

A Novena To

OUR LADY OF CHAMPION: QUEEN OF FAMILIES



NIHIL OBSTAT

Reverend Edward L. Looney

Censor Librorum

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Most Reverend David L. Ricken, DD, JCL

Bishop of Green Bay

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DEDICATED TO:

Adele Brise, tireless in her love
for God and souls



the Discalced Carmelite Nuns
of the Monastery of the
Holy Name of Jesus.



“GO AND FEAR
NOTHING,
I WILL HELP YOU.”

AN INVITATION

When Belgian farming families in Champion, Wisconsin, were neglecting to teach their children the Catholic Faith, Our Lord sent a remedy. In 1859, Our Lady appeared to Adele Brise and said:

"I am the Queen of Heaven who prays for the conversion of sinners and I wish you to do the same.... Gather the children in this wild country and teach them what they should know for salvation.... Teach them their catechism, how to sign themselves with the sign of the cross and how to approach the sacraments."

Adele spent her life fulfilling Mary's request.

Today the National Shrine of Our Lady of Champion stands where Mary gave her message of hope. Since 1859, thousands of visitors have petitioned Our Lord through His mother's intercession. On December 8, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, 2010, Bishop David L. Ricken of the Diocese of Green Bay, Wisconsin, approved the apparitions of Our Lady of Champion as worthy of belief by the Christian faithful.

This novena invites you to respond to Mary's request. In it, we pray for families, who are the doorway, or "threshold" of the faith. Through this doorway, we welcome Christ into our family and embrace him. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, [then] I will enter his house and dine with him, and he with me," (Rev. 3:20). All can find hope and comfort in praying this novena, for we are all members of God's family, for "the Church is a home and family for everyone" (Catechism of the Catholic Church [CCC] 1658).

During these nine days of prayer we will journey with and see the examples of nine holy families who model extraordinary gifts and virtues. We will ask God, through the intercession of these holy men and women and Our Lady of Champion, to give us these gifts and virtues.

May you accept and nurture the graces and treasures Our Lord desires to give you and your family through the intercession of Our Lady of Champion, Queen of Families.

OUR ROADMAP

Our families are called to mirror the mystery of the Most Blessed Trinity, where the Holy Spirit proceeds from the mutual love of the Father and the Son. In a similar way, children proceed from the mutual love of a husband and wife. Thus, husband, wife, and children are an image of the Trinitarian mystery of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

It is then appropriate that this novena for families is Trinitarian in form focusing, first, on how the Father invites three families of the Old Testament into covenantal relationships with Him. Second, how the Son transmits his grace to three families of the New Testament. And third, how the Holy Spirit guides and cultivates three families of our own time.



The Holy Family | Father Richard Cannuli, OSA

“The Christian home is the place where children receive the first proclamation of the faith. For this reason the family home is rightly called ‘the domestic church,’ a community of grace and prayer, a school of human virtues and of Christian charity” (CCC 1666).

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A NOVENA TO OUR LADY OF CHAMPION: QUEEN OF FAMILIES

Opening Prayer:

Lord, You sent Your mother to Adele Brise to invite her to “*pray for the conversion of sinners*” and “*gather the children in this wild country and teach them what they should know for salvation....*” Adele gave tirelessly in undertaking the work You set before her. Ignite a flame in the hearts of all parents and awaken in them a loving and generous response to this timeless message.

Lord, teach us, the domestic church, and help us to recognize Your riches – our children. Guide us, their primary educators, so that we may teach them what they should know for salvation and growth in holiness. May we never relinquish our responsibility by allowing our children to be guided by the world and its false promises. Help us to uphold the dignity of the family, through which we can bring hope to our world.

Father, through the grace of baptism, You made us Your adopted children. Help us to respond joyfully to Your gentle *invitation* to live in an abundant relationship with You.

Jesus, enable us to *transmit* the fire of Your love to our children and those around us by frequenting the sacraments, praying faithfully, engaging in fruitful dialogue and modeling Christian virtue.

Holy Spirit, *guide* us in caring for each soul entrusted to us, cultivating an atmosphere in which You yourself can prune and fashion each child according to Your plan.

We ask all of this through the intercession of Our Lady of Champion, Queen of Families.

Amen.

VIRTUE OF HOPE

Our first parents, Adam and Eve, were created to build the Kingdom of God on earth. They were gifted with dwelling in the eternal, close to the Heart of God the Father. Yet, they succumbed, in their pride and curiosity, seeking knowledge by the words of the serpent and taste of the fruit. This Fall brought trials and pain.

With the help of the Lord, they brought forth life. They were given the duty of sharing their love for God and each other with their children. They experienced firsthand the trials of raising their children in a fallen world. When their first-born took the life of his brother, they lost one son to death and another to sin.

Despite Adam and Eve's broken relationship with God, they came to hope in His mercy and the promised Savior who would mend what they could not. Having fallen, they know our struggles. Having repented, they have been redeemed by the blood of Christ.



*Creation Day and Night
Father Richard Cannuli, OSA*

OUR STRUGGLES TODAY

From the pierced side of Christ on the cross, we have received the gift of the Church and Her sacraments for sustenance. Yet we instead trust in our own strength, rejecting our need to participate in the life of the Church. When God calls, "Where are you?" we are tempted to hide from His mercy, afraid to answer.

