

A 9 DAY NOVENA TO OUR LADY OF Betharram

Introduction

There are times when we feel a great need for prayer. Frequently this arises from deep within which leads us the experience of conversion. Throughout history, we find a great devotion and prayer brought us together in prayer for the good of the humanity. In this time of pandemic, we are called to make a 9 day Novena in honour of Our Lady of Betharram to ask for Mary's protection on our parish communities and all who participate in this novena.

St. Michael Garicoits and Our Lady

For Michael, the veneration of the Blessed Virgin Mary was an essential part of his spirituality. At crucial points in his life, Michael had recourse to her intercession. At the shrine of Our Lady of Betharram, Saint Michael Garicoits received inspiration to found a new religious institute. Like him we shall find in the Virgin Mary a wonderful model of a life consecrated to God, *"always disposed to do what God wanted and willing to submit to all God did"*. (**SCJ Rule of Life 12**)

Betharramites and Our Lady

Betharram, which means BEAUTIFUL BRANCH, is an ancient Marian shrine of pilgrimage. As a young girl, St. Bernadette was often a visitor. Young father Michael was appointed chaplain of the shrine in 1825. He founded the SCJ congregation in 1835. The Betharramites have always turned to Our Lady for protection and care, especially in times of crisis. Following Saint Michael Garicoits' example, we, SCJ fathers and brothers love with a filial love the Blessed Virgin Mary, who was implicated in the mystery of the Word becoming Flesh. We express our love for her (...) by celebrating her feasts, notably those of the Annunciation and of our Lady of Betharram." (*SCJ Rule of Life n. 92, C*)

A Novena

With the examples of St. Michael Garicoits in mind, it is only right that we SCJ communities and parishes where SCJ serves in England turn to Our Lady of Betharram during this pandemic. These 9 days of frequent repetition of our calling on our Lord and his Mother for help increases our faith, hope, and love. It brings us into closer union with God and makes us more ready to do God's will rather than our own. We turn to Our Lady in prayer with confidence, knowing that the love she had for her Son extends to us as well.

The texts for each day below offers the fullest form of this Novena to Our Lady of Betharram. It may be prayed communally or individually. Recognizing that it may not be possible in all circumstances to participate in this full form, one may simply offer each day the prayer composed by Saint Pope Pius X was known to be devoted to Our Lady of Betharram. He offered her two magnificent golden crowns made up of branches woven together. This prayer accompanying the inscription stated:

"May the Son and His Mother accept our gifts and by appeasing our hopes and desires may they keep for us one day the crown of glory which none can tarnish." Amen

We turn to Our Lady of Betharram in prayer as all of us seek to find this Novena to Our Lady's protection and care. As a way to demonstrate our love, we make three promises to Our Lady Betharram as a part of this Novena:

1) To keep a perpetual lamp burning during the Novena days before the image of Our Lady Betharram in our parishes. (The Sacred Heart and St Catherine of Alexandria, Droitwich; Olton Friary Parish, Solihull; Holy Name Great Barr, Our Lady & Saint Werburgh, Clayton and Our Lady & Saint John the Baptist, Ashley; Corpus Christi Clifton and Our lady and St Patrick's, Meadows)

2) To celebrate annually the Feast of Our Lady of Betharram with great solemnity.

3) To promote devotion to Our Lady of the Betharram.

By living into these promises, we hope that our parishes will become a place where people of all walks of life will experience Mary's loving care and protection, just as St. Michael Garicoits did throughout his own life.

Day 1 INTENTION OF THE DAY: For the grace to do the will of God.

God, come to my assistance.

- Lord, make haste to help me.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

OPENING PRAYER: *We fly to thy protection, O holy Mother of God. Despise not our petitions in our necessities, but deliver us from all dangers O glorious and blessed Virgin. Amen.*

Antiphon: Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word, alleluia.

Canticle: Judith 13:18bcde, 19-20 You are the highest honour of our race

Blessed are you, daughter, by the Most High God, above all the women on earth; and blessed be the Lord God, the creator of heaven and earth.

Your deed of hope will never be forgotten by those who recall the might of God. May God make this redound to your everlasting honour, rewarding you with blessings,

because you risked your life when our people were being oppressed, and you averted our disaster, walking in the straight path before our God.

Amen! Amen!

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Antiphon: Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word, alleluia.

