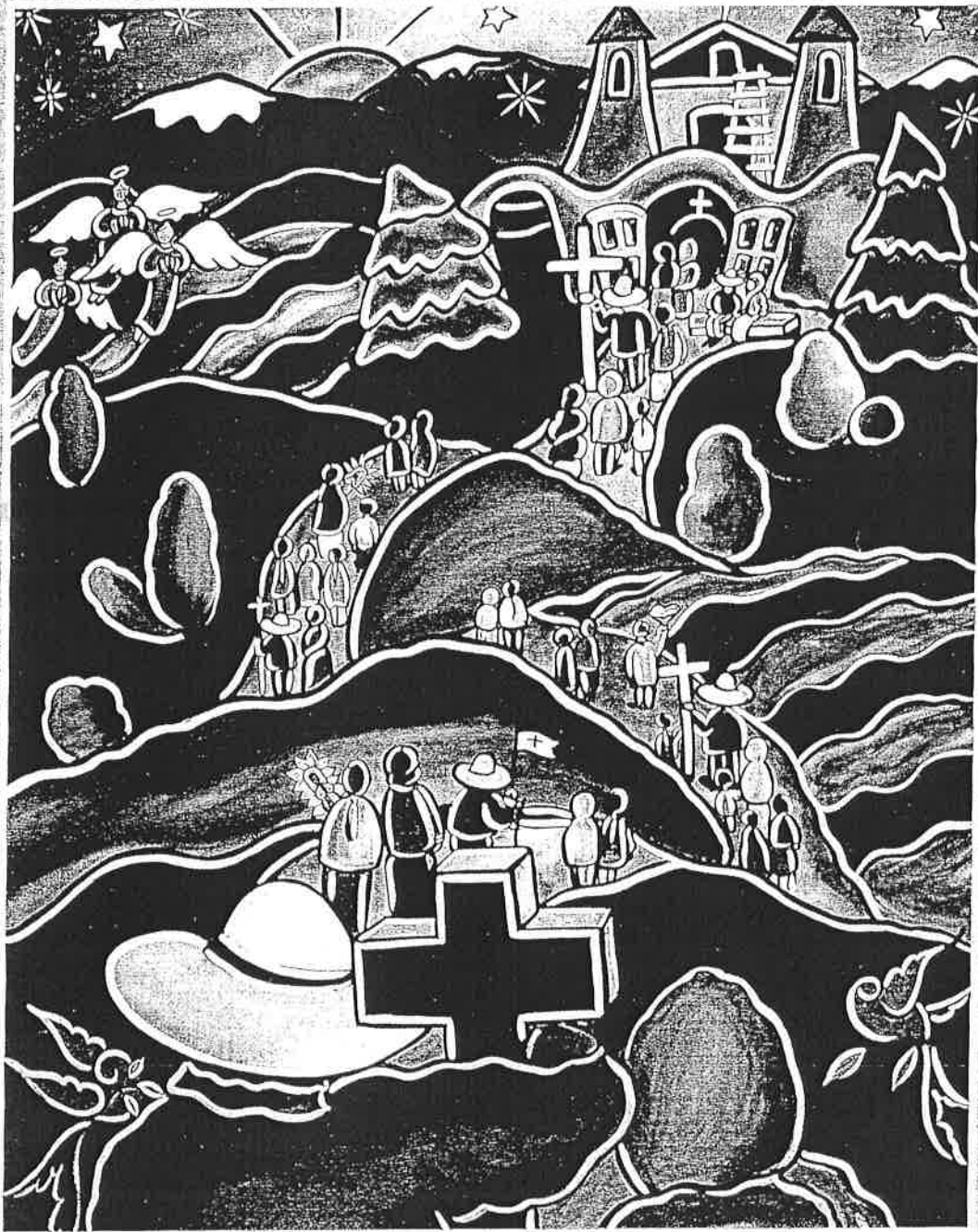


Las Posadas

Peregrinación Hacia Navidad
Journeying Together toward Christmas



CHRISTMAS NOVENA

The Novena is a devotion, consisting of a prayer said over nine successive days from December 16th to December 24th. La Novena de Aguinaldos is a preparation or advent prayer for Christmas telling us what had happened through the nine Month pregnancy of the Virgin Mary and Joseph. It is an old Colombian tradition dating from the 1700s, passing from generation to generation without major changes. Over time the traditional wording has been adapted and changed too for newer generations. Whilst the elderly prefers a more traditional prayer.

