A Novena of Novenas for Justice, Peace, & Creation

This "novena of novenas" is 81 days of intercessory prayer, reflection, and orthopraxis ("right action") for peace among nations, justice for all people, and the care of Creation. We start on the Memorial of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, -- June 9, 2018 and end on August 29, 2018. Our novena dates wander around from year to year, since we always begin on the Immaculate Heart of Mary, a movable feast, the date of which is dependent upon the date of Easter. (It's the Saturday after the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart, which is the Friday after the Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ.)

PDF version of this document, suitable for printing.

A novena is 9 days of prayer, and recalls the 9 days that the Apostles spent praying in the "Upper Room" between the Ascension and Pentecost. This call to prayer consists of nine consecutive novenas -- 81 days!

Each novena has a general intention, the prayers, thoughts for the Journey, and an act of caring for Creation.

Each novena is dedicated to one of the titles of Mary and one or more of the saints of justice and peace, whose prayers of intercession we invoke for our various intentions. It's like calling up a friend and saying, "Please pray for me." The "Works of Justice and Peace" of the first seven Novenas are from the statement of mission of the Blessed-but-soon-to-be-proclaimed-Saint Oscar Romero Catholic Worker House.

Each of the 81 days we will also pray the Novena to St. John Chrysostom on behalf of the conversion of the United States Catholic Bishops, so that they will come to a better understanding of the necessity of authenticity in leadership. We think the orthodoxy ("right teaching") of the Gospel of Jesus Christ calls us to a certain way of living. That's known as "orthopraxis" -- or right action.

The purpose of a novena is not the mechanical recitation of words, but the creation of a genuine time of prayer, an intercessory prayer of the heart, where your relationship with Christ deepens and becomes more intense. Please don't be in a rush. Take your time and enter into a genuine time of relationship with Christ through the Holy Spirit. "... the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words." (Romans 8:26)

If you show up here after June 9th, don't worry about it, just dive into the prayers wherever we are. A novena isn't a recipe for magical incantations, it is a spiritual exercise in prayer, contemplation, and action.

http://www.justpeace.org/novenas.html
The spirit of this novena may be found in these words of the Blessed Oscar Romero... "It is very easy to be servants of the word without disturbing the world: a very spiritualized word, a word without any commitment to history, a word that can sound in any part of the world because it belongs to no part of the world. A word like that creates no problems, starts no conflicts."

"What starts conflicts and persecutions, what marks the genuine church, is the word that, burning like the word of the prophets, proclaims and accuses; proclaims to the people God's wonders to be believed and venerated, and accuses of sin those who oppose God's reign, so that they may tear that sin out of their hearts, out of their societies, out of their laws - out of the structures that oppress, that imprison, that violate the rights of God and of humanity. This is the hard service of the word."

"But God's Spirit goes with the prophet, with the preacher, for he is Christ, who keeps on proclaiming his reign to the people of all times."

Getting Started.
Begin each novena prayer with a time of quiet prayer. You may find it helpful to pray some repetitions of the Jesus Prayer (Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner), a decade of the Rosary, the Chaplet of Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin, or a time of spiritual reading or lectio divina that will prepare your mind and your heart for the prayer to come. This could be a time for a daily examen, where you consider your actions of the day and how they relate to God's call in your life.

**June 9 - 17:** Immaculate Heart of Mary, Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin

**June 18 - 26:** Our Lady of Guadalupe, the Blessed Stanley Rother and all the Martyrs of Latin America

**June 27 -- July 5:** Our Lady of the Precious Blood and St. Franz Jagerstatter, and St Teresa Benedicta of the Cross

**July 6 - 14:** Our Lady Undoer of Knots, and Matthew Talbott

**July 15 - 23:** Our Lady Mother of Mercy and Saints Vincent de Paul and Louise Marillac.

**July 24 -- August 1** Our Lady and Mother Mary Elizabeth Lange

**August 2 -- 10:** Our Lady Queen of Peace and St. Joseph

**August 11 -- 19:** Our Lady of the Assumption and Saints Isidore and Maria

**August 20 -- 29:** Our Lady of Sorrows and Blessed Oscar Romero

**June 9 -- 17**

**Immaculate Heart of Mary and Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin**
**General Intentions:** For the redemption of structures of violence, oppression, exploitation, and despair with beauty, goodness, mercy, and peace. Reparation for sins against life.

**The First Work of Justice and Peace:** Live simply and justly in solidarity with the poor and marginalized and be a good neighbor. Make no war on them, rather, be one with them in spirit, truth, and love.

**Act of Caring for Creation:** Pick up trash in a public place.

God, come to my assistance. Lord, make haste to help me. + Let us pray together in peace, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, help the helpless, strengthen the fearful, comfort the sorrowful, bring justice to the poor, peace to all nations, and solidarity among all peoples. Give us strength to stand against the demonic powers which prowl about the world seeking the ruin of souls.

Open our eyes to see the beauty, joy, redemption, and goodness which comes through obedience to your Son our Lord. Teach us to be a refuge of hope for all who are oppressed by injustice and violence.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for those who serve the poor and who accompany them in their journeys; may we who keep this sacred commemoration experience the joy and love of the grace of your Son; may His most Sacred Heart, together with yours, pierced with sorrow for the evils of the world, be a sure refuge of hope in a time of trouble for all who are oppressed by injustice and violence.

**The Magnificat of Mary.** My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my Savior; for He has looked with favor on His lowly servant. From this day all generations shall call me blessed.

The Almighty has done great things for me, and holy is His Name. He has mercy on those who fear Him in every generation.

He has shown the strength of His arm, He has scattered the proud in their conceit. He has cast down the mighty from their thrones, and has lifted up the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He has sent away empty.

He has come to the help of His servant Israel for He has remembered His promise of mercy, the promise He made to our fathers, to Abraham and his children forever.

**Dorothy Day,** friend and partner of the poor, guiding spirit for the Catholic Worker, home always open to the unwanted, early, often lonely, witness in the cause of peace and conscience, eloquent pattern of gospel simplicity, Dorothy Day, disciple of the Lord, may we continue your gift of self to the needy and your untiring work for justice and peace. Help us to follow your example and dedicate our lives to the creation of structures of beauty and goodness, wisdom and mercy. Amen.

**Peter Maurin,** Holy Fool, teach us to give and not to take, to serve and not to rule, to help and not to crush, to nourish and not to devour. As we create a new
society within the shell of the old, remind us that ideals and not
deals, creed and not greed, are what makes humanity humane.
Amen.

Prayer to St. John Chrysostom on behalf of the U.S. Catholic
bishops.

Thoughts for the journey. Today many swords pierce the
Immaculate Heart of Mary. Injustice, oppression, violence, war,
murder, the rape of Creation -- all these and more are sins and
structures of sin against justice and peace. We know that within our
hearts are the seeds of the problems the world faces.

This redemption begins in my heart and your heart. It all starts, as they say, with
the man -- or the woman -- in the mirror.

If we want to see a better relationship of Christ and the world, we must ask first
about our own personal relationship with Jesus. Is he the Easter Bunny? Someone
who makes us feel good, but who is remote and not really involved? A cultural
construct? A topic in a religious education course?

Or is Christ a living reality in my life?

We are in this for the long haul, and it will be a long haul. We will not wake up on
the 82nd day after 81 days of nine novenas and discover that we have prayed and
worked ourselves into a new world of justice and peace that cares for Creation as
God intended for all of us. There is much more work and prayer to come.

If we think we can do this in our own strength, we are wrong.

If we are going forward in the work of justice and peace, the place to start is with
an examination of our own lives. How do my sins of omission and commission
create and support structures of injustice and oppression? How do I participate in
and profit from the social sins and unjust wars of this age? What must be redeemed
in my life so that I live in solidarity with those our society has pushed to the edge
and further, into the abyss? How can I change my life so that I promote peace,
rather than demanding war? Can I end (or minimize) the ecological harm I cause to
Creation by my lifestyle?

Have I abandoned Christ for secular saviors? Do I bury myself in the busy-ness of
life and ignore God's call?

As you pray these novenas for the next 81 days, let this be a time when your
personal relationship with Christ blooms and flowers. Our prayer for everyone
who takes up these novenas is that their hearts will be open to the reality that Christ
is alive and he loves each and every one of us. He gave his life to save us and our
societies from sin and oppression. He lives today and is at your side every moment
of every day to enlighten, strengthen, and free you. OK, I am paraphrasing Pope
Francis here, but I think the point is clear: the journey of justice and peace is a
journey with Christ.

