

NOVENA

*to Mary help
of christians*



“O MIGHTY VIRGIN MARY”
in preparation for the Feast of Mary Help of Christians

Audiovisual work: 9 videos with comments from the Rector Major

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15 *Saturday*
MAY



TO LOOK is to turn one's eyes to god.

Mary constantly turns her eyes to the sky.

From the moment of the Annunciation she believes beyond the human and teaches us to trust in what God promises.



BIBLICAL REFERENCE

Annunciation Lk 1, 26-38

“How will this take place, for I know no man?” The angel answered her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will cover you with his shadow. Therefore the one to be born will be holy and will be called the Son of God.” Then Mary said, “Behold, the handmaid of the Lord, let it be to me according to your word.”



ACTUALIZATION

Sometimes one happens to live in conditions in which it seems impossible to cast one’s gaze upwards. Forced by a situation or an infirmity, we tend to look only downwards, not beyond our feet, our limits. But Jesus Christ came among us to transform us, from being “bowed to the ground” to being able to face life as

resurrected. Able to look up, to Him, with a new gaze, “intent at the things that are not seen; for the things that are seen are for a time, but the things that are not seen are eternal.” (2 Cor 4: 16-18).



TALE OF DON BOSCO'S LIFE

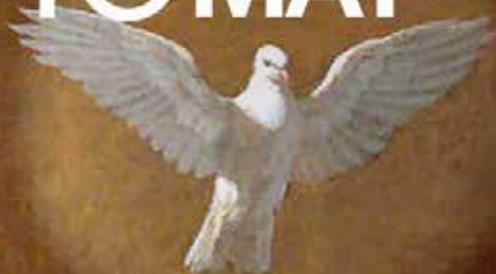
On May 14, 1887, the Basilica of the Sacred Heart in Rome was consecrated. The next day, Don Bosco wanted to celebrate Mass at the altar of Mary Help of Christians. He had just started when Father Viglietti, who was assisting him, saw him burst into tears. A long, uncontrollable cry. “What’s with you, Don Bosco? Are you not well?” Don Bosco shook his head: “I had before my eyes, alive, the scene of my first dream, when I was nine years old.” In that distant dream, Our Lady had told him: “In due time you will understand everything.” Now, looking back on his life, he seemed to understand everything. Was it worth making so many sacrifices, so much work, for the salvation of children? Yes, looking at Don Bosco, we too can say: “It is worth it!”



PRAYER

Oh most holy and immaculate Virgin Mary, our most tender Mother and powerful Help of Christians, we consecrate ourselves entirely to your sweet love and to your holy service. We consecrate to you the mind with its thoughts, the heart with its affections, the body with its feelings and with all its strength, and we promise to always want to work for the greater glory of God. We beseech thee, O great Mother of God, teach us to imitate thy virtues in us, especially deep humility and ardent charity. We invoke you with confidence
O Mary Help of Christians
in temptation,
that we may find shelter
under your beloved mantle of Mother.

16 Sunday
MAY



TO LOOK is to contemplate.

Mary sings the Magnificat.

In Mary's gaze we discover an irrepressible joy - "Magnificat anima mea Dominum!" - her soul contemplates the Son of God in her womb.



BIBLICAL REFERENCE

Magnificat - Lk 1, 47-55

Then Mary said: "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God, my Saviour, for He has looked at the humility of his servant. From now on, all generations will call me blessed. The Almighty has done to me great things, and Holy is His name."



ACTUALIZATION

In these months we stopped; forced, but we did. To stop, however, does not mean to remain immobile, but to seek a balance. Stopping means creating spaces every day that allow the daily routine to broaden the horizons of the mind and find corners for contemplation. Our generation, marked by the haste of action, is asked to rediscover the importance of contemplation.

But we contemplate only starting from a limit, that urges us to look deeply and to know how to grasp the presence of the Creator in everything. Only by educating ourselves in the art of contemplating is it possible to have a true relationship with the world and finally to love.



TALE OF DON BOSCO'S LIFE

Don Bosco's love for Our Lady was contagious among the Salesians and young people. They made it the center of their spiritual life until they reached the heights of contemplation. As he himself says: "One day I entered the church of Mary Help of Christians through the main door, towards evening. When I was about halfway through the church, I saw that the picture of the Madonna was covered with a dark drape. I said to myself: - Who knows why the sacristan covered that image !? - As I approached the presbytery, I saw that the cloth was moving. A little later, it slowly lowered until it touched the floor. He adored the Blessed Sacrament, made the sign of the cross and went out through the sacristy. That cloth

was a son of Don Bosco! In an ecstasy of love it had raised itself up to the image of the Most Holy Mary to see her better, contemplate her, love her, kiss her immaculate feet.



