



16 December 2017

CHRISTMAS NOVENA – First Day

Year B

Let Us Open Our Hearts to the Lord!

Once again our centuries-long tradition of preparing for Christmas through the Simbang Gabi brings us together in great throngs. On this first day of our Christmas Novena, we want to tell Jesus how much we need his presence and long for his coming.

The decorations around us, our singing and our smiles create a joyful atmosphere of expectation. But what matters most is the disposition of our hearts – our desire to welcome Jesus and make him the center of our life; the pledge to love him not only in words but also in deeds.

In this Eucharist, let us pray to the Lord for the grace of a persevering and fruitful attendance from the beginning to the end of this Novena. And may our hearts be ever more eager to welcome the Lord in our midst.



INTRODUCTORY RITES



Entrance Antiphon

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

Behold, the Lord will come descending with splendor to visit his people with peace, and he will bestow on them eternal life.

Greeting

P –May the Lord of peace, love and hope be with you all.
All–**And with your spirit!**

Penitential Act

P –As we begin these Novena Masses in preparation for Christmas, let us ask the Lord to purify our hearts and dispose them to accept Him in our lives. *(Pause)*

P –Lord Jesus, you are the reason for our hope, peace, and joy. Lord, have mercy!

All–**Lord, have mercy!**

P –Lord Jesus, you came to fulfill the promises of the prophets of old. Christ, have mercy!

All–**Christ, have mercy!**

P –Lord Jesus, you 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 –May your grace, almighty God, always go before us and follow after, so that we, who await with heartfelt desire the coming of your Only Begotten Son, may receive your help both now and in the life to come.

Through our Lord, Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever.

All–**Amen!**

LITURGY OF THE WORD



1st Reading *Is 56:1-3.6-8*

God has a plan of salvation which includes both the Jews and the pagans. But for this plan to become a reality, the basic condition to be fulfilled by all is to “observe what is right and do what is just.”

R –A proclamation from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah

Thus says the Lord: Observe what is right, do what is just; for my salvation is about to come, my justice, about to be revealed. Happy is the man who does this, the son of man who holds to it; who keeps the Sabbath free from profanation, and his hand from any evildoing.

Let not the foreigner say, when he would join himself to the Lord, “The Lord will surely exclude me from his people.”

The foreigners who join themselves to the Lord, ministering to him, loving the name of the Lord, and becoming his servants – all who keep the Sabbath free from profanation and hold to my covenant, them I will bring to my holy mountain and make joyful in my house of prayer; their holocausts and sacrifices will be acceptable on my altar, for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples.

Thus says the Lord God, who gathers the dispersed of Israel: Others will I gather to him besides those already gathered.

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

Responsorial Psalm Ps 67

R –“O God, let all the nations praise you!”

R. M. Velez

O God, let all the nations
praise you!

* May God have pity on us and bless us; may he let his face shine upon us. So may your way be known upon earth; among all nations, your salvation. **R.**

* May the nations be glad and exult because you rule the peoples in equity; the nations on the earth you guide. **R.**

* The earth has yielded its fruits; God, our God, has blessed us. May God bless us, and may all the ends of the earth fear him! **R.**

Gospel Acclamation

All–Alleluia! Alleluia!

Behold, the king will come, the Lord of earth: and he will set us free. Alleluia! Alleluia!

Gospel Jn 5:33-36

Jesus is the promised Messiah sent by the Father. Both John the Baptist and the miracles Jesus himself performs give witness to this.

P –The Lord be with you!

All–And with your spirit!

P –A proclamation from the holy Gospel according to John

All–Glory to you, O Lord!

Jesus said to the Jews: “You sent emissaries to John, and he testified to the truth. I do not accept testimony from a human being, but I say this so that you may be saved. He was a burning and shining lamp, and for a while you were content to rejoice in his light.

But I have testimony greater than John’s. The works that the Father gave me to accomplish, these works that I perform testify on my behalf that the Father has sent me.”

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

Homily

Prayer of the Faithful

P –As we begin this Christmas Novena, let us present our petitions to the Lord with hearts full of hope and trust, saying:

All–Come, Lord Jesus, we need you!

C –For the universal Church: May she respond to the call of the Lord to renew herself in the light of the Gospel so as to become a source of inspiration to all mankind. Let us pray! **R.**

C – For the Holy Father, our Bishop, and all our spiritual

leaders: Like the prophets of old, may they constantly remind us of the priorities that really matter. Let us pray! **R.**

C –For all the Filipinos and Filipinas who are working abroad: May they celebrate this Novena with the same fervor they had when they were in their homeland. Let us pray! **R.**

C –For all those who are unemployed, homeless, sick, or suffering in any way: May the beginning of the *Simbang Gabi* arouse in them a well-grounded hope for better days. Let us pray! **R.**

C –For the Filipino families, especially the ones that are undergoing trials of various kinds: May this Christmas Novena be for them a source of healing and strength. Let us pray! **R.**

C –For our community: May this Novena be for all its members an opportunity to come closer to the Lord and rediscover the preciousness of our faith. Let us pray! **R.**

C –Let us pray in silence for our personal intentions.
(Pause)

Let us pray! **R.**

P –Lord Jesus Christ, grant that this Novena may be, for all of us, a moment of deep spiritual renewal. May we prepare ourselves perseveringly for the commemoration of your Birthday. You who live and reign for ever and ever.

All–Amen!

LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST



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 –Be pleased, O Lord, with our humble prayers and offerings, and, since we have no merits to plead our cause,

come, we pray, to our rescue with the protection of your mercy.

Through Christ our Lord.
All—Amen!

Preface of Advent I

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 he assumed at his first coming the lowliness of human flesh, and so fulfilled the design you formed long ago, and opened for us the way to eternal salvation, that, when he comes again in glory and majesty and all is at last made manifest, we who watch for that day may inherit the great promise in which now we dare to hope.

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 Lord, God of hosts. Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest!

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest!

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!

COMMUNION RITE



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, you take away the sins of world: have mercy on us. (2x)

Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world: grant us peace.

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.)

We await a savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will change our mortal bodies, to conform with his glorified body.

Prayer after Communion

P –Replenished by the food of spiritual nourishment, we humbly beseech you, O Lord, that, through our partaking in this mystery, you may teach us to judge wisely the things of earth and hold firm to the things of heaven.

Through Christ our Lord.
All—Amen!

CONCLUDING RITES



P –The Lord be with you.

All—And with your spirit!

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

You rejoice at the approaching commemoration of Christ's birth. When he comes again in glory, may he reward you with endless life.

All—Amen!

P –May God make you steadfast in faith, joyful in hope, and untiring in love all the days of your life.

All—Amen!

P –May God reward you for the sacrifice you made to participate in this first day of our Novena. May He enable you to persevere to the end.

All—Amen!

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

All—Amen!

P –Go and bring the peace of Christ to your family and neighbors.

All—Thanks be to God!

This Christmas, give your children (and yourself!) . . .

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JESUS, THE "HEART" OF SIMBANG GABI

Christmas has already been in the air for more than one month now, but in these past days it has taken on a more pronounced emphasis. We see Christmas decorations just about anywhere: supermarkets, shop windows, offices, streets, houses and, of course, churches. We hear Christmas carols at any time of the day and even well into the night.

This all-pervasive external "Christmas atmosphere" changes and moves people. It makes them "compulsive shoppers" and frantic communicators who flood the post offices (and now the Internet!) with tons of greetings. It brings to churches and chapels greater crowds than usual, including so many who seldom remember to pray or go to Mass during the rest of the year! . . . Such is the common phenomenon in the Philippines every year. It is part of our culture. This year is no exception, in spite of the serious economic crisis.

A question is unavoidable: How much of these activities and flurry of initiatives is genuine, and how much is "palabas"? How much comes from the heart or reaches the heart? How much stops at the purse or comes from the desire to be "in," to do what everybody else does without really reaching the "core" of what the Christmas Novena should be?

There is a danger that many Christians may miss the essence of what the preparation for Christmas is meant to be. For many, it may be pretty much like what was going on in Palestine

in the days when John the Baptizer started his mission along the banks of the Jordan River. People from all walks of life were flocking to him with unusual enthusiasm and expectation. Many even asked to be baptized, but their lives were hardly changed. **Jesus tried to bring people to reflect on who John really was and what was the meaning of what he was saying and doing.** "John testified to the truth . . . he was a burning and shining lamp." (See today's Gospel.) John's testimony was aimed at introducing Jesus to the people. John was the lamp ready to be forgotten about and put aside as soon as the Son of Justice – the Messiah – would appear. How many understood that?

What is the meaning and the message of what we do in this pre-Christmas period? Is it just keeping a tradition? Is it just a fad or curiosity, or just our penchant for being together and to celebrate?

In the midst of so many decorations, singing, buying, and selling, . . . and even in the midst of our cramming the churches and adjoining patios, we run the risk of "getting lost." **We should remember that the "core" of the matter is JESUS CHRIST** – his Birth, his Person, and his mission to reveal to us the love of the Father and to give us the Holy Spirit. **He comes for our sake: to save us and bring us to heaven.** This is the essence. This is what it should be for all of us. The rest is just preparation or decoration.

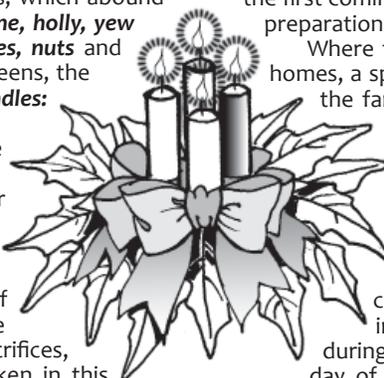
Jess P. Balon

Advent/Christmas Trivia

The Advent Wreath

The Advent Wreath we use in our churches and homes originated in Northern Europe several centuries ago and has a great wealth of meaning. It is made up of several evergreens, which abound in that part of the globe: **laurel, pine, holly, yew** and **cedar**, together with **pine cones, nuts** and **seedpods**. In addition to the evergreens, the Advent Wreath includes also **four candles**: three purple and one pink.

Each of the components of the Wreath has a specific meaning. Its circular shape (without beginning or end) of evergreens signifies God's eternity as well as the new life brought by Jesus Christ. The four candles represent the four weeks of Advent. Three of these candles are purple to signify the preparatory sacrifices, prayers, and good works undertaken in this period. The pink candle represents the rejoicing that characterizes the Third Sunday of Advent since the preparation for Christmas has already gone beyond



the first half. The progressive lighting of the candles (a new one every Sunday) symbolizes the re-living of the expectation and hope of the period that preceded the first coming of our Lord, as well as our constant preparation for his second coming.

Where the Advent Wreath is used in private homes, a special prayer is recited by the head of the family before the lighting of each new candle, which is done by the youngest member of the family.

In some places, on Christmas Eve, people light in the center of the Wreath a white candle which symbolizes Jesus Christ. A variation of this consists in replacing the four colored candles with four white ones (representing Jesus) that are lit for the first time during the Midnight Mass, and then every day of the Christmas period. At this stage, obviously, the "Advent Wreath" has evolved into the "Christmas Wreath" with its own specific meaning of "fulfillment" rather than expectation.



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PUBLICATIONS

Don Bosco Compound, A. Arnaiz Ave. cor. Chino Roces Ave., Makati, Metro Manila

Postal Address: P.O. Box 1820, MCPO, 1258 Makati, Metro Manila, Philippines

Tel. Nos. 894-5401; 894-5402; 892-2169 • Telefax: 894-5241 • Website: www.wordandlife.org

• E-mail: marketing@wordandlife.org, wordandlifepublications@gmail.com • FB: Word & Life Publications

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