La Novena de Aguinaldos is a family affair, it's a get-together to enjoy La Navidad (Christmas) around the nativity (or Pesebre in Spanish) that is mostly placed under the Christmas Tree. Sharing this tradition is not always with the family, it's also shared with friends, office colleges, neighbors and even on TV. It was written by Fray Fernando de Jesus Larrea to Clemencia de Jesus Caicedo Velez, founder of the "la Enseñanza" (a Catholic school in Bogotá) who asked him to compose and write a Christmas prayer.

During and after this Christmas prayer, people are very enthusiastic in the participation of carol singing, accompanied by guitars, tambourines and maracas. Or for Colombia it is common for children to make their own musical instruments, normally a rattle of some kind, made by stone-smash bottle caps, nailed together to a piece of an old wooden broom or mop stick. Here is an image of the parts used for musical instruments. This can make your Novena de Aguinaldos (Advent prayers) an unforgettable one, especially for the young who particularly enjoy making and playing them.

On some occasions, priests ask the church community to pray the Novena de Aguinaldos as a performance which includes participants dressed up as Virgin Mary, Joseph, baby Jesus (on the 24th) and other main characters of the nativity including real animals! After the Novena de Aguinaldos we serve typical Christmas dishes like "Buñuelos", a kind of cheese bread fritters, "Natilla" a dessert made with milk, cloves and cinnamon, "Empanadas" a fried dough filled with potatoes and meat, with drinks.

Novena de Aguinaldos consists of many prayers followed by a particular day prayer. Below you'll see the daily prayers. To participate or just to read the complete Novena de Aguinaldos in English see below.

- The custom starts with one prayer.
- Begin with the Sign of the Cross and start with the "Prayer for Every Day."
- Then there's a prayer for the specific day.
- Read aloud the specific Novena day prayer (dated below).
- You then finish the session with individual prayers.
- Prayer to the Blessed Virgin
- Prayer to St. Joseph
- "Los Gozos" - Aspirations of the Coming of the Child Jesus
- The Memorare to the Child Jesus

Cantos de Adviento/Advent Songs

LAS POSADAS

Outside

1. In the name of heaven
I humbly ask for shelter
For my wife beloved
Who can walk no longer.
2. Be merciful on us:
Won't you take pity, we pray?
Know that our God in heaven
Will your kindness repay.
3. Tired and exhausted we come
From Nazareth far away.
Joseph is my name,
A carpenter by trade.
4. Shelter and lodging we ask,
Your kindness we implore;
For the Queen of Heaven
Only this night and no more.
5. Mary's the name of my wife,
Queen of Heaven is she,
Bearing the Word-made-Flesh,
Soon a mother she'll be.
6. May God honor your goodness,
Your kind and generous deed;
May heaven bring you joy
For your great charity.

Inside

1. This is no inn, you see,
Therefore, be on your way.
I dare not open this door
To rogues to whom I'll fall prey.
2. You are disturbing my peace;
Go now and take your leave.
If you keep bothering me
A beating you will receive.
3. I do not care for your name;
Rest is my only desire.
I will not open the door,
My goal is to retire.
4. If she indeed is a queen,
Who has requested her presence?
How is it that at this hour
She wanders as if a peasant?
5. Are you truly Joseph?
And is this Mary your spouse?
I did not recognize you,
Enter our humble house.
6. Blessings be on this house
That offers welcome and light
To the Virgin pure,
Mary who is our delight!

Pilgrims Enter

7. Come and enter, holy pilgrims, holy pilgrims,
Welcome to our humble home.
Though our dwelling's poor and humble, poor and humble,
Please receive it as your own.
8. Let us sing with joy and gladness, joy and gladness,
As we ponder this great day,
When the blessed Holy Fam'ly, Holy Fam'ly,
Comes to fill us all with grace.

Nota: La partitura de este canto empieza en la siguiente página.
Note: The music for this song begins on the next page.

Prayer for Every Day

Most gracious God of infinite charity, that have loved all mankind, you gave us in your child the best pledge of your love, that once made Him a man in the womb of a Virgin and born in a manger for our health and cure; I, on behalf of all mortals, give you infinite thanks for so sovereign benefit.

