



22 December 2018

CHRISTMAS NOVENA – Seventh Day

Year C

THE LORD HAS DONE GREAT THINGS FOR US!

Today's theme is gratitude to God – "UTANG NA LOOB SA DIYOS" – for the wonders the Lord has done not only for Mary Most Holy, but also for our community and each of us. A grateful heart is a wonderful heart, a heart that knows all is grace and knows how to be thankful to the Lord, the Source of all blessings.

We thank the Lord together with our Blessed Mother for the wonderful things He has done for her and for us. Let us equally express our gratitude to all those who have done good to us by praying for their needs and intentions. Let our grateful prayer in this Eucharistic celebration be our best advance Christmas gift for them.



INTRODUCTORY RITES



Entrance Antiphon

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

O gates, lift high your heads; grow higher, ancient doors. Let him enter, the king of glory!

Greeting

P –Grace and peace from God our Father, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit be with you all!

All–And with your spirit!

Penitential Act

P –The Lord God has showered his blessings upon us. How have we reciprocated His generous love? *(Pause)*

P –For the times we have failed to be grateful for the gift of creation in all its richness and beauty, Lord, have mercy!

All–Lord, have mercy!

P –For the times we have failed to be grateful for the gifts of the Church,

your Word, and the Sacraments, Christ, have mercy!

All–Christ, have mercy!

P –For the times we have failed to be grateful for the gifts of your forgiveness and eternal life, 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 –All-provident God, when we were sunk in sin and death, you turned toward us and rescued us by the incarnation of your only Son. Grant that we who acknowledge his coming with reverent love may also be one with him, our Lord and Redeemer, 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 1 Sm 1:24-28

The gift of a baby boy filled Hannah with joy and gratitude. Her offering the child back to God and the hymn of thanks in the Responsorial Psalm fore-

shadow the manifestation of Mary's gratitude to the Lord as expressed in her "Magnificat."

R –A proclamation from the First Book of Samuel

In those days, Hannah brought Samuel with her, along with a three-year-old bull, an ephah of flour, and a skin of wine, and presented him at the temple of the Lord in Shiloh.

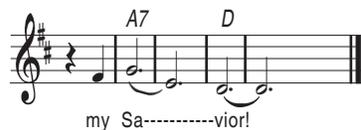
After the boy's father had sacrificed the young bull, Hannah, his mother, approached Eli and said: "Pardon, my lord! As you live, my lord, I am the woman who stood near you here, praying to the Lord. I prayed for this child, and the Lord granted my request. Now I, in turn, give him to the Lord; as long as he lives, he shall be dedicated to the Lord." She left Samuel there.

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

Responsorial Psalm 1 Sm 2

R —My heart exults in the Lord, my Savior!

R. M. Velez



* "My heart exults in the Lord, my horn is exalted in my God. I have swallowed up my enemies; I rejoice in my victory." **R.**

* "The bows of the mighty are broken, while the tottering gird on strength. The well-fed hire themselves out for bread, while the hungry batten on spoil. The barren wife bears seven sons, while the mother of many languishes." **R.**

* "The Lord puts to death and gives life; he casts down to the netherworld; he raises up again. The Lord makes poor and makes rich, he humbles, he also exalts." **R.**

* "He raises the needy from the dust; from the dung heap he lifts up the poor, to seat them with nobles and make a glorious throne their heritage." **R.**

Gospel Acclamation

All—Alleluia! Alleluia!

O, King of all nations and keystone of the Church: come and save man, whom you formed from the dust!

Alleluia! Alleluia!

Gospel Lk 1:46-56

In response to Elizabeth's greeting and words of congratulations, Mary lifts her heart to the Lord in the hymn of praise and thanks we call "Magnificat." Indeed all good things are from the Lord, both in Mary's life and ours.

P —The Lord be with you!

All—And with your spirit!

P —A proclamation from the holy Gospel according to Luke

All—Glory to you, O Lord!