PRAYER

O Mary, powerful Virgin,
You great illustrious garrison of the Church;
You the marvelous help of Christians;
You terrible as an army arrayed in battle;
You alone have destroyed every heresy
throughout the world;
You in distress, in strife, in hardship
defend us from the enemy and at the hour of death
receive our soul in Paradise!

Amen

17 *Monday*
MAY



TO LOOK is to understand reality
in its entirety.

Mary safeguards everything in her heart.

Mary knows that what happens to her today may upset her, but tomorrow it will reveal itself in its greatest purpose. She knows how to hold back, she knows how to keep silent, she never despairs and guards the entirety of the history of humanity.



BIBLICAL REFERENCE

First Easter of Jesus - Lk 2, 41-52

Believing he was in their company, they traveled for a day and then began to search for him among their relatives and acquaintances. After three days, they found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and questioning them. His mother said to him: “Son, why have you done this to us? Your father and I, distressed, were looking for you.” And he answered, “Why did you seek me? Did you not know that I must attend to my Father’s affairs?”.



ACTUALIZATION

Reality appears as an unstoppable sequence of actions and events that follow one another. We find it

hard to contain “it all”, to give an overall sense to what happens to us, to treasure the past and to look to the future with hope. Instead, an attentive gaze manages to have a broad view of things, has the ability to connect, to endure, to look to the present by linking it to yesterday and tomorrow.



TALE OF DON BOSCO'S LIFE

One day - it was 1847 - the Queen of Heaven appeared to me in a dream in a bower of roses. I began to walk and immediately realized that the roses had very sharp thorns. I felt strong pains in my feet but, encouraged by the Blessed Virgin, I continued my journey. I then reached a beautiful garden. A light breeze arose and I found myself surrounded by many young people, assisted by priests and brothers. The Blessed Virgin asked me: “Do you know what all this means?” “No, please explain it to me.” “Know that the path you have journeyed among roses and thorns is the same as the one you will walk when you care for the youth: you will have to walk in the shoes of mortification. The thorns on the ground represent human likes and

dislikes that distract the educator, wound him, and arrest his mission. The roses are symbols of the ardent charity that must distinguish you and your coadjutors. The other thorns are the obstacles, the sufferings, the sorrows that will befall you. But do not lose heart. With charity and mortification you will overcome everything and you will reach the roses without thorns”.



PRAYER

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defend us from the enemy and at the hour of death
receive our soul in Paradise!

Amen

18 *Tuesday*
MAY



TO LOOK is blessing, through which
everyone discovers himself.

Under the gaze of Mary, Jesus grew in holiness and wisdom.

Mary was the first to have a look of gratuitous love towards Jesus. From this gaze springs the manifestation of God's love; an infinite love, which goes beyond all sins, limits, failures, and which continues to trust and look at existence with hope.



BIBLICAL REFERENCE

Presentation of Jesus - Lk 2, 22-40

When the days of their ritual purification, according to the law of Moses, were completed, they took the child to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord. The father and mother of Jesus marvelled at the things that were spoken of him. Simeon blessed them and said to Mary: "Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed." They returned to Galilee, to their city of Nazareth. The child grew, strong in spirit, full of wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him.



ACTUALIZATION

“Then Jesus, having fixed his gaze on him, loved him”. It was not a simple gaze. It was staring with intensity, looking inside, until it reached the deepest part of the heart. Jesus teaches us to see, to know, to welcome, to love freely. Are we capable of these gazes? In our family, at work, at the oratory, in our daily occupations, are we aware that our gaze has the power to define our neighbor?



TALE OF DON BOSCO'S LIFE

On January 1, 1866, Don Bosco told the Oratory he had dreamed of a terrible flood, and that he had taken refuge with his youngsters on a large raft. “When everyone was on the boat,” he said, “I took command and said: ‘Mary is the Star of the Sea. She does not abandon those who trust in Her.’ After a navigation full of dangers, the raft landed on a beach where a statue of Mary Help of Christians stood. All the young people went forward to thank the Celestial Virgin for her many favors. While they were looking at the statue

... 'Our Lady is moving her eyes!,' some exclaimed. Shortly after, a second cry: 'Our Lady moves her hands!' Tears flowed with emotion down our cheeks. 'Our Lady moves her lips!,' said others. There was a profound silence. Our Lady opened her mouth and in a soft voice said: 'If you will be devoted children to me, I will be a merciful mother to you!'