If we are to change the world, each of us must begin with himself or herself as we
ourselves become the change we wish to see in the world. That change is the
fruit of the Spirit that grows from our personal relationship with Christ.
Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin

Dorothy Day was an early advocate of women's rights who wrote for radical leftist newspapers in the early years of this century. She was a bohemian as they said in those days -- but when she looked in her heart of hearts, she found it empty. By the grace and providence of God, she found our Lord and was baptized into the Catholic Church. Thus began a journey which led to the founding of the Catholic Worker movement, together with Peter Maurin and the other first Workers.

It's clear from their writings that both Dorothy and Peter experienced a tender and intimate relationship with Christ. This relationship was the source of all that they were able to do for the cause of justice and peace. Dorothy was not a stranger to activism; for years she had struggled in the streets as part of the great social battles of the first years of the 20th century -- women's suffrage, the 40 hour week, the right to join a union, justice for workers.

Peter Maurin, a French peasant who came to the United States via Canada, taught that it was a great blessing to assist the rich in coming to the assistance of the poor. Too often, "never the twain shall meet," and certainly, in this day and age, communication between the poor and the rich is as bad as it has ever been. Communication requires that each person who wants to be heard and understood must see and hear the "Other" as a human person. It's not easy, and it takes practice.

The program that Peter and Dorothy offered to the world was direct, personal involvement with other human beings. They called us to open houses of hospitality, to engage in clarification of thought so we would understand what needs to be done, and to found agricultural communities as the seeds of new villages. They believed in the importance of the Eucharist, the Rosary, and many traditional devotions -- because their work responded to their lively interior relationship with Christ. They were suspicious of the imperial State. They wanted the Catholic Worker movement to be an organism, not an organization, that drew its strength from the Eucharist and the real presence of Christ in the lives of the workers.

As the United States empire entered a time of great triumph, they called for establishing the seeds of a new society within the "collapsing ruins of the old. " They taught that the poor should be fed by Christians, not by large government bureaucracies. Peter wrote many "Easy Essays" -- short little works, almost poetry in their simplicity, each one packed with intense theological concepts about the human person and how we relate to one another in community. He also reminded us of the nobility -- and the necessity -- of manual labor (something we'd often like to forget in this day of convenience and instant gratification).

Dorothy and Peter worked to create and live structures of beauty and goodness. In the midst of the slums of New York, they provided hospitality to the poor while working for social justice. They learned that the works of mercy and the works of justice and peace are one and the same, different aspects of the same journey, all going the same direction.

Long before it was a theological mantra, the "preferential option for the poor" was a living reality in the life and work of Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin. They were informed critics of current events, prophetically looking for the truth in the signs of their times, and finding Jesus in the poor, rejected, and marginalized.
Their example inspires us today to consider how we can ensure fair distribution, subsidiarity, economic opportunity, justice, and food security for everyone everywhere. As we open our eyes, our minds, and our hearts to the Spirit's guidance, we can discern our response to the signs of these times. We then can see the structures of sin that bind us in poverty and war, and name the demons which oppress us.

We can buy farms and dedicate them for the purpose of raising food for the hungry. We can organize microenterprise co-operatives in every city to provide opportunity for the poor. We can look at our own individual situations, and adopt lifestyles of simplicity and frugality, rejecting the culture of materialistic conspicuous consumption in favor of a life of living simply, that others may simply live. We can minimize our use of fossil fuels and thus remove one of the major causes of war. We can buy our food directly from farmers, and stop funding the destruction of the family farm community. We can discern the cry of the widow and orphan in our own neighborhoods, and be the hands and feet of God in relieving distress and creating justice. We can open our own hearts to the reality of life in Christ, and embrace him as savior and friend.

Dorothy Day used to quote St. Catherine of Sienna -- "All the way to heaven is heaven." May this be our prayer, in Jesus' holy name.

Caring for Creation

Our act of reparation during this 9 day novena, and going forward, is to pick up trash in a public place. You won't have to look far, but I think there are extra blessings for picking up trash in low income neighborhoods. Trash is endemic everywhere. It is a sign of our careless attitude towards the gifts of this Earth that God has so freely given us. Much trash is useful -- many items can be recycled or repurposed, but often we think only of our selfishness and do not take the time or the care to do the right thing by Creation and reduce our impact on the planet by recycling. Examine your conscience! Do you sin against God's Creation by your casual attitude towards waste? Now is the time for actual works of penance, which is why we pick up trash in public places.

June 18 -- 26, 2018

Our Lady of Guadalupe, Blessed Stanley Rother, and All the Martyrs of Latin America

General Intention: the unjust exercise of authority, and the sins and structures of sin against life.

The Second Work of Justice and Peace: Hear the truth when it is spoken to you. Discern the signs of the times and speak truth -- to power, to the people, and to the Church.

Act of caring for Creation: Start a compost pile and compost your organic waste.

God, come to my assistance. Lord, make haste to help me.

Let us pray together in peace, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of
the Holy Spirit.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, help the helpless, strengthen the fearful, comfort the sorrowful, bring justice to the poor, peace to all nations, and solidarity among all peoples. Give us strength to stand against the demonic powers which prowl about the world seeking the ruin of souls.

Open our eyes to see the beauty, joy, redemption, and goodness which comes through obedience to your Son our Lord. Teach us to be a refuge of hope for all who are oppressed by injustice and violence.

**O Mary, blessed Lady of Guadalupe**, bright dawn of the new world, Mother of the living, to you do we entrust the cause of life: Look down, O Mother, upon the vast numbers of babies not allowed to be born, of the poor whose lives are made difficult, of men and women who are victims of brutal violence and unjust wars, of the elderly and the sick killed by indifference or out of misguided mercy. Grant that all who believe in your Son may proclaim the Gospel of life with honesty and love to the people of our time.

Obtain for them the grace to accept that Gospel as a gift ever new, the joy of celebrating it with gratitude throughout their lives and the courage to bear witness to it resolutely, in order to build, together with all people of good will, the civilization of truth and love, to the praise and glory of God, the Creator and lover of life.

**Pray for us, Blessed Stanley Rother and all Martyrs of Latin America!** Bring to our remembrance this day all people who are killed in wars, tortured in jails, disappeared in the night, starved for food, subjected to oppression, driven from their homes, unlawfully imprisoned, denied religious liberty, excluded from economic opportunity, marginalized by poverty, targeted by racial and cultural prejudices, silenced by violence and injustice. Help us to hear and remember the tragedy, joy, despair, and hope of the voices that call to us and to history for justice, reconciliation, and peace. Pray for us so that by the grace of God we will build a world without injustice. Amen.

**Prayer to St. John Chrysostom on behalf of the U.S. Catholic bishops.**

**Thoughts for the journey.** In this Novena we honor Mary as Our Lady of Guadalupe, protector of all children, whatever their social, political, or physical location may be. She is patron of all those who are oppressed and persecuted and patron of the Americas. We also remember the martyrs of Latin America, victims of cruel conflicts between world empires and corrupt ruling classes. Many of these killings were committed with arms and money provided by the United States, by military personnel trained by the United States. All of us must examine our consciences as to how we benefit from the evil done by our governments.

We name in particular Blessed Stanley Rother, born on a farm near Okarche, Oklahoma. Not a great student, he had to leave one seminary because of academic concerns, but was accepted elsewhere which was better equipped to help him meet the academic standards of ordination. Sent to the mission church of Santiago Aititlan in Guatemala, he not only celebrated the Sacraments, he helped the people better their lives. He introduced new crops, organized a farmers marketing coop,
and did all he could to help them to help themselves. This brought him into conflict with the government, whose policy was that the indigenous peoples should be poor, and remain poor, so they could be exploited for the benefit of the ruling class. They were consistently supported in this evil by the United States government, which in the 1950s conspired with the Guatemalan ruling classes to overthrow the only freely elected democratic government that nation had experienced. It is not too much to say that the guns and bullets used to murder Blessed Stanley Rother were paid for by the US taxpayers.

Throughout history, we have drawn circles around certain groups and said, "These people are not human -- dispose of them as you choose." The holocausts are too many to count. Do we really believe that human life is precious and deserves respect and protection? That depends on where the alleged person is located, socially and physically.