INTERCESSORY PRAYER

Adam and Eve, through your intercession, may God grant families the **virtue of hope**. May your example of repentance help us to see that it is never too late to turn to God with sincere hearts. Pray for us as we labor for the Lord, caring for the precious lives God has entrusted to us. Help us to cling to the Church and Her sacraments, and to put our hope in the Savior and the Kingdom of Heaven. May our relationship with God strengthen our faith and call us to deeper conversion, thereby witnessing to others the reason for our hope.

PRAYER OF THE FAMILY: THE THRESHOLD OF FAITH

God, our loving Father and Creator, You invite families to participate in Your unique plan for salvation by entrusting to us the lives of our children, inscribing Your Divine image in their souls. This image or “icon” illuminates our families with Your face, transfiguring our homes into domestic churches. You stand at our thresholds knocking, waiting for us to throw open our doors and invite You to enter more fully into our family life. Let us not ignore Your repeated knocking, but welcome You, embracing the graces You wish to give. May these graces enable us to pass on the gift of our Catholic Faith to our children, giving them what they need for salvation and growth in holiness. It is from the threshold of our domestic church that our families will bring glory to You and hope to the world.

Our Lady of Champion, Queen of Heaven, implore your Son to strengthen the **virtue of hope** in our families in order to teach our children what they should know for salvation.

“Hope is the theological virtue by which we desire the kingdom of heaven and eternal life as our happiness, placing our trust in Christ’s promises and relying not on our own strength, but on the help of the grace of the Holy Spirit” (CCC 1817).

Cf. Gen. 1:26-Gen. 5, Rom. 5:12-21.

VIRTUE OF FAITH

Noah and his wife were faithful servants of the Lord. They found favor with God by obeying His commands in a world that devalued marriage, the foundation of society. They navigated the deceptions and lies of their time by walking and conversing with the Lord. Noah heeded God's warning to save his family by building the ark and enclosing them in its safety. He had faith in what the Lord was asking even when it seemed radical. Noah and his family were spared from the consequences of sin because they trusted in the Lord's promises.

OUR STRUGGLES TODAY

We are drowning in a culture that denies the true nature and purpose of marriage and its unitive and procreative ends. Instead of trusting in God's plan for our family, we choose our own path. As a result, marriages are strained and broken by the weight of sin. The Lord has promised He will never destroy the earth again by flood, yet we are left to navigate these rising waters of sinfulness.



*Holy Spirit Window
Father Richard Cannuli, OSA*

INTERCESSORY PRAYER

Noah, beg of the Lord that He might strengthen families in the **virtue of faith**. May He help us seal any fractures in our marriages with the love of the Holy Spirit. May He help us pass along to our children the truths of our Catholic Faith and the love of the Lord. Let us reaffirm our baptismal promises and marital covenant, and in so doing renew the face of the earth. May we be witnesses to the rainbow God has stretched across the sky showing His covenantal love for us. Noah, may we faithfully follow your example of trust and perseverance, sending forth our children to carry the Catholic Faith into the world.

PRAYER OF THE FAMILY: THE THRESHOLD OF FAITH

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Our Lady of Champion, Queen of Heaven, implore your Son to strengthen the **virtue of faith** in our families in order to teach our children what they should know for salvation.

“Faith is the theological virtue by which we believe in God and believe all that he has said and revealed to us, and that Holy Church proposes for our belief, because he is truth itself” (CCC 1814).

Cf. Gen. 5-10, Heb. 11.

GIFT OF COUNSEL

God bestowed His blessing and new names on Abraham and his wife, Sarah. He promised them land, prosperity and more descendants than stars in the sky. After years wandering a timeworn path of faithfulness, waiting for His promises to be fulfilled, they lost hope. In desperation, Sarah told Abraham to have a child with her maidservant, and Abraham obeyed. Yet this did not satisfy the desire of their hearts or fulfill God's plan for their marriage.

The answer to years of prayer was finally revealed when Abraham and Sarah invited three travelers into their tent to dine at their table. They served these divine guests with the humblest of provisions. Their hospitality and faithfulness were rewarded with joy and laughter at the unexpected birth of Isaac.



The Trinity
Father Richard Cannuli, OSA

OUR STRUGGLES TODAY

Because we have the medical and technological ability to manipulate the gift of life and fertility, we face the temptation of rejecting God's plan for our families. Rather than discerning and trusting in the Church's wisdom and teachings, we rely on our own faulty reasoning. Taking matters into our own hands, we prevent life from beginning, intentionally end life in the womb, and create life in a lab without regard for the outcome. These decisions fail to fill the emptiness of our hearts.

INTERCESSORY PRAYER

Abraham and Sarah, please petition that God might give the **gift of counsel** to all families. Pray that this gift helps spouses serve the Lord by protecting the blessings of children they receive in their families. Intercede, also, that this counsel be a comfort to those who struggle with infertility. May we open our hearts and domestic churches to God's loving plan, trusting in His design for us, whatever it may be. Let us invite the Trinity into our marriages and be guided in making selfless decisions concerning life.

