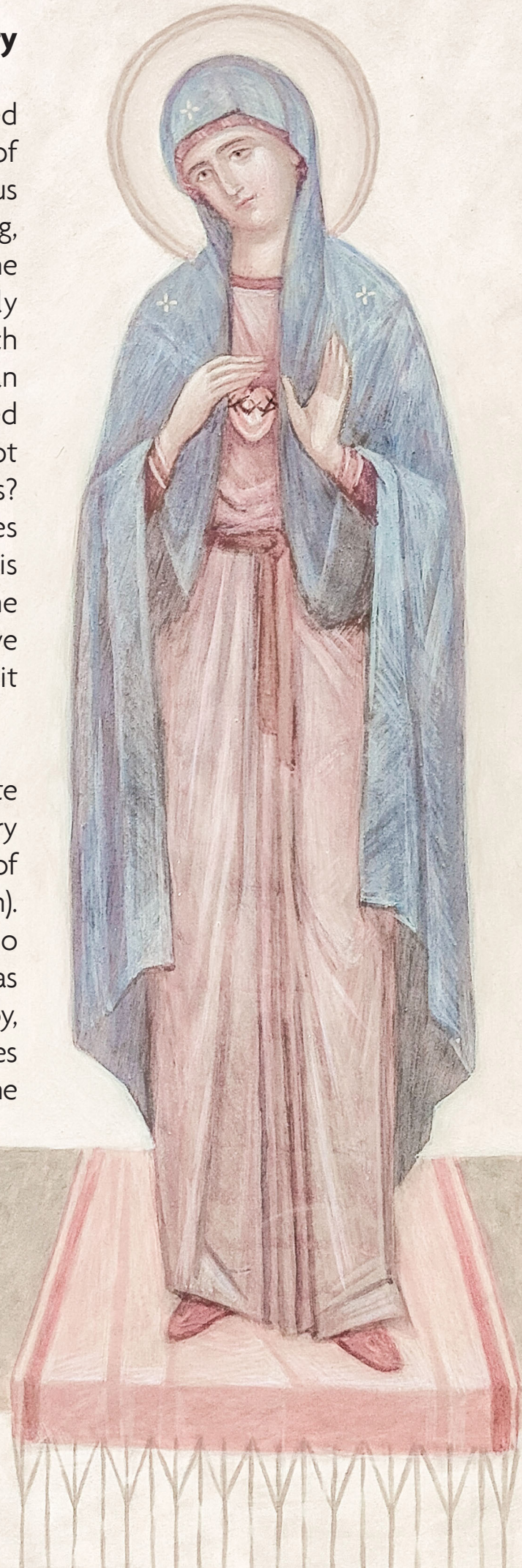
The time came for Mary to have her child, and she gave birth to a son, her firstborn. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in the manger because there was no place for them in the inn. There were shepherds camping in the countryside, taking turns to watch over their flocks by night. Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared to them, with the Glory of the Lord shining around them. As they were terrified, the angel said to them, “Don’t be afraid; I am here to give you good news, great joy for all the people. Today a Saviour has been born to you in David’s town; he is the Messiah and the Lord. Let this be a sign to you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.” Suddenly the angel was surrounded by many more heavenly spirits, praising God, and saying, “Glory to God in the highest; peace on earth for God is blessing humankind.”

Meditative silence.

3. We meditate with Mary and about Mary

We have reason to rejoice: we have received good news, the Good News. The true face of God is revealed to us, so disfigured by spurious words, by messages that claim to be liberating, by our own clumsiness. We remember the propaganda of the atheists: “There is probably no God; so, don’t worry and enjoy life.” Which God were they thinking of? What hope can there be for our world and for the discarded of history, if God does not exist or does not have the traits that the Magnificat describes? He is not envious, greedy, or mean. He does not skimp or tax his gifts. What he demands is that we extend our desire and hope, so that he may increase our knowledge and pour his love more deeply into our hearts. He gives the Spirit without measure (cf. Jn 3:34).

“Rejoice, full of grace”: this is how we can translate the initial greeting of the Angel Gabriel to Mary when we perceive in this greeting resonances of the Old Testament (Zephaniah, Joel, Zechariah). Mary’s spirit will sing joyfully to God, who has shown himself splendidly to her and has made her youth glad (cf. Ps 42:4 Vulg.). This joy, communicative in itself, radiates out and reaches Elizabeth’s son, the shepherds, the people, the Magi, the Christian generations, to us.



Complimentary text 1. “Throughout those first two years it rained a great deal. On one occasion it rained for nine months without skipping a day, and there were days when it rained through the night as well. This made traveling difficult, but I and my companions kept on going and the people kept on coming. We were all happy and in good spirits, although we sometimes lacked even the necessities of life.”

“From Mayari I travelled to Santiago, the capital, a distance of 40 leagues. We set out on the Monday of Holy Week. Since the route we were to travel was very isolated, we had to take along some provisions, which consisted of an earthenware pot containing a stew made of codfish, garbanzos, and potatoes. After we had been walking for a long stretch of road, my companions said that we needed to eat; so, we stopped, took out the pot, lit a fire, and huddled behind the trunk of a large mahogany tree to shield ourselves from the wind. We all took turns gathering wood and the fire got so hot that the pot broke. We got a piece of palm-bark (it peels off the palm tree like a large piece of cowhide) and poured what we could salvage of the stew into it. We didn’t have any spoons or forks; so, we hunted up a gourd and ate our mess of pottage with it. We were thirsty and got another piece of palm-bark, tied both ends of it together like a bucket, filled it with water, and enjoyed a refreshing drink. We were all so happy and content that it was a wonder to behold.” (St Anthony Claret, *Autobiography*, nn. 539, 543)

Complimentary text 2. “One winter evening I was, as usual, doing my duty [caring for a sister]. It was cold and it was night.... Suddenly, I heard the harmonious sound of a musical instrument in the distance. Then I imagined a brightly lit hall, all glowing with rich gold; elegantly dressed young women were paying each other all sorts of compliments and worldly courtesies. Then my gaze fell upon the poor sick woman I was supporting: instead of a melody, I heard from time to time her plaintive moans; instead of rich gilt, I saw the bricks of our austere cloister dimly lit by a little light. I cannot express what happened in my soul. What I do know is that the Lord illuminated it with the rays of truth, which so exceeded the gloomy brightness of earth’s festivities, that I could not believe in my happiness.... No, I would not exchange the ten minutes it took me to perform my humble service of charity for a thousand years of worldly feasting.” (Teresa of the Child Jesus, *History of a Soul*, manuscript C, 29v-30r)

4. We pray together

Through the mother of your Son, whom we invoke as the cause of our joy, we present to you, Father, our wishes:

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

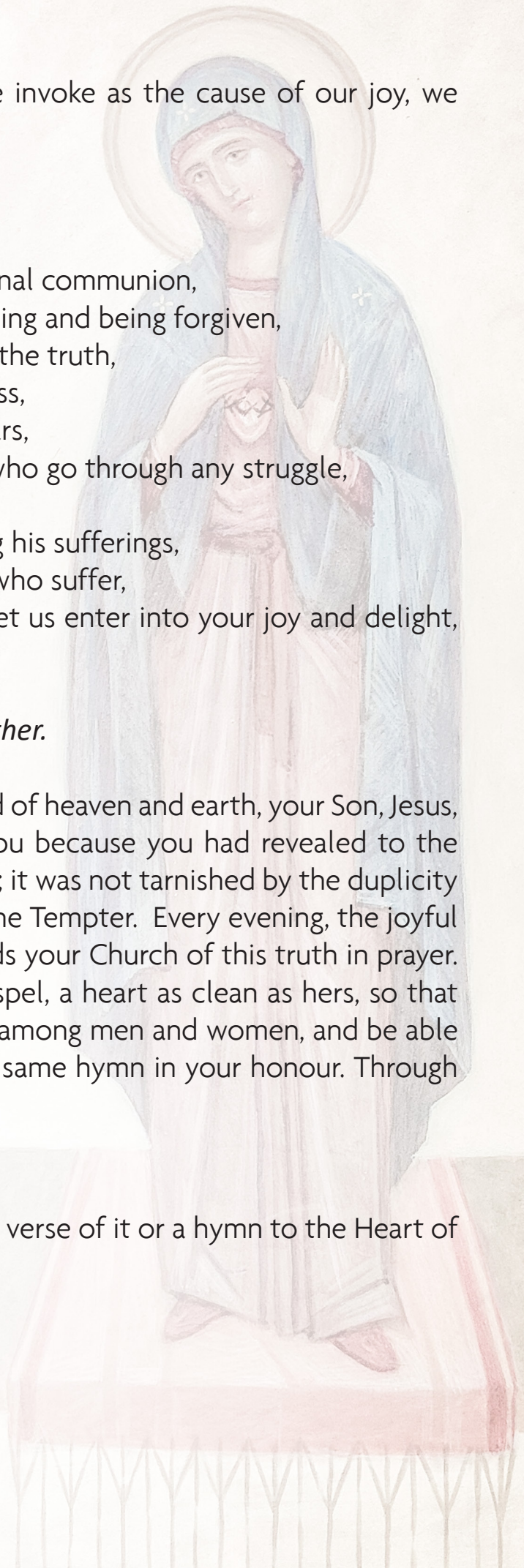
- Grant us to feel the sweetness of fraternal communion,
- Grant us to experience the joy of forgiving and being forgiven,
- Grant us the joy of knowing and loving the truth,
- Grant us the joy, companion of goodness,
- Awaken in us the joy of victory over fears,
- Give your abundant comfort to those who go through any struggle,
- Anoint us with the oil of Christ's joy,
- Give us the joy that comes from sharing his sufferings,
- Make us taste the joy of serving those who suffer,
- Lead us to the city of eternal joy and let us enter into your joy and delight, together with Mary and all the saints.

Spontaneous prayers can be added... Our Father.

Concluding prayer: Our God and Father, Lord of heaven and earth, your Son, Jesus, filled with joy in the Holy Spirit, thanked you because you had revealed to the simple hearted your clear and luminous truth; it was not tarnished by the duplicity and distrust instilled in the human heart by the Tempter. Every evening, the joyful song of Mary, your humble handmaid, reminds your Church of this truth in prayer. Create in us, Father, missionaries of your Gospel, a heart as clean as hers, so that we may see you, make your true face known among men and women, and be able to sing at the end of each day, with joy, that same hymn in your honour. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Blessing.

Final hymn: A version of The Magnificat, or a verse of it or a hymn to the Heart of Mary.



1. Introduction

Opening monition: Our personal life, in all its aspects, is precious, yet fragile and exposed to a variety of ills. We are filled with a longing for fullness that we are unable to satisfy on our own. But we can confidently open ourselves to the one who is the source of that life which fills us with meaning and joy. Mary's humble and simple heart is our model in openness to God's gifts; she confesses him as her Saviour.

Hymn.

Liturgical greeting.

Prayer: Our Lord and God, who looked with eyes of love on the humiliation of your servant and exalted the humble, filled the hungry with good things and stretched out your hand to the fallen, look upon these sons and servants of yours, show us your mercy and give us your salvation and your peace; and those of us who confess that our health-salvation is born of the wound of Christ, make us experience that strength is realised in weakness and makes it victorious. Through Our Lord Jesus Christ.

2. We listen to the Word of God

Isaiah 45:15-18, 21-22

Truly you are the God who remains hidden, the God of Israel, the Saviour. All idol makers will be put to shame, they will go away humiliated. But Israel will be saved by Yahweh – delivered with an everlasting salvation. You will never be put to disgrace for everlasting ages. Yes, this is what Yahweh says, he who created the heavens, for he is God. Let them present their arguments take counsel together and tell me: Who announced this from the beginning, who foretold it in the distant past? Is it not me Yahweh? There is no other God besides me, a Saviour, a God of justice, there is no other one but me. Turn to me and be saved, all you from the ends of the earth, for I am God and there is no other.

Meditative silence.

3. We meditate with Mary and about Mary

“The Saviour” is a new divine title: there are so many individual and collective situations where we need a helping hand! A fall into a pit, being buried under rubble; a disease, an addiction, a state of distress; pestilence, famine, war; ignorance, error, deception, abuse, slavery; guilt, death... Israel was saved from the power of Pharaoh, delivered from invasion, and rescued from deportation. God made use of human agents - Moses, the judges, Cyrus. And the Lord spared his people again and again. Jesus performed acts of salvation and is the bearer of ultimate salvation: by his obedient surrender we were rescued from guilt; and in his resurrection and the gift of the Spirit, we have the promise and pledge of victory over death. We are saved in hope.

Mary sings of God, her Saviour, who has delivered her from humiliation and fulfilled her, without scorning her for her humble condition and social lowliness. She sings of the God who helps Israel, the God who unfolds his mercy generation after generation, the God who discerns between lives open to his will (the humble and the hungry) and lives seriously devoid of dignity (the powerful and the rich), the God who has brought the messianic times to dawn, the God who will bring to completion his plan of salvation. It is the God who has redeemed us in his Son, on whom in the circumcision the name of Jesus will be imposed: YHWH saves. It is up to us to trust, welcome his salvation, and cooperate in it.



Complimentary text 1. “I know that in the order of grace I am like a man who can throw himself into a deep pit but cannot get out again by his own efforts. So it is with me; I can sin but can’t get out of sin without the help of God and the merits of Jesus Christ. I can be damned on my own, but I can’t be saved without God’s goodness and mercy.

I have come to know that the virtue of humility consists in this: in realizing that I am nothing, can do nothing but sin, and depend on God in everything— being, conservation, movement, and grace— and I am most happy to be dependent on God rather than on myself.” (St Anthony M Claret, *Autobiography*, nn. 346-347)

Complimentary text 2. Lolo Jones is a double world indoor 60m hurdles champion and a three-time Olympian. In *Salvando Obstáculos* (Palabra, Madrid, 2022) she tells her story of overcoming obstacles. She faced poverty, family breakdown, her father’s violence against her mother, and setbacks in sport. On this journey there is a special companion: God. She confesses: “He has been my saviour.” (Alfa y Omega, 28 April to 4 May 2022, p. 25)

4. We pray together

Let us with Mary cry out to our God, and let us beseech him, saying:

You are a just and saving God.

- Let your face shine upon us and grant us your peace,
- Save your people and bless your inheritance,
- Give us life, that we may confess your name,
- Grant the return to your Church of those who have fallen away,
- Help us to overcome discord and divisions,
- Let us not be dominated by tepidity and mediocrity,
- Comfort those who pass through temptations, tribulations, and trials,
- Make us solicitous for the good of the brethren,
- Make us attentive to the plight and needs of those who suffer,
- Save the dead, for whom your Son gave his life.