Some people simply aren't considered to be real people. They may be too old, and too sick, and too poor, or located someplace "inconvenient." Perhaps they live on land which is coveted by others more powerful than they. Maybe their nations have resources that we want. This was the attitude of nearly everyone in the United States, including sadly the bishops and most of the clergy of the Catholic Church in the United States, towards the people of Iraq and Afghanistan. We have for the most part stood by and done nothing as they were "caught in the crossfire." All of us must examine our consciences concerning our complicity with the unjust murder that has gone on in the name of the US Government in Iraq and Afghanistan, Africa, Central America, and elsewhere in the world. We have stood in the streets, and instead of crying out against unjust war, we have instead screamed repeatedly -- "Crucify them! Crucify them!"

Society has developed many ways to ease this process, starting with the NewSpeak vocabulary that describes these events passively so they don't see so "bad". Structures of sin always defend themselves vigorously. There is enough tragedy in this to go around more than once.

Abandonment by fathers, violence against women, unjust economics that encourage abortion, terrorism, mandatory contraception & sterilization, demonization of the poor (especially young single mothers), cartelized and corporatized health care and so on. Here is where we remember that the Lady of Guadalupe took upon herself the image of a young pregnant Aztec maiden in a place of oppression and injustice, demonstrating God's love for everybody.

We find this message also in the mysteries of Blessed Stanley Rother and the many Martyrs of Latin America. They were condemned by politicians. The bullets and bombs that killed them were paid for by the powerful. They were targeted because they were poor. Their deaths were enabled by structures that dehumanize and depersonalize human beings. Like unborn children, a circle was drawn around them & they were proclaimed as fair game. Empires counted their deaths as collateral damage. Most of us stood by and did nothing, or actively supported our crusade of brutal violence against the poor. Their voices call to us for justice & remembrance.

How is my life -- how is your life -- open to the reality that Christ is alive and he
loves each and every one of us? Jesus gave his life to save us and our societies from sin and oppression. Does that reality have an impact on the way we live? He was with the Martyrs of Acteal and the Four Churchwomen and the Blessed Oscar Romero and the Blessed Fr. Stanley Rother and all the other martyrs of Latin America at the time that demonic evil so cruelly ended their lives. He comforted them in life and in death. Jesus lives today and is at our side every moment of every day to enlighten, strengthen, and free us. Jesus is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, of our journeys of justice and peace.

**Act of Caring of Creation: Compost!**

God designed this planet to work in accordance with natural laws. So when living organic matter dies, it goes back to the earth, decays, and is reborn as new plants starting a new cycle. This is the natural way our planet works. But we are the Americans! We have a Better Way! We should wrap our organic wastes in black plastic and bury it in holes! Surely we are Smarter Than God! Well as a matter of reality we are not smarter than God, and our fetish with stuffing black plastic bags with trash and burying them in the ground is a moral crime against Nature -- which is the Creation of God. So a compost pile is not some foolish activity of hippies. To package your kitchen waste in black plastic, robbing the earth of those nutrients, contaminating them with chemicals and other industrial wastes, is (for most of us) sin. Think of this unnatural practice as... "environmental sodomy." Holiness demands a better way, and that's what composting is about.

If you don't know how to compost, read this short article that I wrote and recently revised: [Compost! Because a rind is a terrible thing to waste.](http://www.justpeace.org/novenas.html)

**June 27 -- July 5**

Our Lady of the Precious Blood and St. Franz Jagerstatter and St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross

**General Intention:** The reconciliation of persons and peoples.

**Third Work of Justice and Peace:** Make injustice visible -- witness, remember, teach, proclaim, tell. Light candles, do not curse the darkness.

**Act of Caring for Creation:** Fast & Abstinence. Refrain from eating meat or fish one day each week. If you are able, fast that day, eating only one full meal. Donate the money saved as a fast offering to a charity working for food security.

God, come to my assistance. Lord, make haste to help me. † Let us pray together in peace, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, help the helpless, strengthen the fearful, comfort the sorrowful, bring justice to the poor, peace to all nations, and solidarity among all
peoples. Give us strength to stand against the demonic powers which prowl about the world seeking the ruin of souls.

Open our eyes to see the beauty, joy, redemption, and goodness which comes through obedience to your Son our Lord. Teach us to be a refuge of hope for all who are oppressed by injustice and violence.


Remember, O most gracious Lady of the Precious Blood, that never was it known that any of your children, redeemed by the Blood of your Son, sought your intercession and was left unaided. Trusting in the power of the Precious Blood, O Handmaid of the Redeemer, I come before you my Queen and my Mother, and in the bitterness of my sorrow, I place myself at your feet. O Mother of Jesus Crucified, unite my prayers with yours, obtain for me the merciful bounty of the Divine Blood. As I kneel beneath the Cross, O Mother of sorrows, hear and answer me. Amen

**St. Franz Jagerstatter,** in a time of great injustice and violence, you bore heroic witness to peace, beauty, and holiness. Your devotion to truth shows us the way to reconciliation. Your example of fortitude brings us courage. Your life of beauty in the face of appalling evil fills us with hope. May your heart of love inspire us so that we will witness, remember, teach, and proclaim the Gospel of life and love for all peoples, everywhere, and not count the cost. In Jesus holy name, Amen.

**St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross,** child of Sarah, Rebekah, Leah, Rachel, and Mary mother of our Lord, you who were taken to crucifixion by the Nazis, help us, in our own time, and in the ways and opportunities that come our way, to witness and work for justice, peace, and the care of Creation. Help us to always stand firm against every form of racism and persecution. Teach us to understand, and seek forgiveness for, our own complicity in the sins of racism and persecution. Enlighten our minds that we will see clearly the wrongs and evidences of racism in our societies. Help us to speak with clarity, justice, and truth of beauty, wisdom, peace, and racial harmony, denouncing all injustices and social evils in the name of Christ. These prayers we ask, remembering all who have been murdered, lynched, gassed, and tortured to death, Amen.

**Prayer to St. John Chrysostom on behalf of the U.S. Catholic bishops.**

**Thoughts for the journey.** His lifeless body was taken from the Cross and laid in her blessed arms. How the tears must have flowed as she cradled Him in her arms, He who once had been a little baby, bouncing on her lap, a young man who followed in Joseph's footsteps as a carpenter and who taught in the Temple confounding the wise, a fearless prophet who healed and taught and brought hope.

How His life must have passed before her eyes, as her tears mingled with His most precious Blood. "A sword shall also pierce your heart." At the first Eucharist, she received the Cup from His hands -- did she understand even then what was to come? "She kept all these things and pondered them in her heart." What did she tell the servants at the wedding at Cana? "Do whatever Jesus tells you to do."
"For in Christ all the fullness was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile all things for him, making peace by the blood of his cross through him. (Colossians 1:19-20).

"And all this is from God, who has reconciled us to himself through Christ and given us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting their trespasses against them and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation." (2 Corinthians 5:18-19)

How great is the need for reconciliation in this world! But reconciliation is NOT an oppressor who says -- "I'm sorry" -- but then goes and continues a lifestyle of oppression, with eyes closed to the consequences of his or her lifestyle of injustice.

Reconciliation is not the denial of injustice, it is the correction of the objective disorders that cause the harm. The call to reconciliation is not the Voice of the Oppressor saying "Cooperate with our violence against you." No, it is the witness of the Precious Blood of Christ that reconciliation is orthopraxis -- it is right action rooted in our interior personal relationship with Christ, a relationship that changes everything and makes the miracle of reconciliation possible. It is always a life faith that bears fruit, for we know that faith without works is dead.

When Christ is not the center of our lives, when our actions do not flow from our personal interior and devotional relationship with Jesus, reconciliation among peoples is not a comfortable process; it is typically easier to just blame the victims. Many close their eyes to structures of injustice and exploitation and greed, processes that make people poor and keep them "in their place." The poor become a fearful Alien, the Other, to be mastered, confined, counted, regulated, and exploited for the good of the ruling political and economic elites.

Our Lady of the Precious Blood without fear and full of love stands against all oppression and injustice, she comforts the afflicted and afflicts the comforted and calls us to the same journey. She directs us to her son and says, "Do whatever he tells you to do.