PRAYER OF THE FAMILY: THE THRESHOLD OF FAITH

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Our Lady of Champion, Queen of Heaven, implore your Son to strengthen the **gift of counsel** in our families in order to teach our children what they should know for salvation.

The gift of counsel enables us to respond fully to the direction and guidance of the Lord.

Cf. Gen. 11:27.



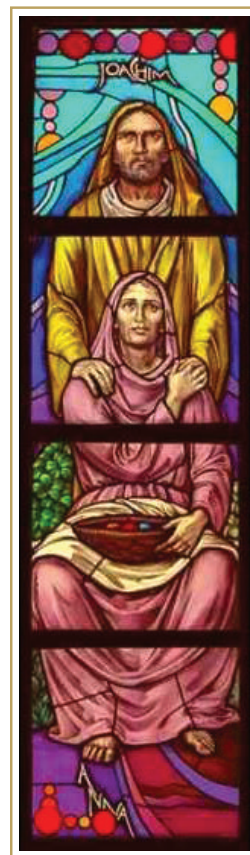
GIFT OF WISDOM

Tradition suggests that Anne and Joachim endured many years of infertility. Intense prayer and fasting were their consolation in this desert of barrenness. At long last, Mary, chosen spouse of the Holy Spirit and mother of the Christ, was fashioned from their union. Her soul was free from the stain of sin inherited from our first parents. From the depth of their faith, Anne and Joachim instructed Mary in wisdom. Under their canopy, this daughter of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob grew in faithfulness and virtue before God in preparation for her great Fiat.

As chosen grandparents of the long-awaited Messiah, Anne and Joachim must have marveled at their unique role in Jesus' life. Certainly from their lap familial tales and sweet praises were entrusted to the little Christ Child.

OUR STRUGGLES TODAY

So often we are tempted to believe that the elderly are a burden to society. Their physical afflictions and mental deterioration hinder us from seeing the unique and important role they play in our families and in our culture. In rejecting them, we are deprived of knowing our heritage. Our children are robbed not only of the consolation of their grandparents, but also of their wisdom.



St. Joachim & St. Anna
Father Richard Cannuli, OSA

INTERCESSORY PRAYER

Saints Anne and Joachim, request of your divine Grandson that He strengthen the **gift of wisdom** in our families. Pray that our eyes be opened to see the veiled jewels we have in the aged. Pray that we recognize the irreplaceable role grandparents have in the vitality and heritage of the domestic church. Intercede on our behalf that we might uphold the dignity of the elderly and consider it an honor to care for them until life's natural end. May this work of mercy flow spontaneously from the hearts of our children and be made manifest in their concern for the aged.

PRAYER OF THE FAMILY: THE THRESHOLD OF FAITH

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Our Lady of Champion, Queen of Heaven, implore your Son to strengthen the **gift of wisdom** in our families in order to teach our children what they should know for salvation.

The gift of wisdom moves us to order our life according to God's will.

Cf. The book of Ruth.

DAY 5

GIFT OF UNDERSTANDING

Scripture speaks of Elizabeth and Zechariah's litanies to the abundant fruitfulness of God. Although the aged couple was righteous in the sight of God and observed all His commands, they remained childless. While Zechariah was humbly offering incense in the Temple, the angel Gabriel announced that Elizabeth would soon bear a son named John. He would be filled with the Holy Spirit, even in his mother's womb, and prepare the way of the Lord. Because of his disbelief, Zechariah's mouth was tied until he announced his son's name.

When Mary, pregnant with Jesus, entered the house of Zechariah, Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and the gift of understanding. The child leapt in her womb and she asked, "How does this happen to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" (Luke 1:43).

Elizabeth and Zechariah nurtured the forerunner of the Messiah, and he grew in virtue and conviction. They prepared John for his mission as "The Baptist." They also met sorrow and loss at his beheading.

OUR STRUGGLES TODAY

When faced with a pregnancy at an advanced or inconvenient age, so many women are conflicted or afraid. Society tells us these pregnancies are burdens that interfere with career, self-fulfillment, and a comfortable life. We may fear that we cannot provide for yet another child, and that by welcoming one more, we will jeopardize the security of our existing children. This fear prevents us from understanding the heart of our Heavenly Father and His blessings.



St. John the Baptist | Father Richard Cannuli, OSA

INTERCESSORY PRAYER

Saints Elizabeth and Zechariah, you suffered the humiliation of infertility for many years, then endured a pregnancy in old age. Obtain for us from the heart of our Heavenly Father the **gift of understanding** so that we might faithfully accomplish His will in our families. May we appreciate the vocations He has entrusted to us and to each of our children. Help us to joyfully receive His gifts and endure any hardships we may face in doing His will.

PRAYER OF THE FAMILY: THE THRESHOLD OF FAITH

God, our loving Father and Creator, You invite families to participate in Your unique plan for salvation by entrusting to us the lives of our children, inscribing Your Divine image in their souls. This image or “icon” illuminates our families with Your face, transfiguring our homes into domestic churches. You stand at our thresholds knocking, waiting for us to throw open our doors and invite You to enter more fully into our family life. Let us not ignore Your repeated knocking, but welcome You, embracing the graces You wish to give. May these graces enable us to pass on the gift of our Catholic Faith to our children, giving them what they need for salvation and growth in holiness. It is from the threshold of our domestic church that our families will bring glory to You and hope to the world.

Our Lady of Champion, Queen of Heaven, implore your Son to strengthen the **gift of understanding** in our families in order to teach our children what they should know for salvation.

The gift of understanding enables us to see more deeply into the mysteries of the faith and to judge with certainty all created things.

Cf. Mark 1, Luke 1.

GIFT OF PIETY

Prophets foretold that the Messiah would be born of a virgin and that He would come from the house of King David.

It was the Lord who chose Mary before her birth to be the bearer of His Son. He filled her with His grace from the moment of her conception in preparation for her role in salvation history. Choirs of angels and souls of the just awaited Mary's Fiat. In the fullness of time, the angel Gabriel came to her with his divine invitation. Mary, in her humility and love of God, replied: "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord, let it be done to me according to thy word" (Luke 1:38). The Holy Spirit overshadowed her, and the Word was made flesh. The new Adam, carried in the womb of the New Eve, would reverse the fall of our first parents, which implicated human flesh and soul alike.

Likewise, the Lord chose Joseph to be the foster father of His Son and protector of Mary. Scripture tells us he was a righteous man. Four times, Joseph trusted what the angel told him in a dream and promptly obeyed. His love of God overshadowed any fear or doubt he may have had in following God's plan.

Mary and Joseph cooperated fully with the divine will, understanding that the child entrusted to them was the Messiah. Their son's identity was confirmed by Elizabeth at the Visitation, by the shepherds and wise men at the Nativity, by Anna and Simeon at the Presentation, by the elders in the Temple, and by John the Baptist at the Baptism of Christ in the Jordan River.



The Holy Family
Father Richard Cannuli, OSA

OUR STRUGGLES TODAY

So many of us have forgotten our true identity as sons and daughters of God. Because we've strayed, we no longer know who God is. In our pride and desire for self-gratification, we see Him as a taskmaster or tyrant, rather than the loving Father he is. We turn away from God and search for love outside of Him. Without His guidance, we are easily deceived. We choose darkness but call it light (Is. 5:20) and perceive the deviant as ordinary. We find ourselves enslaved by addictions, harmful relationships and other situations that belie our true worth.

INTERCESSORY PRAYER

Saints Mary and Joseph, because of your great love for God, you humbly assented to the angel's appeal without regard for the cost. Your loving obedience serves as a model for all. Please pray that the **gift of piety** be strengthened in us. By loving God completely, we will appreciate more fully both our inheritance in the kingdom of God and the privilege of nurturing the souls in our care. May we become families of dignity and love in which our children might grow and willingly join themselves to your Son's saving mission.

PRAYER OF THE FAMILY: THE THRESHOLD OF FAITH

God, our loving Father and Creator, You invite families to participate in Your unique plan for salvation by entrusting to us the lives of our children, inscribing Your Divine image in their souls. This image or "icon" illuminates our families with Your face, transfiguring our homes into domestic churches. You stand at our thresholds knocking, waiting for us to throw open our doors and invite You to enter more fully into our family life. Let us not ignore Your repeated knocking, but welcome You, embracing the graces You wish to give. May these graces enable us to pass on the gift of our Catholic Faith to our children, giving them what they need for salvation and growth in holiness. It is from the threshold of our domestic church that our families will bring glory to You and hope to the world.

Our Lady of Champion, Queen of Heaven, implore your Son to strengthen the **gift of piety** in our families in order to teach our children what they should know for salvation.

The gift of piety inclines us as a child of God to be devoted to and honor God as Father.

Cf. Luke 1:26-56, Luke 2, John 19:26-27, Eph. 5.

DAY 7

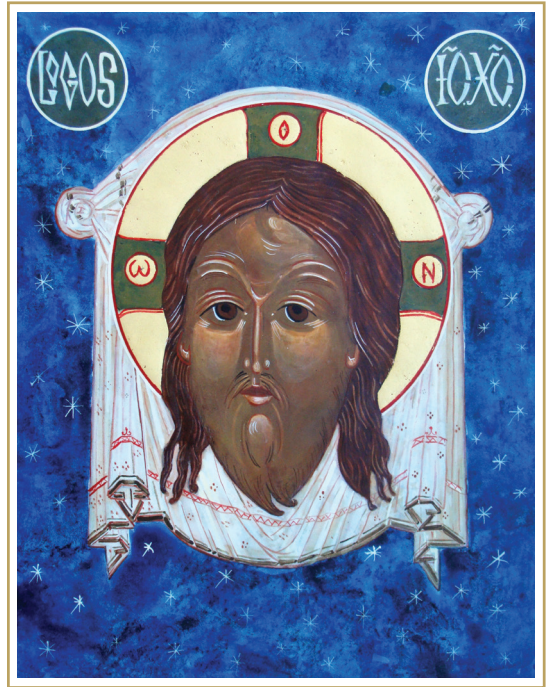
VIRTUE OF CHARITY

Before meeting, Louis and Zelie Martin had decided to consecrate themselves to the Lord by entering religious life. But God had not created them for these vocations. Both discerned that religious life was not God's will. Zelie mastered the delicate handiwork of lacemaking, and Louis became a watchmaker. While perfecting their trade and living their Catholic Faith, they met and fell in love.

