

NOVENA TO OUR LADY OF MERCY

19 – 27 APRIL 2024



In preparation for the blessing and opening of the *Mother of Mercy Shrine* (27 April 2024), we pray the *Novena to Our Lady of Mercy* – 19-27 April 2024. Each day has its theme and particular focus. In addition to that, please feel free to add your particular intention for the Novena.

How to pray the Novena:

- Make the Sign of the Cross.
- Reflect briefly on the day's theme.
- Reflect on the given reflection, and reflection question.
- Pray the Novena Prayer.
- Pray the Prayer to St Medard, patron Saint against bad weather.
- Make the Sign of the Cross.

MOTHER
OF MERCY
MARIAN SHRINE / PASTORAL CENTRE
MAGALIESBURG - CATHOLIC ARCHDIOCESE OF JHB

Day 1 - The Daughter



Before you became an icon in all senses of that word, you were an unremarked girl of Galilee. Before ever you were imagined by the Renaissance painters in the blue regal cloak of honour - because the blue of the ground lapis lazuli was one of the most precious pigments - you were part of a peasant family in a small village. The Christian tradition names your parents as Joachim and Anna. The Muslim tradition honours you and your ancestors. A strong part of that tradition is that you learnt the Hebrew Scriptures at your mother's hand. You were a daughter of a treasured tradition. The Word of God was always in your heart. What you learnt as a child, the simple and the profound, you would pass on to your own child. You were the cusp- the fulcrum- poised between two traditions.

And I reflect on this question today: What are the traditions I treasure from the past; what traditions am I shaping for the future?

Novena Prayer

For this Mercy day, I will rest in the Word; I rise with the images of Mercy in my heart. I aspire to live and give, receive and encounter Mercy, this day and every day, inspired by Mary who mothered Mercy, and with the help of her Son, Jesus the Christ of Mercy. Amen.

Day 2 - The Receiver



When God's consciousness met your consciousness the world changed. What frequency were you tuned to in order to receive the Gabriel message? The Word in your heart enabled the Word to flourish in your uterus. When the Spirit of God sends a messenger, life can never be the same. You honoured your capacity as a creature of God by listening and receiving, trusting and surrendering to the paradox you were given. Love and trust were greater than anxiety and natural fear. You believed, against the odds, in a God of *Hesed*, not of harm, a God of mercy, not menace: God who gave life, for life.

And I reflect on this question today: To what extent am I tuned to life; and what works against that life?

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Day 3 - The Visitor



The journey you made to Elizabeth was heartfelt and generous. The encounter between you was of mutual empathy, of shared need, of recognition of gifts held and nurtured. Despite the difficulties you were both facing- you socially embarrassed, Elizabeth's husband struck dumb-the two little lives within leapt for joy. Your cousin reached for poetry to praise your grace. And you, echoing the Psalms and the Prophets, sang - aware of your own mysterious state, aware of the child. You became the first preacher, in your Magnificat, of your child's "upside down kingdom" the reversal of the predictable ways of the world. This was a meeting of, and a song of, Rahamim, the womb-mercy of God.

I reflect today on relationships of Mercy that have been, and continue to be, significant for me.

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Day 4 - The Mother



The Greeks have a wonderful word for you as mother – *Theotokos* - God-Bearer. Whatever the social ignominy of his origin and arrival, whatever the strange company that welcomed him, whatever the lack of homely comforts, surely your intimate mother's joy was all that mattered when you first gazed at him. No-one else but you shares DNA with Jesus. Did he have your look, your disposition, your eyes and your kindness? It would seem so. Your placenta fed him and led him to being human- the normal nutrients of gestation channelled through your blood to his via the umbilical cord as he sheltered in your uterus.

And I reflect today on this question: In what ways am I and am I not a God-bearer; and who bears God to me?

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Amen.

Day 5 - The Protector



You knew the fierceness of a mother's protective love. You and Joseph respond to danger, safeguarding the precious child, taking refuge far from home, fleeing to Egypt. You protect one another; sustain one another through the arduousness of the journey. You understand from your own depths the displaced and threatened, the exhausted and the vulnerable. You and your family are of their company.

And I reflect today: how do I seek to protect the vulnerable from danger, and what are the impediments I experience?

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Amen.