PRAYER

O Mary, powerful Virgin,
You great illustrious garrison of the Church;
You the marvelous help of Christians;
You terrible as an army arrayed in battle;
You alone have destroyed every heresy
throughout the world;
You in distress, in strife, in hardship
defend us from the enemy and at the hour of death
receive our soul in Paradise!

Amen

19 *Wednesday*
MAY



TO LOOK is to turn one's eyes
towards someone.

Mary goes to visit her cousin Elizabeth.

Maria has the impulse to put herself at the silent service of her cousin in need. Experiencing being loved, she puts herself at service, and that is where love takes shape.



BIBLICAL REFERENCE

The Visit to Elizabeth - Lk 1, 39-45

In those days, Mary arose and went in haste to the mountainous region, to a town in Judah. Entering the house of Zechariah, she greeted Elizabeth. Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed in a loud voice: “Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb! To what do I owe that the mother of my Lord should come to me? Indeed, as soon as your greeting reached my ears, the child leaped for joy in my womb. Blessed is she who believed in the fulfillment of what the Lord said to her!”



ACTUALIZATION

In Mary’s gaze is reflected the gaze of the Father, who made her the Mother of God, and the gaze of her Son on the Cross, who made her our Mother. We need her

tender gaze so much; her maternal gaze that knows each one of us better than anyone else; her gaze full of compassion and care, as it urges us to go to our neediest brothers and sisters and to be in solidarity with one another.



TALE OF DON BOSCO'S LIFE

Young Cesare Bardi was now dying and his guardian did not want to call a priest to administer the last sacraments. The voice of its gravity even reached the oratory. Don Bosco immediately went to knock on the door of his house.

- I came to see the sick young man.
- He is asleep, and it is not convenient to arouse him, replied the guardian!
- Then I'll wait! - The answer was not welcome. Don Bosco noticed but did not change his mind.
- Listen, he said, Cesare was entrusted to us at the Collegio of Lanzo, under my direction, I have some reason to meet him. I'm sure he wants to see me. But if you forbid me, I could also appeal to the authorities.
- And would you dare to commit such arrogance?
- Certainly not, but they would say that Don Bosco

had gone to see a friend of his and was denied. It would not appear honorably to your family. - After speaking with his wife, the guardian invited Don Bosco to enter the sick boy's room. As soon as the poor young man saw Don Bosco, he got up from bed and wrapped his arms around his neck, kissed him several times, exclaiming:

- Thank you, Don Bosco, thank you for coming to see me. I want to confess, I was waiting for you! It was a very tender scene. The young man made his confession and became radiant with joy. He also wanted to hang on the wall an image of Our Lady that he never ceased to admire with love.



PRAYER

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You terrible as an army arrayed in battle;
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receive our soul in Paradise!

Amen

20 Thursday
MAY



TO LOOK is attention to which
an action follows.

Mary at the wedding at Cana.

Mary invites confident obedience. When there is no wine: she remedies with her maternal and attentive gaze to everyone's needs, intervening promptly.



BIBLICAL REFERENCE

Wedding at Cana - Jn 2, 1-11

On the third day, there was a wedding feast in Cana of Galilee and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and His disciples were also invited to the wedding. When the wine ran out, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no wine." Jesus answered her: "Woman, what do you want from me? My hour has not yet come." His mother said to the servants: "Whatever he tells you, do it." And Jesus said to them: "Fill the jars with water"; and they filled them to the brim. "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the feast." And they brought him some. When he had tasted the water that had become wine, the master of the feast called the bridegroom and said to him: "Every man at the beginning sets out the good wine on the table and, when the guests have well drunk, then the inferior wine. You, on the other hand, have kept the good wine until now".



ACTUALIZATION

“Take care of me because if you don’t, who will? And don’t let me fall, I would like to spread my wings but I don’t know how to fly...,” says a song. Looking at a situation or a person suggests action. It is the culture of “taking care”, which today must be increasingly educated. The first step in recognizing the importance of caring is to feel in need of it; then I can stop when I see someone else in need. It is one of the lessons we are learning from this pandemic, that can strike everyone at any moment, making us needy. This is one of the moments to learn to be “guardians” of each other.



