



OUR LADY of MOUNT CARMEL
CATHOLIC CHURCH AND SCHOOL

Grateful no matter what

Novena to Our Lady of Mount Carmel

by Msgr. John C. Duncan

Day 1 – Mary, the Lady of Prayer

Reflection: From the earliest days, even preceding recorded history, Mt. Carmel has been inhabited and seen as a prayerful refuge. Neanderthal bones have been found in the recesses of this beautiful mountain. During pagan times this mountain was a place of prayer where holy men attempted to communicate with divinity. Later during the Jewish period of the Old Testament, this haven was inhabited by religious orders of prophets, such as Elias, who prayed to the True God. On a clear day from the peak of Mt. Carmel the distant hill is visible on which the tiny village of Nazareth is located. Here at Nazareth, Mary, the young virgin, prayed devoutly in the traditions of her Jewish ancestors. She steeped her mind with stories of her people and Old Testament prophecies. In her youthfulness, she had become a devout, prayerful woman. In this way she became profoundly united with the True God.



Prayer: Mary, Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, you learned to pray in simplicity of life and depth of soul in the village of Nazareth. This little town was considered insignificant by the world, but your prayer occurring within it was significant beyond comprehension. Teach us the spirit of prayer that motivated your life and changed the world. Under your maternal tutelage, help us recognize that we must be people of devout and daily prayer. We ask this through Jesus, your Son, our Lord. Amen.

Day 2 – Mary, Our Lady of Contemplation

Reflection: The height of prayer is contemplation. In the deep recesses of her being, Mary reflected upon her own existence with God as her Beginning and her End. She recognized God as the sole purpose of her own relativity. This contemplative spirit permitted Mary to pray her Magnificat, *My Soul Proclaims the Glory of the Lord*. She recognized in the temple of her soul that she had no reason to exist apart from God who gave meaning to her life. She brought to a spiritual perfection the centuries of holy people, of prophets and priests who had dedicated their lives to prayer on the slopes of Mt. Carmel. She preceded those Christians who would come to imitate her life of meditation. In Mary's life the small incidentals of daily activity rose to give an unlimited spiritual meaning to the details of life. Mary's soul soared to those spiritual heights for which Adam and the entire human race were originally created. Centuries of prayer are fulfilled in Mary's soul.



Prayer: Mary, Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, you lived in the mountains of Galilee far removed from the noise and interchanges of a busy and crowded world. Help us through prayer to gain the heights of contemplation to which we are called, both as human beings and as Christians. Grant that our union with the pinnacles of truth may raise us above the materialism and self-centeredness that prevent us from achieving the fullness of life for which God has created us. We ask this through Jesus, your Son, our Lord. Amen.

Day 3 – Mary, Queen of Peace

Reflection: All of her life Mary prayerfully reflected upon the many Old Testament prophecies that foretold that the expected Messiah would be a man of peace. The Biblical concept of peace is not simply an absence of hostility or a lack of violence. The Scriptural view of peace is a flowing together in mutual support **of all reality**. In this understanding of peace one supports and is supported by others, but also by animal, vegetable and inanimate creation. Everything blends together for the common good. The home of Mary – Israel – is hardly a place of peace. Its soil has been inundated with the blood of warriors and citizens, the innocent and the guilty, from the first remembrances of life there. Mary understood well, and still does, the need of people to relinquish destruction and duress and to adopt mutual respect and exchange of love. The everwarring children of Eve need to imitate their spiritual Mother as Queen of Peace. Mt. Carmel is a symbol of peace in the midst of unceasing war.



Prayer: Mary, Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, through you the Prince of Peace chose to enter our world of violence and cruelty. Help us by the example of your life and through the prayers of your Immaculate Heart to receive peace of mind and soul from your Son and to share this gift with those whose lives we touch. We ask this through Jesus, your Son, our Lord. Amen.