The Word took our nature from Mary

From a letter of St Athanasius

The Word took to himself the sons of Abraham, says the Apostle, and so had to be like his brothers in all things. He had then to take a body like ours. This explains the fact of Mary's presence: she is to provide him with a body of his own, to be offered for our sake. Scripture records her giving birth, and says: *She wrapped him in swaddling clothes.* Her breasts, which fed him, were called blessed. Sacrifice was offered because the child was her firstborn. Gabriel used careful and prudent language when he announced his birth. He did not

Speak of "what will be born *in* you" to avoid the impression that a body would be introduced into her womb from outside; he spoke of "what will be born *from* you," so that we might know by faith that her child originated within her and from her.

Novena Prayer

O Virgin of the Beautiful Branch, you saved a girl from drowning in the river at Betharram. Come to our aid in the dangers of this life, and guide our footsteps in the ways of God's love. Amen.

Concluding Prayer: ***"May the Son and His Mother accept our gifts and by appeasing our hopes and desires may they keep for us one day the crown of glory which none can tarnish."* Amen**

DAY 2 Intention : For those who are isolated and unable to see loved ones.

God, come to my assistance.

- Lord, make haste to help me.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

OPENING PRAYER: *We fly to thy protection, O holy Mother of God. Despise not our petitions in our necessities, but deliver us from all dangers O glorious and blessed Virgin. Amen.*

Antiphon: Mary received a blessing from the Lord and loving kindness from God her saviour,

Psalm 144:9-15 Prayer for victory and peace

To you, O God, will I sing a new song; I will play on the ten-stringed harp to you who give kings their victory, who set David your servant free from the evil sword.

Rescue me, free me from the hands of foreign foes, whose mouths speak only emptiness, whose right hands are raised in perjury.

Let our sons then flourish like saplings, grown tall and strong from their youth;
our daughters graceful as columns, as though they were carved for a palace.

Let our barns be filled to overflowing with crops of every kind;
our sheep increasing by thousands, tens of thousands in our fields, our cattle heavy with young.

No ruined wall, no exile, no sound of weeping in our streets.

Blessed the people of whom this is true; blessed the people whose God is the LORD!

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen

Antiphon: Mary received a blessing from the Lord and loving kindness from God her saviour, alleluia.

The mystery of man's reconciliation with God

From a letter of Saint Leo the Great, pope

He took the nature of a servant without stain of sin, enlarging our humanity without diminishing his divinity. He emptied himself; though invisible he made himself visible, though Creator and Lord of all things he chose to be one of us mortal men. Yet this was the condescension of compassion, not the loss of omnipotence. So he who in the nature of God had created man, became in the nature of a servant, man himself.

Thus the Son of God enters this lowly world. He comes down from the throne of heaven, yet does not separate himself from the Father's glory. He is born in a new condition, by a new birth.

He was born in a new condition, for, invisible in his own nature, he became visible in ours. Beyond our grasp, he chose to come within our grasp. Existing before time began, he began to exist at a moment in time. Lord of the universe, he hid his infinite glory and took the nature of a servant. Incapable of suffering as God, he did not refuse to be a man, capable of suffering. Immortal, he chose to be subject to the laws of death.

He who is true God is also true man. There is no falsehood in this unity as long as the lowliness of man and the pre-eminence of God coexist in mutual relationship.

Novena Prayer

O Virgin of the Beautiful Branch, you saved a girl from drowning in the river at Betharram. Come to our aid in the dangers of this life, and guide our footsteps in the ways of God's love. Amen.

Concluding Prayer: ***"May the Son and His Mother accept our gifts and by appeasing our hopes and desires may they keep for us one day the crown of glory which none can tarnish."* Amen**

Day 3: INTENTION: For the protection and sanctity of life, and for families.

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

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen

OPENING PRAYER: *We fly to thy protection, O holy Mother of God. Despise not our petitions in our necessities, but deliver us from all dangers O glorious and blessed Virgin. Amen.*

Antiphon: My soul clings to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Psalm 145:13-21 Praise of God's majesty

The LORD is faithful in all his words, and holy in all his deeds.

The LORD supports all who fall, and raises up all who are bowed down.

The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food in due season.

You open your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing.

The LORD is just in all his ways, and holy in all his deeds.

The LORD is close to all who call him, who call on him in truth.

He fulfils the desires of those who fear him; he hears their cry and he saves them.