TALE OF DON BOSCO’S LIFE

On the “goodnight” of September 2, 1868, Don Bosco described one of his dreams. While walking along the arcades of the oratory, he was met by a Lady who, without speaking, handed him a notebook inviting him to read it. “Novena of the Nativity of Mary” was the title. Intrigued, he leafed through the first page, the names of some boys were written in gold. He turned the page; there were others, but written in black ink. The rest of the pages were blank. The story finished,

Don Bosco helped a boy to understand the meaning: “In that book are written the names of all the young people who make the Novena. The very few written in gold do it well; those in ink pray, but with less fervor. Why are all the other young people not mentioned? I believe the reason is related to the long walks, which have distracted them and they are now no longer good at gathering [...] So, to please Our Lady, let us do all we can, attend the Most Holy Sacraments and practice the devotions. Here’s one for tomorrow: do every single thing with diligence”.



PRAYER

O Mary, powerful Virgin,
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You terrible as an army arrayed in battle;
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throughout the world;
You in distress, in strife, in hardship
defend us from the enemy and at the hour of death
receive our soul in Paradise!

Amen

21 *Friday*
MAY



TO LOOK is to notice, to stop,
to not go beyond.

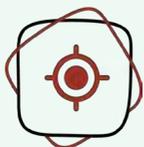
There are those who “see and pass by, on the opposite side”, out of a deliberate desire to avoid the encounter or prevent any emotional reaction. But there are those who see and approach, allow themselves to be involved in the unexpected situation and take it upon themselves: this is what the Samaritan does, who, in essence, is Jesus.



BIBLICAL REFERENCE

Good Samaritan - Lk 10, 30-37

“A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell into the hands of brigands, who stripped him of his belongings, beat him to a pulp and went away, leaving him half dead. By chance, a priest was going down that same road and, when he saw the man, he passed him by. A Levite, too, when he came to that place, also saw and passed him by. But a Samaritan, who was on a journey, passing by, saw and took pity on him. He went to him, bandaged his wounds, pouring oil and wine into them; then he loaded the man onto his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. The next day, he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying: ‘Take care of him; for any extra expense you may have, I shall reimburse you on my return’.”



ACTUALIZATION

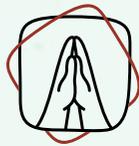
There are looks of love and others of indifference. Gazes that show openness and willingness to understand, to welcome and serve. To look is to put yourself in the shoes of one's neighbor. It is the willingness to step out of the vortex of personal concerns to dedicate ourselves to the concerns of others. The eyes are not only a window from which to look out onto the world and let images in; it is a channel through which we express our dispositions and from which our desires exit. Charity, compassion, purity of heart, poverty of spirit, and willingness to serve are manifested through the eyes.



TALE OF DON BOSCO'S LIFE

Father Cafasso, who had been my guide for six years, first took me into the prisons, where I learned how great the misery of men is. There were many boys between the ages of 12 and 18, all healthy, robust, alert. But seeing them idle, gnawed by insects horrified me. They were unhappy beings. It was on such occasions

that I understood why many returned to prison several times: they were abandoned to themselves. “Who knows,” I said to myself, “if these youngsters had a friend outside who would take care of them, assist them and instruct them in religion on holidays, who knows that they might not keep away from ruin or at least not return to prison?” I communicated this thought to Father Cafasso and with his advice I began to study how to achieve it, abandoning the fruits to the grace of the Lord, without which all the efforts of men are in vain.



PRAYER

O Mary, powerful Virgin,
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You the marvelous help of Christians;
You terrible as an army arrayed in battle;
You alone have destroyed every heresy
throughout the world;
You in distress, in strife, in hardship
defend us from the enemy and at the hour of death
receive our soul in Paradise!

Amen

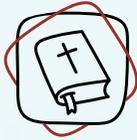
22 *Saturday*
MAY



TO LOOK is compassion.

Mary at the foot of the cross.

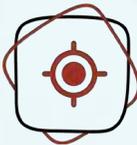
Mary loves each of her children, especially those who, like her Son in the hour of the passion, are prisoners of suffering. She loves them according to the will of Christ on the Cross.



