



## *Novena to the Immaculate Conception 2026*

### **Day 8: Gate of Heaven**

Good morning and welcome once again to this Novena of the Immaculate Conception from Malta Camp. Today, Sunday December 7th, second Sunday of Advent, we approach—in this time of hope at the end of the Jubilee Year of Hope—the heart of our mother the Virgin to contemplate her as the Gate of Heaven.

We begin:

*By the sign of the holy cross,*

*from our enemies deliver us, O Lord, our God.*

*In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.*

*O God, whose Son, as He expired on the cross, willed that the Virgin Mary, chosen by Him as His mother, should henceforth be our mother. Grant that we who have recourse to her protection may be comforted by the invocation of her holy name.*

*Through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

*Amen.*

The Gospel text for today is none other than the well-known account of the Wedding at Cana. The Gospel narrative says:

*"The wine ran short, and the mother of Jesus said to him, 'They have no wine.' Jesus said to her, 'Woman, what does that have to do with me? My hour has not yet come.' His mother said to the servants, 'Do whatever he tells you.'"*

Here we find the Virgin Mary in the Gospel of John for the first time. Mary, with eyes wide open, contemplates the needs of her children. She notices that lack. They lack wine. They lack something essential for what they are doing, and she goes to her Son. She tells Him what she has observed and places it in His hands.

Mary is the one who, after Jesus' response, continues to act with mercy, as we said yesterday. "Do whatever he tells you", she says to the servants. She knows the way to succeed. She wants the good of those who are working, and in the same way she wants you and me to get to work. She wants our good. She wants us to learn to do what He tells us.

Jesus does not remain inactive before His mother's insistence. What she has done does not go unnoticed by His eyes, and He too works with greatness the divine mercy of coming to the aid of those spouses who had run out of wine. The Gospel passage ends by saying: "This was the

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first of his signs, done at Cana in Galilee; through it he revealed his glory, and his disciples began to believe in him." The disciples see what Jesus has done. They see the grandeur of the action He has performed, and then they can believe in Him.

The Virgin Mary, who wants our good, wants us to discover that grandeur with which God our Lord works in our lives. That grandeur with which Jesus truly enters the depths of our existence so that we may believe. His disciples believed in Him. We are called to be disciples of Jesus and to grow every day more in faith. That is what we also ask of our mother today. She, who is the Gate of Heaven, becomes a gate of hope and a source of faith.

The Eastern and Latin Fathers have seen in Mary our mother the door through which the Word enters the world. Thus the Byzantine liturgy defines her this way: a door facing east through which the Savior came, alluding to Ezekiel chapter 44. The hymn Ave Maris Stella says in Spanish: "Hail, star of the sea, holy Mother of God and ever Virgin, blessed Gate of Heaven."

By God's will, the Most Holy Virgin is the mediatrix before the Mediator, as Saint Bernard teaches, and she is subordinate to Him, as we have been saying throughout the novena—no disciple is greater than his master, the Virgin is not greater than our Redeemer, but she works for the best boss in the world.

Mary is the Gate of Heaven, and alluding to the image Saint Isaac of Nineveh uses to explain the Most Holy Trinity: The Father is the eternal dwelling. In Him there is a door that must be opened by a key, which is the Holy Spirit. The door is Christ Himself, but to reach Christ we must enter through Mary.

Mary made her womb, says one of the Advent hymns, a true cloister where her Son could dwell. That is the door through which we will enter, the door of the Virgin's heart to reach the most Sacred Heart of Jesus. God Himself has willed that she be the dispenser of all the treasures Jesus won for us with His blood and death, as He tells us in a beautiful encyclical exalting the most important role of the Most Holy Virgin as mediatrix of all graces. God Himself has willed that she be the dispenser. She is that source of graces that her Son has won for us, eternal salvation, eternal life.

Many theologians affirm that Christ grants us nothing except through His mother. And there we find her, at the foot of the Cross, as we said two days ago. There we find her as we read today at the Wedding at Cana, always at her Son's side. Saint Alphonsus Maria de Liguori reminds us of this in his treatise on true devotion to the Virgin Mary when he says that always, like the Magi of Bethlehem, we find Jesus with Mary His mother. That is why it has been said so many times that devotion to the Virgin is a sign of predestination.

She cares for her children and cares that we find the path that leads to the Father's house. We know that if we place ourselves in the Virgin's hands, we are called to salvation without fail, because it cannot be otherwise. But we must abandon all our acts and operations into her hands, says the saint, and if we ever stray, she will use her powerful means to bring us back to the right path; she will give us her hand like good mothers do so we do not stray again. And if we have fallen, she will raise us and arrange us once more so that we may be presentable before her Son.

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Mary's intercession is therefore infinitely greater than that of the saints, greater than all the saints together, for the other saints obtain nothing without her, nothing except through her. The mediation of the saints therefore depends on Mary, who is universal and always subordinate to her Son. Mary is our mother in the order of grace, says *Lumen Gentium* 61, and Church tradition reminds us that, assumed into heaven, she has not abandoned this saving mission but with her constant intercession continues to obtain the gifts of eternal salvation.

What a gift it is to know that our Mother the Virgin does not leave us orphans, does not leave us exposed, and always becomes a refuge—as we said yesterday—a shelter for all of us! The Catechism of the Catholic Church reminds us that Mary participates in man's entry into heaven as the door that leads us to Christ. She cooperated in such a totally singular way in the work of the Savior through her obedience, faith, hope, and burning love to restore the supernatural life of men. For this reason she is our mother in the order of grace. Paragraph 968 of the Catechism of the Catholic Church says: "Mary has become that channel that leads us directly to the bosom of the Most Holy Trinity."

Tomorrow we will conclude the novena. Tomorrow we will glorify God our Lord through the veneration of our mother in her Immaculate Conception. To discover Mary as the Gate of Heaven is to know how to disarm ourselves, to place ourselves in her hands, to dispose ourselves to walk with the best model we can have, under the attentive gaze of our mother with the profound tenderness of one who exercises that maternal care through the deepest feelings of her immaculate heart.

Guided by that gaze that from afar corrects us with sweetness, cared for and sheltered by that maternal embrace every time we stumble—as we said yesterday—and sin, we must learn to let ourselves be picked up by her from the ground. She has obtained everything for us by saying yes to God's will.

One more day we finish by asking the Lord that, filling us with the Holy Spirit, in imitation of the Virgin we may know how to serve in the midst of the world, and we say to Him:

*Lord Jesus, you who have called us to stand ready upon the frontiers of service and love for all, make yourself present among us so that we too may always be present wherever the cry of a human being is heard; make us generous in our self-giving, timely in our efforts and effective in helping others, instruments of good wherever we are needed forever. We ask your help, you who are the ideal of our lives and who live and reign for ever and ever.*

*Amen.*

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*Let us pray.*

*O God, who by the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary prepared a worthy dwelling for your Son, we beg you that, just as you preserved her from every stain by virtue of the foreseen death of this same your Son, so too may you grant us that, through her intercession, we may come into your presence free from every fault, through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.*

*The Lord be with you.*

*And may the blessing of almighty God:*

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

*Amen.*

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