Spontaneous prayers can be added... Our Father.

Concluding prayer: Our God and Father, Lord of heaven and earth, your Son, Jesus, filled with joy in the Holy Spirit, thanked you because you had revealed to the simple hearted your clear and luminous truth; it was not tarnished by the duplicity and distrust instilled in the human heart by the Tempter. Every evening, the joyful song of Mary, your humble handmaid, reminds your Church of this truth in prayer. Create in us, Father, missionaries of your Gospel, a heart as clean as hers, so that we may see you, make your true face known among men and women, and be able to sing at the end of each day, with joy, that same hymn in your honour. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Blessing.

Final hymn: A version of The Magnificat, or a verse of it or a hymn to the Heart of Mary.



1. Introduction

Opening monition: “Where shall I escape from your presence?” (Ps 139:7), said the psalmist to the Lord. This gaze of God, seeing us in Christ, is that of a Father who feels tenderness for his children and remembers that they are clay. This gaze rested on Mary, the one full of grace. We ask that it may rest on us as on her and that it may purify and embellish us, as it embellished her, the innocent, the immaculate, the beautiful one.

Hymn.

Liturgical greeting.

Prayer: Our God and Father, your gaze reaches into the depths of the heart and searches it. Mary found grace in your presence. We ask you to see us with favourable eyes, and may your gaze forgive, heal, and recreate us; give us your grace, so that we may seek to please you in all things and do what is pleasing in your eyes. Through Our Lord Jesus Christ.

2. We listen to the Word of God

Psalm 33:13-22

The Lord looks down from heaven and sees the whole race of mortals. From where he sits, he watches all those who dwell on the earth – he who fashions every heart observes all their deeds. A king is not saved by a powerful army, nor is a warrior rescued by his great strength. Don't think that a horse will save you; its great strength does not assure victory. But the Lord's eyes are upon those who fear him, upon those who trust in his loving-kindness to deliver them from death and preserve them from famine. In hope, we wait for the Lord, for he is our help and our shield. Our hearts rejoice in him, for we trust in his holy name. O Lord, let your love rest upon us, even as our hope rests in you.

Meditative silence.

3. We meditate with Mary and about Mary

Our God is not like the one of a certain philosopher of antiquity: a deity who neither knows nor loves the realities of this world and ignores us “olympically” - so to speak. Our God, when he concluded his creative work, seeing that all that he had made was very good (Gen 1,31), had a feeling of satisfaction. And he is pleased with his faithful who trust in his mercy (Ps 147,11). They can ask him: “Look upon me, and be merciful to me, for I am lonely and afflicted” (Ps 25,16). For this reason, the prophet will ask him impatiently at his inaction and lack of response: “Your eyes, pure to behold evil, cannot bear to see oppression. Why then do you see the treacherous and remain silent, when the wicked swallows up the righteous?” (Hab 1,13)

God has seen the humble condition of his servant. And, by looking upon her, he has showered her with his grace and blessings. Mary will be able to sing with St. John of the Cross: “When you looked upon me, your eyes were gracious to me; therefore, you loved me, and therefore mine were worthy to adore what they saw in you” (Spiritual Canticle, Song 32 [A23]). She, thus graced, will in her turn be able to look upon us with eyes of mercy. We ask this of her in the Salve: “Turn to us your eyes of mercy.”



Complimentary text 1. When Paul VI went to Mumbai, where Catholics numbered barely half a million, four million people came to welcome him. How can this be understood? A professor of history of religions at the University of New Delhi explained: “They did not come to see the Pope. They came to be seen by him. For an Oriental, the eyes of a holy man convey salvation, they enlighten and purify the souls of those they look upon.”

Complimentary text 2. “Today I have come in your midst, indeed, we have all come together to meet Mary’s gaze, because there is the reflection of the gaze of the Father who makes her the Mother of God, and the gaze of the Son from the cross, who makes her our mother. We need her gaze of tenderness, her motherly gaze that knows us better than anyone else, her gaze full of compassion and care.

Mary, today we want to say to you: mother, give us your gaze! Your gaze leads us to God, your gaze is a gift of the good Father, who awaits us at every crossroads of our journey. It is a gift of Jesus Christ on the cross, who takes upon himself our sufferings, our toil, our sins.” (Pope Francis, in Cagliari, 22 September 2013)

4. We pray together

We pray to you, Father, for the Church, watch over her and each of her children with love. We respond:

Look upon the mother of your Son and listen to us.

- Do not let your Church shut herself up in sterile self-contemplation,
- Grant her to radiate the light of Christ by her presence, proclamation, dialogue, and action,
- Give us your Spirit, that he may instruct our gaze, our feelings, and our action,
- Give us a look and a heart of mercy,
- Do not allow us to remain blind and insensitive to those who suffer,
- Grant that we may live in holiness and justice in your presence all our days,
- Grant that we may not see with complacency what is not right in your eyes,
- Teach us to search our hearts and purify our intentions and desires.

Spontaneous prayers can be added... Our Father.

Concluding prayer: Our God and Father, Lord of heaven and earth, your Son, Jesus, filled with joy in the Holy Spirit, thanked you because you had revealed to the simple hearted your clear and luminous truth; it was not tarnished by the duplicity and distrust instilled in the human heart by the Tempter. Every evening, the joyful song of Mary, your humble handmaid, reminds your Church of this truth in prayer. Create in us, Father, missionaries of your Gospel, a heart as clean as hers, so that we may see you, make your true face known among men and women, and be able to sing at the end of each day, with joy, that same hymn in your honour. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Blessing.

Final hymn: A version of The Magnificat, or a verse of it or a hymn to the Heart of Mary.



1. Introduction

Opening monition: It is not he who destroys who is mightier, but he who is able to create and heal. God is the Almighty: in his hand is power and might, he makes great and comforts all; there he shows the greatness of his power. He brings the world out of the darkness of nothingness; he brings Israel out of the darkness of slavery; he brings Jesus out of the darkness of the grave; he brings the heart of stone out of the depths and implants a heart of flesh; he shows his omnipotence over all by forgiving. He realized these great works by his Spirit, who made Mary's virginal womb fruitful.

Hymn.

Liturgical greeting.

Prayer: Our God and Lord, we confess you almighty Father, for you are the creator of heaven and earth, of the visible and the invisible. We confess your universal lordship. The evening breeze and the rushing wind, the flutter of the butterfly and the whirl of the tornado speak to us of your care and your strength. Renew our lives. Through Our Lord Jesus Christ.

2. We listen to the Word of God

Luke 1:26-28, 30-31, 34-35

In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth. He was sent to a young virgin who was betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the family of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. The angel came to her and said, "Rejoice, full of grace, the Lord is with you. Do not fear, Mary, for God has looked kindly on you. Then Mary said to the angel, "How can this be if I am a virgin?" And the angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore, the holy child to be born shall be called Son of God. Even your relative Elizabeth is expecting a son in her old age, although she was unable to have a child, and she is now in her sixth month. *With God nothing is impossible.*"

Meditative silence.

