

A. Preparation over 12 days and 3 weeks (Fr. Pio Suarez, S.M.M.)

In TD 227, St Louis Marie recommends that “Those who desire to take up this special devotion... should spend at least twelve days in emptying themselves of the spirit of the world, which is opposed to the spirit of Jesus... They should then spend three weeks imbuing themselves with the spirit of Jesus through the most Blessed Virgin.” The following programme is a suggested way to do this.

1. THE “TWELVE DAYS”

To help us to see that we are intended for God, what mission he has entrusted to us, and where he is asking us to go in the course of history, here are some texts.

The encounter between God and human beings. God loved us first, since he created us; he wants our friendship and he came to meet us in Jesus Christ, Eternal Wisdom, through the wonder of the Incarnation. He tells us, through all this, that we have value in his eyes; he reveals to us our own dignity.

Recommended readings: Jn 1,1-18; GS (= *Gaudium et Spes*) 22; LEW 64-72.

Creation and salvation. We were created by God; it was he who willed that we should be made in his own image and likeness, with a very special predilection for us; it is he who intervenes in history to save his people.

Recommended readings: Gen 1,1-2; 4a; Ps 136; LG (= *Lumen Gentium*) 2; LEW 31-38.

Human beings, priests of Creation. The creation was placed at the disposition of human beings by God, that it might serve for their good. But humans must also lend creation their voice to make it sing the glory of the Creator. In the New Covenant, the baptised share in the priesthood of Christ “they may offer spiritual sacrifices and proclaim the perfection of him who has called them out of darkness into his marvellous light” (LG 10).

Recommended readings: Dan 3,57-90; LG 10-11; TD 55-59.

Human beings and history. We are in the service of the Lord, so our lives and our actions should be oriented towards him, for we belong to Christ. So it is up to Christians to work that history might be shot through more and more with the spirit of the Gospel, so that it might lead to the Kingdom of God.

Recommended readings: Col 3,23-25; GS 86 and 93; TD 68.

2. THE THREE WEEKS

A. The first week: self-knowledge

The value and dignity of humans. “What is man that you should spare a thought for him, the son of man that you should care for him? Yet you have made him little less than a god, you have crowned him with glory and splendour” (Ps 8). The human person who can say to God, “Abba, Father”, because re-created by the Spirit, in the womb of Mary, in the image of the only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ.

Recommended readings: Ps 8 and Rom 8,14-17; GS 12; TD 219-221.

Our condition as sinners. To know oneself is also to accept oneself as being a sinner. The sin which goes back to the origins of humanity, and whose consequences we have to bear; the sin that, in our weakness, we commit sometimes... But God always waits for us, and we have to read again the story of the Prodigal Son. We have to “empty ourselves of what is bad in us”, and Mary is with us to help us in this.

Recommended readings: Gen 3,1-24; Lk 15,11-32; GS 13; LEW 39-40; TD 78-82.

Risen with Christ. Baptism, in plunging us into the redemptive death of Jesus, brought us to the birth of the new life and we are promised the Resurrection. It is for us to work that the creation might itself also be transfigured by the power for renewal Christ brings us. As we carry this treasure in fragile vessels, let us entrust everything to Mary.

Recommended readings: Rom 6,3-6; GS 39; TD 173-182.

B. The second week: knowledge of Mary

Mary in the work of salvation. She is the woman through whom we have been given the one who is our salvation, our very Life who renews everything; she is the woman whom the Trinity chose to bring about the wonder of the Incarnation; she is the Handmaid of the Lord who said “YES” to being the Mother of God and our mother.

Recommended readings: Gal 4,4-7; Lk 1,26-38; LG 55-59; TD 14-39.

Mary, Mother of the Church. By her collaboration in the whole of the work of salvation, right up to the Cross, Mary contributed to the birth of the members of Christ, the Church. She watches over us in a motherly way.

Recommended readings: Jn 19,25-27; LG 60-61; TD 201 ff.

Mary and the Holy Spirit. Spouse of the Holy Spirit, Mary is associated with his action in bringing salvation to the ends of the earth, and most especially in forming the apostles which the Church needs.

Recommended readings: Acts 1,8 and 14; Prayer for Missionaries 15-18; TD 34-36 and 43-46.

C. The third week: knowledge of Christ

Christ and the history of our salvation. Christ was sent by the Father “to bring the times to their accomplishment, to bring everything together under Christ as head” (Eph 1,10); having come into our world by the Incarnation, he pursued his earthly journey up to the Passion, to pass from this world to the Father, so as to take us with him.

Recommended readings: Eph 1,3-14; Vatican II, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (*Sacrosanctum Concilium* [=SC]) 5; LEW 105-108 and 115-116.

The Cross of Christ, the secret of our salvation. The “descent” of eternal Wisdom to us, and to the cross which opens for him the way of glorification. It is for us to follow him, especially thanks to the Eucharist, which allows us to be associated with the triumph of the Cross in and through the Paschal mystery.

Recommended readings: Phil 2,5-11; SC 6; GS 22; LEW 172-173.

The risen Christ, the culminating point of our life. “For us, our homeland is in heaven, and from heaven comes the saviour we are waiting for, the Lord Jesus Christ, and he will transfigure these wretched bodies of ours into copies of his glorious body” (Phil 3,20-21). This what the Church is waiting for, the Church which he animates by his Spirit and which “he fills... with his divine gifts so that it may increase and attain to all the fullness of God” (LG 7). True devotion to Mary enables us to recognise Christ as “our ultimate end”.

Recommended readings: Phil 3,7-14; Jn 6,60-69; Col 1,12-20; LG 3, 7; TD 61-62.