



Christmas Novena 2021

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General introduction

These nine days on the way to Christmas, we want to do it in the spirit of gratitude contemplating the 'Emmanuel: God-with-us' and, adoring his faithful presence throughout our history, written with the life of so many brave and daring people who in the power of the Holy Spirit continue to be instruments of the Compassion of God in the midst of the people.

December 16 (Day 1)

We adore the TRINITARIAN PRESENCE that longs to make its abode among us

Setting: in a prominent place a red cloth in the shape of a heart on which to place the Bible or image of the Trinity.

- *In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit*

Motivation: individually and as a community, let us adore the great mystery of God-with-Us. As in that first Christmas, thus in our present-day history, "God with us" continues to make God's home among peoples, communities, and in the hearts of all people. "God with us" continues writing God's story of love and salvation in our personal, communal and intercultural history.



- *Song for the Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament*

Let us contemplate the Mystery of the Trinity, a mystery which is total donation. The Eternal Word from the bosom of the Trinidad, overflowing with Mercy and Compassion, longed for the redemption and salvation of the human race. Let us adore the TRINITARIAN PRESENCE that longs to make its abode among us.

- *Silence for contemplation and adoration*

Biblical Text: Jn. 1:1-18

Meditation: From the beginning God calls humanity into intimate communion with Him/Her and with others. Our humanity marked by personal sin and structures of social sin is in urgent need of finding the way back to happiness, truth and life. This is possible in Christ, the Word made flesh, who assumed our nature and lived as one of us, sharing our life. When the fullness of time marked by our Father-Mother God had arrived, Jesus summoned men and women and challenged them to give their lives for the same mission that He Himself had received.

From our founding generation: *"If something good comes out of this house, we will recognize it as a grace of God and not our merit. If this work it is from God it will continue, otherwise we will beat our chests recognizing that we have not been worthy"* (AJ). Saint Arnold Janssen was captivated by the mystery of the Trinity. As members of his great missionary family, we share that same passion for God together with so many men and women of different cultures and peoples in the joy of proclaiming God-with-us with our own life.

In our history today: We continue to celebrate God's faithful presence with us. We adore his divine presence beating in the hearts of so many people who have embraced, loved, and given themselves completely to collaborate with the great mission of radiating the Holy and Triune God present in the history of humanity.

Reflection:

1- How can I ignite, enliven the dream of God in the hearts of other people?

2- What meaning do I want to give this Christmas?

Spontaneous prayers ...

Daily novena prayer

GOD OF LIFE you have loved us so much,
that you gave us in your Son the best pledge of your love,
so that, incarnated and made our brother,
in the womb of the Virgin Mary, a woman of the people,
He was born poor to be our brother.
Grant us a more just world, full of joy and Life.

Our Lady of Christmas Eve, Queen of Peace;

May Jesus, blessed fruit of your womb, be born in our hearts and in our people.

Pray for us, that we may build the Kingdom of God among us.

Saint Joseph, carpenter of Nazareth, who with your work gave sustenance to the Savior.

May we, like you, put our lives at the service of Christ

as together with him we discover the mission that God entrusted to us.

Child Jesus, the feast of your birth

is the presence of your love in our families and in our community;

It is the memory of your birth among us.

This Christmas, may we share joy, peace,

the justice and love that you yourself have come to bring us. **Amen**

Closing song to Mary

December 17 (Day 2)

We adore the CONSOLING PRESENCE of God who restores and announces Liberation

Setting: place a root or a trunk with a green shoot.

• *In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit*

Motivation: Christmas is an invitation to joy, because the Lord is in our midst; because Salvation, light and truth are present among us. Christmas is an invitation to joy, because no one can be sad when Life is born.

• *Song for the Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament*

"A sapling will sprout from its Roots, Announces the Hope of the Nations." Encouraged by that Hope that the prophet announces to us, let us adore the CONSOLING PRESENCE of God who restores and announces Liberation.

