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Novena to the Immaculate Conception

Family celebrations are natural across the world. They bring family together - usually for a meal - to recognise, appreciate, give thanks or just remember an important event in the history of a family. The bigger the event being celebrated or commemorated, the more time is needed to prepare adequately.

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Like any good mother, Mother Church also calls her children together for family celebrations and she too takes proportionate time to prepare for these family celebrations: the bigger the celebration, the more time she takes to prepare herself and her children.

Lent is the longest preparation-time Mother Church takes to prepare us for the biggest event in her calendar: Easter Sunday - the day when her Spouse and Lord rose triumphant from the dead. Lent is 40 days of preparation (not counting the Sundays of Lent) to prepare for Easter.

Her second biggest feast is Christmas, when Jesus was born in a body such as yours and mine. To prepare for this solemnity (big feast), the Church takes almost 4 weeks called Advent.

Then the Church has smaller feasts that she takes less time to prepare

for. For example, the solemnity of Sts. Peter and Paul - two pillars of this new family of God (the Church) takes just 1 day to prepare. The solemnity is celebrated every year on June 29th. But if you attended evening Mass on June 28th and listened keenly to the prayers and readings, you'd realise you were attending what is called a "vigil" Mass... a "preparation" Mass while we wait for the actual feast.

And somewhere in between these mega feasts and these smaller feasts are the "medium" feasts where Mother Church takes less than the 40 days of Lent, but more than the 1 vigil day to prepare. The solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of Mary is one example.

This solemnity commemorates when the Blessed Virgin Mary was conceived in her own mother's womb without sin. It is celebrated on

December 8th every year. And 9 days before, Mother Church starts preparing herself and her children... These 9 days are what we call a novena.

So today, Nov 30th, many Christians around the world begin preparing themselves to celebrate the solemnity of the Immaculate Conception.

To assist you in preparing yourself to celebrate with the rest of the family, here's a playlist with nine 20-minute guided prayer sessions ("meditations") that you can use on each day of the novena.