

# A Novena for Life<sup>1</sup>

## DAY ONE

Created to Live with You

### Prayer

Father of life,  
help us to long for the fullness of life  
and to know the wonder of what awaits us  
beyond the dimensions of this earthly existence.

### A reading from the Book of Job 19:1, 23-27a

Then Job answered and said: Oh, would that my words were written down! Would that they were inscribed in a record: That with an iron chisel and with lead they were cut in the rock forever! But as for me, I know that my Vindicator lives, and that he will at last stand forth upon the dust; Whom I myself shall see: my own eyes, not another's, shall behold him; And from my flesh I shall see God; my inmost being is consumed with longing.

### (silent reflection)

### Prayer

God of all creation,  
grant us the wisdom  
to understand fully the mystery  
that life has no meaning apart from you.

### A Reflection by Pope John Paul II

The Eucharist is a straining towards the goal, a foretaste of the fullness of joy promised by Christ (cf. Jn 15:11); it is in some way the anticipation of heaven, the “pledge of future glory”... Those who feed on Christ in the Eucharist need not wait until the hereafter to receive eternal life: they already possess it on earth, as the first-fruits of a future fullness which will embrace man in his totality. For in the Eucharist we also receive the pledge of our bodily resurrection at the end of

<sup>1</sup> Based on *Evangelium Vitae*, no. 2.

<sup>2</sup> *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, no. 18.

the world: “He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day” (Jn 6:54).

**Our Father...**

**Hail Mary...**

**Glory Be...**

## DAY TWO

Living Life for Eternity

**Prayer**

Father of life,  
here and now,  
reveal the greatness of your love  
in the inestimable value  
of each and every human life.

**A reading from the second Letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians 4:14--5:1**

Know that the One who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and place us with you in his presence. Everything indeed is for you, so that the grace bestowed in abundance on more and more people may cause the thanksgiving to overflow for the glory of God. Therefore, we are not discouraged; rather, although our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this momentary light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to what is seen but to what is unseen; for what is seen is transitory, but what is unseen is eternal.

**(silent reflection)****Prayer**

God of all creation,  
help us to see our earthly lives  
as but the beginning  
of the plans you have in store for us.

**A Reflection by Pope Benedict XVI:**

I believe... that our life tends in the end toward a discovery of love, toward receiving love and giving love. And the crucified Christ, who presents us with love lived out to the end, as he himself says in the Gospel of John, lifts this principle up into the realm of absolute reality. God himself is love. In this sense, love is indeed both the fundamental rule and the ultimate aim of life.... Human love always lays claim to eternity. Love contradicts death.... This human love is turned from a promise into a fulfillment of reality only when it is wrapped in a love that can truly impart eternity. [Love] is what we are looking for and is the goal toward which our lives are directed. But within its own framework and on its own terms it directs our view toward God and brings us to wait upon God.

**Our Father...****Hail Mary...****Glory Be...**

<sup>3</sup> Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *God and the World*, p. 185f. (available from Ignatius Press).

**DAY THREE****To Truth Through Amazement****Prayer**

Father of life,  
unworthy though I am,  
implant within my heart  
an amazement that you have shared your life with me,  
and have destined me for eternal bliss.

### **A Reading from the First Letter of Saint John 1 John 3:1-2**

See what love the Father has bestowed on us that we may be called the children of God. Yet so we are. The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are God's children now; what we shall be has not yet been revealed. We do know that when it is revealed we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.

**(silent reflection)**

#### **Prayer**

God of all creation,  
give me the grace to live this day  
as a prelude and a preparation  
for eternal life with you.

#### **A Reflection by Pope John Paul II<sup>4</sup>**

Revelation therefore introduces into our history a universal and ultimate truth which stirs the human mind to ceaseless effort; indeed, it impels reason continually to extend the range of its knowledge until it senses that it has done all in its power, leaving no stone unturned.... The truth of Christian Revelation, found in Jesus of Nazareth, enables all men and women to embrace the "mystery" of their own life.... Christian Revelation is the true lodestar of men and women as they strive to make their way amid the pressures of an immanentist habit of mind and the constrictions of a technocratic logic. It is the ultimate possibility offered by God for the human being to know in all its fullness the seminal plan of love which began with creation. To those wishing to know the truth, if they can look beyond themselves and their own concerns, there is given the possibility of taking full and harmonious possession of their lives, precisely by following the path of truth.

**Our Father...**

**Hail Mary...**

**Glory Be...**

<sup>4</sup>Pope John Paul II, Encyclical, *Fides et Ratio*, nos. 14, 15.

### **DAY FOUR**

**To Love Through Amazement**

#### **Prayer**

Father of life,  
as you have given me the gift of life,  
so may I give it away each day  
to you, and to my brothers and sisters,  
that through penitence, prayer, and charity  
my days on earth  
may lead me home to you.