• *Silence for contemplation and worship*

Biblical Text: Isaiah 11:1-10

Meditation: In a vision the holiness of the living God was revealed to Isaiah with shocking force. This changed the course of his life. He became aware of just how small he was and he understood to what extent the people had turned away from the Lord. For the prophet, nothing that happens in the world escapes the wisdom of God who directs the destinies of human beings according to "a plan." Even in the moments of greatest danger Isaiah promises deliverance as long as trust is placed in the Lord. Isaiah contemplates from afar the Day of the Lord: indicating that a branch, a shoot will blossom from the root of Jesse, the Spirit of God will rest on it. Isaiah imagines the wonderful day when all diseases will be overcome, where everyone, sick, weak, blind, cowards, will all be strong with the strength of God. Isaiah shows us that the God Who saves is the "God with Us", Emmanuel.



From our founding generation: Arnold Janssen was a tireless seeker of God's will. A man who was open to dialogue, who read the signs of the times in a challenging and haunting way. He had the inner freedom to listen deeply and, also, the initiative to respond in new ways. He launched himself to look beyond the borders of his country, and saw the needs of the wider world, feeling a new vision: "*we live in a time when many things are collapsing, therefore new things must be established in their place*". The men and women of our founding generation were open and willing to take risks with the audacity of the Spirit by making their lives a donation, giving themselves totally for the Good News that enlightens life.

In our history today: At the established time, all of humanity was invited to wait. The chosen people received new warnings, reminding them that the Messiah would arrive at some point in history. The passing of the centuries did not extinguish that Hope. The Lord was going to keep His promise. That invitation now comes to our lives. We too want to leave sin behind. We too hear a resounding voice that calls us to serve our brothers and sisters.

Reflection:

In our time, the culture of death seems to close the doors to hope, with laws that promote exclusion? - *What groans strike my heart most forcefully at this time?*

In the midst of these threats: - *How can I show the CONSOLING PRESENCE of God who restores and announces the release from darkness?*

- **Spontaneous prayers ...**
- **Daily novena prayer**
- **Closing song to Mary**

December 18 (Day 3)

We adore the PURIFYING PRESENCE of God that invites us to trust and believe

Setting: The empty crib is placed next to the other symbols

• *In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit*

Motivation: The empty crib is presented, and we are invited to contemplate it in silence.

• *Song for the Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament*



Zacharias and Elizabeth were challenged in their faith, in them what was announced is fulfilled. On this third day of our novena, let us adore the PURIFYING PRESENCE of God who invites us to trust, and believe.

• *Silence for contemplation and worship*

Biblical Text: Lk 1:5-23

Meditation: God's work begins among simple believers, among Yahweh's poor. Zacharias wanted a son, but he had already lost all hope since Elizabeth could no longer have children because of her advanced age. While in the service of God, Zacharias had a vision. Zacharias is faced with an angel who announces that the son he has wanted so badly will be born and will have a special mission. Thus begins the Good News: in a corner of the world, with an elderly couple who have no children. Nothing is impossible for God. The doubts that show Zacharias' weak faith do not prevent our faithful God from carrying out his plan of salvation. He uses it to crown a stage of long waiting.

From our founding generation: Blessed Josepha, Hendrina Stenmanns, allowed God the Holy Spirit to fill her in such a way that she received the grace in her personal vocation, to "open hearts to love." Throughout her life she left her mark wherever she passed by the way in which she lived her life and was always close to, very human and compassionate with those she dealt with. Her love for God was made visible in love and concern for her neighbor. For her part, when blessed María Helena Stollenwerk arrived in Steyl for the first time she knew: "*this is my place*" and there she met other women who hoped with God's goodness and grace to serve in the propagation of the faith. It was thus that the trust they placed in God and the response to the need for the presence of women in the work of evangelization led Arnold Janssen to found the Congregation of the Missionary Servants of the Holy Spirit. Those women were captivated by the Spirit of God, open and available, even when the wait was long and doubt struck their hearts.

