

NOVENA TO MARIA BAMBINA

**“MARY BEARER of a PROMISE,,
GUARDIAN of HOPE”** (CV, 44.45)



Here below are the readings for each day of the Novena that substitute the Scripture reading of the Vespers: a reflection and a prayer in common follow the short biblical reading. Then it is continued with the short response.

Introduction *(for the first day)*

In the heart of the Church, Mary shines forth. She is the supreme model for a youthful Church that seeks to follow Christ with enthusiasm and docility; she is the bearer of a promise and the guardian of hope: Jesus Christ!

Looking at the experience of Mary who - by letting herself to be enlightened and instructed gradually by God through what she listened and from what she experienced - was capable of discerning and recognizing, step by step, how to remain close to her Son, let us pray also for us the grace to live our daily life as the place of encounter with the Living One and as an occasion to testify to His love for all.

To participate in this **Novena of Maria Bambina** is to utter once more our “yes” trusting in the only power capable of making all things new because founded on the Promise of God, which in Jesus became a reality and opens the heart of every human person to hope.

Vespers

FIRST DAY – 30 AUGUST

MARY, BEARER OF A PROMISE founded on the faith of a “Yes”

But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah, who are one of the little clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to rule in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days. Therefore, he shall give them up until the time when she who is in labor has brought forth; then the rest of his kindred shall return to the people of Israel. (Mi 5:2-3)

«We are always struck by the strength of the young Mary’s ‘yes’, the strength in those words, ‘be it done to me’, that she spoke to the angel. This was no merely passive or resigned acceptance ... Hers was the ‘yes’ of someone prepared to be committed, someone willing to take a risk, ready to stake everything she had, with no more security than the certainty of knowing that she was the bearer of a promise.. ... Mary’s mission would undoubtedly be difficult, but the challenges that lay ahead were no reason to say ‘no’. Mary did not take out an insurance policy! She took the risk, and for this reason she is strong, she is an ‘influencer’, the ‘influencer’ of God. Her ‘yes and her desire to serve were stronger than any doubts or difficulties» (CV, 44).

Short pause

guide: *Maria Bambina, «bearer of a Promise»,*

all: **nourish our faith and help us to say daily our “Yes” to the project of the Father.**

SECOND DAY – 31 AUGUST

MARY, GUARDIAN OF A HOPE rooted in the trust of a “Yes”

Then God’s temple in heaven was opened, and the ark of his covenant was seen within his temple. A great portent appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. (Rev 11: 19; 12:1).

«Life is like a voyage on the sea of history, often dark and stormy, a voyage in which we watch for the stars that indicate the route. Certainly, Jesus Christ is the true light, the sun that has risen above all the shadows of history. But to reach him we also need lights close by - people who shine with his light and so guide us along our way. Who more than Mary could be a star of hope for us? With her « yes » she opened the door of our world to God himself; she became the living Ark of the Covenant, in whom God took flesh, became one of us, and pitched his tent among us. So we cry to her: Holy Mary, you belonged to the humble and great souls of Israel who, like Simeon, were «looking for the consolation of Israel»... Through you, through your « yes », the hope of the ages became reality, entering this world and its history. (Spe Salvi, 49.50).

Short pause

guide: *Maria Bambina*, «guardian of hope»,

all: **strengthen our trust and help us to say daily our “Yes” to the plan of salvation.**

THIRD DAY – 1 September

MARY, VIRGIN OF LISTENING AND PONDERING in the simplicity of a “Yes”

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin’s name was Mary. And he came to her and said, “Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you.” But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. (Lk 1:26-29).

«A virgin attentive to God's word, she lives in complete harmony with his will; she treasures in her heart the words that come to her from God and, piecing them together like a mosaic, she learns to understand them more deeply (cf. *Lk 2:19, 51*); Mary is the great Believer who places herself confidently in God's hands, abandoning herself to his will. This mystery deepens as she becomes completely involved in the redemptive mission of Jesus. From the Annunciation to the Cross, Mary is the one who received the Word, made flesh within her and then silenced in death. ... Mary of Nazareth is the model for each of us, called to receive the gift that Jesus makes of himself » (*Sacramentum Caritatis*, 33).

