



OUR LADY OF THE SACRED HEART

Novena to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart for Vocations

23-31 May, 2025

The Sacred Heart of Jesus is at the center of everything we stand for and do as Missionaries of the Sacred Heart. Mary, as his mother offers her son to the world, so that we may join in union with him and enter into his grace and mercy. It is Our Lady who unites us all as sons and daughters of God, and as brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ. During the novena to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, we come with our prayers and our petitions united in the faith of the Sacred Heart and knowing that his mother understands our needs as she once recognised the shortage of wine at the wedding feast in Cana.

As a young priest in 1854, Father Jules Chevalier founded the religious congregation of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart and 20 years later the Daughters of our Lady of the Sacred Heart in Issoudun, France. He understood the very special relationship which exists between the Heart of Jesus and the heart of his mother, Mary. The title "Our Lady of the Sacred Heart" focuses on this unique relationship of love between Jesus and Mary. Father Chevalier promised to honor Mary in a special way out of gratitude for her intercession in founding the MSC congregation. In 1859 he wrote: "To Mary we owe everything... Now this title, Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, expresses what I had in mind. When we say it, we shall thank God for having chosen Mary to form from her own flesh and blood, *the Heart of Jesus*. We shall honor in a special way, the love, respect, and intimacy which existed and still exist between Mother and Son, and the power of intercession which Mary has when she speaks for us to the Heart of her Son."

During these nine days of prayer and reflection leading up to the Feast of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, we will call on Mary to remember her special role in the establishment of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, and ask her special intercession for vocations to the priesthood and religious life. We will ask her to recall the time at the wedding feast at Cana when the wine was running out and she turned to her Son, asking him to intervene. Her instruction to the servants "do whatever he tells you" is echoed in Jesus' invitation to his disciples to "come and see".

MEMORARE TO OUR LADY OF THE SACRED HEART

Remember, Our Lady of the Sacred Heart
The great things the Lord has done for you
He chose you to be His mother
He wanted you close to His cross
He gives you a share in His glory
He listens to your prayer
Offer Him our prayers of praise and thanksgiving
Present our petitions to Him
Let us live like you in the love of your Son
That His kingdom may come
Lead all people to the source of living water
That flows from His Heart
Spreading over the world
Hope and salvation
Justice and peace
See our trust in you
Answer our prayer
Show yourself always our mother.

First Day: Friday 23 May 2025

Mary, Dwelling place for the Son of the Most High

SCRIPTURE: From the Gospel according to Luke:
"I am the handmaid of the Lord", said Mary,
"let what you say be done to me". (1:38)

REFLECTION:

The first time we see Mary in the Gospel of Luke she is accepting the invitation to become the Mother of God, in simplicity and humility, yet bemused by the Angel's message. Here in this momentous moment for the history of the world, is a young woman being asked to surrender herself completely to God, to allow herself to be His temple, the one who will give birth, present him, and ultimately surrender him to his mission as the Son of God and son of Man.

Every Christian has a call at baptism, though for most of us that call is not one we hear with any understanding at the time. Like Mary, the call in all its fullness will unfold as life's pages open one by one. At times, we will be confused and uncertain about how to proceed. We may feel ill equipped, or unworthy. The cost of the call may feel too heavy. Our dreams might be confounded as life takes its turns.

PRAYER:

As we make our journey through life, Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, our mother, teach us how to be open to the Holy Spirit directing our feet along the path toward your Son. Help us to be open to accept and to share the love of God. Let us join you in making "known to his people...the loving kindness of the heart of our God who visits us like the dawn from on high".

Today we pray to you especially in your role as Mother of the Church to encourage many vocations to the priesthood and religious life.

TIME FOR QUIET REFLECTION: In the noise and confusion of life do we hear the whispered message calling us to be disciples? Are our hearts open to the Holy Spirit's direction to join Mary in taking up our unique roles to share the message of God's love?

Memorare to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart

Second Day: Saturday 24 May 2025

Mary, Woman of Mission

SCRIPTURE: From the Gospel according to Luke:
“Know too: your kinswoman Elizabeth, has in her old age, herself conceived a son, and she whom people called barren is now in her sixth month, for nothing is impossible to God.” (1: 36-38)

REFLECTION:

The Gospel of Luke has Mary travelling to visit Elizabeth, though not under any instruction from the Angel. Mary's call to be the mother of “the Son of the Most High” once accepted, places on her the privilege to be God's missionary, taking God's presence where it is needed. Mary acts swiftly, full of the Holy Spirit. She carries to her kinswoman the most precious of gifts, one that Elizabeth recognises as does the child in Elizabeth's womb. In this act, Mary blesses both the mother and the unborn son, John.

