



Novena to the Immaculate Conception 2026

Day 3: Servant of the Lord

“Surge et Ambula.” Keep rising, keep standing up, and keep beginning to walk along this path during these days of preparation to celebrate the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception. Today, once again, as we draw near to the treasures of the Heart of Our Mother, the Virgin, we will unfold her qualities and attributes as the Handmaid of the Lord.

We begin:

*By the sign of the Holy Cross,
from our enemies, deliver us, Lord our God,
in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.*

O God, who sent your Son, the Word of salvation and the Bread of life, from heaven to the womb of the Holy Virgin, grant that we may receive Christ as she did, keeping his words in our heart and celebrating his mysteries in faith.

Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Dear listener, this same prayer says: “Grant that we may receive Christ as she did.” And in a certain way, contemplating the Virgin disposes our heart to welcome the gift of Christ in our life, to truly live our condition as baptized people.

And we ask in our prayer to keep his words in our heart and to live in faith in his mysteries. We must go on opening our heart as the Blessed Virgin opened her heart, her very being, her entire life to God’s action, placing her faith in Him, her trust in Him, for He is the one who will accomplish it if we allow Him to act in our lives.

Of course, this reality can stir and awaken a certain fear in each one of us. That is why the biblical text the novena gives us for today, the text of the Annunciation, includes those words of the angel—aware that Mary might be troubled by that visit: “Do not be afraid; you have found favor with God.”

And in a certain sense, we are not “full of grace,” we have not been preserved from sin, but through Mary’s “Yes,” through the Incarnation of her Son Jesus, we too are found gracious in His

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sight as His children—gracious in the sense of being worthy of grace and compassion. God gives us His love, He gives us His Holy Spirit. If we are willing to receive Him, He will bear fruit.

But the Lord is generous and cannot be outdone in generosity in enabling us to live what He asks of us. When He announces to Mary that she is called to be the Mother of God, He explains that this Son of hers, His kingdom will have no end.

Dear listener, this is our inheritance: our inheritance is heaven, and we must desire to reign. What a paradox that we try to do so in this world, seeking fame, recognition at work, in the family sphere, among friends; we hide in money, in our image. Yet our kingdom is not of this world, as Jesus tells Pilate in the Passion.

Mary says to Him, “Let it be done... Behold the handmaid of the Lord.” The slave is different from the servant, and here we must recall Psalm 116 (115):

“Precious in the eyes of the Lord is the death of his faithful. Lord, I am your servant, the son of your handmaid; you have broken my chains.”

I encourage you to pray this Psalm 116 because it is beautiful, but let us really focus on this reality. The psalmist says, “I am your servant, but I am the son of your handmaid.” Thus, the handmaid has ceased to be a slave and has become a servant.

And here we find a notion from Roman law: when a lord wanted to grant citizenship to a slave, to give him a real existential status and identity, he paid the price of his freedom, and the slave became a member of his household.

Christ, dying for us on the cross, has paid the highest price He could pay—His blood. By freeing Mary from slavery, freeing His handmaid, He grants freedom to her children. That is why it is so important to know that we have been freed by Christ, because we are children of Mary, because truly the price of His blood has won us freedom.

For this reason, the psalm says, “Precious in the eyes of the Lord is the death of His faithful.” Because in order that we might not die eternally, He has given us His Son, who died for you and for me.

Hence we are no longer slaves; we are servants, ministers of that Lord who has given us freedom—not only freedom, but the greatest inheritance: to be able to reign with Him in the eternal glory of heaven. But for that, we too must say yes; we must place ourselves face to face with Him and say: “I don’t know how this will be, but let it be done. I trust in You.”

In this way, our chains, as the Psalm says, are broken. Saint Irenaeus says: “By her obedience, Mary untied the knot of Eve’s disobedience.” And in this being the Handmaid of the Lord, we also see Mary’s mission. Mary unties all the knots that become tangled in our lives, in the lives of her children.

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With her “Yes,” Mary is the one who loosens that blockage that existed in the history of redemption and salvation, so that it can truly be fulfilled on Tabor and on Calvary, when Christ gives His life—in those events where the Lord grants us salvation.

With her “Yes,” Mary not only unties the knots but also crushes the head of the serpent; she empowers us to say our own “yes.” She sets the precedent for our possible response.

With our “yes,” we allow God—through His Holy Spirit and by means of Him—to empower us as well to trample the serpent’s head, with our “yes.” With our “yes,” Mary can go on crushing the head of the evil one, who has been defeated by the Redeemer’s death.

With your “yes” today to God’s will, you can allow Mary, our Mother, to continue fulfilling her mission described in Revelation. With our “yes,” we allow Our Mother truly to become hope for those who live in distress and to continue making present the redeeming work of salvation, so that Christ may go on saving those who want to seek refuge in Him. From all of this will flow the joy that lets us discover God as Savior, as my Savior, as the One who has given me eternal life.

This way of living is a bold way of living, and we must ask the Lord for that holy boldness, that courage that makes us go forth from where we are. The Catechism of the Catholic Church says: “Mary, by pronouncing the Fiat at the Annunciation and giving her consent to the mystery of the Incarnation... already cooperates in all the work that her Son is to accomplish.” She is Mother wherever the Lord is Savior and Head of His Mystical Body.

Allow me to finish with a paraphrased quote from the Easter Proclamation. On Easter, in the most radiant night of the Catholic and Christian liturgy, in the Exsultet we pray: “To ransom the slave, you gave up the Son.” Mary, making herself the Handmaid of the Lord, the Servant of the Lord in her humility, brings us salvation; she unveils for us the Father’s will and His love for each one of us.

“I love you so much that you are worth the life of my Son.” “In order to set you free, I have allowed my Son to die out of love for humanity.”

Say to the Virgin Mary: “Mother, teach me to say yes like you. Mother, teach me to answer ‘Let it be done’ as you did, so that I may live as one who is baptized.”

Think today, in order to please Our Mother—perhaps as a resolution or mission for this day: What things in your life enslave you and prevent you from listening to, welcoming, and responding to the call that God is making to you?

Hand over to the Virgin, your Mother, whatever makes you a slave of the world and keeps you from being a servant of the Lord.

Let us now pray together the Volunteer’s Prayer, asking the Virgin, asking God Our Lord through Her, to dispose us for service in our lives:

Lord Jesus, you have called us to be prepared on the frontiers of service and love for all:

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Make yourself present among us so that we too can always be present where a man's cry is heard. Make us generous in giving, timely in trying, and effective in helping others. Instruments of good wherever needed, forever.

We ask for your help, You who are the ideal of our lives, and who live and reign forever and ever.

Amen.

Let us pray.

O God! that by the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin you prepared a worthy dwelling for your Son; we pray that just as you preserved Her from every stain by the foreseen death of your own Son, so you may also grant that through your intercession we arrive cleansed of all guilt before your presence.

Through Jesus Christ Our Lord. Amen.

The Lord be with you. And may the blessing of Almighty God:

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit descend upon you, keep you, and accompany you always.

Amen.

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