Short pause

guide: *Maria Bambina*, «Virgin who listens»,

all: **safeguard in simplicity the time of listening and help us to renew our “Yes” to the work of the Spirit.**

FOURTH DAY – 2 September

MARY, SERVANT OF THE LORD who lived in an unconditional surrender of a “Yes”

The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. ...Then Mary

said, «Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word» (Lk 1: 35.38).

«We could translate this response of Mary thus: «Behold the one who is ready to serve the Lord». It is offering to the Lord the worship of life, not the celebration of rituals: a life lived according to him, coherent with the demands of the Covenant. So « *Here am I, the servant of the Lord* » means: I am ready to serve the Lord unconditionally, offering to him the worship of my life, lived according to him, his project. I am ready to know the Lord, doing what wills, living, as he wants. Only in this manner, we can understand the response of Mary. Hers is the response of the one who can accept the unexpected proposal of God ... Mary had not yet known Jesus when she said: «Here am I, servant of the Lord». She lived like the one who let oneself to be led by her faith towards the one who she will later call by name: and the name is Jesus. Thus, our journey of faith is a possibility that is opened to us for an encounter with Jesus Christ: which is a going together with him, as if we have never discovered, and a remembering of him.... It is simultaneously a going and remembering; becoming a memory and a journey towards the Lord. Like Mary» (cf Giovanni Moiola, *Il mistero di Maria*, p 52).

Short pause

guide: *Maria Bambina*, «*Servant of the Lord*»,

all: **teach us the unconditional surrender and help us to renew our “Yes” to the unpredictability of God**

FIFTH DAY – 3 September

MARY, WITNESS OF A JOY announced in the availability of a “Yes”

My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name. His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. (Lk 1:46-50).

«Mary was a young woman whose heart overflowed with joy (cf. Lk 1:47), whose eyes, reflecting the light of the Holy Spirit, looked at life with faith and treasured all things in her youthful heart (cf. Lk 2:19.51). She was energetic, ready to set out immediately once she knew that her cousin needed her. She did not think about her own plans, but went “with haste” to the hill country (Lk 1:39). (CV, 46).

“May Mary's soul be in each one to magnify the Lord, may Mary's spirit be in each one to rejoice in God; if, according to the flesh, the Mother of Christ is one alone, according to the faith all souls bring forth Christ; each, in fact, welcomes the Word of God within”. Thus, interpreting Our Lady's very words, St. Ambrose invites us to ensure that the Lord can find a dwelling place in our own souls and lives. Not only must we carry him in our hearts, but we must bring him to the world, so that we too can bring forth Christ for our epoch. Let us pray the Lord to help us praise him with Mary's spirit and soul, and to bring Christ back to our world» (*Benedetto XVI General Audience, 15-II-2006*).

Short pause

guide: *Maria Bambina*, «*witness of joy*»,

all: **communicate to us the joy of availability and help us to renew our “Yes” to the demands of our journey.**

SIXTH DAY – 4 September

MARY, MOTHER OF THE REDEEMER wrapped by the tenderness of a “Yes”

And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger (Lk 2:7).

«Mary first conceived Jesus in faith and then in the flesh, when she said “yes” to the message God gave her through the angel. But what took place most singularly in the Virgin Mary also takes place within us, spiritually, when we receive the word of God with a good and sincere heart and put it into practice. It is as if God takes flesh within us; he comes to dwell in us, for he dwells in all who love him and keep his word. It is not easy to understand this, but really, it is easy to feel it in our heart.... Believing in Jesus means giving him our flesh with the humility and courage of Mary, so that he can continue to dwell in our midst. It means giving him our hands, to caress the little ones and the poor; our feet, to go forth and meet our brothers and sisters; our arms, to hold up the weak and to work in the Lord's vineyard, our minds, to think and act in the light of the Gospel; and especially to offer our hearts to love and to make choices in accordance with God's will. All this happens thanks to the working of the Holy Spirit. And in this way we become instruments in God's hands, so that Jesus can act in the world through us» (*Pope Francis, October 2013*).