Mary provides the sanctuary for God to live in our midst, but she doesn't hide it away. Instead, she carries it to her kinswoman, so that both women are able to rejoice together in this great moment in the Salvation story, when God came to dwell among us.

PRAYER:

Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, help each of us to recognise the moments in our life when Christ calls and comes to visit. Teach us to be like you, bearers of joy and hope.

Today we pray to you especially in your role as Mother of the Church to encourage many vocations to the priesthood and religious life that we may find in the Church dedicated men and women who carry the light of Christ to the world.

TIME FOR QUIET REFLECTION: Do we find time for praise and gratitude for our shared moments with family, friends, the children around us, and those who have dedicated their lives to God?

Memorare to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart

Third Day: Sunday 25 May 2025

Mary, Woman of Song and Praise

SCRIPTURE: From the Gospel according to Luke:
“Why should I be honoured with a visit from the mother of my Lord?...Yes, blessed is she who believed that the promise made her by the Lord would be fulfilled. And Mary said: ‘My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my saviour’. (1:41-47)

REFLECTION:

Like the women in the Old Testament, Miriam, Deborah, Hannah and Judith, Mary is bringing a song of praise to God as she meets with Elizabeth. Though the Gospel ascribes the words of this song to Mary, Elizabeth could easily have joined her kinswoman in praising God, as Elizabeth had already announced that: “The Lord had done this for me” when He took away her humiliation. Here at this meeting was a moment of great rejoicing. At Mary’s arrival in the house of Zechariah, Elizabeth “was filled with the Holy Spirit”. This visit brought the two women believers together to praise God.

In the Gospel of Luke, the first person to receive the news of the Messiah after Mary, is Elizabeth who comes with an open heart, a readiness to receive the Holy Spirit and the faith to believe in the promise of the Lord.

PRAYER:

“O my adorable Saviour, I hear the music of your saints, what magnificent songs!
How I wish there was in that concert, a part for me to play!
It is not a brilliant and important part that I wish for, the least, that is all I deserve.
Just one note, that will be enough; but I will sing it solo, that note; it will be mine;
and this will be one more harmony in the universal concert!
I will help all heaven to better sing your praise;
I will give to you that little bit of glory; without me, you would not have had” (ascribed to Fr Jules Chevalier)

Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, today we pray to you especially in your role as Mother of the Church to encourage many vocations to the priesthood and religious life that their commitment will be a sign of the great eternal choir of praise to which we all aspire.

TIME FOR QUIET REFLECTION: “My soul proclaims the greatness of God”... are we ready to find in our lives those moments when the Holy Spirit seeks to fill us with the wonder of God?

Memorare to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart

Fourth Day: Monday 26 May 2025

Mary, Woman of Reflection

SCRIPTURE: From the Gospel according to Luke:
“As for Mary, she treasured all these things and pondered them in her heart. And the shepherds went back glorifying God for all they had heard and seen; it was exactly as they had been told.” (2:19-20)

REFLECTION:

In this story from Luke's Gospel, we see the simple shepherds, those belonging to an underclass in Israel, finding their way to Jesus and with hearts full of joy glorifying God.

The words “pondered them in her heart” suggest that Mary didn't fully understand how these men who spent their lives among the sheep could have such a profound appreciation of the Son to whom she had given birth. She knew that Jesus had a divine calling. Yet like us, grasping what her “Yes” to God would entail in her own life would come with time. The encounter with the shepherds was another of the unfolding moments that brought Mary greater understanding of her Son and his mission.

PRAYER:

Our Lady of the Sacred Heart help each of us to ponder the meaning of the moments in our lives, that call us to be people of faith, hope, and courage, the times that call us to reach out in love to others.

Today we pray to you especially in your role as Mother of the Church to encourage many vocations to the priesthood and religious life, so that all may find a path to your Son and offer glory to God.

TIME FOR QUIET REFLECTION: For us as we travel life's paths, we need to ponder the meaning of new experiences, and our responses to them. Are we growing in our understanding of God's plan for us, and for the church?