**St. Franz Jagerstatter**

St. Franz Jagerstatter was an Austrian farmer who was murdered by the Nazis during World War II because of his refusal to bear arms and serve in the German military. They chopped his head off with a guillotine! His example of fortitude in the face of the most appalling evil is a reminder that reconciliation begins with truth -- and grows from a personal commitment to live the Gospel, even at great personal risk that in turn derives from our personal relationship with Jesus. Can anyone doubt that Franz Jagerstatter was in love with Jesus? From what other source could a young man stand against everyone -- including his bishop -- who told him to "just go along and do what the Nazis say."

His example is of great importance in our day, as the United States wages unjust wars and our government demands support for its crusades of death and slaughter.

Meanwhile, our own Catholic bishops do not defend the right to life of all people in the face of the State's demand for war but hide behind ecclesiastical rhetoric and preach a false gospel of moral relativism regarding the unjust wars of the United States.
In the face of so much blood and death, we must remember the victims of imperial tyranny. Because we live in Christ we can live in true solidarity with them and dedicate our works of life as reparations for our nation's unjust wars and its many other sins against life.

Our prayer is that through the reconciliation of the Blood of Christ, all people will learn to be one in solidarity with each other, so that all persons and peoples acknowledge the human personhood and dignity of each other, and live together in peace upon the earth. And as the song says, let this begin with me. Our praxis is a prayer, and this is the prayer that is most pleasing to God.

How is my life -- how is your life -- open to the reality that Christ is alive and he loves each and every one of us? Jesus gave his life to save us and our societies from sin and oppression. He was with the Franz Jagerstatter at the moment the guillotine sliced through his neck. He comforted him in life and in death and Christ is as real to us as he was to Franz. Jesus lives today and is at our side every moment of every day to enlighten, strengthen, and free us. Jesus is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, of our journeys of justice and peace. How does your relationship with Christ impact your life? What is the orthopraxis that you live that reflects Christ in you?

**St Teresa Benedicta of the Cross**

Edith Stein was a German Jewish philosopher. Surprised by joy, after reading the works of Teresa of Avila, she was called by Christ into relationship with Him, and became a Discaled Carmelite nun taking the name Teresa Benedicta of the Cross. She made notable contributions to what has become known as the personalist school of philosophy, which was later influential in the writings and theology of Saint Pope John Paul II. As early as 1933, she was speaking out against Nazis, and wrote Pope Pius XI asking him to publicly denounce the Nazi regime. Her letter may have been influential in his decision to eventually write the encyclical Mit Brennender Sorge (With Burning Sorrow) condemning Nazism and anti-semitism. For her safety, her religious superiors transferred her to a convent in the Netherlands. After the German invasion, the German bishops had a public statement read in all the Catholic churches condemning racism. in response, the Nazis rounded all the Jewish Catholic converts and sent them to concentration camps. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross was sent to Auschwitz, where she died in a gas chamber on or about August 9, 1942, about a week after her arrest. She refused an opportunity to escape, insisting on her right to share in the sufferings of her people.

**Act of Caring for Creation: Fast & Abstinence!** Refrain from eating meat or fish one day a week. If you are able, fast on that day, eating only one full meal. Give the money you save to a charity that works in food security.

We live in an ocean of plenty while the poor of this world go without. The least we can do is to feel the pangs of hunger and deny ourselves the full bounty that is available to us, not as a matter of ecclesiastical mandate as in days of yore, but as an act of love we take less so that others may have more.
July 6 - 14, 2018

Our Lady Undoer of Knots and Matthew Talbot

General Intention: For all those pushed to the edges of human societies.

Fourth Work of Justice and Peace: Protect the poor and powerless -- listen, learn, educate, organize, empower participation, and respect life from the moment of conception to the time of natural death.

Act of Caring for Creation: Commit! Accept personal responsibility to live your life so that your love for God manifests as you care for people, care for Creation, and have a care for the future.

God, come to my assistance. Lord, make haste to help me.

† Let us pray together in peace, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, help the helpless, strengthen the fearful, comfort the sorrowful, bring justice to the poor, peace to all nations, and solidarity among all peoples.

Give us strength to stand against the demonic powers which prowl about the world seeking the ruin of souls. Open our eyes to see the beauty, joy, redemption, and goodness which comes through obedience to your Son our Lord. Teach us to be a refuge of hope for all who are oppressed by injustice and violence.

Holy Mary, Undoer of Knots, full of God’s presence during the days of your life, you accepted with full humility the Father’s will, and the Devil was never capable to tie you around with his confusion. Once with your son you interceded for our difficulties, and, full of kindness and patience you gave us example of how to untie the knots of our life. And by remaining forever Our Mother, you put in order, and make clearer the ties that link us to the Lord.

Virgin Mary, Mother of fair love, Mother who never refuses to come to the aid of a child in need, Mother whose hands never cease to serve your beloved children because they are moved by the divine love and immense mercy that exists in your heart, cast your compassionate eyes upon me and see the snarl of knots that exist in my life. You know very well how desperate I am, my pain, and how I am bound by these knots. Mary, Mother to whom God entrusted the undoing of the knots in the lives of His children, I entrust into your hands the ribbon of my life. No one, not even the Evil One himself, can take it away from your precious care. In your hands, there is no knot that cannot be undone. Powerful Mother, by your grace and intercessory power with your Son and my liberator, Jesus, take into your hands today this knot. (Mention your petition here.)
Receive me into your hands and free me of the knots and confusion with which our enemy attacks. Through your grace, your intercession, and your example, deliver us from all evil, Our Lady, and untie the knots that prevent us from being united with God, so that we, free from sin and error, may find Him in all things, may have our hearts placed in Him, and may serve Him always in our brothers and sisters. Mary, Undoer of Knots, pray for me, Amen.

Matthew Talbot, you were born into poverty, among a marginalized people, and you went right to the edge as an alcoholic. In these times, the strong prey upon the weak, and violence, despair, alienation and oppression rule the hearts of many. We pray that your example of solidarity with the poor will inspire us to follow your path and open our hearts, minds, and homes to welcome those who are in need. Pray for all who are bound in addiction to money, power, violence, illicit sex, drugs, tobacco, or alcohol.

Lord, in your servant, Matt Talbot you have given us a wonderful example of triumph over addiction, of devotion to duty, and of lifelong reverence of the Holy Sacrament. May his life of prayer and penance give us courage to take up our crosses and follow in the footsteps of Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. We ask this through the same Jesus Christ Our Lord. Amen.

Prayer to St. John Chrysostom on behalf of the U.S. Catholic bishops.

Thoughts for the journey.

Life is complicated. We often find ourselves "tied into knots" spiritually and emotionally. We get ourselves into situations that seem impossible to resolve.

We see this in the world around us. How can the situation in the Middle East ever resolve itself in peace and justice with respect for life for all people there, Arabs, Jews, Kurds, Persians, Yezidis, and many others. What about the Ukraine? In Asia, belligerence grows on the South China Sea. And then there's North Korea and Iran and Venezuela and Central America.

Pope Francis has a strong devotion to Mary as the Undoer of Knots. For Pope Francis, the knots represent the sins that separate us from God, and Our Lady, in untying them, brings us closer to God. As the Pope has said: “Mary, whose ‘yes’ opened the door for God to undo the knot of the ancient disobedience, is the Mother who patiently and lovingly brings us to God, so that he can untangle the knots of our soul by his fatherly mercy.”

Which is to say that the roots of the grave knotty crises of justice and peace lay within our own hearts. It's tempting to wave that away as pious pap, but it's the truth. The United States has the foreign and military policies that it does because we are the people that we are. If we were a better people, our government would have better policies. Since any one of us has little control over the government, but a lot of control over our own individual lives, the road to peace for me begins at 1524 NW 21 in Oklahoma City where I live. And also where you live.

What are the knots that bind you?

Let us recall the advice of Mary to the servants at the wedding at Cana? "Do whatever he tells you!" What does Jesus tell us to do? Feed the hungry, clothe the naked, shelter the homeless, challenge unjust structures, speak out against
oppression and hypocrisy, love God and love our neighbors as we love ourselves. Pious phrases, to be sure, but if that's all they are for us, then our faith is dead as the proverbial doornail. A living faith, begun in a life-changing encounter with the Risen Christ, nourished by Word, Community, and Eucharist, lives these phrases as daily realities. That's the point, holiness! Orthopraxis -- right action! Prudence -- understanding the way towards the greatest good in every situation. Discernment -- learned and practiced over time, so that we are able to make these phrases real by the way we live our lives.

Matthew Talbot was born in a slum in Dublin, Ireland in 1856, and died in the same town in 1925. His journey led into the dark depths of alcoholism. But by the grace of God, he experienced a true and lasting religious conversion, and spent his life among the poor, practicing evangelical poverty, working at labor jobs and giving most of his money as alms to the poor and for the benefit of missions.

He helped people find sobriety. His life was an evangelical witness to the power of Jesus to transform the most alienated & to bring new life to community in the midst of despair. He reminds us of the precarious place of those we push to the edge. Often they fall off, into the abyss. They are all around us, but we don't notice them because they are really good at hiding from us. In their experience, to be noticed is to be abused, hurt, wounded. Their defenders are few, their enemies are many.

Through the example of Our Lady of Good Counsel and Matthew Talbot, we can learn to open our eyes and hearts to see the poor who are among us, and stop doing harm to them.

How is my life -- how is your life -- open to the reality that Christ is alive and he loves each and every one of us? Jesus gave his life to save us and our societies from sin and oppression. He was with the Matthew Talbot as he wrestled with the demons of addiction and then later when he lived a life of penance, reparation, and service. Jesus comforted him in life and when he died of a heart attack on a Dublin street while walking to Mass, Jesus was there. Christ is as real to us as he was to Matthew. Jesus lives today and is at our side every moment of every day to enlighten, strengthen, and free us. Jesus is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, of our journeys of justice and peace.

**Act of Caring for Creation:**

**Commit!** Accept personal responsibility to live your life so that your love for God manifests as you care for people, care for Creation, and have a care for the future

We care for the planet, one decision at a time. Do you really need that plastic straw or that disposal styrofoam cup made by a noxious process that pollutes the planet and that does not decay or compost? Could you carry a cup with you for drinks away from home? Could you carry a little lunch kit, and use that instead of plastic serving ware? Could you carry reusable bags and thus avoid those ubiquitous plastic bags? Sure you could, but will you? It's only a moderate discipline, it's not anything like, you know, dying in a concentration camp or being lynched.

We are destroying the planet one bad decision at a time. We will redeem the planet one good -- better -- or best decision, at a time. Never think that what you do doesn't matter, because it does. It matters to you personally, to your family, your neighbors, your community, your planet, and to your God. We start small or we
don't start at all. As you practice being kind to God's Creation in small ways, you will find your heart and your mind and your will increasingly open to doing more. Before you know it, you could be air drying your laundry on a clothesline!

**July 15-23, 2018**

**Our Lady Mother of Mercy**

& **Saints Vincent de Paul & Louise Marillac**

**General Intention:** Justice in the distribution of the Earth's goods.

**Fifth Work of Justice and Peace:** Work for reconciliation with truth, evangelism, catechesis, orthopraxis.

**Act of Caring for Creation:** Walk, ride a bicycle, car pool, and take public transportation more; drive less.

God, come to my assistance. Lord, make haste to help me.

Let us pray together in peace, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, help the helpless, strengthen the fearful, comfort the sorrowful, bring justice to the poor, peace to all nations, and solidarity among all peoples. Give us strength to stand against the demonic powers which prowl about the world seeking the ruin of souls.

Open our eyes to see the beauty, joy, redemption, and goodness which comes through obedience to your Son our Lord. Teach us to be a refuge of hope for all who are oppressed by injustice and violence.

**Hail Holy Queen, Mother of Mercy,** our life, our sweetness, and our hope! To you do we cry, poor banished children of Eve. To you do we send our signs, mourning and weeping in this valley of tears. Turn, then, most gracious advocate, your eyes of mercy toward us, and after this, our exile, show unto us the blessed fruit of your womb, Jesus. O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary.

Hail Holy Queen, Mother of Mercy, you are the refuge and hope of all who are excluded from sharing in the goodness and bounty of Creation. Help me, for the love of your son Jesus Christ, to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and shelter the homeless. Help me then to ask why so many people are hungry, naked, and homeless so that we know what we must do to ensure justice and peace for all people. Pray for me that I will, my mind being enlightened by the signs of these times, work without ceasing for the reign of justice and peace and the care of God's holy Creation. I bless and thank Almighty God, who in His mercy has given me this confidence in You, which I hold to be a pledge of my eternal salvation. Mary, my spiritual Mother, help me. Do not abandon me in my hour of need. Mother of Mercy, never allow me to lose my faith, hope, and love. Amen.

**Saints Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac,** we reverence your lives of heroic justice, compassion, and mercy in defense of the poor. Today we ask you to pray for all who are excluded from participation in the bounty of Creation. Teach us to use the gifts of Creation with moderation, to live simply, that others may
simply live. Bless our efforts to ensure just distribution of the goods of the earth with discernment and prudence. Help us to do what needs to be done to replace the structures of greed and gluttony with the reign of justice and peace, Amen.

Prayer to St. John Chrysostom on behalf of the U.S. Catholic bishops.

Thoughts for the journey. From the Catechism of the Catholic Church: "2402. In the beginning God entrusted the earth and its resources to the common stewardship of mankind to take care of them, master them by labor, and enjoy their fruits. The goods of creation are destined for the whole human race. However, the earth is divided up among men to assure the security of their lives, endangered by poverty and threatened by violence. The appropriation of property is legitimate for guaranteeing the freedom and dignity of persons and for helping each of them to meet his basic needs and the needs of those in his charge. It should allow for a natural solidarity to develop between men."

"2403. The right to private property, acquired by work or received from others by inheritance or gift, does not do away with the original gift of the earth to the whole of mankind. The universal destination of goods remains primordial, even if the promotion of the common good requires respect for the right to private property and its exercise."

Now is the time to open our eyes to see the sins against just community that occur daily. Merciless and corrupt governments and international agencies encourage the exploitation of the powerless for unjust gain. Globalization, enforced by the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, and the WTO, is making the poorest of the poor even more miserable and wretched and hopeless. Millions die every day from the consequences of chronic poverty -- many of them in countries where large corporate farms grow food that can't be eaten by the locals because it is exported. In the 19th century, people are often shocked by the fact that every year of the great Irish famine, Ireland exported food. But the poor had no money to buy that food, so when their subsistence plots of potatoes failed due to a blight, they starved or emigrated by the millions while their food was sold to those with money in other lands. Why are we shocked by that when this happens every day and people say, "Well, that's just the way the market works."

War destroys resources and creates poverty and misery. Billions are at risk. A just community respects both property rights and the social mortgage on the property. Yet, too often the property rights of the poor are accorded scant protection. Traditional lands are appropriated for the enrichment of others, making the original owners tenants on their ancestral farms. (Think about this when you buy a banana from Chiquita or Dole banana corporations.) Sometimes the poor are killed for their land. In the past 30 years, millions of units of low income housing have been destroyed in the US by politicized eminent domain pogroms against which the poor neighborhoods have no defense. When a powerful government agency wants a cross-town freeway, or a new upscale mall or condo development, the nearest poor neighborhood will do just fine.

Saints Vincent de Paul and Louise Marillac are two of the patron saints of justice in the distribution of earthly goods. They lived 350 years ago, and were part of a generation of saints that transformed France after a century of war. Their influence continues today in the many lay and consecrated religious movements that grow
from their ministry. The Vincentian apostolates fulfill the Gospel's call to justice in the distribution of the bounty of creation. They show us that the path towards reconciliation is illuminated by justice.

When property becomes more important than people, that is a sign of disordered priorities. That's what happens when we don't have a relationship with Jesus. With Christ within us, it becomes easier to understand what is important. So we always must ask -- How is my life open to the reality that Christ is alive and he loves me? Jesus gave his life to save us and our societies from sin and oppression. He was with the Vincent and Louise as they struggled through obstacles to serve the poor in justice. Jesus lives today and is at our side every moment of every day to enlighten, strengthen, and free us. Jesus is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, of our journeys of justice and peace.

