

Novena of the Assumption CROSS THE BOUNDARIES WITH MARY

For the launching of the novena of the feast of the Assumption:

Today we formally launch the Novena in our school. The Novena is a form of prayer to help us grow into the ways of God the way Mary had become a transformed human being. In Mary's life we saw how she had made God's Reign become present in her life and in the world she lived. We saw in Mary's life that she courageously "crossed boundaries" in order to follow God's will for her.



In the Islamic tradition, Mary or Maryam in Arabic, is considered one of the most righteous women and is held as a model of believers. She is the only woman mentioned by name in the Koran and is mentioned more times in the Koran than in the entire new testament.

The 19th chapter of the Koran is named after her. Therefore, it is fitting that as we continue to journey with our Muslim brothers and sisters during this month of the Ramadan, we Catholics honor and learn from Mary and prepare together this great feast of the Assumption through this Novena.

We have chosen the theme; crossing the Boundaries with Mary in the same spirit as our theme for the Ramadan so that all together as a school community we can take small but concrete steps to make God's presence truly felt in the whole net of the entire creation.

FOR THE TEACHERS:

The format of the Novena includes: a scripture text, a brief summary of the text, personal reflection, prayer and a practice for the day. You may modify, adapt according to your context.

The *reflection* questions can be used for quiet prayer and/ or journal writing or for groups.

The *Practice* can be done individually or as a group. The teacher could invite some students to share their experiences of doing the practice each day before they start the novena of the day.

DAY 1: ANNUNCIATION (Luke 1:26-38)

Cross the boundaries of self-doubt and low self-esteem: Believe in your Goodness.

Mary shared the longing of her people for the savior to come and lead them towards liberation. When the angel chose her to participate in God's plan, she asked: "how could this be done?" The angel told her: "Fear not, nothing is impossible with God." Even if Mary struggled to believe, she accepted in faith God's plan for her life. God affirmed the good in her.

Reflection: Have you had experiences of doubt and insecurity? Choose one experience of doubt which later was transformed into faith in the goodness and love of God. Who helped you? Remember them and thank them in your heart or write to them in your journal.

Prayer: Lord, you who created Mary, full of Grace, strengthen our faith in your love and goodness even if we sometimes doubt and feel insecure inside our hearts. Thank you for the gift of my life. We ask this of You who are source of all goodness. Amen.

Practice: Every day this week, discover one good quality in you and write it in your journal or make a card of appreciation to yourself, recognizing the goodness and beauty within you because you are God's creation. "God has knitted me together in my mother's womb." (Psalm 139) Paste this in your journal.

DAY 2: VISITATION (Luke 1:39-45)

Cross the boundaries of being self-centered: Reach out to others.

Aware of the presence of the Divine (God) in her, Mary went out to meet her cousin Elizabeth because she knew, that Elizabeth felt alone and needed support and understanding during that time.

Reflection: When were the moments when you experienced that you were all alone or isolated from others? Did someone reach out to you or were you reaching out to someone? How did that feel like?

Prayer: Lord, in Mary's life, you teach us that those who listen deeply and who are aware of your presence can be more sensitive to the needs of others and readily respond to them. May we follow Mary's humble way of caring.

Practice: Try to be aware that God is in you and in others and reach out to two persons whom you notice feel alone. Reach out to them and make them feel that you care for them.

DAY 3: THE BIRTH OF JESUS (Luke 2:8-19)

Cross the boundaries of not being attentive to the NOW, the PRESENT: Recognize the gift of every ordinary moment.

Mary gave birth to Jesus with Joseph away from the comfort of a real home. The child was wrapped in bands of cloth, and yet, the wise men recognized with joy the promised Messiah.

Personal Reflection: Have you ever felt that your life is boring, too ordinary and the lives of others are more exciting than your own? Was there any event or someone who made you feel that you are very lucky and that your life is full of blessings? How did you feel? Thank them.

Prayer: Mary's faith made her live in simplicity without pretense or trying to show off to others. Grant that we may learn from her to accept what we have and who we are, recognizing God's gifts to us at every moment. May our hearts be always grateful.

Practice: Throughout this day, find reasons for being grateful for who you are, whatever or whoever comes your way. Let your heart sing: "Thank you, God!" At the end of the day, write down all the things that you said "thank you" to for today.