Memorare to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart

Fifth Day: Tuesday 27 May 2025

Mary, Bearer of Christ to the world

SCRIPTURE: From the Gospel according to Matthew:
"The sight of The star filled them with delight, and going into the house they saw the child with his mother Mary, and falling to their knees they did him homage. Then opening their treasures they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh." (1:11-12)

REFLECTION:

Once again Mary is the bearer of God, in this case, to the delighted Magi, who have travelled far, carrying with them the hopes of those outside of Israel. Mary is there with Jesus, allowing these strangers to worship the "leader who will shepherd (God's) people Israel".

Fr. Michael Fallon msc wrote: "As we watch the Magi coming to Jesus, and offering him their gifts, let us to come to him. It is easy, perhaps to offer him our 'gold' – what we know to be a value in ourselves. But let us not forget to offer also – the perfumed oil, myrrh, that was used for burial. It reminds us of our human frailty, our weakness. This also is part of who we are and it is not a barrier to our coming to him. He welcomes the myrrh as he welcomes our gold. Finally, the frankincense of our prayer, which lifts all that we are and all that we have up to God in prayer."

PRAYER:

Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, intercede for us that we might with joy and delight in the gift of faith we received at our baptism, share the love of the Heart of Christ with the world.

Today we pray to you especially in your role as Mother of the Church to encourage many vocations to the priesthood and religious life, so that dedicated people from all over the world will become bearers of the wonderful news of the love of God for us all.

TIME FOR QUIET REFLECTION: What are our gifts of "gold, frankincense and myrrh" that we have to offer to Jesus?

Memorare to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart

Sixth Day: Wednesday 28 May 2025

Mary, Woman and Mother

SCRIPTURE: From the Gospel according to Luke:
Mary said "Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety." Jesus replied, "Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house? But they did not understand what he said to them...His mother treasured all these things in her heart." (2:47- 49)

REFLECTION:

Here in the Gospel, we have Mary and Joseph struggling to understand their Son as he begins to explore his mission. Many parents will appreciate the challenge that Mary and Joseph faced in this scene, where a child is seeking to move away to find his/her own path. In Jesus' case, he is beginning to explore what the Father wills for him.

Mary gave herself over to the Father's Will at the annunciation, now she is trying to understand what that means for her Son. By this time in her life, she has hosted the visitors to the child Jesus after his birth and listened to Simeon, an upright and devout man on whom the Holy Spirit rested: "You see this child, he has been destined for the fall and the rising of many in Israel, destined to be a sign that is rejected – and a sword will pierce your own heart soul too". (Lk 2: 34-35)

The words of psalm 119 extend the Gospel passage that tells of Mary treasuring "all these things in her heart" when it exclaims: "I have treasured your promises in my heart since I do not wish to sin against you...In the way of your decrees lies my joy, a joy beyond all wealth. I mean to meditate on your precepts and to concentrate on your paths."

PRAYER:

Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, help us to meditate on God's precepts and to concentrate on His paths. Show us how to treasure our faith even in the midst of confusion and uncertainty.

Today we pray to you especially in your role as Mother of the Church to encourage many vocations to the priesthood and religious life, that the Holy Spirit may enlighten those who take the path of consecrated life so they may find a joy beyond all treasure.

TIME FOR QUIET REFLECTION: Regardless of our choices in life, a time will come for each of us, when we have to begin to let go of someone or something precious to us. Can we join Mary in praying the psalm with confidence in the promises God has made to us, through his son Jesus Christ?

Memorare to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart

Seventh Day: Thursday 29 May 2025

Mary, Woman of the Hour

SCRIPTURE: From the Gospel according to John:
“When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, ‘They have no wine.’ And Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come.’ His mother said to the servants, ‘Do whatever he tells you.’ Now standing there were six stone water jars... Jesus said to them, ‘Fill the jars with water.’” (2: 1-11)

REFLECTION:

In one of the images of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, we see Mary pointing to her Son and Jesus pointing to his mother. That picture is echoed in the scene at Calvary when Jesus asks John to take Mary as his mother, and Mary to take John as her son. Here in the scene at the wedding feast of Cana, Mary points to her son “Do whatever he tells you”.