Mary said: "My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my savior for he has looked upon his lowly servant. From this day all generations will call me blessed: the Almighty has done great things for me, and holy is his Name. He has mercy on those who fear him in every generation. He has shown the strength of his arm, and has scattered the proud in their conceit. He has cast down the mighty from their thrones and has lifted up the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty. He has come to the help of his servant Israel for he remembered his promise of mercy, the promise he made to our fathers, to Abraham and his children for ever."

Mary remained with Elizabeth about three months and then returned to her home.

The Gospel of the Lord!

All—Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ!

Homily

Prayer of the Faithful

P —The Lord has done great things not only for Mary but also for us. Let us express our gratitude to Him as we say:

All—We thank You, Lord!

C —For the gift of creation, the very foundation of all other gifts the Lord has bestowed on us, let us give thanks! **R.**

C —For the gift of our life, and all the opportunities the Lord has given us to become instruments of His love for others, let us give thanks! **R.**

C —For the gift of Jesus, our Lord and Savior who opened for us the gates of heaven, let us give thanks! **R.**

C —For the gift of the Church and the fruits of holiness that have flourished in it over the centuries, up to our very days, let us give thanks! **R.**

C —For the gift of God's Word which is for us a source of enlightenment, encouragement, and strength, let us give thanks! **R.**

C —For the gift of the Sacraments in which we encounter the Risen Christ from whom we receive the strength we need to live according to the Gospel, let us give thanks! **R.**

C —Let us realize the other personal reasons for which we should be grateful to the Lord. (Pause)

For all these gifts, let us give thanks! **R.**

P —Lord God, source of all goodness and life, continue to shower Your blessings upon us. May all that we are and do be a constant thanksgiving to You who live and reign forever and ever.

All—Amen!



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 –With confidence in your mercy, Lord God, we hasten to place these gifts on your holy altar, that your grace may cleanse us from sin through the very sacrament by which we offer you true worship.

We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord.
All–Amen!

Preface of Advent II

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 all the oracles of the prophets foretold him, the Virgin Mother longed for him with love beyond all telling, John the Baptist proclaimed his coming and proclaimed his presence when he came.

It is by his gift that already we rejoice at the mystery of his Nativity, so that he may find us watchful in prayer and exultant in his praise.

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 the 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.)

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, for the Almighty has done great things for me.

Prayer after Communion

P –Lord God, may our sharing in your sacrament be for us a source of strength, so that when the savior comes, we

may welcome him with holy lives and obtain the prize of unending happiness.

Grant this through Jesus 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 in the many gifts the Lord has granted you. May you use them always in a way that pleases Him.

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 – You rejoice that our Redeemer came to live with us as a man. When he comes again in glory, may he reward you with everlasting life.

All–Amen!

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

All–Amen!

P –Go in peace glorifying the Lord by your life.

All–Thanks be to God!

IT'S CHRISTMAS! PASKO NA!

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SINGING WITH MARY OUR GRATITUDE TO GOD

Mary's reaction to Elizabeth's greeting and high praises was an explosion of unrestrainable joy and gratitude to the Lord. In the exuberance of her teens, she expressed in vibrant words the deep feeling that had been bubbling in her heart since the moment she had received God's message through the archangel Gabriel.

Humble to the marrow, Mary knew and proclaimed that all she had and was were gifts from the Most High. Joyfully grateful in her humility, she thanked her Lord and Savior for the "great things" that He had done for her, with expressions that reveal the features of the God in whom she believes. **She magnifies the God who is merciful toward those who revere Him, lifts up the lowly, and fills the hungry with good things.**

The God of Mary is a strong and just God. He is not intimidated by the arrogant, the rich, the powerful, or the famous. He has no time for them, but He calls them to account for the sufferings they inflict on all those who are weak and defenseless.

Such is the God of Mary. Such is the God who will be portrayed by her Son Jesus in the "Beatitudes" and throughout his life.