In our history today: You have to let yourself be filled with the Holy Spirit to recognize the presence of God in your daily life; you have to open your heart and life in simple things, as those women of our founding generation did. Contemplating the scene of God's visit to the elders Zacharias and Elizabeth, let us listen to the message that they leave us to strengthen our life of faith, of trust, and our ability to surrender.

Reflection

-To what extent is my faith a source of life for the mission?

-How can I be a sign of a Purifying Presence that invites others to trust, to believe?

- **Spontaneous prayers ...**
- **Daily novena prayer**
- **Closing song to Mary**

December 19 (Day 4)

We adore the **TRANSFORMING PRESENCE** of God who calls for conversion and commitment

Setting: we present a LAMP on.

• *In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit*

Motivation: John the Baptist has a profound message to give: the Light is coming and he is the one who announces it to us! John's reason for being is the Messiah; he is to be the forerunner; the one who announces it; the one who prepares his ways. A voice that cries out in the desert.

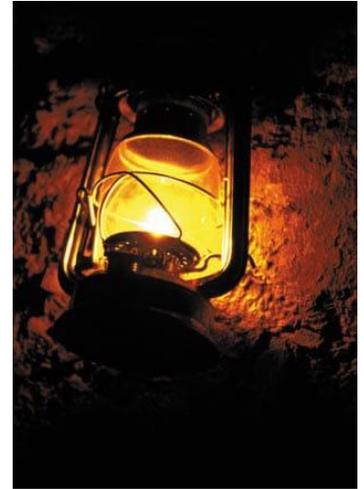
• *Song for the Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament*

John, the Voice that cries out ... the Lamp that burns and shines; the messenger who lives in the desert and from that experience of loneliness and austerity has the moral authority to challenge to conversion, let us adore the **IRRADIANT PRESENCE** of God that calls for conversion and commitment.

• *Silence for contemplation and worship*

Biblical Text: Mk 1:1-8

Meditation: John points out who the Messiah is, one who has already come. John himself is a model of austerity and ardent expectation. Conversion is letting yourself be loved by God. Jesus compares it to the fire that burns and gives light: "*John was a lamp that burns and gives light*" (Jn 5,35). His mission was to prepare the way of the Master: to smooth the way of hearts for Christ.



From our founding generation: Saints Arnold Janssen and Joseph Freinademetz, Blessed Josepha and Blessed Maria Helena and other members of the founding generation, were open and willing persons. With their readiness to risk and with their audacity of spirit they were fully ready to announce the Good News that brings light and life. Blessed Maria Helena Stollenwerk was a bearer of a new charism for the Church and for the people of our times. The love of the One who "*so loved the world*" found space in Helena's heart. Her life was a manger ready to receive God so that He would be known, loved and glorified by all people. "*Beyond the interior and exterior obstacles, she waited, she persevered, she trusted in the Spirit of God.*"

In our history today: That presence, that voice that cries out and resounds in the deserts of our world, continues to inspire us in the throughout our history, it invites us to remember with gratitude the lessons of the past. Calls us to open ourselves to new modes of presence in our current world. It pushes us to continue sharing Good News among the people, the peoples in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Reflection:

Our humanity is in need of that VOICE that calls and commits: - *How can I be a presence Who opens roads, announcing the Savior?*

- **Spontaneous prayers ...**
- **Daily novena prayer**
- **Closing song to Mary**

December 20 (Day 5)

We adore the **MISSIONARY PRESENCE** of God who calls us and sends us on mission

Setting: we place the image of an Angel next to the other symbols

• *In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit*



Motivation: Worship is learning to look at God and let him embrace us and at the same time it allows us to contemplate the peoples and the world with the perspective of our eyes and our hearts.

• *Song for the Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament*

Angel means "Messenger". A messenger of God. The angel entered Mary's presence and greeted her saying: "Hail, Mary." In the company of the Angel Gabriel, a messenger from God, let us adore the **MISSIONARY PRESENCE** of God who calls us and sends us on mission.