### **A Reading from the First Letter of Saint John 3:14-16, 19-20**

We know that we have passed from death to life because we love our brothers. Whoever does not love remains in death. Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life remaining in him. The way we came to know love was that he laid down his life for us; so we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers.... Now this is how we shall know that we belong to the truth and reassure our

hearts before him in whatever our hearts condemn, for God is greater than our hearts and knows everything.

(silent reflection)

**Prayer**

God of all creation,  
help me to listen with everyone I meet  
to the profound and persuasive echo in their heart  
of the Gospel of Life and the joy of your presence.

**A Reflection by Pope John Paul II**

Yes, dear brothers and sisters, our Christian communities must become *genuine "schools"*  
*of*

*prayer*, where the meeting with Christ is expressed not just in imploring help but also in thanksgiving, praise, adoration, contemplation, listening and ardent devotion, until the heart truly

"falls in love." Intense prayer, yes, but it does not distract us from our commitment to history: by

opening our heart to the love of God it also opens it to the love of our brothers and sisters, and

makes us capable of shaping history according to God's plan.

**Our Father...**

**Hail Mary...**

**Glory Be...**

5 Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Letter, *Novo Millennio Inuente*, no. 33

**DAY FIVE**

**Resting Only in Your Truth**

**Prayer**

Father of life,  
help me to bring every longing  
to the infinite fulfillment  
of every heart's expectations.

**A Reading from Saint Paul's Letter to the Romans 2: 14-15**

For it is not those who hear the law who are just in the sight of God; rather, those who observe the law will be justified. For when the Gentiles who do not have the law by nature observe the prescriptions of the law, they are a law for themselves even though they do not have the law. They show that the demands of the law are written in their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even defend them on the day when, according to my gospel, God will judge people's hidden works through Christ Jesus.

(silent reflection)

**Prayer**

God of all creation,  
when I am afraid, weak, or uncertain,  
open my mind to your truth and goodness,

that reading your word written on my heart,  
I might learn to treasure the life of every man.

**A Reflection by Pope Benedict XVI<sup>6</sup>**

An "adult" faith is not a faith that follows the trends of fashion and the latest novelty; a mature adult faith is deeply rooted in friendship with Christ. It is this friendship that opens us up to all that is good and gives us a criterion by which to distinguish the true from the false, and deceit from truth.... We must develop this adult faith; we must guide the flock of Christ to this faith. And it is this faith - only faith - that creates unity and is fulfilled in love.... On this theme, Saint Paul offers us some beautiful words as a fundamental formula for Christian existence, in contrast to the continual ups and downs of those who, like children, are tossed about by the waves: make truth in love. Truth and love merge in Christ. To the extent that we draw near to Christ, in our own lives too, truth and love are blended. Love without truth would be blind; truth without love would be like "a clanging cymbal" (I Cor 13:1).

**Our Father...**

**Hail Mary...**

**Glory Be...**

<sup>6</sup>Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, Homily, Mass for the Election of the Pope, 18 April 2005.

**DAY SIX**

**Preaching the Gospel of Life in Every Moment**

**Prayer**

Father of life,  
from the beginning of each day and into the night,  
teach me the sacred value of every human life  
from its very beginning until its end in you.

**A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Romans 14:7-9, 10c-12**

No one lives for oneself, and no one dies for oneself. For if we live, we live for the Lord and if we die, we die for the Lord; so then, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. For this is why Christ died and came to life, that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living. For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God; for it is written: "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bend before me, and every tongue shall give praise to God." So then each of us shall give an accounting of himself to God.

(silent reflection)

**Prayer**

God of all creation,  
infuse in the minds and hearts of all who serve us  
in government, the academy, and the healing sciences  
the right of every human being  
to the respect of their God-given lives.

**A Reflection by Pope John Paul II<sup>7</sup>**

For the Christian, [the commandment "You shall not kill"] involves an absolute imperative to respect, love and promote the life of every brother and sister, in accordance with the requirements of God's bountiful love in Jesus Christ. "He laid down his life for

us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren" (1 Jn 3:16).... It resounds in the moral conscience of everyone as an irrepressible echo of the original covenant of God the Creator with mankind. It can be recognized by everyone through the light of reason and it can be observed thanks to the mysterious working of the Spirit who, blowing where he wills (cf. Jn 3:8), comes to and involves every person living in this world. It is therefore a service of love which we are all committed to ensure to our neighbor, that his or her life may be always defended and promoted, especially when it is weak or threatened.

**Our Father...**

**Hail Mary...**

**Glory Be...**

7 Pope John Paul II, Encyclical, *Evangelium Vitae*, no. 77

**DAY SEVEN**

**Remembering Our Forefathers**

**Prayer**

Father of life,

help this nation to hear the voice of our forefathers:

and to believe that God has truly given us the right

to life, to liberty, and to the pursuit of happiness.

