



Te Ara a Maria

Mary's way

Novena

Prayers for sharing

Ideal for Te Hikoi Wairua mo Te Ara a Maria

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Te Ara a Maria
MARY'S WAY



Day One

When Mary heard the greeting, Hail, favoured woman, she must have been stunned.

She was just a young girl in an obscure village in Southern Galilee. And the one addressing her was Gabriel, a name that means “God is my strength” – a spirit very near to God, sharing God’s most secret plans.

Yet every woman is like Mary. To bear a child is to bring something unexpected, unprecedented into this world. God knows and loves every woman. Each has a destiny and divine possibilities. Like Mary, it may seem an impossible paradox that the future is hidden within them in the gift they are and may give to the world. Yet every woman may equally say to God, “Let everything you have said about me come true.”

Prayer

O God, we thank you for the gift of Mary, a woman of such courage and faith.

May every mother, every daughter know that they are carried in the mind of God and that their fruitfulness can change the world in ways they would not dare to imagine.

And we make this prayer through Christ Our Lord.



Day Two

Two pregnant women come together, both amazed at their condition. Village gossip may follow them but the joy of meeting overshadows all else. Mary has made a long journey (about 100 kms) to help her cousin. Elizabeth is delighted at her company and support but does not hesitate to greet her as 'mother of my Lord', a term used of the great queen mothers of the Jewish scriptures.

It would have been so easy and so natural for this elderly woman and this young girl to dwell on their pregnancies. Instead Mary gives voice in praise of the Mighty One who exalts the lowly and brings down the rich and haughty. She knows her name will be remembered in prayer day after day while the powerful will be consigned to the pages of history books.

Prayer

O God, we thank you for humble women
like Mary and Elizabeth
who rejoice at the coming of new life.

They remind us that the powerful and rich
may stand high in human repute
but that it is often
the unnoticed and unheralded
that bring hope and the celebration of life
into our world.

Help us to take Mary and Elizabeth to heart
and to help form our hearts.

We make this prayer through Christ Our Lord.

Amen



Day Three

Like much of Luke's writing this account of Jesus' birth is full of vivid imagery. It is stark, shrouded in night.

There is no lodging, no private place for giving birth: there is no doctor, midwife, or even mention of Joseph, hovering in the background. There is only a feed-box for animals in which Mary places the child she has brought forth and wrapped snugly in strips of cloth.

The only witnesses are shepherds – disreputable witnesses – because they cannot observe the Jewish laws about food and ritual washings. Mary takes all of this in and ponders long and hard on these memories in years to come. They are like snapshots that will frame Jesus' life. He is destined to be a pawn in much greater political games: angels and the poor may recognise him, but not the powerful or rich.

Prayer

Dear God, help me to be aware and see the many women who are forced to give birth and care for their children in poverty and obscurity.

May I never be the innkeeper or householder who shuts the door on those in great need.

May we all revere foster parents and health workers who battle to give children a secure and loving start to life.

Amen



Our Lady of Peking, John Lu Hung Nien (1914)

Day Four

Killing off potential rivals has always been a ploy of despots. To do so they are never afraid to wipe out families or communities. Even the Son of God is not free from such peril. It means that Mary and Joseph have to leave all behind and set out at night in great danger to find refuge in a strange land.

Like all refugees, a place to live, work to bring in food, finding friends and keeping an eye on what is happening back home – this becomes the daily life of the young family. In all of this Mary must have been asking herself, where is God's presence and love in all of this?

Prayer

We thank you, God, that we live
in a land of comparative peace and order.

Help us to resist all prejudice and hatred of immigrants and refugees.

May we be open to understanding the world of insecurity and anxiety that can be so much a part of their lives.

Help us to remember that the Holy Family had to live like this, and so treat all such people with respect and care.

We ask this through Christ Our Lord.

Amen



Anthony VanArsdale, for the National Black Catholic Congress (USA)

Day Five

All families have their moments – even holy families. Different priorities, personalities and friendships create tensions but also moments of growth. Jesus was an obedient son; he did not leave home till he was about thirty; most Jewish men married in their early twenties.

What Luke is painting here is a deeper call to obedience and parenthood that drew Jesus to the temple.

His parents are confronted with a growth point in the mission of their son. Like any teenager (or near teen) Jesus could become utterly absorbed in lively debates, even theological questions and answers. Being a boy he also had to learn that he could hurt his parents.

This small incident from Luke helps us to see that like all other families, the Holy Family grew through misunderstandings and dialogue.

Prayer

Lord of love,
you gave us the human family
as a school of love.

We all need to learn how to love one another
despite our different personalities and interests.

Help us to respect the high calling of parents
like Mary and Joseph
but also the need of children
to discover their own inner passion and calling.

We ask this through Christ Our Lord.

Amen



The Marriage Feast at Cana in Galilee, Vasili Nesterenko

Day Six

Mary is beginning to farewell Nazareth and is on the road with Jesus.

She is becoming a follower but remains a mother. Not only does she notice the embarrassing situation facing the young couple, 'they have no wine', she also knows that Jesus brings healing when all seems astray.