• *Silence for contemplation and worship*

Biblical Text: Malachi 3:1-4

Meditation: The angel Gabriel spoke to Joseph in a dream: "*Take Mary as your wife.*" The angel Gabriel intervenes in the temple (Zacharias). This intervention reminds us that salvation is a free gift of God. Just as life can explode in a sterile womb, the joy of life can explode and salvation can come through humble, poor people and ignite hope in the hearts of downcast people. The angel Gabriel intervenes in Nazareth (Mary), during his visit to Mary. He enters into a dialogue with her to explain God's plan. Gabriel acts as a messenger of God. With his language and his attitude, he reveals kindness, love and respect. In this revelation we are shown the actions of God in the history. God does not force our freedom. He offers us his love and respect in His Son. God awaits our free acceptance. There is no love by force. Faced with the gift of life in Jesus, let us say with Mary: "*Let what you said be done to me.*"

From our founding generation: St. Arnold Janssen was convinced that God's will makes itself known in the concrete circumstances of life. His solidarity with the marginalized of the world, led to conflicts with various authorities, which due to internal political systems, caused the expulsion of many missionaries. Even so, the Spirit of God covers us with its shadow and makes the mission fruitful and thus the Word continues to reveal itself in various cultures. Saint Joseph Freinademetz also followed the will of God leaving his own homeland, Tyrol, to go to an unknown land, the land of China. And there, afterwards, he became more Chinese than Tyrolese.

In our history today: we also have our "Annunciations", some are happy, others are sad. With these announcements of joy and pain we build our lives. Thus, we know and recognize in each annunciation the call of God and we pray to have the generosity and availability to commit ourselves, flourishing wherever God wants to sow us. May the presence of the angel Gabriel during this season of Advent heal our unbelief and unleash our tongues to sing the merciful tenderness of our God. Jesus - God's tenderness comes from on high, like the rising sun to illuminate our darkness.

Reflection:

As we get closer to the great Christmas event, let us make silence within ourselves,

to: - *Contemplate the visits of God, the Annunciations that I have received throughout this year.*

- **Spontaneous prayers ...**
- **Daily novena prayer**
- **Closing song to Mary**

December 21 (Day 6)

We adore the LOVING PRESENCE of God who protects and cares for life

Setting: we bring the image of Saint Joseph and place it next to the empty crib

• *In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit*

Motivation: Joseph, just man - custodian and guardian. The holiness and maturity of the faith do not magically resolve the anguish and hesitations of the heart. There must be discernment in prayer and listening to the Word and then the angel of the Lord will arrive to guide our steps.

• *Song for the Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament*



The attitude of Joseph today speaks to our hearts as disciples and outgoing missionaries and we know how to do our part, even where life is in danger. Let us adore, in silence and in humility, the LOVING PRESENCE of God who protects and cares for life.

• *Silence for contemplation and worship*

Biblical Text: Mt. 1:18-24

Meditation: The word Joseph means: "*feed*". Joseph served God his entire life with integrity. God spoke to Joseph and he did not hesitate to accept God's plan. Joseph was the righteous man chosen by God to be the husband of Mary, the adoptive father of Jesus. Joseph suffered a conflict of

conscience in which his love and respect for the person he loved prevailed over the rigor of the law. Joseph allowed God to whisper to his heart and then he set out and acted! "*He went, took Mary and took her into his home ... He took the child and his mother and fled to Egypt.*" When life is in danger, we must allow ourselves to be mobilized from the heart and allow the Spirit of God to whisper to our ears the way what He wants of us.