Fr Michael Fallon writes that there “is a long and ancient tradition that translates “My hour has not yet come”, as a question: “Has not my hour now come?” The Gospel of John shows Mary stepping forward as an intermediary in Cana. She does not respond to Jesus’ question, implied or otherwise, she leaves the moment and the solution to her Son, in the full knowledge that he will respond to the need. In doing so, she takes part at the very beginning of the Messianic journey towards the cross. She is here in this scene in Cana at one with her Son. One final time, we find her presenting her Son, as she did to Elizabeth, the shepherds, and the magi, however this event in Cana also marks the moment Mary surrenders Jesus to his mission.

PRAYER:

Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, teach us to recognise the times of God’s calling and discern the path to take. Help us to discern the instructions that come from unknown sources and take the leap of faith required to set out on new paths in our faith journey.

Today we pray to you especially in your role as Mother of the Church to encourage many vocations to the priesthood and religious life, so that those who receive this special call may discern the right path and have the courage to take it.

TIME FOR QUIET REFLECTION: Are we being asked to begin a journey in our lives, perhaps a change in the way we live, in our spiritual lives, or our care for others ...?

Memorare to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart

Eighth Day: Friday 30 May 2025

Mary, Mother of the New Covenant People

SCRIPTURE: From the Gospel according to John:
“When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, ‘Woman, here is your son.’ Then he said to the disciple, ‘Here is your mother.’ And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home.” (19:25- 27)

REFLECTION:

Pope Francis wrote: “Jesus extended Mary’s maternity to the entire Church when He entrusted her to his beloved disciple shortly before dying on the cross...From that moment on, we have all been gathered under her mantle, as depicted in certain medieval frescoes or paintings...the Madonna who ‘covers,’ like a Mother, to whom Jesus entrusted us, all of us; but as a Mother, not as a goddess, not as co-redeemer: as Mother.”

We, the people of the new covenant, are called to join Mary among the poor of spirit, those who are condemned, and those who desperately need hope in our times. We are asked to share the meaning of the cross, the living water that flows from Jesus’ Heart full of compassion for us. Each of us has an hour when we make a response to our call in life. That moment can bring both hope and loss for us and those we love.

On the cross Jesus gave his mother a new commission, one that involves all of us. Mary his mother, is to be our mother.

PRAYER:

Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, may we be like the beloved disciple and make room for you in our lives. Let us live like you in the love of your Son that his kingdom may come. May each of us play our part in leading people to the source of living water that flows from his Heart.

TIME FOR QUIET REFLECTION: Do we, in our moments of great suffering, uncertainty and pain, turn to the mother we were bequeathed at the crucifixion? Do we ask her to intercede on our behalf when we need the Holy Spirit to find our way, to find her Son among the messiness of our lives?

Memorare to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart

Ninth Day: Saturday 31 May 2025

Mary, Woman of Prayer

SCRIPTURE: From the Acts of the Apostles:
"All (the disciples) were constantly devoting themselves to prayer, together with certain women, including Mary, the mother of Jesus, as well as his brothers." (1:13-14)

REFLECTION:

In the days of waiting after the death of Christ, his community of followers including his mother joined together in prayer. They supported each other in faith in the midst of uncertainty and danger.

Prayer, communal and in private, played an essential part of the life of Jesus. A number of times in the Gospel, Jesus removed himself to pray about his mission, his Father's Will. Within the community of the new covenant, Mary took her place, not only as the mother of Christ, the Redeemer, but also as the Mother of the Church as it struggled to find its way after Jesus' death. For Mary this was another birthing. She had given birth to the "son of man" and "Son of God", now she was asked to be the Mother of the Church, the ongoing presence of her Son on earth.

Mary and the believers followed the example of Jesus and withdrew to pray and wait, providing us with a model for the Church in turbulent times and those when the Church needs renewal.

PRAYER:

Mary, Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, intercede for us that find ways to strengthen prayer in our lives and in the Church. May we always pray with confident faith as your Son taught us: "ask and it will be given to you." (Lk 11:9)

Today we pray to you especially in your role as Mother of the Church to encourage many vocations to the priesthood and religious life that those called may become people of prayer, leading in the great chorus of prayer for our Church and the world.

TIME FOR QUIET REFLECTION: How often when faced with serious decisions do we put aside time to pray; do we ask Mary to help us find the space and peace to pray within our most challenging moments?

Memorare to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart