



NOVENA IN PREPARATION
FOR LOURDES

GRAND PRIORY OF ENGLAND
& BRITISH ASSOCIATION

CHAPLAIN'S INTRODUCTION

DEAR friends, welcome to (yet) another Lourdes Novena, ahead of the annual BASMOM and Grand Priory of England (and indeed international Order of Malta) pilgrimage. You are all invited to join in with the meditation and prayers each day, whether or not you are able to join us in person for the actual pilgrimage, as we get ready both spiritually and practically for our journey to Lourdes.

This year as we celebrate “OMV 50” – fifty years of the Order of Malta Volunteers – I thought it would encourage us all within the British Association, Grand Priory, and Companions of the Order (and be rather nice) if we were to meditate on the OMV prayer, which is one penned by Mother Teresa (St Teresa of Calcutta) and used by her Missionaries of Charity.

As the OMV affirm, it contains within it the “spirit of Lourdes” that animates our pilgrimage, and indeed our vocation within the Order of Malta. Here is the prayer in full:

Dear Lord the Great Healer,
We kneel before you, since every perfect gift comes from you.
We pray, give skill to our hands,
clear vision to our minds
and kindness and tenderness to our hearts.
Give us singleness of purpose,
strength to lift up a part of the burden

of our suffering fellow men,
and a true realisation of the privilege that is ours.
Take from us all pride and worldliness,
so that with the simple faith of a child,
we may rely only on you.
Amen.

We will take it more or less line-by-line, thinking of the pilgrimage we are about to undertake, and bringing to Mary the needs of ‘Our Lords the poor and the sick’ as well as our own intentions. We pray that through her intercession God will bring comfort to all those in any distress, and tend to us all with that care which He alone can give – the very same care which He will inspire in us, as His helpers, during our pilgrimage.

Fr Stephen Morrison, O.Praem.,
Lead Chaplain (and a proud trustee of the OMV!)
April 2024

DAY ONE

WEDNESDAY 24 APRIL

“Dear Lord, the Great Healer, we kneel before you”

GOD came to us in the flesh, incarnate in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and at his birthday we acclaim him “risen with healing in his wings.” He is a Saviour who not only reveals the Blessed Trinity to us, but also reveals our destiny to be drawn into total union with God. In him, we find our healing. To admit this is to admit that we are in some ways wounded, and in need of the Divine Physician. This, of course, is the wound of “concupiscence” within each of us, the result of Original Sin, a wound which is further exacerbated by our personal sins, driving us further from God; the medicine, of course, is grace, which is the free gift of God’s very life in us. The greatest grace, surely, comes with Holy Communion, a veritable “Precious Blood” transfusion gifting us with the life of Jesus flowing within us. But we receive graces and mercy through all the Sacraments and through prayer, as well as in countless circumstances of our lives when God intervenes, without forcing our wills, to draw us to himself.

Yes, we kneel before him now, our Great Healer, asking not only for the medicine we require, but also the inner strength to withstand the disease of wickedness, which is so endemic

in the world, and conquer it, with Christ on the Cross. Each absolution ensures our continued state of being “in remission” – while Christ’s resurrection points towards a future “complete recovery” which is the destiny of each of us, where “death has no power” over us anymore. Our Lady, who submitted so humbly to the will of God, will inspire us to trust Our Lord more. What is of great comfort to us here on earth, is that both Jesus and Mary have the best “bedside manner” of all! Our Divine Physician is “meek and humble of heart,” and Our Lady is no fierce ward matron either (!), but the “handmaid of the Lord.” Truly, they will come to our aid, hold our hands through the painful times, and lead us gently to that elimination of all our “morbidity” – in other words, to that Salvation which is our ultimate healing.

Hail Mary...

O GOD, who by the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary didst prepare a worthy habitation for Thy Son; grant, we humbly beseech Thee, that we who visit the Grotto where she appeared to Saint Bernadette, may obtain health both of soul and body. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Our Lady of Lourdes, *Pray for us*

St Bernadette, *Pray for us*

St John the Baptist, *Pray for us*

Blessed Gerard, *Pray for us*

Blessed Adrian Fortescue, *Pray for us*

DAY TWO

THURSDAY 25 APRIL

“since every perfect gift comes from You”

IN the Mass, as we offer the humble elements of bread and wine to God the Father, we acknowledge that everything comes from him (“de tuis donis ac datis”), and that we are offering back to him elements which we first received from him. Even at grace before meals, we acknowledge that what we are about to receive comes “from his bounty.” God truly is good, and all his gifts are good. Perfection, however, must only come from him, who alone is perfect. Every perfect gift (or grace) comes from him. What we offer may seem paltry of course, but that should not deter us from our offering; great things can come from little offerings. After all, the staple elements of bread and wine become for us his very Body and Blood as our food and drink. Anything that is good in us also comes from him, including all our good intentions and resolutions.