**Act of Caring for Creation:** Walk, ride a bicycle, carpool, take public transportation more, drive less.

Fossil fuels are a primary driver of ecological calamity on this planet. Anything we can do to reduce our use of private cars will benefit the planet, make it safer, more beautiful, and less hazardous. We Americans believe we are entitled to any amount of travel, irrespective of the consequences to the planet. We think we have a grand American Exception to the moral demand to care for Creation. Sure, "care for Creation" is a nice pious statement, but God Forbid that I actually do something real to care for the planet, like giving up my personal car one day a week.

**July 24 -- August 1, 2018**

Our Lady Mother of **Charity** and Mother Mary Elizabeth Lange

**General Intention:** For the gift of fortitude for all who work for justice and all who suffer injustice.

**Sixth Work of Justice and Peace:** Celebrate life, goodness, beauty, virtue, responsibility, and joy. Practice peace, non-violence, servant leadership, harmony, community, voluntary cooperation, and the proper stewardship of God's creation. Pray without ceasing.

**Act of Caring for Creation:** Protect Earth's creatures! Leave a place for our fellow creatures who share in Creation. Bell the cat. Support programs that provide free or low cost spay/neuter, and veterinarian services to the pets of low income people.

God come to my assistance. Lord, make haste to help me. † Let us pray together in peace, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, help the helpless, strengthen the fearful, comfort the sorrowful, bring justice to the poor, peace to all nations, and solidarity among all peoples. Give us strength to stand against the demonic powers which prowl about the world seeking the ruin of souls.
Open our eyes to see the beauty, joy, redemption, and goodness which comes through obedience to your Son our Lord. Teach us to be a refuge of hope for all who are oppressed by injustice and violence.

**Our Lady of Charity**, who came to us as a messenger of peace across the sea, we know you hear the cry of all who are at the mercy of others who are stronger than they. Give your gift of comfort and courage in our time of grave need. To your motherly heart, we entrust our desires and hopes, our work and our prayers.

We pray for our families, that they may live in fidelity and love. We pray for our children, that they may grow strong in spirit and in body. We pray for our young people, that their faith may increase, as well as their desire for the truth. We pray for the sick, the homeless, the lonely, the exiled, and for all suffering souls. We pray for the triumph of love, mercy, and justice throughout the world.

**Mother Mary Elizabeth Lange**, your holy example of courage and faith in the face of injustice and oppression strengthens us during this time when politicians profit and the common good is defiled with messages of hate and fear. Pray for all who stand with faith today against the demons who prowl about the world seeking the ruin of souls. Walk with us as we journey towards peace and justice.

Amen.

**Prayer to St. John Chrysostom on behalf of the U.S. Catholic bishops.**

**Thoughts for the Journey.** In the early 1600s, a statue with an inscription "Our Lady of Charity" was found floating in a bay after a storm by two Indians (Rodrigo and Juan de Hoyos) and a young slave (Juan Moreno). As at Guadalupe, this revelation came not to the rich and the powerful, but instead to the poor and outcast.

The same call to charity, fidelity, and service comes to us today - from "across the sea". Will we respond in faith, prayer, and action?

First we must feel the sufferings of others in true solidarity. Then, having the desire to help, we must actually do something practical! If you have food for five people, then feed five hungry people and be grateful for the opportunities. If you have food for five, and fifty ask you for food, feed whoever you can and then start asking questions - why are there all these hungry people in my community? Then you can start creating structures so that there is enough food (and justice!) for all.

It's not complicated. You don't need a foundation, an endowment, insurance, or anything other than eyes that are open to see, and hearts that are open to Christ and the realities He shows us, and hands that are busy doing goodness, beauty, and love. Don't let anyone tell you that you don't have the authority to do this, because your baptism is all the authority that you need. This is what it means to celebrate life and goodness, to practice peace and justice (so we get good at 'em!). We pray without ceasing because that is the way that Christ shows us.

Mother Mary Elizabeth Lange founded the first religious order in the United States for women of African descent, the Oblate Sisters of Providence on July 2, 1829. She was born a slave on the island of Santo Domingo, but came to the United States after the Haitian revolution of 1791 and settled in Baltimore. She and her sisters started a school, widows' home, and orphanage; they provided vocational
training and taught adults to read and write. They endured many hardships, including opposition from a racist bishop.

Her order today ministers in inner cities, Africa, and several countries in the Carribean. Her faith and hope gave her the determination necessary to realize her vision and create new opportunities in the midst of injustice and oppression for the victims of racism and slavery. Her example inspires us today to follow her path of service and justice, and in these words of the Oblate Sisters, refuse to "tolerate any expression of racism, prejudice, discrimination, violence or injustice that violates the sanctity of life, demeans the dignity of the human person and desecrates family life."

With Christ within us, it becomes easier to understand what is important. So we always must ask -- How is my life open to the reality that Christ is alive and he loves me? Jesus gave his life to save us and our societies from sin and oppression. He was with the Mother Lange as she struggled through the darkness of Jim Crow segregation and vicious institutionalized racism. Jesus lives today and is at our side every moment of every day to enlighten, strengthen, and free us. Jesus is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, of our journeys of justice and peace.

**Act of Caring for Creation: Protect Earth's creatures!**
Leave a place for our fellow creatures who share in Creation. Bell the cat. Support programs that provide free or low cost spay/neuter, and veterinarian services to the pets of low income people.

**August 2 -- 10, 2018**

**Our Lady Queen of Peace and St. Joseph**

**General Intention:** + For the creation of structures of beauty and goodness.

**7th Work of Justice and Peace:** Ensure fair distribution, subsidiarity, economic opportunity, justice, and food security for everyone everywhere.

**Act of Caring for Creation: Get involved!** Support public and private initiatives that promote organic gardening and farming, public/community transportation, free range and pastured flocks and herds, energy conservation, urban agriculture, water conservation, local food systems, and community capacities for food and economic security.

God, come to my assistance. Lord, make haste to help me.

+ Let us pray together in peace, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, help the helpless, strengthen the fearful, comfort the sorrowful, bring justice to the poor, peace to all nations, and solidarity among all peoples. Give us strength to stand against the demonic powers which prowl about the world seeking the ruin of souls.
Open our eyes to see the beauty, joy, redemption, and goodness which comes through obedience to your Son our Lord. Teach us to be a refuge of hope for all who are oppressed by injustice and violence.

**Our Lady Queen of Peace**, mystical rose, pray for all who create and sustain a culture of life and love that we will do so with endurance, hope, and abundance. May the candles we light glow bright with hospitality and hope, respect and love, peace and justice. Help us to turn away from war and embrace peace. Pray for us that we will reform our ways and manners of living so that the way we live calls for peace and not war.

**Holy St. Joseph**, Worker and Father, In faith you welcomed our Lord when He was yet within His Mother's womb. You opened your heart in obedience to the Word of God. You protected Jesus and Mary and provided a home for them of peace, safety, and holiness. We honor you as patron of the Poor, and all who serve them, of Workers and Carpenters and Builders. Your heroic example shows us the way that we should go and we trust in you for protection in our time of need.

Holy St. Joseph, Guide and Protector, Open the minds and hearts of all who by their actions give power to structures of sin that enable oppression. Help us to understand the consequences of sins against justice, charity, and the care of Creation. Turn oppressors from ways of darkness, and help them to embrace the light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Holy St. Joseph, help the helpless, comfort the dying, bring justice to the poor, and peace to all nations. Amen.

**Prayer to St. John Chrysostom on behalf of the U.S. Catholic bishops.**

**Thoughts for the Journey.**

In the May 1977 edition of the Catholic Worker newspaper, Dorothy Day wrote about events in the first years of the movement. . . "When bills piled up and creditors came, we used to go to church and pray, all of us taking turns, and we called this "the picketing of St. Joseph." Once when I asked an unemployed chambermaid if she would take a half-hour of "picketing Saint Joseph" over at Precious Blood Church, she asked me if she was to carry a sign." There's been a lot of picketing of St. Joseph since those days.

St. Joseph is our protector and guide. Each time I witness a blessing of a St. Joseph's Table, I am always moved to tears at these words of that blessing. . . "All-provident God, the good things that grace this table remind us of your many good gifts. Bless this food, and may the prayers of Saint Joseph, who provided bread for your Son and food for the poor, sustain us and all our brothers and sisters on our journey towards your heavenly kingdom."

