

## A Christmas Novena – The Children of the Promise

### **Day One – God’s Dream**

Antiphon: Share the mirth of Jerusalem and dance in her streets,  
all of you whose love for her lasts forever.

Reading: Isaiah 40:9-11

Reflection: You must be men and women of ceaseless hope, because only tomorrow can today's human and Christian promise be realized; and every tomorrow is to have its own tomorrow, world without end. Every human act, every Christian act, is an act of hope. But that means you must be men and women of the present, you must live this moment--really live it, not just endure it--because this very moment, for all its imperfection and frustration, BECAUSE of its imperfection and frustration, is pregnant with all sorts of possibilities, is pregnant with the future, is pregnant with love, is pregnant with Christ. --Walter J. Burghardt, S.J. (*Sir, We Would Like to See Jesus*, Paulist Press, 1982)

Intercessory

Prayer: *To each intercession, respond:*  
“The Lord will come and rule forever. Alleluia.”

Prayer: Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
ever faithful to your promises  
and ever close to your church:  
the earth rejoices in hope of the Savior’s coming  
and looks forward with longing  
to his return at the end of time.  
Prepare our hearts and remove the sadness  
that hinders us from feeling the joy and hope  
which his presence will bestow,  
for he is Lord forever and ever. Amen.

### **Day Two – By Justice and by Mercy**

Antiphon: Let us live by justice and by mercy,  
and wait with bright hope for the Lord to come.

Reading: Isaiah 40:27-28, 31

Reflection: The glory of God is a living person  
and the life of each living person is the vision of God – Irenaeus of Lyons

Intercessory

Prayer: *To each intercession, respond:*  
“Our God speaks: Comfort, take comfort, my people.”

Prayer: Rise up, Lord,  
with mercy for Zion, we pray,  
for the time of mercy has come,  
the time has come at last. Amen.

### **Day Three – O Wisdom**

Antiphon: O Wisdom, O holy word of God,  
you govern all creation  
with your strong yet tender care  
Come and show your people the way to salvation.

Reading: Sirach 24:3, 9, 18

Reflection: There is one God, whose word and wisdom made and ordered all things. God’s word is our Lord Jesus Christ who in these last times became human among humankind, that Christ might unite the end with the beginning, that is, humankind with God. – Irenaeus of Lyons

Intercessory

Prayer: *To each intercession, respond:*  
“Our Creator and God, will to fashion us anew.”

Prayer: You are the brightness of the Father’s glory, the image of the one that begot you; you appeared in our human flesh and enlightened our soul by the light of your life-giving gospel. We praise and worship and glorify you at all times. With your sacred wisdom make me wise, O Lord, and grant that I may serve you by keeping your vivifying and divine commandments, entirely and always. Amen.

### **Day Four – O Lord**

Antiphon: O sacred Lord of ancient Israel,  
who showed yourself to Moses in the burning bush,  
who gave him the holy law on Sinai mountain:  
Come, stretch out your mighty hand to set us free.

Reading: Genesis 16:7-16 – A Child is Promised: Ishmael

Reflection: If the lost word is lost, if the spent word is spent  
If the unheard, unspoken  
Word is unspoken, unheard;  
Still is the spoken word, the Word unheard,  
The Word without a word, the Word within  
The world and for the world;  
And the light shone in the darkness and  
Against the Word the unstilled world still whirled  
About the center of the silent Word. – T.S. Eliot (*Collected Poems 1909-1962*,  
Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1963, 1964)

Intercessory

Prayer: *To each intercession, respond:*  
“Let us be awake! The Lord God is so near!”

Prayer: O eternal God, the beginning and end, you who sustain all things, understand all things, who existed before all things, and who are without end, be with us, remain among us; strengthen our intentions, sanctify our souls and eradicate in us all that is evil. Enable us to make a good sacrifice and pour out your abundant blessings, and so enable us to enter into the holy of holies wherein dwells your presence. Amen.

### **Day Five – O Rod of Jesse**

Antiphon: O Flower of Jesse’s stem,  
you have been raised up as a sign for all peoples;  
rulers stand silent in your presence;  
the nations bow down in worship before you.  
Come, let nothing keep you from coming to our aid.

Reading: Genesis 18:1-15 – A Child is Promised: Isaac

Reflection: The Advent mystery is the beginning of the end of all in us  
that is not yet Christ – Thomas Merton (*Seasons and Celebration*, Farrar, Straus  
& Giroux, 1965)

Intercessory

Prayer: *To each intercession, respond:*  
“Come, Lord Jesus!”