We are about to embark upon a pilgrimage at the service of his little ones; so let us ask for pure motives, and perfect resolutions. We will not be offering Our Lords the Poor and the Sick anything of ourselves if we believe that it comes uniquely from us; rather, in “laying down our lives” at their service, even for one week, we are doing so in order to bring

Christ to them, and them to Christ. We are, in fact, mere instruments of grace. Perfect gifts, then, will reach other children of God through our imperfect hands. That is our privilege, but let the reminder of this fact keep us humble servants about our duty, in order that we may become channels of grace for others.

Hail Mary...

O GOD, who by the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary didst prepare a worthy habitation for Thy Son; grant, we humbly beseech Thee, that we who visit the Grotto where she appeared to Saint Bernadette, may obtain health both of soul and body. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Our Lady of Lourdes, *Pray for us*

St Bernadette, *Pray for us*

St John the Baptist, *Pray for us*

Blessed Gerard, *Pray for us*

Blessed Adrian Fortescue, *Pray for us*

DAY THREE

FRIDAY 26 APRIL

“We pray, give skill to our hands”

THE blessing of the helpers’ hands in Lourdes is a poignant reminder each year that we lend our bodies to the service of the poor and the sick. We ask, then, that our hands may be skilled rather than clumsy, artful rather than sloppy, and genuinely caring rather than just perfunctory. Some of us are “skilled labourers” when it comes to Lourdes, as well-seasoned pilgrims, while others of us, newer to the pilgrimage, balk at the sight of a hoist or a commode and need to learn from others how to administer care appropriately and kindly. But aside from the practical implications, there is also a metaphorical meaning here... we need to learn from God how to be like him. “Come to me, all you who labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest; learn from me, for I am gentle and humble of heart, and you will find rest for your souls; for my yoke is easy, and my burden, light.”

Jesus shows us that he is also our teacher, if we are docile enough to learn from him. Our restless souls need to rest in him. In fact, we cannot work for him at all, if this is not the case. Let us ask, then, for the grace not merely to be

“accessories” to the great work of Salvation, but veritable co-workers and participants in the project of Christ the Healer. Whenever he forgives sins, raises the dead, or heals the broken-hearted or the broken of limb, he always does so with great gentleness and patience. Perhaps that is the “skill” we particularly ask for – and not only for our hands, which we place at his service, but for our souls as well, which we surrender to his delicate care. “Into your hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit.”

Hail Mary...

O GOD, who by the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary didst prepare a worthy habitation for Thy Son; grant, we humbly beseech Thee, that we who visit the Grotto where she appeared to Saint Bernadette, may obtain health both of soul and body. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Our Lady of Lourdes, *Pray for us*

St Bernadette, *Pray for us*

St John the Baptist, *Pray for us*

Blessed Gerard, *Pray for us*

Blessed Adrian Fortescue, *Pray for us*

DAY FOUR

SATURDAY 27 APRIL

“Give clear vision to our minds”

BLIND Bartimaeus is the one who speaks for us all when he begs Jesus for help, saying, “Rabbi, that I may see!” As he is healed, he hears the words “Your faith has saved you.” Bartimaeus had clear vision of mind before the sight was restored to his bodily eyes. That is the sort of vision that St Paul means when he says that “we walk by faith, and not by sight.” In fact, he also says that faith and hope are fixed on things which are “as yet unseen” and therefore are eternal. The eyes of our minds, therefore, need to be opened to those supernatural realities which we cannot see with our physical eyes. All of us, occasionally, are somewhat myopic or blind when it comes to God; but our spiritual cataracts can be healed by the laser-sharp Word of God, which is “alive and active, and sharper than a double-edged sword,” judging “the secret emotions of men’s hearts.”

Faith gives us real knowledge, and real vision. The materialist cannot see how this is true, since he believes that ‘faith’ is a kind of deception or comfort-blanket; but the spiritually alive soul knows that there is an “inner vision” at work in us in prayer, when our souls respond to the call of God to enter

into communion with him. It is often through meditation on his Word that we have a clearer vision of his will for us, and a better idea of what our true vocation is.

