Presentation Day
Novena
2014
“The Lord God put grace upon the child...”

(Protevangelium of James, 2nd Century)
The Novena this year focuses specifically on Mary the Mother of God. We have chosen Gospel stories that highlight significant events in the life of Mary and her Son, Jesus. These are bookended by the ancient story of the Presentation of Mary in the Temple.

We have not suggested any hymns or music to use during the Novena days. This allows you to choose appropriately from your own library.

May these days and our great titular feast day, be a source of many blessings for our whole Presentation family.

Society of Presentation Sisters Australia & Papua New Guinea
“We are each given the gift of our journey.
Some days we walk with delight and a lightness
that is filled with clarity and focus,
confidently proceeding with the knowledge that we
are companioned and supported as our life unfolds.
Our awareness of the Divine presence is amazingly vivid.
The map seems clear, the obstacles seem manageable, and our
provisions substantial.
We walk with the assurance of knowing that there is nothing
That can keep us from Love!”

(Taken from Journey of the Soul, Doria Klein CSA)
DAY 1: 12 Nov.

“...and the Lord God sent grace upon her; and she danced with her feet and all the house of Israel loved her.”

Today we remember our Presentation family in New Zealand and Latin America.

We begin our Novena with a reflection on the story of Mary’s entrance into the Temple as a very young child with the reminder that Mary was chosen by God for her special role as the Theotokos or Birthgiver of God. The story is part of Tradition rather than being found in the New Testament, but we are prepared for it in the prophesies of the Old Testament, especially in the book of Isaiah 60:5ff; 61:10, and the words of Ps. 45: 10-15. (adapted from Focus Units of Department of Christian Education)

“Joachim placed her on the third step of the altar, and the Lord God put grace upon the child, and she danced for joy with her feet, and the whole house of Israel loved her. And her parents went down wondering, praising and glorifying the almighty God because the child did not turn back. And Mary was in the Temple nurtured like a dove and received food from the hand of an angel.” (from Protevangelium of James, Second Century).

The Virgin “appears in the temple of God”, an experience she shares with her son, Jesus, whose presentation in the Temple is also celebrated. In the Eastern Church the feast refers to Mary herself as “the pure Temple of the Saviour.” She is the dwelling place of God incarnate.

Reflective Silence...... (quiet reflective music)
“The virgin appears in the temple of God,

In anticipation proclaiming Christ to all,

Let us rejoice and sing to her:

Rejoice, O fulfilment of the Creator's dispensation!”

(Eastern Orthodox Troparion of the Feast)

Paul says ‘you are God’s temple’ (1Cor 3:16), ‘your body is a temple of the Living God’ (1 Cor 6:19), and the Gospels promise a rebuilt temple, meaning the community of believers. God dwells with us in the heart of the Christian community. Not only is the Christian community the Dwelling Place of God, but in the Johannine and Pauline writings the whole cosmos is infused with God’s presence. For Paul, since the resurrection, ‘creation groans in a continuous act of giving birth’ (Rom.8:22). John writes: ‘The Word became flesh and dwelt (literally, tabernacled) among us (Jn 1:14). Jesus is the new Temple – the new dwelling place of God among us (Jn 2:21) and Mary, because she bears God in her womb, is the new Ark of the Covenant, the new dwelling place of God. She bears the new Temple in her womb. We too have a part in this drama. Because Nano becomes Christ working in the garrets and schools of Cork, she too images the presence of God, a disciple of the New Temple, feeding and nurturing all in her path.

(Adapted from Marlette Black, Presentation Charism and Spirituality, 2010)

As we ponder reflectively on Mary’s Presentation in the Temple:

“Let us reverently enter into the temple of our own beings, seeking out, celebrating and nurturing God’s presence in the desires of our hearts and the work of our hands.”
Presentation of Mary from the Melkite Liturgy

We pray......

The angels were stunned as they beheld the most pure one coming in, and they said: O Wonder. The Virgin enters into the Holy of Holies. O Mother of God, you are the precious Ark of God: no profane hand may touch you. But the lips of the faithful will never cease to sing your praise, repeating with joy the angel's word: O pure Virgin, you are indeed raised above all creatures.

Blessing......

“May your roots go deep
And deeper still
Into the holy ground of God.”

(Jan L. Richardson, In the Sanctuary of Women, p.126)
DAY 2: 13th Nov

“Let what you have said be done to me.”

Today we remember our Presentation family in the Philippines and Thailand.

READING: Luke 1:31-38

...you will conceive in your womb and bear a son and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his Kingdom there will be no end. Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I am a virgin?” The angel said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God.” Then Mary said, “Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.” Then the angel departed from her.”