In exchange of Him, I will offer the poverty, humility and other virtues of your incarnated Son, I beseech you for His divine merits, for the discomforts of His birth and the tender tears He shed in the manger, also prepare our hearts with deep humility, passion, and with such contempt of all earthly things, so that the newborn Jesus has in them his crib and dwell forever. Amen. (Pray three times Glory Be)

Prayer to the Blessed Virgin

Sovereign Mary, that for your great virtues and especially for your humility, you have deserved that all a god had chosen you to be His Mother, I beg that you yourself prepare and arrange my and everyone's soul at this time of praying this advent pray (Novena), for the spiritual birth of your beloved Son. Oh sweet mother!, Convey to me something of the deep meditation and divine tenderness of your awaiting, so that we should do less unworthy of him, love him and adore him for all eternity. Amen. (Pray three times the Hail Mary)

Prayer to St. Joseph

Oh Blessed Joseph, husband of Mary and foster father of Jesus! Infinite thanks be to God that has chosen you for as sovereign mysteries and adorned you with all the gifts provided to so excellent greatness. I beseech you for the love you had to the Divine Child, hold me in earnest wishes to see him and receive him sacramentally, while I see His divine essence and joy in heaven. Amen. (Pray one Our Father, Hail Mary and Glory)

Aspirations of the Coming of the Child Jesus "Los Gozos"

We understand that the following prayer was inspired by Vespers on the seven days before Christmas eve "O Antiphons" and hymn "O come, O come, Emmanuel".

Sweet Jesus of mine,
my beloved child,
Come to our souls!
Come do not delay!

Oh Wisdom, from the sovereign God,
that a childish reach You have lowered!
O Divine Child, come to teach us prudence (the way of peace),
that makes truly wise men!
Come to our souls!
Come do not delay!

Oh, Mighty God (Adonai) that to Moses had spoken,
and gave him the commands for the Israeli people!
Oh, come promptly to rescue us,
and as weak child show an outstretched arm!
Come to our souls!
Come do not delay!

Oh, Joseph sacred root that from the highest
submits to orb your fragrant tuberoses!
Sweetest Child that has been called
Lily of the Valley, Beautiful flower of the field.
Come to our souls!
Come do not delay!

O key of David that opens to exiled
the closed doors of the Royal palace!
Get us out! Oh Boy with your white hand,
from this sad jail seated in sin!
Come to our souls!
Come do not delay!

Oh Dawn, splendor of eternal light
that in the darkness your shine we will see!
Child so precious, bliss of the Christian,
flaunt your smile from your sweet lips.
Come to our souls!
Come do not delay!

Unspotted mirror, holy of holies,
unsurpassed image of sovereign God!
Erase our sins, save the banished
and as a child, give the miserable shelter!
Come to our souls!
Come do not delay!

Oh King of the nations, Emmanuel illustrious,
From Israel yearning, you are Shepherd of the flock!
Child who grace with soft arch
the surly sheep and the meek lamb!
Come to our souls!
Come do not delay!

Open up the heavens and rain from above
beneficent dew as a holly irrigation!
Beautiful Child come, come incarnate God!
Flaunt God star! Spring up, flower of the field!
Come to our souls!
Come do not delay!

Come, that Mary prevents her arms,
for her child to see, in nearby!
Come, that Joseph, with longing sacrum,
has disposed him to take your holly love!
Come to our souls!
Come do not delay!

From weaken relief and suffered under,
You are comfort for the sad and light the exiled!
Life of my life, my beloved owner,
my unfailing friend, my divine brother!
Come to our souls!
Come do not delay!

Come in my eyes, they inspire love!
And kiss your feet! kiss your hands!
I am prostrated on the ground, my arms are stretched,
and even more to my sentences, says my tears!
Come to our souls!
Come do not delay!

Come on our Saviour for whom we sigh
Come to our souls, Come, do not delay!