Peter Maurin used to say that one of the goals of the Catholic Worker movement was to create a society "where it was easier to do good." It is often not easy to do good in our society, because there are great structures of sin that make it easy to do evil. But the spiritual truth of this is that every act of beauty, goodness, and wisdom weakens the structures of sin that make it easy to do evil, and strengthen the structures of beauty, goodness, and love that make it easier for us to do good.

In this year of our Lord 2018 we are 17 years into a series of unjust wars in the Middle East that originally were to protect our so-called "right" to oil and now
have devolved into something we do, you know, because this is what we do. One thing has led to another thing and each new evolution of the situation is met with more violence, more war, more death and suffering. We wage war on poor people and kill them. Violence rules the day. The US Empire is presently at the top of the world heap, held up by structures of sin created by wealth and demonic evil, but like all empires, we have no place to go but down. Ash heap of history here we come! Our national bloodlust for war drives us toward that abyss. Discerning eyes can see the coalition that is coming together that will challenge us for world hegemony. Sooner or later the rest of the world is going to gang up on us and do to us what we did to the Germans during World War II: totally destroy our nation. "Sow not in furrows of injustice, lest you reap a seven-fold harvest," says the Bible and the prophet Sirach was surely talking to us. That's what structures of evil always do -- collapse, crash, and burn.

Where is the Catholic Church in all this? It is a tragedy of epic proportions faced with unjust war, the U.S. Catholic bishops did not take a stand for the Gospel of Life but instead opted for a position of moral relativism towards the unjust wars of the United States government. This gravely harms the Church's witness to the protection of life from the moment of conception to the time of natural death. We obviously don't believe that that's true for the people of Afghanistan, Syria, Libya, or Iraq. If the Catholic Church in the US actually believed in their non-negotiable right to life, our bishops would have forbidden participation in those unjust wars. The right to life is supposed to be a "non-negotiable" tenet of the Faith, but if you live in Afghanistan or Iraq, or are a soldier of the United States or one of our allies, the U.S. bishops have abandoned you to the not-so-tender mercies of unjust war. Your right to life is apparently trumped by the American Nationalist demand for war, slaughter, death, and destruction.

Peace is the fruit of justice, as Pope Paul VI reminded us. All people are connected, rich and poor. The Gospel and these times call us therefore to the work of justice, to the celebration of life, goodness, beauty, virtue, responsibility, and joy. As we practice peace, non-violence, servant leadership, harmony, community, voluntary cooperation, and the proper stewardship of God's creation, we may eventually get good at it, especially if we pray without ceasing.

With Christ within us, it becomes easier to understand what is important. So we always must ask -- How is my life open to the reality that Christ is alive and he loves me? Jesus gave his life to save us and our societies from sin and oppression. Jesus lives today and is at our side every moment of every day to enlighten, strengthen, and free us. Jesus is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, of our journeys of justice and peace.

**Act of Caring for Creation: Get involved!** Support public and private initiatives that promote organic gardening and farming, public/community transportation, free range and pastured flocks and herds, energy conservation, urban agriculture, water conservation, local food systems, and community capacities for food and economic security.

**August 11 -- 19, 2018**

Our Lady of the Assumption and Saints Isidore & Maria
General Intention: For the conversion of the rich and powerful.

Corporal Works of Mercy. Feed the hungry. Give drink to the thirsty. Clothe the naked. Shelter the homeless. Visit the sick, Visit those in prison, Bury the dead.

Act of Caring for Creation: Place matters! Work with your neighbors to heal and regenerate the natural environment, & to increase the safety, security, health, and well-being of your neighborhood.

God, come to my assistance. Lord, make haste to help me.
+
Let us pray together in peace, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, help the helpless, strengthen the fearful, comfort the sorrowful, bring justice to the poor, peace to all nations, and solidarity among all peoples. Give us strength to stand against the demonic powers which prowl about the world seeking the ruin of souls.

Open our eyes to see the beauty, joy, redemption, and goodness which comes through obedience to your Son our Lord. Teach us to be a refuge of hope for all who are oppressed by injustice and violence.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, your Assumption into heaven is a sign of the triumph of good over evil and the coming renewal of all Creation. Help us to be visible signs of hope and comfort for all we meet and give us strength and inspiration to do the works of healing and renewal.

Saints Isidore and Maria, Teach us that creation is good and bears the imprint of Christ from beginning to end. Reveal to us the full expression of God's generosity and blessings that are found through oneness in the Mystical Body of Christ. Instruct us regarding the dignity of work, the necessity of charity, and our vocational call to care for people, care for Creation, and to have a care for the future. Amen.

Prayer to St. John Chrysostom on behalf of the U.S. Catholic bishops.

Thoughts for the journey.

God loves everybody and so should we. That in fact includes everybody, and "everybody" includes the rich. So we must love and pray for them and be in solidarity with them too. But because our love is motivated by our personal relationship with Christ Jesus, we should endeavor to help the wealthy understand the role they play in maintaining structures of sin and injustice that enable poverty and prevent people from full participation in their own lives. Our prayer and work to bring all people into a relationship with Christ Jesus is for the rich as well as the poor.

This is a much better solution to modern justice issues such as the widening gap between rich and poor, the on-going centralization of wealth, and the corruption of our political system by wealthy campaign donors. Historically, what happens is...
that eventually the rich become so oppressive that a violent revolution breaks out, which is typically a rather hard ending for the wealthy. Alas, also historically, the old boss is replaced by a new boss but its all the same system so those who are poor and oppressed remain poor and oppressed. So we work for the salvation of the rich, as well as the poor and all points in between, because that can drive the decentralization of wealth, universal health care, full participation on the part of everyone in their own lives and the lives and stories of their communities and many other blessings.

Earlier in this series of novenas, we learned about the importance of growing our own food. For centuries, the Church has blessed the fruits of the soil on the Feast of the Assumption.

Here are the traditional blessings for this purpose.

- Let us pray. Almighty everlasting God, who by your word alone brought into being the heavens, earth, sea, things seen and things unseen, and garnished the earth with plants and trees for the use of man and beast; who appointed each species to bring forth fruit in its kind, not only for the food of living creatures, but for the healing of sick bodies as well; with mind and word we urgently call on you in your great kindness to bless + these various herbs and fruits, thus increasing their natural powers with the newly given grace of your blessing. May they keep away disease and adversity from men and beasts who use them in your name; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

- Let us pray. God, who through Moses, your servant, directed the children of Israel to carry their sheaves of new grain to the priests for a blessing, to pluck the finest fruits of the orchard, and to make merry before you, the Lord their God; hear our supplications, and shower blessings + in abundance upon us and upon these bundles of new grain, new herbs, and this assortment of produce which we gratefully present to you on this festival, blessing + them in your name. Grant that men, cattle, flocks, and beasts of burden find in them a remedy against sickness, pestilence, sores, injuries, spells, against the fangs of serpents or poisonous creatures. May these blessed objects be a protection against diabolical mockery, cunning, and deception wherever they are kept, carried, or otherwise used. Lastly, through the merits of the blessed Virgin Mary, whose Assumption we are celebrating, may we all, laden with the sheaves of good works, deserve to be taken up to heaven; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

With Christ within us, it becomes easier to understand what is important. So we always must ask -- How is my life open to the reality that Christ is alive and he loves me? Jesus gave his life to save us and our societies from sin and oppression. He was with Isidore and Maria in their lives as farm workers. Jesus lives today and is at our side every moment of every day to enlighten, strengthen, and free us. Jesus is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, of our journeys of justice and peace.

**Act of Caring for Creation: Place matters!** Work with your neighbors to heal and regenerate the natural environment, & to increase the safety, security, health, and well-being of your neighborhood.

**August 20 -- 29, 2018**
Our Lady of Sorrows & Blessed Archbishop Oscar Romero

**General Intention:** For the creation of new structures within the crumbling ruins of the old.

**Spiritual Works of Mercy:** Convert the sinner. Instruct the ignorant. Counsel the doubtful. Comfort the sorrowful. Bear wrongs patiently. Forgive injuries. Pray for the living and the dead.

**Act of Caring for Creation:** Reduce, reuse, repair, recycle, make it over, made do, do without.

God, come to my assistance. Lord, make has to help me.

Let us pray together in peace, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, help the helpless, strengthen the fearful, comfort the sorrowful, bring justice to the poor, peace to all nations, and solidarity among all peoples. Give us strength to stand against the demonic powers which prowl about the world seeking the ruin of souls.