DAY 4: THE MAGNIFICAT Luke 2:3-20)

Cross the boundaries of revenge and being unforgiving: Live God's Mercy, learn to forgive and to be forgiven.

Mary recognized God's mercy towards her and towards humanity. It was God's compassionate love which brought freedom to those who were enslaved bringing about a new community.

Personal Reflection:

Where in your life have you felt that you need to be forgiven? Where in your life do you feel you need to forgive someone? Have you ever experienced someone forgiving you or asking for your forgiveness? How did you feel?

Prayer: Lord open the eyes of our hearts to recognize your Mercy in every event of our lives. Give us the joy of receiving your Mercy and to share this forgiveness to others.

Practice: Do something to express your forgiveness to someone who has hurt you. If you need to ask for forgiveness to someone, make a concrete gesture to express this.

DAY 5: THE PRESENTATION – (Luke 2:21-40)

Cross the boundaries of fear: Take a risk to trust!.

When Mary presented Jesus to God in the temple, making the offering of the poor, Mary heard Simeon foretelling that her Son would be a sign of contradiction and that a sword would pierce her own heart. In pondering things in her heart, Mary found the courage to take the risk of trusting in God.

Personal Reflection: Have you had experiences when you felt afraid because you had to face people whom you could not trust? Have you seen other people who have been afraid because they could not trust people? What was that like? Have you also experienced having the courage to trust people even if you are not sure of them? How was that experience for you?

Prayer: Lord, when we are afraid, grant us the serenity and the courage of Mary who chose to trust after she heard the angel tell her: “Do not be afraid...the Lord is with you.” May we find our strength in your abiding presence.

Practice: If there is anyone whom you are afraid to trust in school or in your family, reach out to them and discover something good in them.

DAY 6: WEDDING AT CANA (John 2:1-11)

Cross the boundaries of being careless about the environment: Be attentive to creation, respond with respect.

Mary joined the celebration of a wedding. Her attentive heart quickly responded with respect to the needs of the occasion. They ran out of wine. Discreetly, she asked her Son to spare the couple from embarrassment. She witnessed with confidence abundance and the transformation of water into wine.

Personal Reflection :

Here is an excerpt from an Indian Prayer:*O Great Spirit! Whose voice I hear in the winds, and whose breath gives life to the entire world...*

Let me walk in beauty and make my eyes ever behold the red and purple sunset...

Make my hands respect the things you have made and my ears sharp to hear your voice.....

Let me learn the lessons you have hidden in every leaf and rock.....

Have you listened to the voice of the wind and the rains? Have you paused and noticed how the Creator gives life to the entire world? Do you learn lessons from trees, leaves and stones around you? What are some of these lessons we can learn from them? Have your hands touched nature with respect and seen its abundance?

Prayer: Lord, Mary’s heart was silent and free from the noise of greed and violence. Thus, she could be attentive to the needs of others and recognize the abundance that the Presence of Jesus brings. She responds to the situation in a discreet and respectful way. May we learn attentive listening and celebrate the abundance God’s Presence brings each day.

Practice: Use one part of the Indian prayer and put it into action, i.e. listen to the winds and rains, learn one lesson from the trees, leaves, animals, etc....touch nature with respect. Rejoice in the abundance nature brings and journal your experiences of being attentive to nature.

DAY 7: MARY AT THE FOOT OF THE CROSS (John 19:25)

Cross the boundaries of escaping from difficulties: Stand firm even in times of difficulties.

Mary stood by her Son till the end with unwavering support and love even when friends and disciples fled away out of fear. Near the cross, she saw her Son's total surrender to the Father's will and heard him tell the secret of love and forgiveness.

Personal Reflection: Do I allow failures, what others say of me to discourage me and make me waver in what I believe and choose to do? What gives me the strength to face some difficulties I encounter each day? Do I experience finding strength in God, from within? What helps me to let God be my source of strength?

Prayer: Lord, your mother showed us how to stand firm with courage in the face of great suffering. May we learn from her to draw strength from you, our God.

Practice:

1) If you have some pain or difficulty, spend some time in silence and tell God about it through a prayer or write God a letter.

2) Be attentive to someone who may need encouragement, appreciation, support in any form through words, gestures, or recognition. Stand and be near them today.

Read this story about what it is to stand by someone who is in pain: a story of compassion.