From our founding generation: Saint Arnold Janssen reminds us: "*When you recognize the will of God, put your hands to work*"; "*Yes we trust in the Lord and when we do our part, he will do the rest and will not abandon us*"; "*Let us trust more in God, the more adverse the matter is.*"

In our history today: With the simplicity of wisdom and serene discernment we can listen as Joseph did and have the humility of knowing that because we belong to God, He communicates with us always. The presence of Joseph in Advent invites us to recognize that God acts in us and in history beyond legal aspects and human complications. We are to take refuge in the Lord and trust in his goodness when conflicts and doubts arise in our conscience. When life appears fragile, delicate, sensitive, just there the passion of the Author of life mobilizes us from within and calls us to recognize the truth, to pray for it, to defend it and guard it after the example of this just and faithful custodian.

Reflection:

May we have the simplicity of Joseph to listen and to allow the Good Lord to whisper in our ear, his plans:

- *I adore in silence, his PRESENCE that accompanies, protects and guards life.*
- *I listen with the Humility of Joseph to know what God wants to communicate to me today.*

- **Spontaneous prayers ...**
- **Daily novena prayer**
- **Closing song to Mary**

December 22 (Day 7)

We adore the VOCATIONAL PRESENCE of God who calls and waits for an answer

Setting: we bring the image of Mary and place it next to the empty crib

• *In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit*

Motivation: Mary is called Blessed by everyone. She is a central Advent character.

We look to Mary to learn from her how to listen, how to expect and how to prepare for the coming of the Emmanuel = God with us. Today we listen to the cries and groans that come to us and put them on this altar before the Divine presence. With Mary, the listening woman, let us adore the VOCATIONAL PRESENCE of God who calls and waits for an answer.

• *Song for the Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament*

Biblical Text: Lc. 1: 26-38

Meditation: Mary is the key figure of Advent. In her the waiting of Israel culminates. She is the most faithful welcomer of the Word made flesh. She receives the Word in her bosom and in her heart. She lent him her life and her blood. She made the first Christmas possible and is a model and channel of the coming of God to all people. The Savior, Jesus was placed in the hands of a young virgin, a Nazarene, betrothed to Joseph. The future of the world was in her hands.

• *Silence for contemplation and worship*



From our founding generation: From the beginning, the SSpS sent to the new mission fields assumed a poor lifestyle, simple in solidarity with the people of the place where they were sent. Saint Arnold's solidarity caused him problems and conflict with various authorities of his time. Still, he encouraged the missionaries to deal with the social problems of the environment, creating education centers, schools, care for the sick and needy.

In our history today: Let us adore the divine presence on our journey with the new missionary challenges which we are called to answer. Let us become aware of our baptismal vocation, by which we are called to participate in the mission of the Triune God. We ask that the Lord continue to bless our great Arnoldus family with seeds of new vocations for the mission of the missionary Church.

Reflection:

Mary became the bearer of Jesus. She said yes and set out to announce the gospel that was throbbing within her. - *To what extent am I a bearer of Jesus? What announcement do I bring to others?*

Mary, the woman of waiting, secluded herself with the child of her womb, in the intimacy of prayer, in silence waiting for the moment to give birth to the one who was conceived by the Holy Spirit. She invites us to return home, to enter our own privacy, to be silent, pray and purify our hearts. *What do I need in order to make Christmas in my heart?*

• **Spontaneous prayers ...**

• **Daily novena prayer**

• **Closing song to Mary**

December 23 (Day 8)

We adore the **COMPASSIONATE PRESENCE** of God who wants to be born in our hearts

Setting: we place the image of Joseph and Mary in the stable (little house) next to the empty crib.

• *In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit*

Motivation: On the way to Bethlehem.... In Bethlehem looking for shelter; a place for the Lord of the world. In silence, let us contemplate Mary and Joseph and let us adore the **COMPASSIONATE PRESENCE** of God who wants to be **BORN** in our hearts.