The Memorare to the Child Jesus

Remember, Oh most sweet Child, Jesus! you said to the Venerable Margaret of the Blessed Sacrament, and through her to all your devotees, these words so comforting for our poor, burdened and suffering humanity: "Anything you want to ask, ask for it by the merits of my childhood and nothing will be denied." Full of confidence in you, oh Jesus! that you are the same truth, we come to lay before all our misery. Help us to lead a holy life, to get a blessed eternity. Grant us by the infinite merits of your childhood, the grace of which we need both. We surrender to you, oh omnipotent Boy! We are confident that you will not miss our hope, and that under your divine promise, you will welcome and favorably dispatch our prayer. Amen.

Day 1 - December 16th

In the beginning of time the Word was resting in the bosom of his Father at the top of heaven, in there He was the cause, along with the model of the creation. In those depths of an untold eternity remained the Child of Bethlehem; before He deigned to descend to Earth and visibly taken possession of the grotto of Bethlehem. Here is where we must look for His beginnings that have never beginning, hence we date the genealogy of eternity, which has no ancestors and contemplate the life of infinite satisfaction there He had.

The life of the eternal Word in the bosom of his Father was a wonderful life and yet sublime mystery! Find another home, another ready-made mansion. It was not because in his eternal mansion there was missing something to his infinite happiness, but because his infinite mercy longed for redemption and salvation of mankind, that without Him we could not verified it. Adam's sin had offended God and that infinite offence could not be condoned but by the merits of the same God. The race of Adam had disobeyed and deserved eternal punishment, it was therefore necessary to save it and meet its fault, that God, without leaving heaven, take the form of man on Earth and obeys the will of his Father atone that disobedience, ingratitude and rebellion. It was necessary, in view of his love, that He taken the form, systematic weaknesses and ignorance of man, it grew to provide spiritual growth to suffer, to die to teach their passions and their pride. And so, the eternal Word, burning to save man, and decided to become man and redeem the guilty.

Day 2 - December 17th

The Eternal Word is about to take its nature created in the Holy House of Nazareth where Mary and Joseph lived. When the shadow of the divine secret came to glide over Mary, She was alone engulfed in prayer. She spent the silent hours of the night in closer union with God and while She was praying, the Word took up his abode created.

However, He didn't come unexpectedly, before appearing He sent a messenger, who was the Archangel Gabriel, to ask Mary from God Her consent to the Incarnation. The Creator did not wish to make this great mystery without the consent of his creature.

That moment was very solemn. It was optional for Mary to decline... Which adorable treats; With what unspeakable indulgences await the Holy Trinity that Mary opened her lips and pronouns the fiat that should be soft melody to their ears, and which conformed to her deep humility to that omnipotent divine will!

The Immaculate Virgin has endorsed. The Archangel has disappeared. God has assumed a created nature, the eternal will is fulfilled and the whole creation consummated. The Word was made flesh, and though still invisible to the world, dwells among mankind and his great love has come to rescue.

Day 3 - December 18th

It had begun incarnated life for Jesus the Child. Let us account the glorious soul and the Holy Body he had taken, to worship them deeply.

Admire first the soul of the Divine Child, consider it the fullness of its beatific knowledge, by which from the first moment of His life saw more clearly the divine essence than all angels and read the past and the future with all their arcane and knowledge.

From the Soul of the Child Jesus, we now turn to his body, which was a world of wonders, a masterpiece of God's hand. He wanted Him to be small and weak like all children and subject to all the inconveniences of childhood, to become more like us and participate in our humiliations.

The beauty of the body of the Divine Child was beyond anything ever have imagined, and divine blood in his veins began to flow from the incarnation time, which was the one that washed all stains from guilty world.

Let us ask Him to wash our stains in the sacrament of penance for the day of his happy Christmas (navidad) (birth) found us purified, forgiven and willing to receive Him with love and spiritual profit.

Day 4 - December 19th

From the womb of his mother the Child Jesus started to implement His entire submission to God, which continued without any interruption throughout His live. He adored his Eternal Father, He loved him, He submitted to his will, accepting with resignation the state in which He was, knowing all His weaknesses, all His humiliation and all His discomforts. Who of us would like to go back to a similar state and with full enjoyment of reason and reflexion?, Who could hold, knowingly so long, a martyrdom, so painful in anyway? Through there the Divine Child came in His painful and humble career, and began to annihilate before his Father, to show us what God deserves from his infant, He came to atone (keep watch on) our pride, the source of all our sins, and make us feel crime and pride disorder.