Open our eyes to see the beauty, joy, redemption, and goodness which comes through obedience to your Son our Lord. Teach us to be a refuge of hope for all who are oppressed by injustice and violence.

**Our Lady of Sorrows,** most holy and afflicted mother, of martyrs, you stood beneath the cross and witnessed the agony of your dying Son. In this world of violence, we ask you to pray for those who will die today because of war, economic chaos, injustice, and exploitation, especially the children.

Prepare them for the agony, despair, and terror of the violence that is upon them. Comfort them and hold them close to the bosom of thy Wounded Heart as they drink deeply of the bitter cup which is forced upon them.

Wipe their tears, calm their fears, welcome them to peace and safety. Eternal rest grant to them, and may perpetual light shine upon them. Amen.

**Blessed Romero,** During a time of grave evil, you spoke with courage to rebuke the powerful, pleading with them to cease their violence, and repent of their murders. You called upon the rich to end their greed, to embrace just economic systems, and to relinquish their power. In solidarity you comforted the poor, gave them hope and strength, and witnessed the crimes against them, always speaking truth, justice, mercy, and love.

Teach us to understand our complicity with the sins of empire. Help us end our support for the structures of sin that bring violence and injustice into the world. Be our guide as we build structures of justice, mercy, love, and beauty.

O God, who by the preaching and teaching of Oscar Romero has given us an example of love and fortitude in the face of violence and greed, grant that we who
reverence his life and ministry may also imitate his fidelity to truth, justice, and peace. Soon come the promise of Mary, that all tyrants will be cast down, the proud scattered, the lowly exalted, and the hungry filled with good things. through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

Prayer to St. John Chrysostom on behalf of the U.S. Catholic bishops.

Thoughts for the journey.

Traditionally, we recall "seven sorrows of Mary": the prophecy of Simeon, the flight into Egypt, the three-day separation from Jesus, and four incidents along the Via Dolorosa (Mary meets Jesus on the way to the crucifixion, the crucifixion, the taking down of his body, the burial). Today, the sorrows multiple beyond our ability to comprehend. The daily news is a litany of horrors. Just when you think you have heard the worst, along comes something even worse.

In the face of the steady onslaught of violence, all of us are at risk of despair.

After the bombing of the Federal Building in Oklahoma City in 1995, someone paid for billboards to be put up all around the city, quoting the Apostle Paul's advice to the Romans: "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good." That is the plan. It begins with our relationship with Jesus, continues in prayer and bears fruit in the way we live our lives.

With Christ within us, it becomes easier to understand what is important. So we always must ask -- How is my life open to the reality that Christ is alive and he loves me? Jesus gave his life to save us and our societies from sin and oppression. He was with Oscar Romero as he ministered to his people as they were persecuted and murdered by their own government. Jesus was with Romero at the moment the bullet tore into his heart even as he elevated the Chalice during the Eucharistic Prayer. Jesus lives today and is at our side every moment of every day to enlighten, strengthen, and free us. Jesus is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, of our journeys of justice and peace.

The Blessed Oscar Romero of El Salvador knew something about hope in the face of horror. Let us listen to some of his wisdom.

From the words of Romero... Those who do not understand transcendence cannot understand us. When we speak of injustice here below and denounce it, they think we are playing politics. It is in the name of God's just reign that we denounce the injustices of the earth.

Not just purgatory but hell awaits those who could have done good and did not do it. It is the reverse of the Beatitude that the Bible has for those who are saved, for the saints, "who could have done wrong and did not." Of those who are condemned it will be said: they could have done good and did not... Let us be today's Christians. Let us not take fright at the boldness of today's church. With Christ's light let us illuminate even the most hideous caverns of the human person: torture, jail, plunder, want, chronic illness. The oppressed must be saved, not with a revolutionary salvation in merely human fashion, but with the holy revolution of the Son of Man, who dies on the cross to cleanse God's image, which is soiled in today's humanity, a humanity so enslaved, so selfish, so sinful...
A religion of Sunday Mass but of unjust weeks does not please the Lord. A religion of much praying but with hypocrisy in the heart is not Christian. A church that sets itself up only to be well off, to have a lot of money and comfort, but that forgets to protest injustices, would not be the true church of our divine Redeemer. . .

Everyone who struggles for justice, everyone who makes just claims in unjust surroundings, is working for God's reign, even though not a Christian. The church does not comprise all of God's reign, God's reign goes beyond the church's boundaries. The church values everything that is in tune with its struggle to set up God's reign. A church that tries only to keep itself pure and uncontaminated would not be a church of God's service to people. The authentic church is one that does not mind conversing with prostitutes and publicans and sinners, as Christ did -- and with Marxists and those of various political movements -- in order to bring them salvation's true message. . .

Even when all despaired at the hour when Christ was dying on the cross, Mary, serene, awaited the hour of the resurrection. Mary is the symbol of the people who suffer oppression and injustice. Theirs is the calm suffering that awaits the resurrection. It is Christian suffering, the suffering of the church, which does not accept the present injustices but awaits without rancor the moment when the Risen One will return to give us the redemption we await.

To be a Christian now means to have the courage to preach the true teaching of Christ and not be afraid of it, not be silent out of fear and preach something easy that won't cause problems. To be a Christian in this hour means to have the courage that the Holy Spirit gives in the sacrament of confirmation, to be valiant soldiers of Christ the King, to make his teaching prevail, to reach hearts and proclaim to them the courage that one must have to defend God's law. . .

Everyone can contribute much that is good, and in that way trust is achieved. The common good will not be attained by excluding people. We can't enrich the common good of our country by driving out those we don't care for. We have to try to bring out all that is good in each person and try to develop and atmosphere of trust, not with physical force, as though dealing with irrational beings, but with a moral force that draws out the good that is in everyone, especially in concerned young people.

Thus, with all contributing their own interior life, their own responsibility, their own way of being, all can build the beautiful structure of the common good, the good that we construct together and that creates conditions of kindness, of trust, of freedom, of peace.

Then we can, all of us together, build the republic -- the res publica, the public concern -- what belongs to all of us and what we all have the duty of building. . .

Let us not be disheartened, even when the horizon of history grows dim and closes in, as though human realities made impossible the accomplishment of God's plans. God makes use even of human errors, even of human sins, so as to make rise over the darkness what Isaiah spoke of. One day prophets will sing not only the return from Babylon but our full liberation. "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light. They walk in lands of shadows, but a light has shone forth. . .:
**Act of Caring for Creation:** Reduce, reuse, repair, recycle, make it over, made do, do without.
We should respect the goods of Creation that God gives us so abundantly. That means that we take care of what we have. The frugality of our grandparents served them well during the Great Depression. Our profligate attitudes that trifle with the goods of Creation lay the foundation of ecological collapse. It is far better to learn to live with less, so that there is more for others.

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**Prayers for the Celebration of the Queenship of Mary on August 22nd.**

**Act of Consecration**

O Mary Immaculate Queen, glorious Queen of the Universe, most powerful Virgin, merciful Mother of a merciful God and refuge of sinners, we consecrate ourselves to your Royal and Immaculate Heart.

It is through you that Jesus Christ our King has come into the world to save it. It is also through you that He is to reign over the world.

In order to obtain this great benefit for ourselves and all mankind, we come to you to consecrate to you our persons, our lives, all that we are, all that we have, all that we love. Keep us, enlighten us, dispose of us, reign over us.

May all hearts and all homes willingly proclaim you as their Immaculate Queen.

O Mary Immaculate Queen, look down upon this distressed and suffering world. You know our misery and our weakness. O You who art our Mother, saving us in the hour of peril, have compassion on us in these days of great and heavy trial.

We recognize your Queenship and ardently desire thy triumph. We need a Mother and a Mother's Heart. You are for us the luminous dawn which dissipates our darkness and points out the way to life. In your clemency obtain for us the courage and the confidence of which we have such need.

Most Holy and Adorable Trinity, Who crowned with glory in Heaven the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Savior, grant that all her children on earth may acknowledge her as their Sovereign Queen, that all hearts, homes, and nations may recognize her rights as Mother and as Queen. Amen

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[HOME](http://www.justpeace.org/novenas.html) + [www.energyconservationinfo.org](http://www.energyconservationinfo.org) + [www.bettertimesinfo.org](http://www.bettertimesinfo.org)