Let us sit with and savour the Word.......

“Then Mary said, “Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.”

Mary said “yes” for the human race. Each of us must echo that ‘yes’ for our lives...
The Annunciation

Cast from afar before the stones were born
And rain had rinsed the darkness for colour,
The words have waited for the hunger in her
To become the silence where they could form.

The day’s last light frames her by the window,
A young woman with distance in her gaze,
She could never imagine the surprise
That is hovering over her life now.

The sentence awakens like a raven,
Fluttering and dark, opening her heart
To nest the voice that first whispered the earth
From dream into wind, stone, sky and ocean.

She offers to mother the shadow’s child;
Her untouched life becoming wild inside.

(John O'Donohue, conamara blues, p.36)

Pause for reflection.....

What words, thoughts or phrases speak to you? You may wish to share these with others.....

Julian of Norwich (14th Century) tells us that she saw Mary’s:

“spirituality in her bodily likeness, a simple, humble maiden, young in years, of the stature which she had when she conceived. Also God showed me part of the wisdom and truth of her soul, and in this I understood the reverent contemplation with which she beheld her God, marvelling with great reverence that he was willing to be born of her who was a simple creature created by him.”

(J. Robert Baker, et. al. in A Sourcebook about Mary, p.32)
The following may be read for further reflection or sharing.

Anunciation

In prayer Miryam watched. 
Eyes of her soul turned inward, 
she watched. 
Ears of her spirit stretched out, 
she watched. 
Watched for Yahweh in silence. 

In awe Miryam listened. 
With the firm beat of her heart, 
she listened. 
With the deep stroke of her 
breath, she listened 
Listened for Yahweh in stillness. 

The Shadow streamed into her 
being. 
Greeting the core of her soul. 
Hearing, she stretched for 
the life source. 
Embracing the quickening call. 

(Ann Johnson, Miryam of Nazareth, p. 72)

We pray.....

With Mary who throughout her life was open to God’s Spirit. 
May we too, have the grace to open our lives to all that you would 
call us to be. 

We ask this through Jesus the Incarnate Word. Amen.
DAY 3: 14th Nov.

“Then the angel left her.”

Today we remember our Presentation family in Canada

The silence that follows is positive and creative – it is the silence that belongs to the very fabric and structure of humanity, and Mary, the pattern and model of what it means to be a person – after Jesus, her Son, exemplifies the essential human quality of silence.

St Gregory tells us that stillness or silence of the heart is nothing else than an attitude of attentive listening. Listening is only possible when there is silence in the human person, listening and silence belong together, as the psalmist tells us “Be still and know that I am God.” (Ps. 46:10)

To be silent in prayer is to listen to God. Silence is presence at the heart of which is God. Silence is not emptiness but fullness, not the absence of speech but the awareness of God’s immediacy.

Silence is waiting on God, and Mary is depicted in the Gospels as one who listened, as one who “treasured all these things, pondering them in her heart.” (Lk 2: 52b)
Let us contemplate that aloneness and silence following the enormity of the message of the Annunciation through the poem of Tom McGuinness SJ.

**Lady so Still**

Lady, so still, lost in the moment of your listening,
Is it the soft wind of the Spirit gently singing?
Do you see the messenger who comes to call your name,
Or is it just a moment in the air above a candle-flame?

Lady, so still,
Lost in the moment when your heart is full of praise,
Show us, in the coming days, the message that you hear:
In your silence God is very near.

Lady, so still, lost in the moment of your answering,
Is the curtain gently torn to open your mind?
Can your soft blood run the risk of bearing us a child?

Lady, so still,
Lost in the moment when your heart is full of praise,
Show us, in the coming days, the message that you hear:
In your answer God is very near.

Lady, so still, lost in the moment of your wondering,
Form the Word that tears apart our darkness, lights the burning sun:
The God of Love who holds our world forever in his hand
Is no more than a murmur in your womb:
The Word is just a murmur in your womb.

Lady so still,
Lost in the moment when your heart is full of praise,
Show us in the coming days, the message that you bear:
In your silence God is very near.
Let us pause savouring the silence with Mary.....

Personal or shared reflection..... what has remained with you as you contemplate Mary’s silence....

We pray....

God of love, help us to contemplate the heart of Mary as it opens to receive the gift of Emmanuel. May we listen to the peace within her heart and be ready to open our own hands and hearts when we hear you call our name. Amen
DAY 4: 15th Nov.

“Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country…”

We remember our Presentation family in England, Ireland and Slovakia.

READING: Lk. 1:39-45

“Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed with a loud cry, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfilment of what was spoken to her by the Lord.”