Day 4 – Mary, the Seat of Wisdom

Reflection: Mary prayerfully reflected upon the Old Testament writings of wisdom through which God had communicated His people's need to move beyond mere knowledge. Wisdom is the bringing together in one body all the knowledge of mankind. It is an insight into the depths of the human reality that gives meaning to every aspect of life. In the Old Testament books, Wisdom is portrayed as a person who unites all knowledge and all disciplines of human life. Wisdom is seen as a loving person inviting the human mind to partake of rich delicacies and to enjoy pleasures that rise above the body and elevate the mind. Mary's own Son was to be the personification of the eternal wisdom of God. Mary was to give human birth to the One who is the living knowledge of God, of His own perfection, His own goodness, His own totally unlimited being. When He was on the verge of maturity, Mary was to find her Son in the Jerusalem Temple. There on the Porch of the Wise Solomon, Jesus, the living and incarnate Wisdom of God, interacted with the rabbis. The age-old wisdom of Mt. Carmel is amplified for all mankind.



Prayer: Mary, Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, in the simplicity of your life and the sparseness of your formal education, you attained the heights of truth. In the depth of your soul, you learned wisdom from the Source of all Wisdom. Grant that we may receive true wisdom of heart so that we always recognize truth, be attracted to goodness, and choose the life of grace. We ask this through Jesus, your Son, our Lord. Amen.

Day 5 – Our Lady of Sorrows

Reflection: Life for every human being is filled with contrasts. The most significant of these contrasts is the sorrow which every human being endures even while desiring to achieve joy. Every human joy is preceded and followed by sorrow. Mary was not spared this affliction. Her joy at the birth of her Son was tempered by the prophecy of Simeon that a sword of sorrow would pierce her soul. In order to preserve her Son's safety, Mary had to leave her homeland and live as a poor refugee in a pagan land. Her own family and friends in Nazareth turned against her Son, Jesus. They rejected Him, the Source of all Wisdom, as insane. They reacted against Him with such jealousy that they attempted to murder Him in their little village of Nazareth. Mary was forced to leave her home in Nazareth with Jesus and Joseph and live in another refuge, the fishing village of Capernaum. She witnessed her Son carrying a cross of infamy to His place of death where He died at the hands of vicious and merciless men. Her only response was her tears, flowing as the rains flow down Mt. Carmel.



Prayer: Mary, Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, despite your many quiet and deep joys, you suffered in the depths of your soul. In our inevitable sufferings in this valley of tears, help us to avoid bitterness, resentment and anger. Instead, help us to recognize the hand of God in all the circumstances of our lives that lead us lovingly to Him. Help us, as you did, to unite our sufferings to the Cross of Jesus as our humble share in leading unbelievers to faith and sinners to grace. We ask this through Jesus, your Son, our Lord. Amen.

Day 6 – Mary, the Spouse of Joseph

Reflection: One of the strange contrasts of Mary's life was her marriage. She lived in a culture where a woman had no profession open to her other than that of wife and mother. The Angel invited her to fulfill the ancient prophecies and become the Mother of the Messiah. The one who was **to establish the throne of their ancestor**, David, forever and still be the Suffering Servant of God was to be her Son. In her response to the angel, it was clear that she had already entered into the first of two wedding ceremonies required by their culture. Her answer to the angelic inquiry also clarified her intention to live permanently in a virginal marriage. Joseph, her husband, asserted his own understanding of this agreement when he almost divorced Mary upon learning of her pregnancy. When God's Will was manifested to them both, Mary and Joseph established the Holy Family at Nazareth within sight of Mt. Carmel where Jesus could be reared in safety to fulfill His supreme destiny.



Prayer: Mary, Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, you brought the immense gift of grace which God showered on you to the lowly Holy Family of Nazareth. Yet this home was filled with love, self-sacrifice, respect and mutual support. Today, many homes that are far more materially luxurious and materially comfortable lack these essential components of family life. Bless our families with the gifts that you knew so well and lived so completely. We ask this through Jesus, your Son, our Lord. Amen.