The LORD keeps watch over all who love him; the wicked he will utterly destroy.

Let my mouth speak the praise of the LORD;

let all flesh bless his holy name forever, for ages unending.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen

Antiphon: My soul clings to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Beloved Mother:

Fr. Gustavo Agín SCJ General Superior

"Beloved mother, make us strong like you, who as the first believer said "yes" to the proposal of the divine messenger, without worrying about yourself and the consequences of your gesture of tenderness. You took the same tenderness from Nazareth to Bethlehem with Joseph, and from Jerusalem to Calvary with your Son and then to the Upper Room with the apostles, witnesses of the resurrection.

Novena Prayer

O Virgin of the Beautiful Branch, you saved a girl from drowning in the river at Betharram. Come to our aid in the dangers of this life, and guide our footsteps in the ways of God's love. Amen.

Concluding Prayer: *"May the Son and His Mother accept our gifts and by appeasing our hopes and desires may they keep for us one day the crown of glory which none can tarnish." Amen*

Day 4: Intention: For those who seek to share Christ's message of love during this time.

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

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen

OPENING PRAYER: *We fly to thy protection, O holy Mother of God. Despise not our petitions in our necessities, but deliver us from all dangers O glorious and blessed Virgin. Amen.*

Antiphon: My life is at the service of the Gospel; God has given me this gift of his grace.

Psalm 116:10-19 Thanksgiving

I love the LORD, for he has heard my voice, my appeal;
for he has turned his ear to me whenever I call.

They surrounded me, the snares of death; the anguish of the grave has found me;
anguish and sorrow I found. I called on the name of the LORD:

"Deliver my soul, O LORD!" How gracious is the LORD, and just;
our God has compassion.

The LORD protects the simple; I was brought low, and he saved me.

Turn back, my soul, to your rest, for the LORD has been good to you;
he has kept my soul from death, my eyes from tears, and my feet from stumbling.

I will walk in the presence of the LORD in the land of the living.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen

Antiphon: My life is at the service of the Gospel.

'Christus Vivit'

Pope Francis

*'We are always struck by **the strength of the young Mary's 'yes'**, the strength in those words, 'be it done', that she spoke to the angel. This was no merely passive or resigned acceptance, or a faint 'yes', as if to say, 'Well, let's give it a try and see what happens'. Mary did not know the words, 'Let's see what happens'. She was determined; she knew what was at stake and she said 'yes' without thinking twice. Hers was the 'yes' of someone prepared to be committed, someone **willing to take a risk**, ready to stake everything she had, with no more security than the certainty of knowing that she was the bearer of a promise. So I ask each one of you: **do you see yourselves as the bearers of a promise?** What promise is present in my heart that I can take up? Mary's mission would undoubtedly be difficult, but the challenges that lay ahead were no reason to say 'no'. Things would get complicated, of course, but not in the same way as happens when cowardice paralyzes us because things are not clear or sure in advance. **Mary did not take out an insurance policy!** She took the risk, and for this reason she is strong, she is an 'influencer', the 'influencer' of God. Her 'yes and her desire to serve were stronger than any doubts or difficulties'".*

Novena Prayer

O Virgin of the Beautiful Branch, you saved a girl from drowning in the river at Betharram. Come to our aid in the dangers of this life, and guide our footsteps in the ways of God's love. Amen.

Concluding Prayer: ***"May the Son and His Mother accept our gifts and by appeasing our hopes and desires may they keep for us one day the crown of glory which none can tarnish."*** Amen

Day 5: Intention : That our trust in Our Lady's care and protection may be strengthened

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

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen

OPENING PRAYER: *We fly to thy protection, O holy Mother of God. Despise not our petitions in our necessities, but deliver us from all dangers O glorious and blessed Virgin. Amen.*

Antiphon : *You have been raised up like the cedar of Lebanon, like the cypress tree on Mount Sion, O holy Mother of God.*

Give thanks to the Lord for he is good, * for his love endures for ever.

Let the sons of Israel say: * 'His love endures for ever.'

Let the sons of Aaron say: * 'His love endures for ever.'

Let those who fear the Lord say: * 'His love endures for ever.'

I called to the Lord in my distress; * he answered and freed me.

The Lord is at my side; I do not fear. * What can man do against me?

The Lord is at my side as my helper; * I shall look down on my foes.

It is better to take refuge in the Lord * than to trust in men;

it is better to take refuge in the Lord * than to trust in princes.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen

Amen.