As we prepare for pilgrimage, let us ask for our blindness to be healed, and for the clarity of the Light of God's Love to be given to us – that seeking, we may find, and seeing clearly the Way, the Truth and the Life, we may follow him eagerly towards the Beatific Vision of Heaven.

Hail Mary...

O GOD, who by the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary didst prepare a worthy habitation for Thy Son; grant, we humbly beseech Thee, that we who visit the Grotto where she appeared to Saint Bernadette, may obtain health both of soul and body. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Our Lady of Lourdes, *Pray for us*

Saint Bernadette, *Pray for us*

Saint John the Baptist, *Pray for us*

Blessed Gerard, *Pray for us*

Blessed Adrian Fortescue, *Pray for us*

DAY FIVE

SUNDAY 28 APRIL

“Give kindness and tenderness to our hearts”

NOW that we have surrendered our hearts to Jesus, he will make them like his own! Only once we have given them (back) to him, can he do this! “Jesus, meek and humble of heart, make our hearts like unto thine.” The whole devotion to the Sacred Heart of our Lord rests on this important premise, that in the exchange between our soul and his soul, we are transformed into him, in order to imitate him in his kindness.

We are called to be Christ, to others. So not only do we preach him to the world first hand rather than second hand, but we also do not merely “hand on” the Light of the world, we are called to be light for the world and salt for the earth. We prayed earlier that “every perfect gift” comes from him. Now of course we realise, with some trepidation, that we are called to be a perfect gift for others: “Be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” The bar is set terrifyingly high, until we realise that, incapable of perfection ourselves, it is only united with him that we can adequately serve him.

It is his kindness and tenderness that we will show this week, because we are joined to a loving Saviour, a Servant-King, who gives his gifts through us, his ambassadors. By Mary's prayers, may we always be the gentlest and tenderest of Christians, showing kindness and courtesy to Christ's beloved ones.

Hail Mary...

O GOD, who by the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary didst prepare a worthy habitation for Thy Son; grant, we humbly beseech Thee, that we who visit the Grotto where she appeared to Saint Bernadette, may obtain health both of soul and body. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Our Lady of Lourdes, *Pray for us*

Saint Bernadette, *Pray for us*

Saint John the Baptist, *Pray for us*

Blessed Gerard, *Pray for us*

Blessed Adrian Fortescue, *Pray for us*

DAY SIX

MONDAY 29 APRIL (FEAST OF ST CATHERINE OF SIENA)

“Give us singleness of purpose”

ST Catherine, whose feast it is today, may well have displayed great “singleness of purpose” and inspired it in others, basically telling the Pope of the day to get back to Rome and govern the Church; it is as if she told him, “You had one job to do!” Well, we too ask for singleness of purpose. Our purpose is none other than the glory of God and the salvation of souls – which, like love of God and love of neighbour, is really a dual phrase meaning a single thing. Rather like “*tuitio fidei*” and “*obsequium pauperum*” it is a single, rather than a double, charism – one cannot exist without the other. St James points out in his Epistle that Faith and Works need to go together. We cannot claim to have/do the one without the other.

But our motives are so often mixed... we sometimes “do good” not merely for the sake of the good to be done, but to be seen, appreciated, praised, commented on, and rewarded. May the Good Lord, in the words of St Richard, make us generous: “may we serve thee as thou deservest; to give and not to count the cost, to fight and not to heed the wounds, to toil and not to seek for rest, to labour and to ask for no

reward, save that of knowing that we do thy holy will.” Amen!
“A pure heart create for me, O God, put a steadfast spirit
within me.”

Hail Mary...

O GOD, who by the Immaculate Conception of the
Blessed Virgin Mary didst prepare a worthy habitation
for Thy Son; grant, we humbly beseech Thee, that we who
visit the Grotto where she appeared to Saint Bernadette, may
obtain health both of soul and body. Through Christ our
Lord. Amen.

Our Lady of Lourdes, *Pray for us*

Saint Bernadette, *Pray for us*

Saint John the Baptist, *Pray for us*

Blessed Gerard, *Pray for us*

Blessed Adrian Fortescue, *Pray for us*

DAY SEVEN

**TUESDAY 30 APRIL
(POPE ST PIUS V)**

“Give us strength to lift up a part of the burden of our suffering fellow men”

THIS image of lifting up the burden reminds me of Simon of Cyrene, helping Our Lord to carry his cross. It may have been an unpleasant demand, particularly for a man of Simon’s rank, to be forced to participate in the execution of a criminal, and perhaps the Roman soldiers wished to humiliate him, or even make an example of him. But the man derided as the “King of the Jews,” who is in reality King of all Kings, is helped willingly by Simon in his Passion, and a part of the burden of the cross is shared.