We want to make a real prayer; let us start to form an exact notion by watching the Child in the womb of his mother, the Divine Child pray and pray in the most excellent way. He does not speak, does not meditate or

melts in tender affections. On This state, He accepted the intention of honoring God, through his prayer and on His state, He highly expressed all that God deserves and how it wishes to be worshipped by us.

Let us join with the prayers to Child Jesus in Mary's womb; let us unite to deep depression and let it be this the first affection of our sacrifice to God. Let us give ourselves to God, not to be something like our vanity continually seeks to be, but to be nothing; to be eternally consumed and overwhelmed, to renounce to ourselves stimulation, to all care of our greatness even spiritual, to any movement of vainglory. Let us disappear in front of our own eyes and God be the only thing to us.

Day 5 - December 20th

We have seen the life that the Child Jesus carried in the womb of his most pure Mother; let us also see today the life that Mary lead during the same period of time. Today we need to understand through Her feelings, and as far as possible to our limited capability, the sublime mysteries of the Incarnation and the way we have to reciprocate it.

Mary never stopped wondering for the time that She would enjoy that terrestrial beatific vision, the face of God incarnates. She was about to see that human face that would light up the sky for all eternity, She was going to read filial love in those same eyes whose rays should spread happiness forever to the elected millions. She was going to see His face every day, every hour, every moment, for many years. She was going to see him in presumed ignorance of childhood, in the charms of his youth and reflective serenity of mature age... She would do anything He wanted to do, She could cuddle Him with all the freedom of maternal love; cover him with kisses over his lips which should pronounce the judgement to all men; She could contemplate His face as She like during His sleep or awake, until She had memorized it... how ardently She wished that day!

Such was the expectation of Mary... it was unprecedented in itself, but not so ceased to be part of a Christian life. Let us not be content admiring Jesus living in Mary, but rather let us admire how He was essence, power and presence.

Yes, Jesus is born continuously in us and of us, in a way of good works that enables us to meet our cooperation and grace, so that the soul within the grace is in a perpetual womb of Mary, one endless Bethlehem. After communion Jesus dwells in us, for a few moments, He is really, substantially as God and man, because the same child that was in Mary is also in the Blessed Sacrament. What is all this? but a participation in the life of Mary during those wonderful months, and an expectation full of delights like Hers.

Day 6 - December 21st

Jesus was conceived in Nazareth, home of Joseph and Mary, where he was believed to be born, in all probability. But God had arranged differently, and the prophets had foretold that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, the city of David. To fulfill this prediction, God used a method that seemed to have no connection with the prophecy, namely the order given by the Emperor Caesar Augustus, that all the subjects of the Roman Empire census in the place where they originated. Mary and Joseph, who were descendants of David, were not exempt from going to Bethlehem. Neither the status of Our Lady or the need that Joseph had of daily secure livelihood, could exempt them from this long and arduous journey, in the most rigorous and uncomfortable season of the year.

Jesus does not ignore the place where He must be born and inspires His parents to surrender to divine guidance, and unconsciously made them attend to the execution of the God's plans. That our Inner souls, watch this management of the Divine Child, because it is the most important spiritual life, let us learn to whom is dedicated to God not to belong to themselves, nor to love every moment but what God wants for us, blindly

follow Him even in trivial things, such as change of place wherever He pleases to lead you. Will have chance to observe this dependence and inviolable fidelity throughout the life of Jesus Christ, and this is the point on which the saints and truly inner souls have taken pains to imitate Him, giving absolutely up to their own will.

Day 7 - December 22nd

Let us imagine the journey of Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem, carrying with them an unborn, the Creator of the universe made man. Let us contemplate humanity and obedience of the Divine Child that even from Jewish race and having loved his people for centuries with an unaccountable penchant, Who obeys a foreign prince who is part of the population census of his province, as if for Him had something that flattered in that circumstance, and He wanted to rush to seize the opportunity to become an official and authentically subject at the time when He was coming to the world. Is not it strange that humiliation, that causes so incredible repugnance to the creature, which appears to be the only thing devised that has appeal to the Creator? Will not the humility of Jesus teach us to love this beautiful merit?