Quiet time to ponder the Word....

As you pondered the journey of Mary and her encounter with Elizabeth, is there a particular thought that you would like to explore with others?

Miryam embarked on the journey. Her mind precise for the journey. Her soul enflamed for the journey. Journeyed to the arms of Elizabeth.

In the warmth of those arms, she knew. Ancient pathways op’ning before her, she knew. Words of her people streamed from her mouth, she knew. Knew that her God lived within her.

(Miryam of Nazareth: Woman of Strength and Wisdom, Ann Johnson, p.73).
Mary’s visit to the home of Elizabeth is the springboard for a much deeper understanding of the Incarnation. It acts as a catalyst for Mary’s dawning understanding of her role in the drama of God’s plan and for her recognition of those whom her Son will save.

Elizabeth will move us to a response that recognises Jesus as Lord for the first time in the Gospel narrative, as she is the first to use this title for him. She also moves Mary to a response that recognises the justice and tenderness of God for all the poor and needy as she breaks into her song of the Magnificat.

*(Christ our Morning Star, Magdalen Lawler, p.23)*

Shout for joy, O daughter Zion!
Sing joyfully, O Israel!
Be glad and exult with all your heart,
O daughter Jerusalem!
The LORD has removed the judgment against you,
he has turned away your enemies;
The King of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst,
you have no further misfortune to fear.
On that day, it shall be said to Jerusalem:
Fear not, O Zion, be not discouraged!
The LORD, your God, is in your midst,
a mighty saviour;
He will rejoice over you with gladness,
and renew you in his love,
He will sing joyfully because of you,
as one sings at festivals. *(Zep. 3:14-18a)*
We pray......

O God of life, we rejoice with Mary and Elizabeth at the birth of their children. Many children enter this world without the means to sustain them. Move us to work for global justice where the gifts of earth are shared more equally.

Creator God, Mary and Elizabeth shared with each other the good news of your dramatic intervention in their lives. They found in that exchange the vision for a new world order. Encouraged by their witness, may we reach out to one another with our own stories of God’s life within us. In our sharing, may we find joy and hope, courage and clarity. Amen.
DAY 5: 16th Nov:

“Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb.”

*Today we remember our Presentation family in India and Pakistan*

We gather in prayer……*reflective music.*

“Two women locked in a story of birth.

Each mirrors the secret the other heard.”

*(conamara blues, John O'Donohue, p.37)*

“Two women meet

And cling to one another

for comfort and reassurance.

Bodies speaking as loudly as words:

“The God in me

greets the God in you.”

In a barren womb the unborn child

Leaps to life.

*(A Time to Celebrate: The Promise, Gemma Simmonds IBVM, p.16)*

Blessed Mary! Blessed are you!

Bearer of hope for the world!

Co-creator

Graced by divine mystery

To mother-love

Swelling your belly with redemption!
Ah, Mary!
How your soul sang
With fullness and gratitude—
Awed and raised up
By the miracle of mothering
Given to women
And given, now, to you—
The small, the insignificant,
The one without a man
Whom God raised up,
Lavishing in blessing!

(Soul Sisters: Women in Scripture Speak to Women Today, Edwina Gately, p.27)

Reflect and Share:

How are we called to “Bear God’s Word” in a prophetic way as Presentation people today?

How are we truly favoured by God?

We pray.....
God of greeting, you are at the heart of each human encounter. Help us to recognise you when we see you with a human face. Help us to see in our own features your image and likeness, to know that you are pleased with your daughters and sons. Like Mary, may we believe that the promise you made to us would be fulfilled.
DAY 6: 17th Nov:
“My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour”

Today we remember our Presentation family in Africa and Palestine

Luke, 1:46-55

“Mary said, “My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour, for he has looked with favour on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed: for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is His Name. His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever.”

God’s reign has already begun in Mary. Personal, social, and political values are reversed, and the atmosphere of God’s kingdom is already revealed. (Christ our Morning Star, p.24).

Entering into Mary’s exuberant joy at her realization of God’s work in her, let us sing with her:

“God consistently exhibits divine faithfulness and mercy in times past, through present crises and to all ”those who fear him from generation to generation” (Luke 1:50). The powerful and enduring impact of Mary’s Magnificat is generated by the interweaving between the formative and decisive events of
ancient Israel's traditions and the transforming and defining endeavours of Luke's Jewish-Christian "Poor Ones."

In silence we ponder the wonder of God's work in Mary and in us.....

Mary's Magnificat proclaims the reversal of values in a world where the strongest and richest survive and the weakest are crushed. Mary, the strong and exuberant woman exults in the power of God, shining through her human weakness.