It is a magnificent image, and one that inspires us to be Simons for others, and to pray for Simons for ourselves in our own struggles. A burden shared is a burden halved, people say. And even, many hands make light work. We might not be able to eliminate every pain and suffering, but we can, in most cases, alleviate it. Lifting the burden is also an image of “offering it up” – which is always easier said than done. But God will give us the strength, if we ask him, to help others to carry their crosses. We can be mindful too, of course, that the cross of each of us may be the route to our salvation – and that to try to wish it away is therefore not only fruitless,

but perhaps less than charitable. We might wish that it were otherwise, but suffering does exist, and confronting it even with sympathy can be a comfort to the suffering. What is even more useful to them, however, is to “lift up” – with them – the pain they are undergoing and turn it into a cross of victory and triumph. If we can “share the load” then we are truly friends to our suffering fellow men.

Christ himself does not wish us to suffer on our own, either... the “yoke” which to him is “easy” implies that we need to be joined to him, carrying it along with him, united to him... we are not alone, our Emmanuel is truly with us. May he be with our hospital pilgrims as they journey to Lourdes with us, and may we get ready to be a Simon of Cyrene to them all.

Hail Mary...

O GOD, who by the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary didst prepare a worthy habitation for Thy Son; grant, we humbly beseech Thee, that we who visit the Grotto where she appeared to Saint Bernadette, may obtain health both of soul and body. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Our Lady of Lourdes, *Pray for us*

St Bernadette, *Pray for us*

St John the Baptist, *Pray for us*

Blessed Gerard, *Pray for us*

Blessed Adrian Fortescue, *Pray for us*

DAY EIGHT

WEDNESDAY 1 MAY (ST JOSEPH THE WORKER)

*“Give us strength to lift up a part of the burden of our suffering
fellow men”*

MUCH is said by the “politically correct” or “woke” brigades these days about privilege. It tends to signify some sort of negative positive; or the assumption of something we take for granted that is meant to be oppressive to others. Much of the woke talk of privilege is of course nonsense. But that is not to say that there are not those who enjoy privileges while others do not – it is the very definition of the term. For a Christian, it is a privilege to serve, since Christ came “not to be served, but to serve.” Compared with those we serve, then, we may seem “privileged” in the eyes of the world: others – or even we ourselves – may be led to consider us virtuous in our stooping to help them. But to us who believe, those who are suffering are especially privileged, beyond words, to be participants in the Passion of Christ which is what redeems (present tense) the world. As Blaise Pascal put it, “Christ is on the Cross until the end of time.” This does not mean that our Easter celebration of his resurrection is any less real; he did, once and for all, offer himself upon the Cross to save us, and rose from the dead to set us free from death. But he also suffers on, today, in us – and it is particularly apparent in the crowns of thorns and the nails which the sick endure every day. If we are privileged at all, it is to be in a position to help. Obviously, there is nothing

wrong with the correct use of worldly or material privilege, provided that if we command the respect of others we repay them the courtesy of mutual respect. But our Christian service is not undertaken merely in a sense of “noblesse oblige” – it is far deeper. “Caritas Christi urget nos” – the love of Christ compels us, more than any social convention, to return love for love. We saw yesterday the image of Simon; we might meditate today on the figure of Veronica. She does what she can to wipe the sweat and blood from the Saviour’s face, stooping down to him as he fell. If we serve Christ likewise in the poor and the sick, he might just leave upon our souls the image of his holy face... which, surely, is the greatest privilege of all. This truth is one which the Marxists of today either ignore or scoff at. But if we recognise the face of Christ in the face of those suffering today, his image will be imprinted ever more clearly upon us, turning us into his witnesses in the world – a world which sees the price of everything, but not its value. May Our Lady, who reflects perfectly the glory of God, grant us the grace to “seek his face,” and so do likewise.

Hail Mary...

O GOD, who by the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary didst prepare a worthy habitation for Thy Son; grant, we humbly beseech Thee, that we who visit the Grotto where she appeared to Saint Bernadette, may obtain health both of soul and body. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Our Lady of Lourdes, Saint Bernadette, etc *Pray for us.*

DAY NINE

THURSDAY 4TH MAY (ST ATHANASIUS)

“Take from us all pride and worldliness, so that with the simple faith of a child, we may rely only on you.”