Day 7 – Mary, the Mother of Jesus

Reflection: In the Old Testament Book of the Exodus, God gave His wandering people a symbolic reminder of the reality of His presence among them. God instructed Moses to house the Ten Commandments in an ornate, portable chest, the Ark of the Covenant. God, through Moses, told the people that this would be the focal point of His loving presence among them. When the Decalogue stones were placed within the Ark of the Covenant, a cloud symbolizing God overshadowed the Ark and took possession of it. Wherever they wandered, they carried this treasure with great reverence. Once the people had settled, the great Jerusalem Temple was constructed around this Ark. The ground or place upon which this relic rested was referred to as “The Presence.” Mary conceived the Second Person of the Trinity, the living Wisdom of God, by the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit of God. Mary carried within her the reality of God as the new Ark of the New Covenant. She, who was overshadowed physically by Mt. Carmel, was overshadowed and possessed by the Spirit of God.



Prayer: Mary, Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, Jesus chose to come into the world through you. In your turn you agreed at considerable self sacrifice and obedience to the Will of God to be the source of saving grace for all humankind. Help us to become more like Jesus, whom you know so well and love so much, so that in seeing us, you might be reminded at least in some small degree of Him to whom you are so close. We ask this through Jesus, your Son, our Lord. Amen.

Day 8 – Mary, the Mother of God

Reflection: The early Christian title, Mother of God, is often misunderstood today. It does not imply in any sense that God is dependent upon Mary for His existence or that God found His divine origin in Mary. Nor does this title indicate that Mary is in any sense a goddess or divine. This title was given to Mary at the Council of Ephesus in 431 AD, to reflect the already ancient belief of the Church that Jesus is the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, God the Son, become Man. In its Oriental or Greek orientation, the Council affirmed both the eternal divinity of Jesus and His humanity taken from Mary by referring to His Mother as *Mother of God*. This phrase means that Mary is the Mother of the Person, Jesus, who for all eternity is God the Son and who in time, through the Holy Spirit, took human nature from her. Mother of God means that her Son is truly God as well as a Man. The ancient pagan and Jewish attempts through prayer and meditation on Mt. Carmel to unite divinity and humanity are fulfilled in Mary.



Prayer: Mary, Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, through the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit you carried within you Him whom the entire universe cannot contain. Help us by your prayers to receive Jesus in our souls through the same Holy Spirit and to carry Him with us wherever we go. Help us to accept His guidance in all that we do. We ask this through Jesus, your Son, our Lord. Amen.

Day 9 – Mary, Mother of the Church

Reflection: Jesus and St. Paul both teach us in the New Testament that the Church that Jesus established is His Spiritual Body. His followers are united to Him in this Mystical Body by their spiritual rebirth through baptism. This Spiritual Body of Jesus, alive with supernatural life, flowed from the opened side of the physical Body of Jesus on the Cross. Before His death, Jesus had looked down upon those standing at the foot of the Cross -- among them His mother, Mary, and the Beloved Disciple, in reality the only remnants at that pain-filled time. In the last act of legacy, Jesus gave Mary to this Disciple, symbolic of His Church, as a Mother. Mary was present when Jesus was born and again when His Church was born from His side. She became the Church's Spiritual Mother forever. As a mother she inspires us by her motherly example, protects us by her prayers, and loves us with her heart. This gift of motherhood occurred on Mt. Calvary in the sight of the Temple, just as Mary had mothered Jesus in Nazareth on the side of the mountain within sight of Mt. Carmel.



Prayer: Mary, Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, through baptism we have been born again into the life of the Most Holy and Eternal Trinity. In your motherly concern and care for us, help us to avoid sin and to accept the responsibilities of salvation that your Son has given to us as members of His Mystical Body, His Catholic Church. Help us to accept, love and to follow you as our Mother, eternally united to our Holy Mother the Church. We ask this through Jesus, your Son, our Lord. Amen.