3. We meditate with Mary and about Mary

Our God is not like the idle divinities of some religions. And he is not impotent, like the idols, who, far from being doers, are our artifacts; those stones or wood have hands and do not touch, their throat has no voice, and they cannot utter a creative word. On the other hand, the eternal God, the creator of the ends of the earth, is powerful, he does not tire or grow weary. He accomplishes great works: he creates, he reconciles and renews from within with forgiveness, he fulfils through the Spirit his plan for history and recapitulates everything in Christ. Whatever he wills, he does, in heaven and on earth. Nothing is impossible for him.

The mighty Roman praetors did not care for trifles, but God's style is different. He reaches down and reaches out to his humblest creatures: he cares for the lilies of the field, the sparrows, the ants, the ravens themselves; he makes the majestic cypress grow and clothes the feeble blade of grass; the sea is his and the village spring is his, the Temple is his and the simple house in which Mary lives is his. We ask him to keep us as the apple of his eye.

María sings: "He has done great things for me." He has given her life, granted her to belong to the people of the covenant, looked upon her with love, showered her with his favour, made her younger than sin, blessed her among women, and sent his creative spirit to make her virginal and fruitful and give birth to the Messiah, called her to cooperate in the work of salvation, accompanied her in her trials and sorrows, extended her motherhood to the brothers and sisters of her Son, raised her to glory with him.



Complimentary text 1. Claret writes about Mary: “Not only does she exceed in goodness everything created, but she also exceeds everything that can be found among the pure creatures; so that, in creating Mary, God made the greatest effort of his divine omnipotence, says the venerable Señeri. God could well have created, and could now, if he wished, create a richer and more star-studded heaven, he could create a wider and broader ocean, an earth more beautiful and more magnificent with plants and flowers, richer and fuller of fruit, metals, and precious stones, but not a more excellent mother than Mary.” (St Anthony Mary Claret, *Escritos marianos*. Prepared by Jesús Bermejo [Publicaciones Claretianas, Madrid, 1989] 109)

Complimentary text 2. Fr. Claret writes: “In the expression that we say: Give us this day our daily bread, we ask not only bread for the body but also bread for the soul, which is the principal thing; since, as for the body, He who takes care of the birds of the air and the flowers of the meadows, will also take care of us; so that, as for this, we should neither hurry nor be anxious, because, if we seek first the kingdom of God and his justice, all the rest will be given to us as an addition.” (St Anthony Mary Claret, *Escritos marianos*, 231-232)

4. We pray together

We glorify our God for all his works. We respond:

We bless you and we give you thanks, O Lord.

- For all creatures, even the smallest, bear an imprint of your greatness,
- For you care for the earth, you water it and enrich it beyond measure,
- For you have made us in your image according to your likeness,
- For you have entrusted us with the dominion and care of your creation,
- For you magnify and comfort all,
- For in your Son you have shown yourself infinitely near,
- For you manifest your power over all in forgiveness and mercy,
- For you predestined Mary to be the mother of your Son,
- Because you did great works for your humble handmaid,
- For you chose her to be holy and blameless before you in love,
- For you gave her a new and faithful heart,
- For you guided her on her pilgrimage of faith,
- For you gave her a sensitive eye for those who have no wine,
- For you have associated her with the Passover of your Son,
- For you have entrusted us to her motherly care,
- For you propose her to us as a teacher of hospitality.

Spontaneous prayers can be added... Our Father.

Concluding prayer: Our God and Father, Lord of heaven and earth, your Son, Jesus, filled with joy in the Holy Spirit, thanked you because you had revealed to the simple hearted your clear and luminous truth; it was not tarnished by the duplicity and distrust instilled in the human heart by the Tempter. Every evening, the joyful song of Mary, your humble handmaid, reminds your Church of this truth in prayer. Create in us, Father, missionaries of your Gospel, a heart as clean as hers, so that we may see you, make your true face known among men and women, and be able to sing at the end of each day, with joy, that same hymn in your honour. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Blessing.

Final hymn: A version of The Magnificat, or a verse of it or a hymn to the Heart of Mary.



1. Introduction

Opening monition: God is the only holy one, the Holy One by essence. His holiness qualifies everything that belongs to his being or is connected with it: his holy arm, his holy name, his holy dwelling place, his holy law, the holy Scriptures, the holy angels, his holy people... The Church confesses the infinite holiness of God who, through Jesus Christ and in the power of the Holy Spirit, gives life and sanctifies everything. And contemplates Mary as the all-holy one, by the most wonderful work of the Most Holy Trinity.

Hymn.

Liturgical greeting.

Prayer: Lord our God, we bless you because you gave Mary the grace to understand the mystery of your holiness: she confessed that your ineffable name is holy and to be venerated in profound silence and respect, and in the same confessing impulse she proclaimed your mercy, which reaches out to your faithful and is offered freely to those who have turned away from you. Grant us this same grace to understand and venerate the mystery of your holiness and to acclaim your mercy. Through Our Lord Jesus Christ.

2. We listen to the Word of God

Isaiah 6:1-3, 5-7

In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted; the train of his robe filled the Temple. Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: two to cover the face, two to cover the feet, and two to fly with. They were calling to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is Yahweh Sabaoth. All the earth is filled with his Glory!" I said, "Poor me! I am doomed! For I am a man of unclean lips living among a people of unclean lips, and yet I have seen the King, Yahweh Sabaoth." Then one of the seraphs flew to me; in his hands was a live coal which he had taken with tongs from the altar. He touched my mouth with it and said, "See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin is forgiven."

Meditative silence.

3. We meditate with Mary and about Mary

“His name is holy.” This name of God is like a double of his own reality. Before the divine holiness we must keep our distance, bow down and prostrate ourselves (cf. Ex 3:5); because of his infinite holiness, God deserves our adoration. And before Jesus, “the Holy One of God” (Mk 1:24), the unclean spirits tremble and Simon Peter exclaims in awe: “Depart from me, O Lord, for I am a sinner” (Lk 5:8). But the holiness of God is at the same time a holiness that draws near, welcomes, purifies, and renews. We do not sanctify his name when, reflecting on ourselves, we think that God has manufactured rubbish or that he does not care for these poor wretches who are a hopeless case. We are not: “Every penance of man is the crowning of a hope of God” (Péguy). Let us not cease to believe that his Son came down from heaven for us men and for our salvation, so that we may have life in abundance.

Mary teaches us to sanctify the name of God with that trust which is abandonment and diligence, and which overcomes, therefore, weariness and apathy; with the joyful and resolute obedience of the “let it be done,” whether the solemn one of the Annunciation or the humble ones which precede it or the grave ones which follow it; with the fulfilment of the rites prescribed by the holy Law of God; with the painstaking search for three interminable days; with the renunciation of being a mother jealously folded over her Son (MC 37); with the belonging to a Church of forgiven sinners; with the final Amen.



Complimentary text 1. “The Holy Spirit [...], choosing Mary to be His Bride, that is, the Bride of a divine Person who, by antonomasia, is called Saint, was to lavish on her all the charisms of holiness proper to make her the holiest of all creatures, the most worthy of them all to be his Bride, and he lavished them on her by sharing with her all that he could give and she could receive. Thus, Mary was endowed with a holiness the most eminent of all created things, a superhuman holiness, a super-angelical holiness, a divine holiness by participation, a holiness, in short, which makes her the worthy Bride of so holy a Spouse. [...] The three Persons of the Most Holy Trinity all concurred to form in Mary the most complete and most similar image of themselves, to make her for the world like a visible photograph of the invisible Trinity.” (St Anthony Mary Claret, *Escritos marianos*, 344-345).