At the beginning of their marriage, Louis and Zelie were dedicated to a life of celibacy, viewing each other first as brother and sister in Christ and second as husband and wife. Following the advice of their confessor, the door of marital love was opened, their marriage was consummated, and they were blessed with nine children. Their life centered on daily Mass, the rosary, devotion to the Brown Scapular, and care for those in need.

Their path to holiness was not without pain. Louis and Zelie suffered greatly at the loss of four of their children. Zelie died of cancer when their youngest child was just four years old. The Martin family did not lose hope, but learned to place even greater trust in God. Left a widower, Louis persevered faithfully and selflessly in the raising of his children. He suffered through severe sickness and deterioration of both mind and body, depending on his daughters' care and drawing strength from the Lord.

Louis and Zelie had instructed their children in the faith, and their sacrifices bore great fruit. All five of their surviving daughters – including the youngest, Thérèse, the “Little Flower” – ultimately entered religious life.



Made without Hands
Father Richard Cannuli, OSA

OUR STRUGGLES TODAY

We find ourselves in relationships that are void of true love and justice. We value people based on how useful they are to us, selfishly manipulating them to get what we want. We are unable to find the human connection we long for because we seek fulfillment in artificial relationships, rather than offering to others a generous, self-giving love. We turn human beings into objects for our own self-gratification, often through technology or pornography.

INTERCESSORY PRAYER

Saints Louis and Zelig, you regarded each other as brother and sister in Christ, and were aware of God's deep love for each soul placed in your care. When faced with suffering, your selfless concern for the other was the ultimate strength of your marriage and family. Your sincere devotion to the Lord and to each other helped you guide your children on the path that God had chosen for them. Louis and Zelig, obtain for us from God the **virtue of charity** so we may generously give of ourselves to our families for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven.

PRAYER OF THE FAMILY: THE THRESHOLD OF FAITH

God, our loving Father and Creator, You invite families to participate in Your unique plan for salvation by entrusting to us the lives of our children, inscribing Your Divine image in their souls. This image or "icon" illuminates our families with Your face, transfiguring our homes into domestic churches. You stand at our thresholds knocking, waiting for us to throw open our doors and invite You to enter more fully into our family life. Let us not ignore Your repeated knocking, but welcome You, embracing the graces You wish to give. May these graces enable us to pass on the gift of our Catholic Faith to our children, giving them what they need for salvation and growth in holiness. It is from the threshold of our domestic church that our families will bring glory to You and hope to the world.

Our Lady of Champion, Queen of Heaven, implore your Son to strengthen the **virtue of charity** in our families in order to teach our children what they should know for salvation.

"Charity is the theological virtue by which we love God above all things for his own sake, and our neighbor as ourselves for the love of God" (CCC 1822).

Cf. The book of Tobit.

DAY 8

GIFT OF KNOWLEDGE

By all appearances, Luigi and Maria Quattrocchi lived an ordinary, simple life. Yet beneath this humble exterior, their deep faith enabled them to follow God's will in extraordinary ways. The Quattrocchis were well-educated and lived in Rome. Luigi was a lawyer and Maria a teacher and writer. Throughout their married life, they dedicated themselves to many apostolates that supported marriage and the family. They were strengthened by daily Mass, the rosary, and devotion to the Sacred Heart.

With joy, they welcomed four children and poured themselves into their little “domestic church.” When Maria was pregnant with their fourth child, doctors diagnosed her with placenta previa, giving her a five percent chance of survival unless she aborted the child. Maria refused, trusting instead in God's Providence. For the remainder of her pregnancy, both she and Luigi drew courage from Christ's cross. To their great relief and gratitude, their daughter Enrichetta was born without complications.

Despite their work and apostolates, they never sacrificed time with their own children. Instead, their devotion and actions served as a living example of how to “appreciate everything from the roof up,” as Maria would often say. When the Nazis invaded Italy, the Quattrocchis opened their home to Jews and others desperate for shelter. After twenty years of marriage, Luigi and Maria took the unique vow of living together as brother and sister, humbly sacrificing marital love for the sake of the kingdom.

Placing themselves close to Christ's Sacred Heart they tasted joy, suffering, and self-sacrifice. This example was richly rewarded. Their two sons became priests, one daughter became a nun, and Enrichetta dutifully cared for them in their old age until their deaths.



*Sacred Heart of Jesus
Father Richard Cannuli, OSA*

OUR STRUGGLES TODAY

We are tempted to place our careers and possessions before the practice of our faith and time with family. As a result, our relationships with our spouse, children, elderly parents and even God deteriorate. Across the nation and throughout the world, these fractured relationships lead to isolation, distrust, and fear. Rather than reaching out to others, we withdraw, anxious of what the future holds for us and for our children.