Ah... the time has come to display the one desired of the nations, because all calls for this happy event, the world plunged into darkness and discomfort sought and not finding relief from their ills, pines for their Liberator. The yearning to Joseph, the expectation of Mary, are a thing which no human language can express. The Eternal Father is, if we may use this expression, adorably eager to give his only Son into the world, and to see him take his place among the visible creatures. The Holy Spirit is burning to present to the light of day this sacred humanity so beautiful that He himself has formed so special and with divine care. Divine Child, object of many desires, let us remember what is moving to Bethlehem is moving towards us, let us hasten our desire upon His arrival; purify our souls to be his mystical abode, and our hearts to be his earthly Manis, that our acts of mortification and detachment prepare the way of the Lord and make straight his paths.

Day 8 - December 23rd

Joseph and Mary arrived at Bethlehem, seeking accommodation in the inns, but they are already found all busy, and because they are discriminate because of their poor looking. However, this cannot disturb the inner peace that is fixed in God. Joseph felt surprise when he was rejected from house to house, and because He thought of Mary and the Child, He smiled also so calmly when he setted his eyes on his chaste wife. The unborn child rejoiced on those negative response which were the prelude to his future humiliations. Each voice rough, the slam of each closed door before them, was what he had come for. The desire of these humiliations was what had helped him to take human form.

O divine Child of Bethlehem! These days that so many (people) have been at parties and entertainment or comfortable resting softly in rich mansions, your parents have been to a day of fatigue and abuse of all kinds. Oh! Bethlehem's spirit is that of a world that has forgotten God. How many times has also we been like them, let us not closed continuously with rude ignorance the door to the calls of God, who is asking us to become, or sanctify or conform to his will? Do not we misuse our sorrows, ignoring their heavenly character that each of us in own our way, has engraved it? God comes to us many times in life, but we do not know his face, or recognize him until we turned his back and walks away after our refusal.

The sun sets on December 24 behind the rooftops of Bethlehem and its last rays gild the tops of steep rocks surrounding it. Rude men rub roughly the Lord in the streets of this village east, and close their doors after seeing his mother, The dome of heaven appears glitter over those hills frequented by shepherds. The stars will appear one after another. Within a few hours will come the eternal Word.

Day 9 - December 24th

The night closed entirely in the plains of Bethlehem. Discarded by men, and homeless, Mary and Joseph have left the inhospitable town and have taken refuge in a grotto that was at the foot of the hill. The ass that had served to the Queen of the Angels as a humble ride during the trip was still following her. Inside the grotto they found a willing ox, probably left there by one of the walkers who had come to look for a shelter in the city.

The Divine Child, unknown to his rational creatures, will have to resort to the irrational's creatures, to praise for their warm breath to warm the cold clime of the winter night, and manifest with this their humble attitude, respect and adoration that Bethlehem had been denied Him. The redish lantern that Joseph had on in his hand dimly lit the very poor enclosure, the manger full of hay is prophetic picture of the wonders of the altar, and also the intimate union and prodigious eucharistic that Jesus has to engage with men. Mary is praying in the middle of the grotto, and so silently are passing the hours of that night filled with mystery.

But midnight has come, and suddenly we see within that manger, shortly before empty, the Divine Child expected, predicted, desired for four thousand years with ineffable longing. At His feet prostrates his Blessed Mother, submerged in worship from which nobody can have idea. Joseph also comes over and pays tribute with this he officially inaugurates his mysterious and imponderable role of foster father to the Redeemer of men. A multitude of angels descend from the heavens to contemplate that wonder unparalleled, they burst their joy and leave harmonies vibrate in the air of in Excelsis Glory that echoes of worship that occurs around the Almighty, made it perceptible for a moment to the ears of the poor Earth. Called by them, shepherds of the region come in droves to worship the newborn and present their humble offerings. Shines in the East the mysterious star of Jacob, and it begins the "Wise Men" splendid procession to Bethlehem, who in a few days come to lay at the feet of the Divine Child gold, frankincense, and myrrh, they are symbols of love, worship and mortification.

Oh beloved Child! We too, who have made this novena to prepare your day of Christmas, we want to offer our poor worship. Do not reject it! Come to our souls, come to our hearts full of love! Ignite on them devotion to your holy continuous childhood but limited to the time of your Christmas, always and in all times; this devotion practiced faithfully and zealously propagated, lead us to eternal life, freeing us from sin and sowing all the Christian virtues.