Mother of God

Pope Francis Homily for Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God

Let us allow ourselves to be gazed upon. Especially in times of need, when we are entangled in life's knots, we rightly lift our eyes to Our Lady, to Our Mother. Yet first, we should let ourselves be gazed upon by Our Lady. When she gazes upon us, she does not see sinners but children. It is said that the eyes are the mirror of the soul; the eyes of Mary, full of grace, reflect the beauty of God, they show us a reflection of heaven. Jesus himself said that the eye is "the lamp of the body" (Mt 6:22): the eyes of Our Lady are able to bring light to every dark corner; everywhere they rekindle hope. As she gazes upon us, she says: "Take heart, dear children; here I am, your Mother!"

Novena Prayer

O Virgin of the Beautiful Branch, you saved a girl from drowning in the river at Betharram. Come to our aid in the dangers of this life, and guide our footsteps in the ways of God's love. Amen.

Concluding Prayer: ***"May the Son and His Mother accept our gifts and by appeasing our hopes and desires may they keep for us one day the crown of glory which none can tarnish."* Amen**

Day 6 Intention : For justice, peace, and all who are sick and in need.

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

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: - as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

OPENING PRAYER: *We fly to thy protection, O holy Mother of God. Despise not our petitions in our necessities, but deliver us from all dangers O glorious and blessed Virgin. Amen.*

Antiphon: You were born of the Virgin in a mysterious manner of which no man can speak; you fulfilled the scriptures; like rain falling gently on the earth you came hither to save the human race. We praise you: you are our God.

*If the Lord does not build the house, in vain do its builders labour;
if the Lord does not watch over the city, in vain does the watchman keep vigil.*

*In vain is your earlier rising, your going later to rest,
you who toil for the bread you eat, when he pours gifts on his beloved while they slumber.*

*Truly sons are a gift from the Lord, a blessing, the fruit of the womb.
Indeed the sons of youth are like arrows in the hand of a warrior.*

*Ó the happiness of the man who has filled his quiver with these arrows!
He will have no cause for shame * when he disputes with his foes in the gateways.*

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Antiphon: You were born of the Virgin in a mysterious manner of which no man can speak; you fulfilled the scriptures; like rain falling gently on the earth you came hither to save the human race. We praise you: you are our God.

Fruitful Mother,

Fr. Gustavo Agín SCJ

intercede for us so that all our apparent sterilities of today may become an opportunity to be more steadfast and trustful in our commitment in following Christ.

Always faithful to what the Shepherd of Ibarre wanted for us: to be religious and laity of Betharram.

Available like you to serve the Church of the poor, of those who have no voice, of those who do not know your Son... Teach us to do so, readily, unreservedly, without turning back, and more out of love than for any other reason."

Novena Prayer

O Virgin of the Beautiful Branch, you saved a girl from drowning in the river at Betharram. Come to our aid in the dangers of this life, and guide our footsteps in the ways of God's love. Amen.

Concluding Prayer: "May the Son and His Mother accept our gifts and by appeasing our hopes and desires may they keep for us one day the crown of glory which none can tarnish." Amen

Day 7 Intention: For vocations to the priesthood, diaconate and the religious life.

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

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: - as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen. Alleluia.

OPENING PRAYER: *We fly to thy protection, O holy Mother of God. Despise not our petitions in our necessities, but deliver us from all dangers O glorious and blessed Virgin. Amen.*

Antiphon: O wonderful exchange! The Creator of human nature took on a human body and was born of the Virgin. He became man without having a human father and has bestowed on us his divine nature.

Psalm 150 Praise the Lord

Alleluia, Praise God in his holy place; praise him in his mighty firmament.
Praise him for his powerful deeds; praise him for his boundless grandeur.

O praise him with sound of trumpet; praise him with lute and harp.
Praise him with tumbrel and dance; praise him with strings and pipes.

O praise him with resounding cymbals; praise him with clashing of cymbals.
Let everything that breathes praise the LORD! Alleluia

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen

"Missionary Mary...

Fr Gustavo Agín SCJ

She had to take care of Jesus, and let herself be taken care of by Joseph, but she did not want to forget to take care of Elizabeth. As a good mother, she encourages us to "launch ourselves" on mission, to console and proclaim with our lives that Betharramites belong to the Heart of Jesus, the One who has called us to follow him with an ever new "Here I am."