A little girl was sent to the store with specific instructions from her mother to come straight home when she had bought everything. She was more than two hours coming home, much to the distress of her anxious mother. "Where have you been?" scolded the mother.

*"I am sorry, Mommy. I know I am late, but Jane broke her doll and I had to stop and help her fix it."
"And how could you help her fix that broken doll?"*

In her precious, childlike manner the girl responded. "I really couldn't, but sat down with her and help her cry."

DAY 8: CENACLE (Acts 1:12-14)

Cross the boundaries of division: Create bonds of unity.

Mary and the 11 apostles are gathered in prayer with one mind and one heart as they await the Spirit who will send them to their mission. Receiving the power of the Spirit, they proclaim God's deeds with joy!

Personal Reflection:

Have you ever experienced the joy of community and unity at home, in school and with nature? Are we aware how interdependent we are to one another? As you wake up in the morning and as we rest at the end of the day, we realize that everything we wear, what we use to remain alive (our food, our homes, the air we breathe, our education, etc.) depend on other persons, and on other beings. All of our life is related to the life of God's creation. All of creation are truly connected and depend on each other to remain alive. The survival of all is dependent on everyone. Thus if we abuse and harm other beings, the harm will affect everyone one in the community of the cosmos. Connecting with other beings, living or not is connecting with the Creator Spirit. What a responsibility we have!

Prayer: We thank you O God for the life that we share in the entire community of creation. May we learn from Mary how to live according to your Spirit which brings unity and life to all beings.

Practice: Choose an action that will express gratitude for the life we are constantly receiving from others and at the same time, do something for the environment that shows you care for the life of all. (ex. Use water with gratitude in our hearts without wasting it because in some places others do not have water to use; pick up any litter around the campus...); live sapat (use only what is enough and necessary without greed or waste)....

DAY 9: PENTECOST (Acts 2:1)

Cross the boundaries of clinging to the past (hurts, habits, etc): live the newness that God wants to give you today.

Mary allowed the Spirit of Jesus to transform her into a new person. Her whole life was now a mirror of God's life and love on earth. Wherever she walked, people felt God was present and alive in their midst. Everyone rejoiced and praise God because in Mary, they were sure that God is faithful to His promise: "I will be with you always!"

Personal Reflection: What kind of "glasses" do I wear when I look into the world? Are they "eyes of the gospel" or "eyes of selfishness and greed?"

Gospel of Selfishness

Blessed are those who always want more
And to have a high position
blessed are the tough
- Blessed are those whose every want are satisfied even if they destroy others

-Blessed are those who get even and revenge
-Blessed are you when they accept you and pamper you. Who cares about the environment. Get the most profit.

-Look out for yourself first; nobody else will

-Avoid pain and suffering at all costs
- Success is the name of the game, you are a loser if you don't achieve
-The only way to peace is to have more and better weapons/ I like violence

- Perform rituals and show off; keep up the Appearances

Gospel of Christ

Blessed are the poor in Spirit
Blessed are the meek and the non-violent
- Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness
Every life comes from God and therefore, sacred-

-Blessed are the merciful and forgiving
- Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you
You are responsible for the life of the whole web

- Give, and it shall be given to you in good
Be aware of our interconnectedness
- Take up your cross each day and follow me
- What profit would there be for one to gain the whole world and forfeit one's life?
- All who take the sword will perish by the sword....

He says: Peace be with you....
-love the Lord your God with all your heart....and with all mind.

As you read these lines, discuss in groups where you experience this contrast concretely. What are the ways of God? How different are they from the ways of selfishness?

Prayer: We glorify you ever greater God, for Mary and the new life you invite us to live. To live as a new person brings healing, harmony and peace to the community of creation. Grant that after these 9 days of novena prayer, we can bring something new to our community.

Practice: Divide your class in groups or as a class, choose one concrete action you will do to cross boundaries and bring something new to our community (school, purok, barangay, or etc.)

Analyze first:

What in that situation expresses a culture of selfishness, fear, waste, division....? Reflect together, what is the action that you will do to bring something new to that area? How did you experience God in bringing about something new in that area?

Gather together in thanksgiving and share your feelings as you participate in living this new life in God. "Sing together: "New life, new creation....." or any song to celebrate our crossing of boundaries.

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