• *Song for the Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament*

Biblical Text: Lk 2:1- 5

Meditation: Let's look at Mary and Joseph: They begin a painful pilgrimage to comply with what is prescribed by law; and, arriving in Bethlehem, they look for a place because the time has come for Mary to give birth. There in Bethlehem, on the outskirts there is a barn. The first thing that stands out in the barn is poverty. In that extreme poverty God wanted to be born, making the poor his privileged, his blessed. Besides being poor the stable is marginal. God is always away from the houses, away from us, that is the place we gave him to be born, far from our hearts and from our brothers and sisters. We can also say that the barn is warm, the inhabitants of poverty and marginality offer their warmth to the child of Bethlehem and give him a place to be born.



• *Silence for contemplation and worship*

From our founding generation: Saint Joseph Freinademetz was looking for a dwelling place for God in China. It was necessary to set out to find the place. Saint Joseph walked patiently so as to come to know the hearts that would receive the message he was going to announce. He dedicated his life to embody that love in the communion of Christian communities. Focused on the hope of the wisdom of the creator God who made each human being unique and unrepeatable. The love of people allowed Joseph Freinademetz to change his views about the Chinese people and led him to love that culture. For in order to find a dwelling place for God, it is necessary to speak the same language. Joseph understood perfectly that *“The language that everyone understands is love”*, and *“The best place for me is the one where God wants me.”*

In our history today: Our mission is like that road that we are traveling, with its days and nights, with its fatigue and breaks, with prayers and silences, carrying good news in our hearts ... which will be cause of great joy for all peoples. From Bethlehem to our life, our searches to find a place, the sanctuary of our hearts welcomes the life that wants to be born. - *Where is that personal place where I can savor that new, hopeful presence?* Christmas night has to be the right time to get closer to the poor and outcast brother, sister and so on, to enrich us with its warmth and offer it our love.

- *Where are you waiting for Jesus, tonight?*

- *What is the stable that can make the birth of God possible in our history today?*

Let us be seekers of “a place” so that God may be born in the hearts of people.

- **Spontaneous prayers ...**
- **Daily novena prayer**
- **Closing song to Mary**

December 24 (Day 9)

We adore the FAITHFUL PRESENCE of God who accompanies the journey of God's people

Setting: The shepherds and animals are already in the manger. We place a star on the stable and prepare the baby Jesus to be placed in the crib during the celebration.

• *In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit*

Motivation: Guided by the Light of a Star. The night was the moment when God wanted to be born. First of all, the night is silent, and in silence God makes himself present in our lives and in the history of our people; and we pray. Let us adore the FAITHFUL PRESENCE of God who accompanies the journey of God's people.

• *Song for the Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament*



Biblical Text: Matthew 2:1-11

Meditation: The night contains all the mystique of calm, that calm that invites us to prayer,

that calls us to look inward and find ourselves already recognizing ourselves as sons and daughters of God. Christmas night has to be for me and for all of us the right moment to meet Jesus, that Jesus who is born in my heart and in that of my brothers and sisters. Because we believe that the Savior came to restore us and give hope to our world, because many times there were those who were looking for God at night ... those who believed in the stars, God gave them one. As we remember our nights and our deserts, let us worship the presence of our Faithful God in the midst of those nights.

• *Silence for contemplation and worship*



From our founding generation: This desire for God to be known and loved by all flowed within Saint Arnold Janssen. Arnold achieved this through his foundations with the help of Joseph Freinademetz, Helena Stollenwerk, Hendrina Stenmanns, and other missionaries, who continue to proclaim the Word, looking for the places where the Word can be received.

In our history today: Christmas ... each one of us is called "*Called to be Christmas for others*". We are the greatest gift. May we be able to be Christmas! The celebration of Christmas Eve connects us with our family and cultural roots, with our loved ones, those near and far. Now is the moment to present before the manger all the people who were part of this novena. We also want to make you a part of this great celebration of the arrival of the Savior.

Gesture: *I take the child in my hands, express my gratitude and veneration in silent prayer, then I pass it to the person next to me.*

- Spontaneous prayers ...
- Daily novena prayer
- Closing song to Mary