Day 6 - The Homemaker



There were plenty of ordinary days: cooking and cleaning, washing the sawdust from Joseph's clothes, showing Jesus how to comb his hair, tending to scratches and ailments,

teaching him the courtesies and considerations of life, reciting the Scriptures with him. You made a home for Joseph and Jesus in the ordinary days of peace. You were there too nudging your adult Son to exercise his gift at the Wedding Feast of Cana, not as a party trick but purely to help others. You were there for Pentecost and the Ascension and the law of averages suggests you were at the Last Supper, no doubt providing bread for the table. Why would he not use for the first Eucharist the bread your hands had made? You were there for the ordinary and the extraordinary. You were a nurturer and provider, unassuming yet utterly essential to the humanity of Jesus.

And I reflect today: Who do I nourish, heal and welcome; where am I nourished, healed and welcomed?

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Day 7 - The Sufferer



Stabat Mater means the standing mother. We see artworks of you standing by the cross, one in spirit with your dying son. We see artworks of you as the Pietà, seated- the twenty four year old Michelangelo made you look serene for Rome; nearly fifty years later the older man knew better when he made another Pietà in Florence, where you look tortured and worn. But essentially you are the standing woman, in every sense of that word: who stood by the cross, stood by your Son, stood by his friends, stood by his values and his beliefs. To take your stand took courage, immense energy and came at great cost. But you stood.

And today I ask: What do I stand for and with whom do I stand?

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Amen.

Day 8 - The Survivor



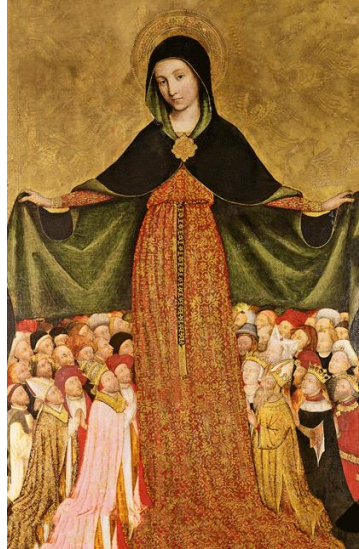
After the trauma and loss, after the hints of more to the story than the Cross, after the Pentecost ardour, you kept walking. Tradition has it you went with John the Beloved Disciple to live near Ephesus in Turkey. Maybe you did. Perhaps John's little anecdote about Peter being led where he would rather not go was partly about you too. Widowed, childless, ageing, you became dependent on the kindness of others. Wherever you were, you were a survivor and a bearer of hope, still harbouring in your heart the Word. You are the human being closest in the entire world to God, your boy, Jesus. And you kept walking for him.

Today I reflect: Where is my path of survival and hope leading me?

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Amen.

Day 9 - The Titled



Just as tradition insists on the extraordinary nature of your birth, so it elevates your death and eternal life to the extra human, beyond our understanding and beyond rationality. We accept the mystery because we accept your sanctity. Each culture possesses its own way to honour those it considers venerable, worthy, of exemplary life. We revere you, girl of Nazareth, for the life you let the Spirit give you. Your titles are many, each of them evocative and inspirational. Today we hold you as Mother, the one who uniquely gives form and life to the quality of God we call Mercy. You are the progenitor of Mercy. Our name is Mercy. Hold us to that.

And I reflect today: How does the Mother of Mercy, inspire me today and what is she encouraging me to be?

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Reflections by Sr Mary Wickham RSM (used with her permission)

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Calling on Saint Medard, Patron Saint against bad weather:

Saint Medard, sixth-century bishop, preacher, and missionary, is the patron saint for protection from bad storms. As a child, so the legend goes, he was once sheltered from the rain by an eagle hovering over him. As the hours pass and we get closer to the celebration of the Opening and Blessing of the Shrine of Our Lady, Mother of Mercy, let us call upon the intercession of Saint Medard to keep all pilgrims safe and that the Lord may provide us with good weather on the day of our celebration.

Prayer to Saint Medard:

Saint Medard, patron saint for protection against bad storms, we ask you to intercede for us during the storms of our lives as well as the storms in nature.

Protect our families and our homes.

We pray for assistance for the victims of snowstorms, hurricanes, tornadoes, earthquakes, and other natural disasters. Intercede especially for good weather on the day of our celebration on 27 April 2024. Loving Lord, You calmed the storm on the Sea of Galilee; deliver us from the storms that threaten to rage around us.

Saint Medard, pray for us.

Amen.