Novena Prayer

O Virgin of the Beautiful Branch, you saved a girl from drowning in the river at Betharram. Come to our aid in the dangers of this life, and guide our footsteps in the ways of God's love. Amen.

Concluding Prayer: "May the Son and His Mother accept our gifts and by appeasing our hopes and desires may they keep for us one day the crown of glory which none can tarnish." Amen

Day 8 Intention: May those who are in danger experience the depth of maternal protection of Our Lady.

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

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: - as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen. Alleluia.

OPENING PRAYER: *We fly to thy protection, O holy Mother of God. Despise not our petitions in our necessities, but deliver us from all dangers O glorious and blessed Virgin. Amen.*

Antiphon: Here I am, Lord; I come to do your will, alleluia.

Psalm 40:2-6 Thanksgiving and plea for help

I waited, I waited for the LORD, and he stooped down to me;
he heard my cry.

He drew me from the deadly pit, from the miry clay. He set my feet upon a rock, made my footsteps firm.

He put a new song into my mouth, praise of our God.
Many shall see and fear and shall trust in the LORD.

Blessed are those who have placed their trust in the LORD,
and have not gone over to the proud who follow false gods.

How many, O LORD my God, are the wonders and designs that you have worked for us;
you have no equal. Should I wish to proclaim or speak of them,
they would be more than I can tell!

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: - as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Antiphon: Here I am, Lord; I come to do your will, alleluia.

Blessed is she who believed

REDEMPTORIS MATER, St. John Paul II

In the expression "Blessed is she who believed," we can therefore rightly find a kind of "key" which unlocks for us the innermost reality of Mary, whom the angel hailed as "full of grace." If as "full of grace" she has been eternally present in the mystery of Christ, through faith she became a sharer in that mystery in every extension of her earthly journey. She "advanced in her pilgrimage of faith" and at the same time, in a discreet yet direct and effective way, she made present to humanity the mystery of Christ. And she still continues to do so. Through the mystery of Christ, she too is present within mankind. Thus through the mystery of the Son the mystery of the Mother is also made clear.

Novena Prayer

O Virgin of the Beautiful Branch, you saved a girl from drowning in the river at Betharram. Come to our aid in the dangers of this life, and guide our footsteps in the ways of God's love. Amen.

Concluding Prayer: "May the Son and His Mother accept our gifts and by appeasing our hopes and desires may they keep for us one day the crown of glory which none can tarnish." Amen

Day 9 Intention: Personal

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

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: - as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen. Alleluia.

OPENING PRAYER: We fly to thy protection, O holy Mother of God. Despise not our petitions in our necessities, but deliver us from all dangers O glorious and blessed Virgin. Amen.

My soul rejoices in the Lord

Antiphon: *Blessed is the womb that bore you, Christ, and blessed are the breasts that suckled you, for you are the Lord and Saviour of the world, alleluia.*

My soul glorifies the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God, my Saviour.

He looks on his servant in her lowliness; * henceforth all ages will call me blessed.

The Almighty works marvels for me. Holy his name!

His mercy is from age to age, * on those who fear him.

He puts forth his arm in strength * and scatters the proud-hearted.

He casts the mighty from their thrones * and raises the lowly.

He fills the starving with good things, * sends the rich away empty.

He protects Israel, his servant, * remembering his mercy,

the mercy promised to our fathers, * to Abraham and his sons for ever.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end.

Amen.

Antiphon: *Blessed is the womb that bore you, Christ, and blessed are the breasts that suckled you, for you are the Lord and Saviour of the world, alleluia.*

Mary, Queen of Peace
VI

CHRISTI MATRI ENCYCLICAL OF POPE PAUL

Nothing seems more appropriate and valuable to Us than to have the prayers of the whole Christian family rise to the Mother of God, who is invoked as the Queen of Peace, begging her to pour forth abundant gifts of her maternal goodness in midst of so many great trials and hardships. We want constant and devout prayers to be offered to her whom We declared Mother of the Church..

Novena Prayer

O Virgin of the Beautiful Branch, you saved a girl from drowning in the river at Betharram. Come to our aid in the dangers of this life, and guide our footsteps in the ways of God's love. Amen.

Concluding Prayer: "May the Son and His Mother accept our gifts and by appeasing our hopes and desires may they keep for us one day the crown of glory which none can tarnish." Amen