Short pause

guide: *Maria Bambina*, «*Mother of the Redeemer*»,

all: **teach us the tenderness of love and help us to renew our “Yes” to the many forms of demands of incarnation.**

SEVENTH DAY – 5 September

MARY, DISCIPLE OF CHARITY blended with the courage of a “Yes”

On the third day, there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. 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.” (Jn 2:1-5).

«The openness to the Father which Mary has observed in Jesus [...] enables her to grow in that same attitude, towards Jesus. This is what we see happening in the sign of Cana.

Mary spoke to Jesus of that fact ... and deeply respectful of Jesus’ own time and space, she is ever ready to wait upon him even when she does not know how Jesus will behave: “Do whatever he may tell you”... Mary is therefore model of openness to God as well as to Jesus. God asked so much of her: a life of poverty, of obscurity, of hardship, a life that culminates in the suffering of Calvary ... Jesus requires of her to stand by and watch, yet always apart ... God and Jesus who asked so much of her, have given her over and above her longings. She seems to have a foretaste of this when she declares: “Henceforth all generations will call me blessed, for He who is mighty has done great things for me» (cf p U. Vanni, *Maria Bambina. Historical Background and Theological Reflections*, pp 81-83).

Short pause

guide: *Maria Bambina*, «*disciple of charity*»,

all: **kindle in us the courage of charity and help us to renew our “Yes” to the new demands of the mission.**

MARY, POOR AND OBEDIENT, steadfast in the strength of a ‘Yes’

Standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. 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.” (Jn 19:25-27).

«She accompanied the suffering of her Son; she supported him by her gaze and protected him with her heart. She shared his suffering, yet was not overwhelmed by it. She was the woman of strength who uttered her “yes”, who supports and accompanies, protects and embraces. She is the great guardian of hope... From her, we learn how to say “yes” to the stubborn endurance and creativity of those who, undaunted, are ever ready to start over again» (CV, 45).

Short pause

guide: *Maria Bambina, «poor and obedient»*,

all: **strengthen in us the steadfastness to obey and help us to renew our “Yes” even in the hour of trial.**

MARY, HOPE AND DAWN OF THE WHOLE WORLD, persevering in faithfulness of a “Yes”

«Who is this that looks forth like the dawn, fair as the moon, bright as the sun, terrible as an army with banners? ». I am the mother of beautiful love, of fear, of knowledge, and of holy hope. In me is all grace of way and of truth, in me all hope of life and of strength (Song 6:10; Sir 24:18).

«Mary is the message, the prelude, the dawn, the eve; Mary is the immediate preparation that crowns and brings to end the age-long unfolding of the divine plan of redemption; is the goal of prophecy, is the intelligent key to the mysterious messianic messages.

The coming of Mary in the history of the world is like the lighting of a light in the dark place; a light in the morning, still pale and indirect, but gentle, very beautiful:

the light of the world, Christ, is about to come; the happy destiny of the humanity, its possible salvation, is by now certain; Mary brings it with her.

It was the hour of God, the unique and determining hour the whole of redemption, the birth of Mary; let us pray to her that this new hour, in which her hour continues and reflects, bring to us once again Christ the Saviour” (General Audience - 8 September 1965)

Short pause

guide: *Maria Bambina*, «*hope and dawn of the whole world*»,

all: **enlighten us in our journey and help us to renew our “Yes” perseveringly.**

**At the cradle of Maria Bambina, let us raise our prayer
for the Institute, for the Church and for the whole world:**

*Teach me Mary, to live according to your style,
in the readiness of «here I am»,
in the abandonment of «fiat».
Then my heart will open itself
to the mystery of Jesus as you were open;
teach me not to plan my life,
not enrich myself with my projects,
in order to live the “today” of God.
Let me with you be a disciple of that divine pedagogy
which leads us,
through the by-ways of the circumstances,
to feel ourselves always ever more small and dependent
more poor and meek,
more free in the spirit of the children of God.
(m. Angelamaria Campanile).*