Complimentary text 2. “‘God’ is the most attacked of all human words. [...] The human race has unloaded on this word the weight of its anguish and trampled it underfoot; it lies in the dust and bears the weight of all. Men have torn this word with their religious divisions; they have killed for it and died for it; it bears the mark of everyone’s fingers and everyone’s blood [...]. They paint grotesque figures and under them they write ‘God’; they kill each other and say they do it ‘in the name of God.’ But when the mirage and the lie disappear, when they come face to face with him in the loneliest darkness and no longer say ‘he, he,’ but sigh ‘You, You,’ cry ‘You,’ all the same, and if they then add ‘God,’ is it not the real God they invoke, the Living One, the God of the sons of men? Is it not he who hears them? is it not he who listens to them? And is it not precisely in this way that the word ‘God,’ the word of invocation, the word that has become a name, is blessed for ever in all human languages?” (Martin Buber, *Gottesfinsternis*, 1962, p. 509).

4. We pray together

Let us praise our God, who showered every blessing on Mary, and whose name she sanctified, and let us say to him:

We bless you and we thank you, O Lord.

- Because Mary never took your name in vain,
- Because her face most resembles Christ,
- Because you gave her the gifts of the Holy Spirit,
- Because she knew the joy of believing and obeying,
- Because he loved your will and accepted your plan,
- Because she served you in holiness and righteousness all her days,

- Because she was a hearer of the word, in high faithfulness,
- Because she was a woman who kept, in her heart the memory
- Because she searched for the meaning and reason for the manifestations of Jesus,
- Because you propose her to us as a model of dedication to you.

Spontaneous prayers can be added... Our Father.

Concluding prayer: Our God and Father, Lord of heaven and earth, your Son, Jesus, filled with joy in the Holy Spirit, thanked you because you had revealed to the simple hearted your clear and luminous truth; it was not tarnished by the duplicity and distrust instilled in the human heart by the Tempter. Every evening, the joyful song of Mary, your humble handmaid, reminds your Church of this truth in prayer. Create in us, Father, missionaries of your Gospel, a heart as clean as hers, so that we may see you, make your true face known among men and women, and be able to sing at the end of each day, with joy, that same hymn in your honour. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Blessing.

Final hymn: A version of The Magnificat, or a verse of it or a hymn to the Heart of Mary.



1. Introduction

Opening monition: God's mercy is mentioned twice in the Magnificat. Mary has experienced it and contemplates it as a mighty river flowing through space and time. It is a theme that runs through the whole of Luke's Gospel, where Jesus urges us: "Be merciful, as your heavenly Father is merciful." We acclaim Mary *as queen and mother of mercy*, and we ask her: "Turn to us your eyes of mercy."

Hymn.

Liturgical greeting.

Prayer: Our God and Lord, we confess you "Father of mercies." Your heart is moved at the sight of your children. You attract with bonds of love those who have turned away from you and you welcome us with joy and celebrate a feast when we return home. You do not want a single one of the little ones whose angels gaze upon your face to be lost. Nothing and no one can separate us from your love, manifested in Christ Jesus our Lord, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit and is God for ever and ever.

2. We listen to the Word of God

Psalm 36:6-11

Your love, O God, reaches the heavens; your faithfulness, to the clouds. Your justice is like the mighty mountains; your judgment is like the unfathomable deep. You preserve, O Lord, humans and beasts. How precious, O God, is your constant love! Mortals take refuge in the shadow of your wings. In your house they find rich food and they drink from your spring of delight. For with you is the fountain of life, in your light we see light. Bestow on your faithful your love and give salvation to the upright of heart.

Meditative silence.

3. We meditate with Mary and about Mary

In view of the misfortune that has befallen the people, the psalmist asks himself in anguish: “Has the Lord rejected us for ever and will not favour us again? Has his mercy run out, has his promise come to an end for ever?” (Ps 77: 8-9) In such a situation, he needs to draw on his memories and hold on to them tightly. The memory of the exodus, which has become an anchor of hope, could not be missing. We cannot forget the appearance of the Saviour’s humanity. St Bernard said of it: “It is as if God had emptied on earth a sack full of his mercy; a sack that was to be emptied in the Passion, so that our price, hidden in it, might be poured out; a small sack, but full. For we have been given a child, but in him dwells all the fullness of divinity.” Such mercy does not demean or humiliate; on the contrary, it dignifies us.

Mary knows at first hand, in her mind and in her heart, the mercy of God. She knows that it is not a tiny drop of dew that evaporates; it is a flooding tide that “reaches its faithful from generation to generation.” From this, flows the full joy of the mother of the Lord, untouched by any trace of sadness. She is and feels poor, but not sad: God gives her more joy than if she abounded in wheat, wine, luxurious mansions, rich furnishings, and an immense multitude of followers. And she can burst out in praise: “He has done wonders of mercy for me” (Ps 31:22). Her motherly heart understands mercy and knows how to show it.



Complimentary text 1. Claret writes about Mary: “She, as St. Bernard says, makes herself all things to all; she opens the bosom of her great mercy, so that all may share in the fullness of her graces; through Mary the captive obtains freedom, the sick health, the sad consolation, the sinner the forgiveness of their sins, the just the increase of grace, and the angel joy.” (St Anthony Mary Claret, *Escritos marianos*, 122-123)

Complimentary text 2. “A saint, whose name I do not remember, had a vision, during which he saw Satan standing before the throne of God. And having lent an ear, he heard the evil spirit saying:

‘Why then have you condemned me who have offended you but once, while you save thousands of people who have offended you so many times?’

God answered him:

‘You have asked my forgiveness only once?’” (Joseph de Maistre).

4. We pray together

In union with the Heart of Mary we present to the Father praise and blessings. We respond:

Because your mercy is without end.

- To you, who makes the sun rise on the good and the bad and sends rain on the just and the unjust, we praise you:
- To you, who gives seed to the sower and bread to the eater, we praise you:
- To you, in whom we live and move and have our being, we praise you:
- To you, who will that all people be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth, we praise you:
- To you, who have sown seeds of the Word among peoples and cultures, we praise you:
- To you, who are not far from those who sincerely seek you, we praise you:
- To you, who have revealed yourself slow to anger and rich in mercy to your people, we praise you:
- To you, who sent your Son, born of the womb of Mary, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life, we praise you:
- To you, who reconciled us to yourself through the blood of the Lamb without blemish, we praise you:

- To you, who have forgiven us our trespasses, we praise you:
- To you, who have given us Mary as queen and mother of mercy, we praise you:
- To you, who impel us by the Spirit to proclaim the gospel of joy to the poor, we praise you.

Spontaneous prayers can be added... Our Father.

Concluding prayer: Our God and Father, Lord of heaven and earth, your Son, Jesus, filled with joy in the Holy Spirit, thanked you because you had revealed to the simple hearted your clear and luminous truth; it was not tarnished by the duplicity and distrust instilled in the human heart by the Tempter. Every evening, the joyful song of Mary, your humble handmaid, reminds your Church of this truth in prayer. Create in us, Father, missionaries of your Gospel, a heart as clean as hers, so that we may see you, make your true face known among men and women, and be able to sing at the end of each day, with joy, that same hymn in your honour. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Blessing.

Final hymn: A version of The Magnificat, or a verse of it or a hymn to the Heart of Mary.