INTERCESSORY PRAYER

Blesseds Luigi and Maria, your extraordinary approach to family as the pinnacle of joy is a beacon of light to us. Obtain for us from God the **gift of knowledge** so we may always give our faith and families first priority. Pray that we will guide our children as they face the uncertainties of our time. Let your generous example teach us to open our hearts and homes to those in need, acting as a channel of God's love for all his children, especially the displaced. In this age of materialism, remind us of the importance of appreciating everything from the "roof up."

PRAYER OF THE FAMILY: THE THRESHOLD OF FAITH

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Our Lady of Champion, Queen of Heaven, implore your Son to strengthen the **gift of knowledge** in our families in order to teach our children what they should know for salvation.

The gift of knowledge guides us in knowing what to believe and how to share it with others.

CF. Rom. 16:3-5, Phil. 2:1-18.

GIFTS OF FORTITUDE AND FEAR OF THE LORD

Born tenth of thirteen children, Gianna grew up in a family whose focus was unity, sanctity, and sacrifice. Her parents taught her to seek and follow God's will by participating in the sacrifice of the Mass, praying the rosary daily, consecrating herself to the Sacred Heart, and continually accepting the crosses God sent. While the early death of her parents could have fractured her family, it instead strengthened their foundation of faith, making the bonds between siblings impenetrable. Gianna witnessed the mystical workings of God in the various vocations of her siblings, including religious life and the priesthood.

As an adult, Gianna felt called to serve God and others by becoming a doctor. She longed to be a medical missionary, but health issues made it impractical. She instead became a pediatrician, ministering to both the body and soul of her patients. It was at this time she met Pietro, her future spouse.

Throughout their engagement and marriage, their lives were intertwined with Christ. Shortly before their wedding, Gianna wrote to Pietro about her hopes for their life together: "With God's help and blessing we will do our best to make our new family a little Cenacle where Jesus reigns over all our affections, desires, and actions."

Despite difficult pregnancies and deliveries, Gianna experienced motherhood with an abundance of joy. She welcomed three children while continuing her profession as a doctor. During Gianna's fourth pregnancy, doctors discovered a large fibroid in her uterus that threatened the life of her unborn child. Untreated, it would pose a danger to her as well. Doctors advised an abortion. Trusting in Divine Providence and understanding the risks, she instead chose to have the fibroid removed. Gianna insisted that if a choice had to be made, they choose the life of her child over her own. While she gave birth to a healthy baby girl, Gianna's health rapidly declined, and she began her own ascent to Calvary, joining her suffering to Christ's. She died of infection just seven days after delivery. In the last moments of her earthly life, she was accompanied by the prayers, love, and support of Pietro and her siblings. Together they anticipated her union with Christ and her loved ones in eternal life.



Angels with Holy Cross
Father Richard Cannuli, OSA

OUR STRUGGLES TODAY

Our culture has lost the ability to see how God can transform our lives through suffering. We no longer believe that the truths of the Catholic Faith will sustain us through this suffering. Searching for the easy way out, we choose every means possible of escaping pain. We seek to prolong pleasure and the desires of our youth, forgetting we were not made for this world but the next. With our sights no longer set on heaven, we reject the crosses God asks us to carry, robbing ourselves of graces and deeper conversion.

INTERCESSORY PRAYER

Saint Gianna, you once said we cannot love without suffering or suffer without loving. Your immense love of God and your family enabled you to make heroic sacrifices. Please pray that God grant the **gift of fortitude** to our families. It is only through this Divine gift that we will have the courage to accept and embrace suffering. Help us to believe the Lord who says, “my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Matt. 11:30). Pray that we might foster the **gift of fear of the Lord** in the hearts of our children. Help us to teach them to hear His gentle promptings, to walk His path of holiness and to trust in the graces He gives to persevere in sufferings, uniting us eternally with our family in heaven.

PRAYER OF THE FAMILY: THE THRESHOLD OF FAITH

God, our loving Father and Creator, You invite families to participate in Your unique plan for salvation by entrusting to us the lives of our children, inscribing Your Divine image in their souls. This image or “icon” illuminates our families with Your face, transfiguring our homes into domestic churches. You stand at our thresholds knocking, waiting for us to throw open our doors and invite You to enter more fully into our family life. Let us not ignore Your repeated knocking, but welcome You, embracing the graces You wish to give. May these graces enable us to pass on the gift of our Catholic Faith to our children, giving them what they need for salvation and growth in holiness. It is from the threshold of our domestic church that our families will bring glory to You and hope to the world.

Our Lady of Champion, Queen of Heaven, implore your Son to strengthen the **gifts of fortitude and fear of the Lord** in our families in order to teach our children what they should know for salvation.

The gift of fortitude moves us to endure difficulties for the sake of eternal life with God.
The gift of fear of the Lord brings forth the fear of offending God by sin.

Cf. Col. 1:24, Wis. 3:1-9, Rom. 5:3-8, 1 Pet. 2:21.

APPENDIX

Additional Information and Citation Materials, Listed Chronologically

An Invitation

The National Shrine of Our Lady of Champion

Phone: 920-866-2571

Website: www.championshrine.org

Ricken, Most Reverend David, *Decree on the Authenticity of the Apparitions of 1859* at the Shrine of Our Lady of Good Help. Diocese of Green Bay, December 8, 2010.

