

Rosary Novena for Life and Liberty

Sunday, October 14 through Monday, October 22, 2012

Copyright © United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Washington, DC. All rights reserved.

INTRODUCTION

Prayer has always been central to the Church's observance of Respect Life Month—prayer on behalf of human lives wherever they are threatened, prayer for our nation and our leaders and prayer for God's mercy toward those who have taken innocent lives, promoted such killing or stood idly by, indifferent to the mounting toll of dead and wounded.

This year, believers have faced an unprecedented new threat. In the two centuries since the Bill of Rights was ratified, Americans had the assurance that the U.S. Constitution secured their God-given rights to religious liberty and freedom of conscience. But in 2011, a federal agency mandated that virtually all employers would be required to include sterilization, abortifacient drugs and contraceptives among the benefits covered in the healthcare plans they offer employees.

This "Rosary Novena for Life and Liberty" is a resource jointly offered by the Committee on Pro-Life Activities and the Ad Hoc Committee for Religious Liberty. It is designed for parish use, as well as for family and individual use. In it, we highlight the courageous witness of the saints commemorated during these nine days—witnesses to our faith, to the sanctity of every human life and to religious liberty and conscience.

Among these men and women are the North American Martyrs—St. Isaac Jogues and companions—who were slain between 1642 and 1646 near present-day Auriesville, NY.

We also look to the witness of three new American saints who will be canonized on October 21, 2012. Kateri Tekakwitha, a Mohawk maiden, was persecuted for her faith and devoted herself to prayer and acts of charity, ignoring the limitations of her own disabilities. Mother Marianne Cope, OSF spent 35 years caring for the physical and spiritual needs of women and girls afflicted with leprosy in Hawaii. Pedro Calungsod, a missionary catechist, was martyred in Guam while still in his teens.

It is our hope that this Rosary Novena for Life and Liberty will inspire Catholics to learn more about our courageous forebears in the faith and even consider making a pilgrimage to one of the many shrines and devotional sites throughout the United States.

Day 1: Sunday, October 14 **The Glorious Mysteries of the Rosary**

Reflection

Today marks the beginning of our Rosary Novena for Life and Liberty. On this day, dioceses around the country are celebrating special Masses and reminding us that the rights to life and religious liberty are foundational for a just society.

Intentions

Lord God, You are the source of our life, liberty, and happiness. With Christ as our great model for freedom, give us the grace to root out all that holds us back from walking in the full freedom of the children of God.

Show us the way to promote the freedom of all to seek your Word and live the truth of your teaching. Grant that we may be faithful to you in these efforts and strengthen us to boldly bear witness to the Gospel.

We pray for the conversion of our fellow Americans who are indifferent to the rights of the unborn and the rights of those who seek to live according to the demands of faith and conscience. We pray for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit to assist us in our work, which by God's grace, will contribute to building an authentic civilization of love. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Day 2: Monday, October 15 Memorial of St. Teresa of Jesus
The Joyful Mysteries of the Rosary

Reflection

St. Teresa of Jesus, a Carmelite nun and reformer, was born in Avila, Spain in 1515. Teresa was brilliant, charming, headstrong, vain and worldly. Before and after entering a Carmelite Monastery at age 20, she periodically took drastic steps to conquer her pride and worldliness, but each time she soon resumed her former outlook and behaviors. She described herself as a “mediocre nun” until the age of 40 when she had a deep conversion. In contemplative prayer, Teresa came to know and love Jesus with all her being and Our Lord favored her with mystical and ecstatic experiences of divine love. Her prayer life bore fruit in remarkable books on the spiritual life and in her founding—after decades of heated opposition—many convents and a new religious order, the Discalced Carmelites. Teresa serves even today as a beacon of hope and direction to all of us who struggle and backslide on the path to holiness. The first woman Doctor of the Church, Teresa showed that we can accomplish great and lasting works if we make prayer the foundation of our lives and if we are willing to persevere. But in the end, she reminds us, “the Lord doesn’t look so much at the greatness of our works as the love with which they are done” (The Interior Castle).

Intentions

Lord God, You illuminated your “way of perfection” for Teresa of Jesus, enabling her to love and serve you unreservedly in the latter half of her life. We pray that you would enlighten and guide our nation to recognize and uphold the inherent value of every human life. Remove the obstacles and worldly attractions that prevent us from uniting our hearts and wills to you in prayer.