1. Introduction

Opening monition: Mary is not an alien suddenly dropped into this world. She is our sister in humanity and knows that she is part of the history of a people. She is connected to that people and its series of generations. She is an Israelite on all four sides: she participates in the faith and beliefs of Israel, in its rites, in its dramas, in its hopes and expectations, in its prayers.

Hymn.

Liturgical greeting.

Prayer: God of the fathers and Lord of mercy, you are the Eternal One. Yours is the time and yours are the times: the time of the beginning when you created heaven and earth, the time of the dawn of human history, the time of the new beginning you established with Abraham, the time of fullness when you sent your Son, and yours also in this year of our grace. You are the one who opens up unprecedented opportunities in the march of peoples and in the lives of individuals, the one who will make all things new.

2. We listen to the Word of God

Exodus 3:13-18

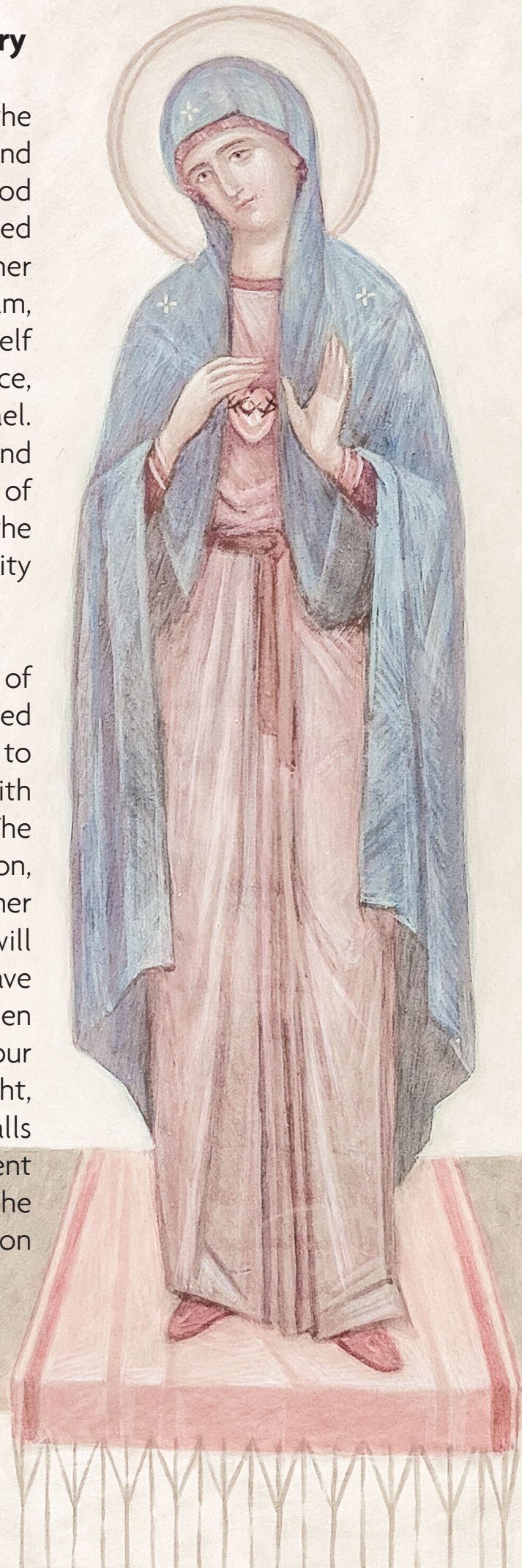
Moses answered God, "If I go to the Israelites and say to them: 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' they will ask me: 'What is his name?' What shall I answer them?" God said to Moses, "I am who am. This is what you will say to the sons of Israel: 'I am sent me to you.'" God then said to Moses, "You will say to the Israelites: 'Yahweh, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob, has sent me.' That will be my name forever, and by this name they shall call upon me for all generations to come. Go! Call together the elders of Israel and say to them, 'Yahweh, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob appeared to me and said: I have seen and taken account of how the Egyptians have treated you, and I mean to bring you out of all this oppression in Egypt and take you to the land of the Canaanites, a land flowing with milk and honey.

Meditative silence.

3. We meditate with Mary and about Mary

Unlike the Manichaeans, we do not contrast the God of the Old Testament, as an evil God, and the God of the New Testament, as the good God. To be sure, the image of God was refined in the course of Israel's history; but the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God who revealed himself to Moses, with whom he spoke face to face, and the God of the prophets and sages of Israel. It is not a matter of clinging to the known and rejecting the new, but neither is it a matter of erasing, scandalised, the old and clinging to the new; it is a matter of perceiving the continuity within the newness itself.

María knows herself to be a descendant of Abraham's lineage. But she is not descended only according to the flesh; she belongs to Abraham's lineage according to faith. This faith knows that nothing is impossible for God. The angel reminds her of this at the Annunciation, perhaps so that she will carve this word into her heart and make it the motto of her life. She will not lack sorrow or hardship, and she will have to walk through the street of bitterness. When the darkness and the icy wind of the sixth hour come, the torch of his faith will be kept alight, nourished by a word that does not fail. She calls us, the children of her Heart, in this present hour of a certain eclipse of God, to keep the faith alive and to pass it on without hesitation or delay.



Complimentary text 1. Father Claret writes: “Among the chosen people, the only one among all those who faithfully preserved the venerable traditions of the consoling truth that was to regenerate the world, the Patriarchs yearned unceasingly for the fulfilment of the divine promises; the Prophets, inspired by God, encouraged the just, announcing the coming of the divine Comforter in a greater or lesser time, and rebuked the vices of sinners, urging them to prepare themselves to receive the Holy of Holies. The day came at last, the longed-for hour sounded, the hour which the Most High had fixed in his high and adorable purposes to release the first precursor and sure guarantor of the fidelity of his promises. From the lineage of the Patriarchs and Prophets a child was born in Nazareth, conceived without stain of sin, full of grace and resplendent with holiness. This is the Virgin foretold by Isaiah, the Virgin who, betrothed at a very young age to the virgin Saint Joseph, and without any detriment to her ineffable virginity, was to give the world its liberator.” (St. Anthony Mary Claret, *Escritos marianos*, 352)

Complimentary text 2. “An adult catechumen had great difficulty in identifying the story of Abraham who responded to God’s call. He did not see why his preparation for baptism had to go through the study of that ancient story with which he did not perceive any personal connection. One day, enlightenment came. He exclaimed, “I am Abraham!” The story had worked for him: he had entered the story, he had identified with the character. Abraham’s vocation had become the parable of his own call to faith.” (Bernard Sesboué, *De la narrativité en théologie: Gregorianum*, 75 [1994] 425)

4. We pray together

In union with the Heart of Mary, we give thanks to the Father. We respond:

Father, we thank you.

