

Novena for Our Lady of Exile

Introductory Notes

What is a ‘novena’? A novena is nine days of intentional prayer for a particular cause/petition, in thanksgiving, or in preparation/expectation. The novena finds its origin in the nine days between Jesus’ ascension and Pentecost, the time when Jesus’ followers gathered in the prayer as they awaited the coming of the Holy Spirit: “When they had entered the city, they went to the room upstairs where they were staying, Peter, and John, and James, and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James son of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. All these were constantly devoting themselves to prayer, together with certain women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, as well as his brothers.”(Acts 1:13-14)

Who is the Our Lady of Exile? She is the Blessed Virgin Mary under a title recalling when she St. Joseph and the infant Christ-child had to flee Bethlehem for exile in Egypt. In fear of losing his kingship to the child “who had been born king of the Jews” (Matthew 2:2), Herod had begun a government program of killing all boys under the age of two. In this story and in Mary’s title Lady of Exile, we are called to see Mary, Joseph, and the infant Jesus in all those who must flee their home for safety’s sake. In the exiled Holy Family, we are called to see all those who must live in a country other than their own, and who may there live in fear and on the margins. As such, under her title Our Lady of Exile, she is the patron of those who forced to leave their homeland to take refuge or to seek work abroad, of all those, homesick for her homeland and hoping to find understanding and sympathy in the adoptive land.”

The Feast of Our Lady of Exile is January 21. This novena is intended to begin on January 13 and conclude on January 21. It is a communal way – as a parish or diocese – to reflect on the plight of those alienated from their homes and who must live in foreign country. It is a way of making intentional time to pray for all those immigrants and asylum seekers who live among us in fear and insecurity.

Preparatory Prayer

(said each day before the appointed Scripture)

My God and my Lord, I come before you in confidence and in communion with Blessed Mary, Our Lady of Exile, St. Joseph and all who are exiled from their homeland, with all who live in fear in a foreign country, and with all who seek a permanent home. Open now my heart and mind to hear your word revealed in prayer, and warm my heart to the cares of all your children. As I mediate on the virtues that adorn of the Blessed Virgin and, above all in the hours of tribulation and anxiety, teach me to imitate her courage and unshakeable trust in you. Amen.

Closing Prayers

(said each day after the supplication to Our Lady of Exile)

Prayer to Our Lady of Exile

Our Lady of Exile, Mother of God and ours, who suffered the anxieties and uncertainties of flight and exile in distant and unknown Egypt, listen to our supplication. Here we stand, trusting in your love as a kind and understanding Mother. We ask your intercession for all families who seek the warmth of a home, the safety of work, their daily bread. Intercede for those who suffer, lift up the discouraged, restore hope to the helpless of this land. Accompany migrants, refugees, and all far from their homeland and family. Give us strength to build a living and holy Church and to work for a just and compassionate world. And after our walk in the world show us the blessed fruit of your womb, Jesus, blessed is. O clement, O pious, O sweet ever Virgin, Mary! Our Lady, pray for us. Amen.

Lord’s Prayer

Hail Mary (seven times in memory of the seven years that the Holy Family remained in exile)

Hail Mary, full of grace,
the Lord is with you.
Blessed art thou amongst women,
and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.
Holy Mary, Mother of God,
pray for us sinners,
now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Invocations

Jesus, have mercy on us

Our Lady, Virgin of the Exile, grant comfort to us.

Glorious Patriarch, St. Joseph, intercede for us

First Day: For the Grace to Seek Jesus

Preparatory Prayer

Scripture

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, “Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage. (Matthew 2:1-2)

Reflection

The shepherds visit the infant Jesus in the manger. The Wise men come from the east to adore him. They recognize the divine child in the midst of an ordinary stable, an ordinary home, and an ordinary family. They recognize him among those for whom no room has been made.

Supplication

O Mary, Our Lady of Exile, open my eyes to search for Jesus in humblest and most ordinary.

Closing Prayers

Second Day: For the Church and her Leaders

Preparatory Prayer

Scripture

When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They told him, “In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet.” (Matthew 2:3-5)

Reflection

News of Christ’s birth frightens the King Herod, and he seeks support from the religious authorities. In their willingness to please the King the priests and scribes give him the information he seeks, using their sacred texts to do so.