Keep us faithful and strong in the face of opposition, ridicule and persecution from those who defend killing as a solution to social problems. Help us to live holy lives that serve as models for others. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Day 3: Tuesday, October 16 Memorial of St. Margaret Mary Alacoque
The Sorrowful Mysteries of the Rosary

Reflection

St. Margaret Mary Alacoque, a Visitation sister, lived in France from 1647 to 1690. She promoted devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus at a time when there was rebellion both inside the Church in the form of heresy and outside the Church from new Protestant sects. Through Jesus’ revelations to her, St. Margaret Mary recognized the antidote for doctrinal error and confusion: understanding Jesus’ infinite, merciful love for us (as fully as humans can) and freely choosing to love him in return, by doing the will of our Heavenly Father. She wrote of three streams that “flow endlessly” from the heart of Jesus: “mercy for sinners” (leading us to contrition and repentance); “charity which helps all in need,” especially those striving to lead better lives to overcome their difficulties; and “love and light,” so that those who have achieved holiness can most effectively witness to others.

Intentions

Lord God, St. Paul tells us that “for freedom Christ set us free.” We are grateful for the gift of being able to freely follow the Lord and embrace his ways. At this time in our history, we ask you to protect the freedom you have given us so that we can be faithful to your law.

Give us the courage to speak up for our religious beliefs, even when those around us do not believe. To those in our society who substitute their will for yours, give them the grace to respect our freedom of conscience and our religious freedom, especially when our beliefs are unpopular. Forgive our nation for tolerating the killing of our innocent brothers and sisters and pour out your healing mercy on us all. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

**Day 4: Wednesday, October 17 Memorial of St. Ignatius of Antioch
The Glorious Mysteries of the Rosary****Reflection**

St. Ignatius of Antioch (35–108), a disciple of St. John the Apostle, was consecrated Bishop of Antioch by the apostle St. Peter. Ignatius was one of the first leaders to be arrested under the persecution of the Roman Emperor Trajan. Rather than killing him in Antioch, out of fear of an uprising by the Christian community, the authorities brought Ignatius to Rome. The long journey allowed him to witness to the true faith by his words and letters and especially by his heroic example. He approached his death in the Roman Coliseum (where two lions devoured him) with gratitude that he could give up his life for Jesus Christ as Jesus gave up his life for us. During the journey he wrote seven letters to Christian communities and to a brother bishop, in which he dispelled confusion and misunderstandings about the faith and showed us the heroic nature of Christian discipleship to which all of us are called.

Intentions

Lord God, In the life and letters of Ignatius of Antioch, you gave us an enduring example of how Christians are to live joyfully in serving your Church and how they are to persevere in faith and charity, even when their liberty is threatened.

We ask you to dispel the frustration and anger we may sometimes feel when innocent lives are threatened and our liberties are violated. In the midst of a culture that sometimes fails to respect our beliefs and seeks to marginalize our voice, strengthen our resolve to defend human life and liberty with wisdom and courage, with charity and peace of mind and heart.

We pray that you will soften the hearts of those who deny your sovereignty over life and death, who deny that you alone are the supreme law-giver and the merciful judge of our actions.

Help them see the value of every human life and the freedom that you have bestowed on every human being to know, love and serve you as their faith and conscience direct them. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

**Day 5: Thursday, October 18 Feast of St. Luke, Evangelist
The Luminous Mysteries of the Rosary****Reflection**

St. Luke the Evangelist was a physician, a convert from paganism and a companion of the apostle Paul. Together, they tirelessly evangelized the Gentile communities. Luke authored the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles. His gospel emphasizes God's merciful compassion toward Gentiles and Jews alike, notably in the detailed recounting of Jesus' many miraculous healings. The Acts provide a first-hand account of the early years of the Church.

Intentions

Lord God, Who commanded your apostles to proclaim the Gospel to every person, and whose evangelist St. Luke faithfully detailed the humanity of Jesus, showing his divinity and his genuine compassion for all human beings, give us the courage to proclaim your word and, through that word, open minds and hearts to the beauty of your teaching.

Give us the same compassion for every human life, especially the lives of the weakest and most vulnerable, that St. Luke revealed about Our Lord Jesus Christ. Give us the determination to actively defend the life and liberty of every human being. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Day 6: Friday, October 19 Memorial of St. Isaac Jogues and Companions
The Sorrowful Mysteries of the Rosary

Reflection

The eight North American Martyrs honored today were Jesuit missionary priests and their companions who brought the faith to Native Americans living in the area that is now upstate New York and southern Canada. Prior to being martyred, nearly all of these missionaries were enslaved and tortured in unspeakably gruesome ways. Father Isaac Jogues, Br. René Goupil and Jean de la Lande were slain in a Mohawk village near present-day Auriesville, NY.

Today, with all our creature comforts and aversion to hardship and sacrifice, it is difficult to understand the zeal that burned in the hearts of the North American Martyrs for bringing the love of God and the hope of salvation to pagans whose culture was marked by violence and brutality. Today, killing is conducted by means that are technologically advanced (e.g., precision-guided missiles and drone aircraft) and seems more “clinical” and antiseptic (whether in abortion facilities or labs conducting destructive embryo research, or by means of lethal injection or a doctor-prescribed drug overdose), but the end result is the same for the victims.