- For Abraham, your friend, for Isaac, your servant, for Israel, your consecrated one,
- For Moses, shepherd of your people, and for the holy vine of David, your servant,
- For the prophets and prophetesses, true witnesses of your ancient covenant,
- For the mothers of Israel,
- For the holy remnant, who remained faithful to you,
- For the first disciples of Jesus, your Son,
- For the apostles, witnesses of Christ’s Passover,

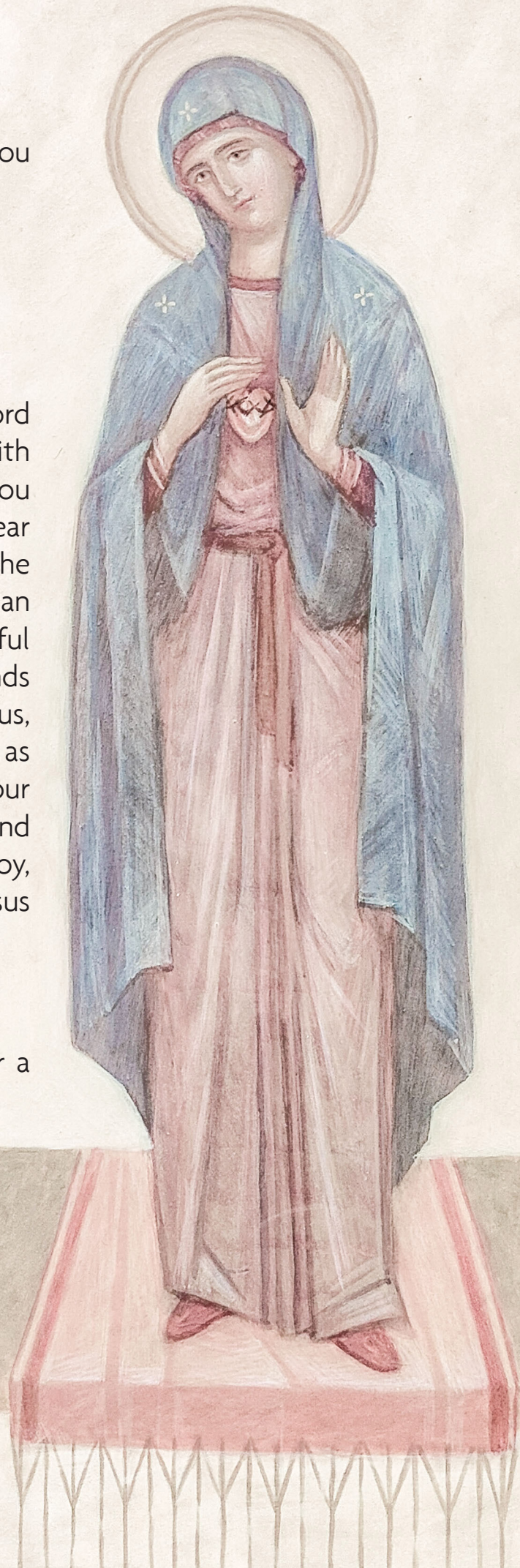
- For your holy Church, established on the foundation of the apostles and prophets,
- For all the saints, who have believed in you and have sought you and loved you above all things.

Spontaneous prayers can be added...
Our Father.

Concluding prayer: Our God and Father, Lord of heaven and earth, your Son, Jesus, filled with joy in the Holy Spirit, thanked you because you had revealed to the simple hearted your clear and luminous truth; it was not tarnished by the duplicity and distrust instilled in the human heart by the Tempter. Every evening, the joyful song of Mary, your humble handmaid, reminds your Church of this truth in prayer. Create in us, Father, missionaries of your Gospel, a heart as clean as hers, so that we may see you, make your true face known among men and women, and be able to sing at the end of each day, with joy, that same hymn in your honour. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Blessing.

Final hymn: A version of The Magnificat, or a verse of it or a hymn to the Heart of Mary.



1. Introduction

Opening monition: Mary sings to God, who helps his servant Israel, remembering his mercy. Already earlier, with his own name, Zechariah (“God remembers”) had confessed that God faithfully keeps his holy covenant, and therefore the son of his old age must bear the name John, which is a confession of grace (“God has been gracious”). The whole event of Christ, from the conception in Mary’s womb to his Passover, is the work of the good remembrance of the merciful and faithful God.

Hymn.

Liturgical greeting.

Prayer: Our Lord and Father, everything is present before you, everything is “contemporary” to your eternal now. You engrave our name in the palm of your hand and you gather our tears in your wineskin. You count the number of the stars and the steps of your friends. Your heart is the keeper of remembrance, for our lives are precious to you. You only let our infidelities fall into oblivion. See if our path deviates, guide us on the everlasting way. Through Our Lord Jesus Christ.

2. We listen to the Word of God

Isaiah 49:13-16

Sing, O heavens, and rejoice, O earth; break forth into song, O mountains: for Yahweh has comforted his people and taken pity on those who are afflicted. But Zion said: “Yahweh has forsaken me, my Lord has forgotten me.” Can a woman forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child of her womb? Yet though she forget, I will never forget you. See, I have written your name upon the palm of my hands; your walls are ever before me.

Meditative silence.

3. We meditate with Mary and about Mary

Scripture presents an alternation of divine remembrance and forgetfulness, both in the plea of the faithful or the people and in God's purposes. On the one hand we say to him: "How long, O Lord, will you forget me? How long will you hide your face from me?" (Ps 13:2); and again: "Remember me in mercy, because of your goodness, O Lord" (Ps 25:7b). He in turn responds: "Though a mother forgets her child, I will not forget you" (Is 49:15). On the other hand, we ask him: "Remember not the sins and iniquities of my youth" (Ps 25:7a); and he declares: "I cancel your crimes and forget your sins" (Is 43:25; cf. Jer 31:34; Heb 8:12; 10:17). And as death leads to the land of oblivion, we ask the living God not to leave us abandoned in that desert of forgetfulness.

God has remembered Mary. He has not left her in the land of oblivion and shadows. He has remembered his own divine mercy and he has remembered the love and faithfulness of his servant. He has raised her from the dead by the power of the Spirit and associated her with the glory of his Son. The monument he has erected to remember her is not a statue or a tombstone, but the body in which she lived that story of accepting his grace, underwent trials, trembled and leapt for joy, felt anguish, cradled and held the Child in her arms and - as Christian memory suggests - had the Crucified One on her knees.



Complimentary text 1. A certain missionary was visiting one of the communities entrusted to his pastoral care. In his dialogue with those present at the meeting, he asked a question: “Peter, what do you think God is like? Peter gave his answer. - And you, Jeanne, how do you represent God? Joan gave her answer. - “And you..., you..., you, madam, who is God for you?” The lady answered: “For me, God is someone who has always known my name.”

Complimentary text 2. We can invoke Mary with this traditional prayer in which we ask her to remember us: “Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary, that never was it known that anyone who fled to your protection, implored your help or sought your intercession, was left unaided. Inspired by this confidence, I fly unto you, O Virgin of virgins, my mother. To you I come, before you I stand, sinful and sorrowful. O Mother of the Word incarnate, despise not my petitions, but, in your mercy, hear and answer me. Amen.”

4. We pray together

Our Lord and Father, we recall Mary, who kept in her heart all those things she witnessed. We repeat:

Look upon the mother of your Son and listen to us.

- We ask you to grant us the grace to remember Jesus Christ, your Son, risen from the dead, who showed his pierced heart to the Apostle Thomas,
- We ask for the grace to celebrate in faith and in communion the memorial of his cross and resurrection,
- We ask for the grace to remember the memorable works which you have accomplished in history,
- We ask you for the grace to keep the first commandment vividly engraved in our hearts,
- We ask for the grace to live the second commandment, the other part of your holy Law,
- We ask for the grace to remember with gratitude your history of salvation in our congregational and personal life,
- We ask for the grace to be ever mindful of your mercy by the forgiveness you grant us again and again,
- We ask for the grace not to forget the people who have helped us to grow and to believe,

- And we entrust to your care and remembrance the people who are victims of our forgetfulness or neglect and our brothers and sisters who slept in the hope of resurrection and sleep the slumber of peace.