Pause for reflection.......

Can we identify the same issues in our own world where the strongest survive and the weakest are crushed? How do we respond to these issues? How do we reverse them.....share .....

“The Magnificat is a revolutionary document of passionate conflict and vindication, calling all believers to a journey of solidarity with all oppressed peoples. Mary's song is the great New Testament canticle of liberation, praising a God who not only promised to dwell with those who suffer, but more importantly has been faithful to those sustaining promises.” (Daniel Casey, Scripture from Scratch)

We pray as with Mary....

My thoughts race ahead over the beating of my heart when I remember your goodness to me. You have visited me! You have overwhelmed me! Take from my song
The strident notes Of pride And arrogance, Strengthen my steps To leave the shadows And find the movement of spirit That keeps us one.

(Mary's Journey: Reflections by Shane O'Connor. Chp.4)
DAY 7: 18th Nov:
“And she gave birth to her first born son…..”

Today we remember our Presentation family in the United States of America

Luke 2: 4-7

“Joseph went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her first born son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.”

“for there is a child born for us, a son given to us. (Isaiah, 9:5)

We contemplate the word….

“The nativity scene can often seem like a children’s story, a magic tale where we all live happily ever after. Instead, for Mary and Joseph it was the beginning of a lifelong pilgrimage: Egypt, Nazareth, Jerusalem, Cana, Golgotha.”
Mary’s questions, begun at the Annunciation, only get deeper, ‘How can this be...?’ Where she goes, we follow – from manger to tomb and beyond. Trusting in God’s promise, even without fully understanding, she shows us the path of true discipleship.

By living our human life to the full, Jesus transforms death into life, human weakness into divine strength. The crib and the cross are one.” (The Closeness of God, Gemma Simmonds p.32)

Reflection.........

Can we trace our own pilgrim journey? What have been the Egyps, the Nazareths, the Jerusalems, the Canas, the Golgothas in our lives? How have these influenced or shaped us?

Share something of this if you wish.....

In a corner store of pilgrim strangers,
She falls and heaves, holding a tide of tears.
A red wire of pain feeds through every vein
Until night unweaves and the child reaches dawn.

Outside each other now, she sees him first.
Flesh of her flesh, her dreamt son safe on earth.

( conamara blues, John O’Donohue, p.38)
“The true light comes into the world!
A light shining in the darkness –
A light the darkness cannot overcome.
A baby treasured,
a heart pondering
The meaning of God’s gift

Have we come to witness a birth or a death?
What is born when the promise comes into the world?
What has to die?
The mystery of birth and death calls us
a sign of contradiction that will pierce
our hearts with a sword,
so that the secret thoughts of many
may be revealed.”

( *The Promise*, Gemma Simmonds, p. 18)

*Share, if you wish, any phrase or image that may have touched you from these two readings.....*

*We pray....*

Christ our morning star – to you
our deepest night is as clear as the day, help us to be aware of the small joys of our daily lives
so that we may recognize the joyful song of all creation that your Son has become one of us, sharing our earthly joys and sorrows too. May we trust you with the trust of Mary and Joseph.
We adore you and we praise you because by your life and your death you have redeemed the world.
DAY 8: 19th Nov:

“Jesus said to his mother: “Woman here is your son,” then he said to the disciple, “Here is your Mother.”” (John, 19:26b)

Today we remember our Presentation family in Australia and Papua New Guinea

John 19:25b-27

“Meanwhile, standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved, standing beside her, he said to his Mother, “Woman, here is your son.” Then he said to the disciple, “Here is your mother.” And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home.”

“To what can I compare you, O daughter of Jerusalem? Who can save or comfort you, O virgin daughter of Zion? Deep as the sea is your affliction, and who can possibly heal you?”

(Lamentations, 2:13)

Reflect on the word........

“Mary is the archetype of all who are bereaved and who have lost loved ones. The loss of the beloved is when our faith is most challenged. With Mary, we pray for the faith that we need to remain steadfast in the face of grief and loss and to recognise the accomplishment of a life lived in God.”

(Christ our Morning Star, Magdalen Lawler, p.60)
Maternal Womb

All is fulfilled!  
Now there are  
No cries of sorrow  
No pain, no struggle.  
A corpse finally at peace,  
Secure in his mother’s embrace  
Silence  
Intimacy  
Peace.

A mother, tenderly  
Enfolding the child of her  
womb,  
Cherishing his blood-stained  
body;  
Naked as the day  
She gave him birth.

Now she hushes him  
Into the dawn of a new birth  
The skulls of our forebearers,  
A symbol of death,  
Now superseded  
By the new creation.  
A new dawn  
Filtering through new life.