Virtues Defined

All of the virtues defined are taken from the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

Catechism of the Catholic Church. New York: Doubleday, 1994.

Gifts Defined

All of the gifts in this Novena are summarized from the Dominican Sisters of Mary, Mother of the Eucharist *Remain in Me* catechesis.

Kennedy, Carol and Sister John Dominic Rasmussen, O.P., *Remain in Me*. Spiritus Sanctus Publications. Ann Arbor, MI. 2001.

Day One: Adam and Eve

In the Catholic Church's "Litany of the Saints for Solemn Intercessions" (Roman Missal—Third Edition), there is a section entitled "Prophets and Fathers of our Faith" in which we invoke the intercession of "Abraham, Moses and Elijah" as well as the "Holy patriarchs and prophets." While these patriarchs and prophets are saints (or "holy ones") enjoying the Beatific Vision in heaven, the Church rarely refers to these holy men and women of the Old Covenant as "Saints." Rather, the Church has usually reserved this title for those who have lived lives of heroic Christian discipleship under the New Covenant. But we still commemorate these just men and women who intercede for us before the throne of God. In fact, the 2005 Roman Martyrology for the Vigil of Christmas commemorates "all the holy forefathers of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham, the son of Adam, namely of the fathers, who pleased God and were found to be just also according to the faith of the dead..."

Gibbons, James. *The Roman Martyrology*. Baltimore: J. Murphy Co, 1916.

At baptism, the Lord infuses the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity into the soul to enable the person to function on the supernatural level. These virtues are called "theological" because they enable us to participate in the very life of God ("theos").

Cf. Gen. 3:15. This passage gives "hope of humanity's redemption," called the Protoevangelium or "the first Gospel."

Tradition holds that Adam and Eve, after living a life of penance, died in a state of righteousness. While deprived of the vision of God, they were not damned, but awaited the coming of the Savior in what Jesus refers to as "Abraham's bosom" (Lk. 16:22-26; Cf. CCC 633); "He (Christ) has gone to free from sorrow Adam in his bonds, and Eve, captive with him" (CCC 635).

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Day Two: Noah

Cf. Gen. 5:28. “But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord” (Gen. 6:8); “Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation; Noah walked with God” (Gen 6:9); “By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, took heed and constructed an ark for the saving of his household; by this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness which comes by faith” (Heb. 11:7). Noah’s wife’s name was Naamah according to many biblical scholars.

Day Three: Abraham and Sarah

At baptism, the Holy Spirit bestows seven spiritual gifts on a person: wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord. These gifts of the Holy Spirit “complete and perfect the virtues of those who receive them” (CCC 1831).

In his Wednesday, May 7, 2014, general audience, Pope Francis said, “Through this gift [of counsel], God enlightens our hearts and directs our thoughts, words and actions in accordance with his saving will. By leading us to Jesus, and through him to the Father, the Holy Spirit guides us in our daily interaction with others and enables us to make right decisions in the light of faith. Through the gift of counsel, we also grow in the virtue of prudence, learning to overcome our self-centredness and to see all things with the eyes of Christ.”

Cf. Gen. 18:1-15. In the iconography of Eastern Christianity, the image of the Lord in this passage is either depicted as three messengers or the Lord and two messengers. The Trinitarian imaging of “three” is beautifully depicted in the icons of the East, especially the famous “The Trinity” by Andrei Rublev.

Cf. “The poor man died and was carried by angels to Abraham’s bosom” (Lk. 16:22). The Eucharistic Prayer of the Roman Canon refers to Abraham as “Our Father in Faith.” The Feast of Abraham is commemorated on October 9 in the 2005 *Martyrologium Romanum*.

Day Four: Saints Anne and Joachim

In his Wednesday, April 9, 2014, general audience, Pope Francis began a catechetical series on the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Beginning with the gift of wisdom, he said, “Wisdom is an interior light, a grace enabling us to contemplate all things with the eyes of God and a heart docile to the promptings of the Spirit. Born of closeness to God in prayer and loving communion, it helps us to recognize with joyful gratitude his providential plan for all things. Christian wisdom is thus the fruit of a supernatural ‘taste’ for God, an ability to savour his presence, goodness and love all around us.”

The Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary is a truth of faith solemnly defined by the extraordinary Magisterium of the Church in Pope Pius IX’s 1854 Apostolic Constitution *Ineffabilis Deus*. The document explains how the Blessed Virgin Mary “in the first instance of her conception, by a singular privilege and grace granted by God, in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Savior of the human race, was preserved exempt from all stain of original sin.”

Pius IX’s Apostolic Constitution solemnly defining the Immaculate Conception, *Ineffabilis Deus*, December 8, 1854.

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Day Five: Saints Elizabeth and Zechariah

In his Wednesday, April 30, 2014, general audience, Pope Francis said, “The gift of understanding enables us to see in all things the unfolding of his [God’s] eternal plan of love. The Holy Spirit dwells in our hearts and enlightens our minds, guiding us to an ever deeper understanding of Christ’s teaching and his saving mission. Like the disciples on the way to Emmaus, we often fail to recognize the Lord walking at our side and the working of God’s grace in our lives and the world around us. Yet thanks to the Spirit’s gift of understanding, our eyes are opened and our hearts burn within us (cf. Lk. 24:13-27) as we recognize the Risen Lord’s presence and view all things in a new light, with fresh spiritual insight.”