Spontaneous prayers can be added... Our Father.

Concluding prayer: Our God and Father, Lord of heaven and earth, your Son, Jesus, filled with joy in the Holy Spirit, thanked you because you had revealed to the simple hearted your clear and luminous truth; it was not tarnished by the duplicity and distrust instilled in the human heart by the Tempter. Every evening, the joyful song of Mary, your humble handmaid, reminds your Church of this truth in prayer. Create in us, Father, missionaries of your Gospel, a heart as clean as hers, so that we may see you, make your true face known among men and women, and be able to sing at the end of each day, with joy, that same hymn in your honour. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Blessing.

Final hymn: A version of The Magnificat, or a verse of it or a hymn to the Heart of Mary.



A God faithful to his promises

1. Introduction

Opening monition: Every reality carries within it a promise: air provides oxygen, water quenches thirst, soil gives a firm foundation for walking, wine gladdens the heart.... Each of these gifts is based on the power and care of the Creator, who is the reality of realities. In the history of salvation, he has extended his promises: he gives himself to us as the Life of our life and the goal of our pilgrimage. In Mary he has anticipated the promises made to his Church, to all his children.

Hymn.

Liturgical greeting.

Prayer: Lord and Father, you have pronounced in Christ an irrevocable yes in our favour. This decision without return frees us from uncertainty and anxiety. You do not know how to turn away, you are eternally faithful to your promises and cannot deny yourself. May your faithfulness awaken our boundless gratitude and strengthen in us a faithfulness that will stand the test of time. Through Our Lord Jesus Christ.

2. We listen to the Word of God

Deuteronomy 7:6-9, 12

You are a people consecrated to Yahweh, your God. Yahweh has chosen you from among all the peoples on the face of the earth, that you may be his own people. Yahweh has bound himself to you and has chosen you, not because you are the most numerous among all the peoples (on the contrary, you are the least). Rather, he has chosen you because of his love for you and to fulfil the oath he made to your fathers. Therefore, with a firm hand Yahweh brought you out from slavery in Egypt, from the power of Pharaoh. So, know that Yahweh, your God, is the true and faithful God. He keeps his covenant, and his love reaches to the thousandth generation for those who love him and fulfil his commandments. If you observe these norms, if you keep and practice them, Yahweh will be faithful to his Covenant and will show you the love he promised to your fathers.

Meditative silence.

3. We meditate with Mary and about Mary

God is Eternal and is the Lord of history. He is not subject to fate, like the gods of Greek religion. No fate or necessity rules over him. He governs everything: the universe with its innumerable galaxies, nature and its processes, history with its upheavals and the possibilities that germinate in it, human generations. He marks the times and moments of the astronomical clock and of our historical calendar. It is in his sovereign decision to shorten the time, for the sake of the chosen ones, or to extend the time, so that we may be converted to him and become the people who bear fruit in his seasoning. When the fullness of time has come, he has sent his Son, born of a woman. He will complete his work, according to his promise written in the resurrection of Jesus; leaning on it, we can say to him: "In you, O Lord, I have hoped, I shall never be disappointed."

Mary gives credence to the announcement-promise that she will conceive and bear a son, at the time and in the manner chosen by God. Her faith rests on the faithfulness of the One who is the firm Rock. She knows that the passage of time does not erode the promise. To her came the different moments of that fullness of time: that of conceiving (in the sixth month after the announcement to Zechariah), that of bringing him into the world (in the reign of Augustus), that of presenting the Child in the Temple (forty days after giving birth to him), that of going up with him to Jerusalem for the Passover (twelve years later). They are milestones of a time that arrives, that grows, that overflows, that fulfils, that is.



Complimentary text 1. God's faithfulness is the basis and foundation of our own faithfulness. Claret sees it exemplified in the figure of the dog: "The dog is so faithful an animal and so constant a companion to his master that neither misery, poverty, hardship, nor anything else can separate them. I should be the same: so faithful and constant in serving and loving God that I might say with the Apostle that neither death nor life nor anything else can ever separate me from Him. The dog is more loyal than a son, more obedient than a servant, and more docile than a child. Not only does he willingly do what his master orders, but he scans his master's face to tell from his looks what he wants, so that he can do it without being told to, with the greatest alacrity and joy. He even shares his master's affections, becoming a friend of his friends and an enemy of his enemies. I should practice all these beautiful traits in serving God, my beloved Master. Yes, I shall gladly do what he commands me, and I shall study to know and do his will without waiting for a command. I shall promptly and gladly do all that he disposes through his representatives, my superiors. I shall be a friend of the friends of God, and I shall treat his enemies as he tells me, barking out against their wickedness to make them leave it..." (St. Anthony Mary Claret, *Autobiografía*, nn. 670-671)

Complimentary text 2. An atheist fell off a cliff. He was able to grab hold of a branch of a small tree, 300 metres from the rocks at the bottom. He had an idea: "God!" he shouted at the top of his voice. There was silence. "God! If you exist, save me, and I will believe in you!" More silence. But, suddenly, a powerful Voice sounds, "That's what they all say when they are in trouble." "No, God, no!" he cried out, a little more hopeful. "I am not like the others! I have already begun to believe, having heard your Voice. Save me, and I will proclaim your name to the ends of the earth!" "All right," said the Voice, "I will save you. Let go of that branch." "Let go of the branch?" groaned the poor man. "What! Do you think I'm mad?" (A. de Mello, *The Song of the Frog* [abbreviated]). To believe or to not believe in the promise: that is the question.

4. We pray together

We thank the Lord for the origins and history of our Congregation and pray for it and for each one of us. We respond:

Through the intercession of Mary, hear our prayer.

- Grant us, Father, to match the progress of our congregational life with the progress of the universal Church and with that of the particular Churches,

- Teach us to measure our years, that we may acquire a wise heart,
- Grant us to live faithfully the gift and the call of each stage of our life, like Mary,
- Do not allow us to become enclosed in the sterile nostalgia of the “good old days”, but teach us to love the present time,
- Grant that we may accept with gratitude and responsibility the precious and vulnerable gift of each day,
- Give us a watchful heart that discerns the coming of Christ and the signs of his manifestation within the context of our lives,
- Make us aware of your patient waiting, which gives us time to bear the fruits of conversion,
- Send your Spirit to make us grow to maturity in Christ.

Spontaneous prayers can be added... Our Father.

Concluding prayer: Our God and Father, Lord of heaven and earth, your Son, Jesus, filled with joy in the Holy Spirit, thanked you because you had revealed to the simple hearted your clear and luminous truth; it was not tarnished by the duplicity and distrust instilled in the human heart by the Tempter. Every evening, the joyful song of Mary, your humble handmaid, reminds your Church of this truth in prayer. Create in us, Father, missionaries of your Gospel, a heart as clean as hers, so that we may see you, make your true face known among men and women, and be able to sing at the end of each day, with joy, that same hymn in your honour. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Blessing.

Final hymn: A version of The Magnificat, or a verse of it or a hymn to the Heart of Mary.



Detail of the Immaculate Heart of Mary
on the icon of the Claretian Martyrs.



MISSIONARII **CLARETIANI**
IMMACULATI CORDIS MARIÆ FILII

GENERAL PREFECTURE OF SPIRITUALITY
AND COMMUNITY LIFE

