

# Novena to the Immaculate Conception

Novena to prepare for the Feast  
of the Immaculate Conception

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Through the centuries the Church has become ever more aware that Mary, "full of grace" through God, was redeemed from the moment of her conception. That is what the dogma of the Immaculate Conception

confesses, as Pope Pius IX proclaimed in 1854:

"The most Blessed Virgin Mary was, from the first moment of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege of almighty God and by virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ, Savior of the human race, preserved immune from all stain of original sin." (Catechism of the Catholic Faith, 491).

## **A preparation for the great solemnity**

The novena to the Immaculate Conception is a custom that has taken root in the Church to prepare for the great Solemnity of December 8. St Josemaria advised his children in *Opus Dei* to make this novena personally, in whatever way each of them chose. He recommended, of course, putting more effort into an ongoing conversation with our Lady, and taking great care of mental

prayer, small mortifications, and ordinary work. He also suggested everyone could try and bring their relatives, friends and acquaintances – the more the better – to Jesus Christ through our Mother Mary. We always go, and return, to Jesus through Mary, he said (*The Way*, no. 495).

St Josemaría reminded his children that Opus Dei was born and had grown under the protection of our Lady. That is the reason for the many Marian customs that fill the daily life of God's children in Opus Dei.

Msgr. Javier Echevarría, Prelate of Opus Dei recalled that "saint Josemaría's joy when Pope Pius XII, in 1954, proclaimed a Marian Year for the universal Church, to celebrate the centenary of the dogmatic definition of the Immaculate Conception.

St. Josemaría reminded us then that Opus Dei "was born and has

developed under our Lady's mantle. That is why we have so many Marian customs embedded in the daily life of the daughters and sons of God in this Work of God." And he added:

"Imagine how great my joy was on seeing this year 1954 consecrated to the Blessed Virgin Mary by the Roman Pontiff" (St. Josemaria, January 9, 1954).

I would like these words to resound in your ears, since he was speaking to all of us. Besides, it is so easy to recognize our Lady's help in every step in our life! Let us consider this protection calmly in the fruitful silence of prayer, and we will discover with even greater clarity the constant action of our heavenly Mother, even in the apparently smallest events of our life.

Our Lady has been the one who, through her Son's power, has so often defended us from the snares of

the enemy of souls; she has helped us to overcome temptations, and to surmount the obstacles that arise on our path towards God. It has been our Lady—because God has so disposed it—who has obtained for us new lights and graces that have taken root in our hearts, despite the personal littleness of each one of us."

Letter from the Prelate (December 2007).

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