Mary had very good reasons to be so full of admiration, praises, and gratitude for God. He preserved her from the devastation of original sin; He has chosen her to be the virgin mother of His only eternal Son. **God has, indeed, done for this daughter of Israel greater wonders than He has done for any other human**

creature, save His own Son, Jesus. No wonder all generations will call Mary "blessed."

And what about us? We definitely have not been conceived and born without original sin. **But the Lord has done great things for us, too:** our very existence, our intelligence and our memory, our affectivity and especially the call to live for ever in communion with our Creator, Redeemer and Friend; the gifts of faith, hope and charity; the gifts of the Church, Revelation and the Sacraments; the gifts of solidarity, friendship and pure joy

These are the gifts we share with Mary Most Holy. Rather than focusing on the few that she alone has received, we should focus on the hundreds we share with her. The list could be almost endless. **Noble hearts know how to count them and be grateful for them.**

This will spontaneously bring us to make our own Mary's hymn of thanksgiving – the one we call "Magnificat." The only thing we could leave out is the sentence, "From this day all generations will call me blessed." This seems to fit only her. On second thoughts, however, even this sentence can be retained, if we **do our best to faithfully live the Gospel given us by Jesus.** Those who have done so will be "blessed" by the Divine King himself as he will invite them to take possession of the Kingdom prepared for them by God's love since the foundation of the world. (See Mt 25:34.)

Jess P. Balon

Advent/Christmas Trivia

HOW THE CHRISTMAS TREE ORIGINATED

The origin of the "Christmas Tree" has different "versions." The use of evergreen trees as a symbol of life goes back to the times when pagan people in ancient Egypt, Rome and Northern Europe used to worship them. Eventually, in Germany, this pagan custom was "christianized," some say by St. Boniface (8th century), or by some other devout person in the Middle Ages, and still others, by Martin Luther (16th century).

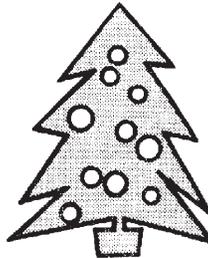
According to the most ancient of these legends, on Christmas Eve, in a pagan region of Germany, a boy was about to be sacrificed to the pagan god Thor in front of an old, leafless oak tree. **St. Boniface** (the monk who evangelized and converted a great number of Germans) broke with his crozier the sacrificial hammer that was about to crush the skull of the boy, then he felled and destroyed the old oak tree which was supposed to be revived through the blood of human sacrifices. As the oak fell, there appeared behind it a young fir tree, which St. Boniface called "the tree of life" because its leaves remain always green. Candles were placed on the branches of the fir tree. Then St. Boniface recounted in front of it the story of the birth of Christ, and the forest people came to believe in him. From that night on, the fir tree was, for those people, a symbol and a reminder of the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem.

According to another tradition, the Christmas tree is an "evolution" of the "Tree of Life" which, in the Middle Ages, was used in the "mystery plays" that portrayed the creation of the world and the temptation of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. When the "mystery plays" were discontinued, the "Tree of Life" of the Garden of Eden became the "Christmas Tree" with just a few "adaptations." The fruits of the tree of temptation were replaced with lights to symbolize the joy of Christmas, while the big light placed at the top of it symbolizes Jesus as the light of the world.

Still according to another tradition, it was **Martin Luther** who started using a fir tree as a symbol of Jesus Christ. Impressed by the sight of an evergreen on a Christmas Eve, with the stars twinkling above it, he decided to bring a small

fir tree into his house and decorated it with candles as reminders of the birth of Jesus, the light of the world. From that time on, the custom of bringing a fir tree into one's house and decorating it with candles became a tradition in all Lutheran homes in Germany.

Eventually, the custom spread to other European countries and the USA. From America, through the relentless commercialization of Christmas, this religious symbol has spread all over the world, often losing its relationship to Christ, and remaining just a seasonal decoration.



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