Supplication

O Mary, Our Lady of Exile, preserve the Church in integrity and guide her in faithfulness and truth.

Closing Prayers

Third Day: For this Nation and its Leaders

Preparatory Prayer

Scripture

Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, “Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage.” (Matthew 2:7-8)

Reflection

Apparently, Herod shows pious interest in the Jesus, but is really hiding sinister intentions. His generosity and hospitality does not extend beyond his own self-interest and self-preservation. As a king he seeks only facile security and safety.

Supplication

O Mary, Our Lady of Exile, guide this nations and its leaders in the ways of justice and truth that honor the dignity of every human person.

Closing Prayers

Fourth Day: For All Those in Positions of Authority

Preparatory Prayer

Scripture

When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother. (Matthew 2:9-11a)

Reflection

After days and miles of traveling, the wise men enter into the dwelling of the Holy Family and see the truth and light they have longed and for which they searched, revealed in Jesus. They were not daunted by the journey’s challenges nor by the arduous work required to discover the divine.

Supplication

O Mary, Our Lady of Exile, keep all those in authority from the allure of cheap and easy answers.

Closing Prayers

Fifth Day: For All Parents and Caregivers

Preparatory Prayer

Scripture

And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, the wise men left for their own country by another road. Now after they had left, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him." (Matthew 2:12-13)

Reflection

Joseph undoubtedly awakened Mary and the baby Jesus in the middle of the night. His was the responsibility of their care and safekeeping. To ensure both, he takes the risk to leave their homeland secretly and move to a foreign country.

Supplication

O Mary, Our Lady of Exile, strengthen all parents raising children in the midst of violence and fear.

Closing Prayers

Sixth Day: For Those Traveling in Search of a Safe Home

Preparatory Prayer

Scripture

Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt, and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet. (Matthew 2:14-15a, b)

Reflection

Joseph and Mary, along with Jesus, made the dangerous and difficult journey from Judea to Egypt. Fleeing violence and danger at home they risked life in a foreign country as aliens and strangers

Supplication

O Mary, Our Lady of Exile, keep safe all who live in fear and persecution, all who flee their homeland in hopes of finding safety for themselves and their families.

Closing Prayers

Seventh Day: For Those Living Amongst Violence and Danger

Preparatory Prayer

Scripture

When Herod saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, he was infuriated, and he sent and killed all the children in and around Bethlehem who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had learned from the wise men. (Matthew 2:17)

Reflection

Herod will stop at nothing to secure his position and power, and in order to do so turns murderous violence against his own people. He turns the knowledge and insight provided by the wise man to the purposes of destruction.

Supplication

O Mary, Our Lady of Exile, hear the cries of the victims of violence and oppression as the hands of their leaders..

Closing Prayers

Eighth Day: For Those Who Aid Immigrants the Marginalized

Preparatory Prayer

Scripture

When Herod died, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said, "Get up, take the child and his mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who were seeking the child's life are dead." (Matthew 2:19-20)

Reflection

In Egypt Mary, Joseph, and Jesus found a new life and a new hope. There they were strengthened by a welcome and hospitality. There they were refreshed. Still, the angel comes to Joseph again; this time offering an awkward kind of good news, that Herod is dead. It is safe for the little family, after years of exile, to return to Judea.

Supplication

O Mary, Our Lady of Exile, keep at peace all those who have made a new home in their adopted countries, and keep them faithful to the culture and places from which they came.

Closing Prayers

Ninth Day: For Peace and Justice

Preparatory Prayer

Scripture

Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus was ruling over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And after being warned in a dream, he went away to the district of Galilee. (Matthew 2:21-23)

Reflection

Joseph returns warily with Mary and Jesus to Judea. In coming back they seek the safety that only peace can bring, and the Holy Family find the small town of Nazareth to settle and re-establish their household.

Supplication

O Mary, Our Lady of Exile, keep in peace and justice all who seek a new life and all who long for a new hope..

Closing Prayers