IF pride is the root of all sin in us, may the Lord finally root it out! Pride, selfishness, self-centredness, egoism: it's all basically the same predicament. We sometimes think that the world revolves around us, that we know best, or that we deserve everyone's full attention. It is a very worldly sin, but it is also the most common one, given our weak human nature. “Unless you convert and become like little children...” Yes, we need the “simple faith of a child,” which is dependent on its mother and father rather than self-reliant. We need the opposite virtue of pride – humility – to realise that before God, we are nothing and he is everything. One reason why God might permit suffering, is to humble us before him. He gambles on our nature a bit here, because it's sometimes easier to fight and rebel against suffering, and stiffen into stubbornness, rather than accept being “flattened” a bit by it, which must be the beginnings of the virtue of humility. When we are dependent on others, or on medication, or on assistance in some way, perhaps we are being taught that “simple faith of a child” which leads the soul to rejoice in being reliant on God alone. He is so gracious with us, even amid the trials he permits us to undergo, since he leaves us

free to respond to him. Surrender and acceptance may come later, rather than at the beginning of some trial, but hopefully he is leading our soul to just that. One day, our final illness, or however he has envisioned our death, will be that “twitch upon the thread” to bring us home to him. Meanwhile, every sorrow we experience – great or small – is a small tug on that same thread, intended to draw us closer to him. Why do we so often recoil and try to run away? “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” we cry. Well, he cried the same thing, so there’s no shame in that. But finally, there came acceptance, forgiveness, and surrender to the Father. It is not only in our sufferings that he can accomplish this; he wants us to be humble in our achievements too, and “gracious in victory” when he allows us a little triumph. Certainly, we will do something great on this pilgrimage. It will be, in many ways, successful. But the glory always belongs to him, not to us. May we truly “rely only on him” and remain humble servants – and friends – of the Servant King, the greatest friend of our souls. “Not to us, Lord, not to us; but to your name be the glory given.” And with that attitude, let’s pack our bags and get ready for our pilgrimage. See you at Stansted!

Hail Mary...

O GOD, who by the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary didst prepare a worthy habitation for Thy Son; grant, we humbly beseech Thee, that we who visit the Grotto where she appeared to Saint Bernadette, may obtain health both of soul and body. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Our Lady of Lourdes, *Pray for us*
Saint Bernadette, *Pray for us*
Saint John the Baptist, *Pray for us*
Blessed Gerard, *Pray for us*
Blessed Adrian Fortescue, *Pray for us*

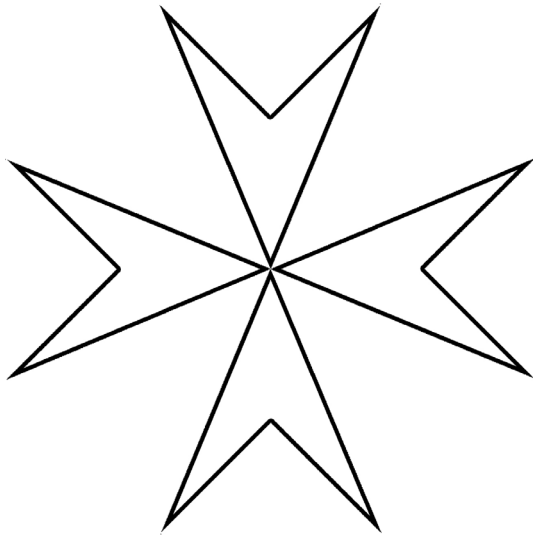
Prayer before departure for Lourdes

OLADY full of grace, I have packed my bags and I'm ready. I'm ready for Lourdes, I'm ready – in other words – for Heaven. Help me to make a good pilgrimage to both destinations! Prepare my body and soul for whatever graces God wishes to give me in this process of healing and conversion, and let me be attentive to His call to be changed from within, and come closer to Him. Let me see you as never before; let me rediscover the joy of the Faith, the joy of knowing and serving Christ, the joy of being your child. Be a true mother to me! Help me and guide me, and accompany me always with your loving prayer and protection.

May I make this pilgrimage as if it were my first, my last, my only pilgrimage. Bless all those who come with us – and those who, unable to travel with us, will accompany us spiritually to your Grotto. May we set off blessed, and return home blessed. Be the beginning and the end of this holy endeavour, and may it bear fruit in time and in eternity! Mary, my Mother, Immaculate Virgin, Our Lady of Lourdes, I trust in you!



O: Mater: concepta: sine: peccato: O: pro: nobis: qui: ad: te: confugimus:



*Produced by the Grand Priory of England
London - April 2023*