BIBLICAL REFERENCE

Stabat - Jn 19, 25-27

Near the cross of Jesus stood His mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. Jesus, on seeing his mother and the disciple whom he loved beside her, said to his mother: "Woman, behold, you son!" Then he said to the disciple: "Behold your mother!" And from that hour the disciple took her in.



ACTUALIZATION

Compassion urges us not to look at the suffering of others with indifference, but to experience all feelings together. In this identification, the gazes of those who give and those who receive, of those who look at and those who are not looked at, of those who love and those who are not loved, merge together. Thus it

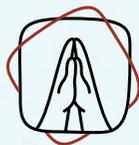
evokes gratuitousness, benevolence and total trust in the arms of God who restores to the creature, wounded by sin, the capacity to love and to feel loved. Compassion can thus flourish even from a broken branch, a prodigy of Love, a miracle of Charity.



TALE OF DON BOSCO'S LIFE

On October 30th I had to be in the seminary. My modest trousseau was packed. Family members were happy, and I more so than they. Only my mother was pensive and she enveloped me with her gaze. She wanted to tell me something and she was looking for the most opportune moment. The evening before the departure she called me aside: "Giovanni, you have put on the habit of a priest. I feel all the consolation a mother can feel for the success of a son. Remember, however, that it is not the dress that does one honor, but virtue. If one day you have doubts about your vocation, for heaven's sake, do not dishonor it. Put it down immediately. I prefer to have a poor peasant as a son than a priest neglected in his duties. When you were born I consecrated you to Our Lady. When you began your studies, I advised you to always love

her. Now I recommend you to be all hers, Giovanni. Love those companions who love Our Lady. And if you become a priest, spread the love for Her around you.” My mother was moved. And I, weeping, replied to her: “Mother, I will never forget your words. I will carry them with me as a treasure for the rest of my life”.



PRAYER

O Mary, powerful Virgin,
You great illustrious garrison of the Church;
You the marvelous help of Christians;
You terrible as an army arrayed in battle;
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throughout the world;
You in distress, in strife, in hardship
defend us from the enemy and at the hour of death
receive our soul in Paradise!

Amen

23 *Sunday*
MAY



TO LOOK is to look beyond obstacles
with hope.

Mary mother of humanity.

Mary present in every moment of the history of salvation is a solid witness of hope.

It supports us in times of difficulty and discouragement. We dedicate our devotion to her, so that she is close to us in our daily existence.



BIBLICAL REFERENCE

Moved by hope: “See, I am making all things new” (Rev 21,5)

And He who sat on the throne said, “See, I am making all things new.” And He added: “Write, for these words are certain and true”.



ACTUALIZATION

We have so many possibilities in everyday life. We can choose to spend our lives worried about what has happened in the past, about possible mistakes made, about missed choices. Or we can choose to look “sideways”, spending our lives looking for someone to tell us what to do, waiting for a word from others that confirms how important and loved we are. Again, we can choose to look “downward”, spending life not feeling up to the task, preferring not to take responsibility, not to run after our dreams. But what

is the choice that Jesus himself made and proposes to us today? To look ahead! To live letting ourselves be challenged and provoked by what happens every day, learning to make everything a school, practicing the art of listening to our heart, the place where the Lord sows His Word every day. And looking ahead we shall discover we are walking behind a Teacher named Jesus who repeats to us, fixing on us his gaze full of love: “Come and follow me!”.



TALE OF DON BOSCO'S LIFE

On 21 September 1880, while the persecution against religious Orders and Congregations was advancing in France, Don Bosco wrote to Father Bologna, director in Marseille: “Fear not: you will have trouble, annoyance, disturbances, but they will not drive you away.” Why such confidence? On the feast day of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, he had a dream: “I saw the Blessed Virgin in front of me, just as she is on the dome of Mary Help of Christians. She had a large mantle that spread around her, and underneath our French houses. Our Lady looked at them with a smiling eye. However, a great earthquake occurred with lightning,

hail, horrible monsters, rifles and cannon fire directed against our people under the mantle of Mary. But they harmed no one. All the shots went to blunt in the mantle of our powerful defender. The Blessed Virgin, in a sea of light, with a radiant face and a smile of paradise, exclaimed many times: “Ego diligentes me diligo” (I love whoever loves me). Little by little, all storm ceased and none of our houses fell victim to them.



PRAYER

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receive our soul in Paradise!

Amen





SALESIANI DI DON BOSCO
EXTRA COMMERCIAL EDITION

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