He wants to wait to be sure of the Father's call; she has no doubt of it.

The first great sign that Jesus offers is about rejoicing at the gift of love. He does come to bring forgiveness but that is only the doorway to a life of giving, receiving and celebrating life.

Prayer

We thank you, Lord,
for the joys and celebrations of family life
which echo the intimate life of the Trinity.

Help us to be like Mary,
noticing the gaps and bridging differences.

Let us be bringers of joy where there is need
and agents of peace where there are shortcomings.
We ask this through Christ Our Lord.

Amen



Philipp Uffenbach, The Virgin Mary and Mourners at the Crucifixion, 1588, Städel Museum (Frankfurt, Germany)

Day Seven

Death is usually the end of a journey. Long ties, life-changing experiences, dreamy plans – all are over, wiped out, gone.

That was also true for Mary, seeing the son whose call to freedom and new life had reshaped her inner being, now brutally butchered on an instrument of torture. But part of it was a second death.

Starting a journey with no known outcome, with an adopted family. All without the one who had come to be the shaper, the goal, the all consuming passion of her life. This was a second death, and beginning of another life.

Prayer

Loving God, you allowed the mother of your Son to experience the sense of total loss and abandonment that is the worst any human heart can know.

You knew this was the opening to a greater mothering.

Help us in our times of loss,
especially at the death of those we love the most,
to believe and experience
a renewed sense of bonding and hope
in a way we cannot name or define,
except that you are there at the heart of it.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Amen



The Risen Christ Appearing to the Virgin, Francesco Solimena, 1708, Cleveland, Museum of Art

Day Eight

After Jesus had risen from the dead, Mary had seen and been close to him several times. These were moments of intense personal joy. Now gathered with his disciples, there was a renewed expectation, a sense of a coming revelation of a quite different way of seeing and living. As the Spirit filled her, a new intensity lifted her seeing every moment of her life with him in sharpness and depth. Just as at Nazareth many years before she experienced Jesus conceived once more in her, not as body but as a life and mission to be shared with those called to carry his name to the ends of the earth.

Prayer

We thank you, Lord, for giving us your mother, Mary, as our mother too.

By the power of your Spirit she was able to recall and interpret the discovery and transforming presence of Jesus to the new family for which she was now a beating heart.

Help us to learn from her in sharing and listening to the power of that same Spirit given now to all the sons and daughters of the risen Lord.

And we ask this through the same Christ Our Lord.

Amen



The Assumption, Tim Langenderfer, 2017

Day Nine

As we get older many day-to-day concerns drop away.

The central values of our lives: family, foundational memories, letting go, grow stronger. So too with Mary.

As the Church grew and sank deeper roots, she gave herself more and more to Jesus, whose presence and pull became more tangible day by day. It was as if just the finest of gauze curtains hid his presence. Her body was totally at one with her mind and heart. Just as Jesus had passed through the portal of death, she too was ready for this final journey. He called and she responded, passing through joyfully, mind, heart and body into his glorious presence.

Prayer

Lord of glory,
at times we detect traces of your face
in the beauty of the world and the goodness of those we
love.

Help us, like Mary,
to become ever more aware
of your abiding and gently summoning presence.

So when our time to pass to you arrives
we may surrender into that last journey into your glory,
to be there with you and Mary,
your mother and ours.

We ask this through Christ Our Lord.

Amen



Feast of Assumption, St Mary of the Angels (Wellington), 15 August 2021

Prayer for the Rededication

E te Atua aroha mā te whakapuaki
i tō mātou whakapono

Loving God in professing this faith
In which we are united as your people
we unite ourselves with the yes of your mother
Mary, the first disciple.

E te Atua, te Puna o ngā mea ora katoa,
te kaihomai o ngā mea pai katoa
O God, Source of all life, giver of all that is good
We, your people of Aotearoa New Zealand
Meet in the bonds of your love
Keep us faithful in our response to your love
with Mary patroness of our land.

E te Atua aroha, ka karangahia houtia mātou
e koe ki ngā hua o te ora.
Loving God, you call us anew to the abundance of life
For which we have been created.

In our life with you we mature
in relationship with you,
with one another, and with our land
We repent the harm we have caused in this holy place

To our sisters and brothers and to our land.

In humility we turn to Mary,
Mother of God, Assumed into Heaven

E te Atua, mā roto i te korowai o Maria
te whāea o tāu tamaiti, tō mātou whāea anō hoki
O God, under the patronage of Mary,
the mother of your son, and our mother
We join with those gathered in the Hokianga in January 1838
with the leadership of Jean-Baptiste Pompallier
first Catholic bishop of this place
to dedicate our land of Aotearoa New Zealand
To the care of Mary, Mother of God, Assumed into Heaven.

I tenei wā, ka whakahoungia e mātou tēnei oati tapu
We now renew this dedication
Turning to Mary with new fervour
In union with her Son
Our Lord Jesus Christ
Who lives and reigns with you
In the unity of the Holy Spirit
God forever and ever

Amen