The dove,  
Bearing an olive branch,  
Announces  
The new covenant of peace  
His gift to all.
The response to Sieger Koder’s painting poignantly encapsulates Mary’s pain and heartache as she embraces her dead Son. The beautiful image of ‘hushing’ him into the ‘dawn of a new life’ awakens our own understanding of what awaits us as we journey into our ‘promise’. The emptiness of death is filled with the mother’s love; her gift to a creation that has been waiting for the awakening of the salvific promise of the saviour. Magdalen Lawler expresses it in these words:

“She who gave him life now presents him to us – his naked and blood-stained body like that of a child emerging into the world. Her first sight of him as he broke forth from her womb is also her last sight before he springs forth from the womb of God, bringing us with him as heirs. The mystery of Alpha and Omega is played out before us. Mary’s child is born into new life and we are re-born with him.”
(p.59)

*We ponder*......

Across the globe we see women and children suffering the effects of war, famine and drought. The new slavery of trafficking women and children sits as a condemnation of our age. We wonder at Jesus’ ability to provide comfort at his darkest hour, and we ask him to be with us as we seek to comfort those who cry out for our comfort and practical assistance today.

*We pray*....

Lord, your mother felt the pain of seeing her child rejected and killed. May we share the pain of mothers who see their children die through violence or hunger.

We ask you to bring into your presence all our loved ones who have departed. May your mother console us in our time of grief and may our faith be strengthened by the grace of her prayerful compassion. Amen
DAY 9: 20th Nov.

“And the child danced before the Lord.....”

Today we remember all members of the Nagle-Rice family

“In my beginning is my end.” (T.S. Eliot)

We end where we started, with Mary’s Presentation in the Temple using Raphael Consedine’s poem/prayer

*Presentation*

Mary, by your unconditioned Yes, lean down to us who stammer out our weak assent and tremble lest God take us at our word.

By your swift love, redeem our paltriness, when with a sparing hand we dole from what, unmeasured, has been heaped on us.

Without a backward glance you followed when he led to Calvary. Come, lest from that all-demanding love we turn, Lot’s wife, immobile, hard as stone.

Ah, Mary, little one whom God raised from the depths unto the heights, help us, we pray, grow small enough again to marvel at the wonder of our call.

*Pause for personal reflection.....*
The young Mary’s eager dancing steps into the sacred portals of Jerusalem’s splendid Temple, become for us a symbol of the joyful service we owe God in whatever the circumstances of our lives.... The feast of Mary’s Presentation reminds us that the service of God in whatever walk of life we find ourselves is a joy experience.....

It is a delightful tradition to celebrate: Mary, model of Christians, joyfully following the call of God to total self-dedication to Him. What a magnificent fusion of images – Mary in the Temple of the Lord merges into Mary the Temple of the Lord.  (adapted from: J.B. Duffy, Marian Feast).

Marlette Black sums it up beautifully when she says our spiritual legacy is that we are Heart people and Temple people – a pulsating heart that is a source of life and loving energy for our world. She says that “as Presentation people we are called to become for our world, God’s loving gaze and compassionate heart.” (Marlette Black, Presentation Charism and Spirituality).

Reflect on some image or thought that struck you in the readings above..... share if you wish....

Over these days, we have only touched a few of the important events in the life of Mary gleaned from the Scriptures and from different authors who have imagined the ‘more’ that can be imagined from this Word:

Mary the strong and youthful girl who listens to the God who calls her, the vibrant and concerned mother who listens to those in need, the perfect disciple, attentive servant to her son and Lord, the sorrowing mother who bears the burden of a crucified son and whose faith is rewarded in the Paschal Mystery.

These stories have been presented over many centuries, yet they are ever new and ever inspiring. We are aware of the significance of Mary in Nano’s life and we, the family of Nano, who stand under the banner of Mary’s Presentation in the Temple, continue that devotion to Mary in our own lives.
We pray.....

Mary, Mother of God, you are the woman who is always there.
You celebrate with us
The Bethlehems and the Nazareths
Of our daily family living.
You stand by us in our Calvarys
And are with us at Pentecost.
Whatever our need
Or wherever we are,
Mother of all seasons
You are there.

You are the silent space of prayer
In our lives.
You are the yes to God,
Our yes to growth,
Our yes to the birthing
Of Christ in the world.

And however we see you
Or fail to see you,
You are always there.

Final Blessing:

May the words that have survived the ages find a home in you.
May you read them with renewed vision and receive them with open hands.
May their power and their grace be a blessing on your days, fire in the night, companions on your way.  

(Jan Richardson, In the Sanctuary of Women, p.280).