Prayer: Above the clamor of our violence  
your word of truth resounds,  
O God of majesty and power.  
Over nations enshrouded in despair  
your justice dawns.  
Grant your household  
a discerning spirit and a watchful eye  
to perceive the hour in which we live.  
Hasten the advent of that day  
when the weapons of war shall be banished,  
our deeds of darkness cast off,  
and all your scattered children gathered into one.  
We ask this through him whose coming is certain,  
whose day draws near:  
your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ,  
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, forever and ever. Amen.

### **Day Six – O Key of David**

Antiphon: O Key of David, O royal power of Israel,  
controlling at your will the gate of heaven:  
Come, break down the prison walls of death  
for those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death,  
and lead your captive people into freedom.

Reading: Judges 13:3-20, 24 – A Child is Promised: Samson

Reflection: The Word of God was made human in order that we might be made divine. The Word displayed itself through a body, that we might receive knowledge of the invisible Father. – Athanasius

Intercessory

Prayer: *To each intercession, respond:*  
“Bring us salvation, true to your promise”

Prayer: Lord, hear the prayers of your people.  
May we who celebrate  
the birth of your Son as one like us  
rejoice in the gift of eternal life  
when he comes in glory,  
for he lives and reigns with you  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, forever and ever. Amen.

## Day Seven – O Dawn

Antiphon: O radiant Dawn,  
splendor of eternal light, sun of justice:  
Come, shine on those who dwell in darkness  
and the shadow of death.

Reading: I Samuel 1:1-20 – A Child is Promised: Samuel

Reflection: As the sun illumines not only the heavens and the whole world, shining on both land and sea, but also sends rays through windows and small chinks into the furthest recesses of a house, so the Word, poured out everywhere, beholds the smallest actions of our life. – Clement of Alexandria

Intercessory

Prayer: *To each intercession, respond:*  
“Come to us, Lord, like gentle rain upon the grass.”

Prayer: God our Father,  
you sent your Son  
to free humankind from the power of death.  
May we who celebrate the coming of Christ as one like us  
share more fully in his divine life,  
for he lives and reigns with you  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, forever and ever. Amen.

## Day Eight – O Ruler

Antiphon: O Ruler of all the nations,  
the only joy of every human heart,  
O Keystone of the mighty arch of humankind:  
Come and save the creature you fashioned from the dust.

Reading: Luke 1:5-25 – A Child is Promised: John

Reflection: Peace is not merely the absence of war; nor can it be reduced solely to the maintenance of a balance of power between enemies; nor is it brought about by dictatorship. Instead, it is rightly and appropriately called an enterprise of justice. Peace results from that order structured into human society by its divine Founder, and actualized by human beings as they thirst after ever greater justice. The common good of humanity finds its ultimate meaning in the eternal law. But since the concrete demands of this common good are constantly changing as time goes on, peace is never attained once and for all, but must be built up ceaselessly. Moreover, since the human will is unsteady and wounded by sin, the achievement of peace requires a constant mastering of passions and the vigilance of lawful authority.

But this is not enough. This peace on earth cannot be obtained unless personal well-being is safeguarded and human beings freely and trustingly share with one another the riches of their inner spirits and their talents. A firm determination to respect peoples and their dignity, as well as the studied practice of sister-brotherhood are absolutely necessary for the establishment of peace. Hence peace is likewise the fruit of love, which goes beyond what justice can provide. – *Gaudium et spes*, 78 (Vatican II, 1965)

Intercessory

Prayer: *To each intercession, respond:*  
“Wake up, Lord! Rise up! Clothe yourself in strength!”

Prayer: Father,  
we contemplate the birth of your Son.  
He was born of the Virgin Mary  
and came to live among us.  
May we receive forgiveness and mercy  
through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,  
who lives and reigns with you  
in the unity of Holy Spirit,  
one God, forever and ever. Amen.

### **Day Nine – O Emmanuel**

Antiphon: O Emmanuel, ruler and lawgiver,  
desire of the nations, savior of all people:  
Come and set us free, Lord our God.

Reading: Luke 1:26-38 – A Child is Promised: Jesus

Reflection: It is both terrible and comforting to dwell in the inconceivable nearness of God, and so be loved by God that the first and last gift is infinity and inconceivability itself. But we have no choice. God is with us. – Karl Rahner, S.J. (*Meditations on Hope and Love*, The Seabury Press, 1977)

Intercessory

Prayer: *To each intercession, respond:*  
“Tomorrow the sins of the world will be taken away  
and the Savior will rule over us”

Prayer: Come, Lord Jesus!  
*Marana tha!* Do not delay.  
Give new courage to your people who trust in your love.  
By your coming, raise us to the joy of your kingdom,  
where you live and reign with the Father  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, forever and ever. Amen.