Intentions

Lord God, We ask you to instill in us a greater desire to speak persuasively of your truth and your mercy to those who, in our own time, are taking the lives of innocent human beings through war and acts of terrorism, through assisted suicide and euthanasia, through abortion, destructive embryo research and through certain reproductive technologies.

By the blood of these martyrs and the love of subsequent missionaries, many thousands were converted. Increase in us both conviction and kindness, so we may be truly effective witnesses to the truth. Bless our efforts to convert all those who engage in and promote killing, and bless our renewed efforts to transform our culture into one worthy of persons made in your image. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Day 7: Saturday, October 20 Memorial of St. Paul of the Cross
The Joyful Mysteries of the Rosary

Reflection

St. Paul of the Cross was the son of a wealthy merchant in northern Italy. Born in 1694, Paul experienced a mystical vision at age 25 and thereafter dedicated his life to God. Ordained by the pope in 1727, he later founded the Passionist Order.

Through contemplating the immense love of God for us, as revealed in Christ’s Passion and Crucifixion, through personal fasting and severe penances for the conversion of souls and through his fervent preaching of parish missions, St. Paul of the Cross led countless souls to repentance and conversion.

His willingness to share in the sufferings of Christ serves to remind us of the importance of prayer and fasting to combat evils from within, as well as from without. Perhaps our own efforts to transform our culture would meet with greater success if we were willing to add fasting and small sacrifices to our prayers and actions.

Intentions

Lord God, We pray today that you would form and inform our consciences of what is right and what is wrong, and give us the words to teach others the truth.

We pray that our fellow citizens would come to know your truth and your saving love.

By his acts of penance, Paul of the Cross led many to you. We pray for the resolve to make small daily sacrifices for the conversion of all who deny the fundamental human rights of life and religious liberty. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Day 8: Sunday, October 21 The Canonization of Three American Saints
The Glorious Mysteries of the Rosary

Reflection

Today in Rome, Pope Benedict XVI will canonize three American saints. At age 14, a Filipino boy named Pedro Calungsod went to Guam as a missionary catechist with Bl. Diego Luis de San Vitores, SJ. They converted many Chamorros, including the wife of a pagan village chief. Furious that his Catholic wife had asked San Vitores to baptize their newborn daughter, the chief goaded a villager into killing both missionaries.

Kateri Tekakwitha, a Mohawk child living near Auriesville, NY, lost her parents and baby brother to smallpox when she was four. The disease left her half-blind, sickly and lame. She learned the faith, over the objections of her pagan uncle in whose home she lived. He tried to force her into marriage to a pagan, and one member of the tribe threatened to kill her if she didn't renounce her faith. Escaping to the Mission of St. Francis Xavier (in Kahnawake, Quebec), she made a vow of chastity and devoted herself to prayer and charity until her death in 1680 at age 24. Mother Marianne Cope, OSF was Superior General of her congregation in Syracuse, NY when she accepted a plea from the King of Hawaii to care for women afflicted with leprosy. When all those with leprosy were exiled to Molokai, she went with them to care for the dying Fr. Damien and to found a home for women and girls. She brought joy, hope, beauty and a sense of dignity to the victims of leprosy—sewing dresses for them in the latest fashions, teaching the faith, embroidery and other arts.

Intentions

Lord God, We pray that all young people will imitate the apostolic zeal of St. Pedro Calungsod, who dedicated himself to evangelization from his early teens.

Grant that all those struggling with disabilities may, like St. Kateri, grow in confidence of their gifts and their ability to accomplish great good through their prayers, their suffering and their loving-kindness toward others. We ask you, Lord, to give all Americans hearts as generous as the heart of St. Marianne Cope, OSF who became a tireless servant and a doting mother to the despised outcasts of Molokai. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Day 9: Monday, October 22
The Joyful Mysteries of the Rosary

Reflection

Today is the final day of our "Rosary Novena for Life and Liberty." Today's first reading tells us that "we are his handiwork, created in Christ Jesus for good works...." Although our novena will come to a close, our good works continue as we witness to those around us to the dignity of human life and the importance of religious liberty in our country.

Intentions

Lord God, We thank you for the gift of life and of faith. Open the eyes and minds of our brothers and sisters who fail to see the value of every human life and the threats to our religious liberty. Give us wisdom and stamina to defend our faith, imitating the holy men and women we have remembered during this Rosary Novena.

Strengthen our bonds with our ecumenical and interreligious allies who have joined with us in defending the causes of life and liberty. And grant that this great land will always be "one nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all." Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Please say this Rosary Novena again starting tomorrow. Your prayers will change our nation.