**A Reading from the Acts of the Apostles 17:26-28**

[God] made from one the whole human race to dwell on the entire surface of the earth, and he fixed the ordered seasons and the boundaries of their regions, so that people might seek God, even perhaps grope for him and find him, though indeed he is not far from any one of us. For "In him we live and move and have our being...."

(silent reflection)

**Prayer**

God of all creation,

make every one of your children

a defender and promoter of the right to life.

**A Reflection by Pope John Paul II**

[The] Gospel gave a new meaning to the concept of native land [*patria*]. In its original sense, it means what we have inherited from our fathers and mothers on earth. The inheritance we receive from Christ orientates the patrimony of human native lands and cultures toward the eternal homeland. Christ says: "I came from the Father and have come into the world; again I am leaving the world and going to the Father" (Jn 16:28). Christ's departure to go to the Father introduces a new homeland into human history. Sometimes we speak of the "heavenly home," or "eternal home." These expressions indicate what has been accomplished in the history of man and the history of nations through Christ's coming into the world and through his leaving this world to go to the Father.

**Our Father...**

**Hail Mary...**

**Glory Be...**

<sup>8</sup> Pope John Paul II, *Memory and Identity: Conversations at the Dawn of a Millennium*, pp. 62f. (available from Rizzoli Publications).

## **DAY EIGHT**

### **Consecrated to the Sacredness of Life by Christ**

#### **Prayer**

Father of life,  
in every moment of this day  
remind me of the incomparable value  
of every human person.

#### **A Reading from the Holy Gospel According to John 3:16-18**

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him will not be condemned, but whoever does not believe has already been condemned, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

(silent reflection)

#### **Prayer**

God of all creation,  
as by his birth,  
Christ united himself with us,  
so by the way we live our lives,  
may we witness the boundless love  
of the one who so loved the world  
that he gave his only Son.

#### **A Reflection by Pope Benedict XVI<sup>9</sup>**

[The] words [of Pope John Paul II]... constantly echo in my ears: “Do not be afraid! Open wide the doors for Christ!...” Are we not perhaps all afraid in some way? If we let Christ enter fully into our lives, if we open ourselves totally to him, are we not afraid that He might take something away from us? Are we not perhaps afraid to give up something significant, something unique, something that makes life so beautiful? Do we not then risk ending up diminished and deprived of our freedom? And once again the Pope said: No! If we let Christ into our lives, we lose nothing, nothing, absolutely nothing of what makes life free, beautiful and great. No! Only in this friendship are the doors of life opened wide. Only in this friendship is the great potential of human existence truly revealed. Only in this friendship do we experience beauty and liberation.... Do not be afraid of Christ! He takes nothing away, and he gives you everything.

#### **Our Father...**

#### **Hail Mary...**

#### **Glory Be...**

<sup>9</sup> Pope Benedict XVI, Homily, Mass for the Inauguration of his Pontificate, April 24, 2005.

## **DAY NINE**

## Meditating on the Gift of Life

### Prayer

Father of life,  
may the mysteries of our Redemption  
stir us to contemplate with wonder  
the invincible hope which is ours  
in the Gospel of Life.

### A Reading from the Book of Revelation 22:1-5

An angel showed me the river of life-giving water, sparkling like crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of its street. On either side of the river grew the tree of life that produces fruit twelve times a year, once each month; the leaves of the trees serve as medicine for the nations. Nothing accursed will be found anymore. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. Night will be no more, nor will they need light from lamp or sun, for the Lord God shall give them light, and they shall reign forever and ever.

(silent reflection)

### Prayer

God of all creation,  
may men and women of every time and place  
proclaim the Gospel of Life:  
a Gospel of God's love for us,  
a Gospel of human dignity.

### A Reflection by Pope Benedict XVI<sup>10</sup>

[The] Eucharist is far more than just a meal; it has cost a death to provide it, and the majesty of death is present in it. Whenever we hold it, we should be filled with reverence in the face of this mystery, with awe in the face of this mysterious death that becomes a present reality in our midst.... Death is the ultimate question.... Only when this question is answered can men truly celebrate and be free. The Christian feast, the Eucharist, plumbs the very depths of death. It is not just a matter of pious discourse and entertainment, of some kind of religious beautification, spreading a pious gloss on the world; it plumbs the very depths of existence, which it calls death, and strikes out an upward path to life, the life that overcomes death.

**Our Father...**

**Hail Mary...**

**Glory Be...**

<sup>10</sup> Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *God Is Near Us: The Eucharist, the Heart of Life*, p. 44 (Available from Ignatius Press).