Day Six: Saints Mary and Joseph

The gift of piety fills our hearts with a deep love for God and the things that He loves. Filial piety is an attitude of reverence and respect by children toward their parents (Cf. CCC 2215).

The first three chapters of the gospels of both St. Matthew and St. Luke offer beautiful narratives on the mysteries of the Annunciation and Incarnation.

In his Wednesday, June 4, 2014, general audience, Pope Francis said about the gift of piety, “Through this spiritual gift, we experience ever anew, with joy and gratitude, the loving relationship with God our Father which has been granted us in Jesus his Son. It is this loving relationship which grounds and perfects our authentic worship of God. The love poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit leads us to perceive the Lord’s presence and love in our lives, and moves us to respond joyfully in prayer and adoration. Piety is not mere outward religiosity; it is that genuine religious spirit which makes us turn to the Father as his children and to grow in our love for others, seeing them as our brothers and sisters, members of God’s family. Let us ask that, through this gift of the Holy Spirit, we may always be ready to offer a helping hand to others, in the joyful awareness of that solidarity which is born of our communion with God in the unity of Christ’s body, the Church.”

Day Seven: Saints Louis and Zélie Martin

On October 18, 2015, Pope Francis canonized the French married couple Louis and Zélie Martin, the parents of Sr. Marie, Sr. Pauline, Sr. Leonie, Sr. Celine, and St. Thérèse Martin of Lisieux, patroness of missionaries.

Piat, Rev. Fr. Stephane-Joseph, *The Story of a Family: The Home of St. Thérèse of Lisieux*. TAN Books; Reprint edition. 1994.

Day Eight: Blesseds Luigi and Maria Quattrocchi

On October 21, 2001, Pope Saint John Paul II declared an Italian couple, Luigi and Maria Beltrame Quattrocchi, the first married blesseds together. They are modern blesseds who lived in the 20th century through German occupation. They were instrumental in the establishment of the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart, Italian Catholic Scouts, and pilgrimages for the infirm. They had four children: Fr. Tarcisio, Fr. Paolino, Sr. Cecilia, and Enrichetta.

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In his Wednesday, May 22, 2014, general audience, Pope Francis said about the gift of knowledge, “Through this spiritual gift, we are enabled to see every person, and the world around us, in the light of God’s loving plan....the gift of knowledge gives rise to grateful contemplation of the world of nature and joyful praise of the Creator....It also prevents us from restricting our vision to the persons and things of this world alone, forgetting that in their order, value and beauty they point beyond themselves to God, their source and ultimate end....[knowledge] enables us to perceive the love with which God guides the world, to respond with gratitude and to praise him for his infinite goodness and love.”

Day Nine: Saint Gianna Molla

On May 16, 2004, Pope Saint John Paul II canonized Gianna Molla, an Italian wife, mother, and doctor who chose the life of her child over her own life. It was the first canonization where a spouse was in attendance. Gianna and Pietro had four living children: Pierluigi, Mariolina, Laura, and Gianna Emanuela, a geriatric physician, who cared for her father the last seven years of his life.

In Colossians, St. Paul addresses how we participate in the suffering of Christ: “Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ on behalf of his body, which is the church...” (Col. 1:24).

In his Wednesday, May 14, 2014, general audience, Pope Francis said, “Through the gift of fortitude, we receive the strength to do God’s will in spite of our own natural weakness and limitations....Through the gift of fortitude, the Holy Spirit enables us to remain faithful amid every difficulty and—as the experience of so many Christians around the world shows—even amid persecution and martyrdom. For most of us, the gift of fortitude is exercised in our patient pursuit of holiness in the circumstances of our daily lives.”

In his Wednesday, June 11, 2014, general audience, Pope Francis said, “Fear of the Lord is also a kind of alarm for all Christians: awakening us to the presence of sin in our lives and reminding us that we, too, will one day be held accountable to the just Judge.”

In *Salvifici Doloris* (On the Christian Meaning of Human Suffering) Pope Saint John Paul II explores the meaning of redemptive suffering. “Christ has in a sense opened his own redemptive suffering to all human suffering....Christ has accomplished the world’s redemption through his own suffering. For, at the same time, this redemption, even though it was completely achieved by Christ’s suffering, lives on and in its own special way develops in the history of man. It lives and develops as the body of Christ, the Church, and in this dimension every human suffering, by reason of the loving union with Christ, completes the suffering of Christ. It completes that suffering just as the Church completes the redemptive work of Christ” (SD 24).

John Paul II’s letter On the Christian Meaning of Human Suffering, *Salvifici Doloris*, February 11, 1984.

McKenna, Thomas J. *St. Gianna Molla: A Modern Day Hero of Divine Love*. Catholic Action. 2008.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Karin Saunders is a native of the Green Bay Diocese who began making pilgrimages to Our Lady of Champion as a young wife and mother, finding it a place of hope and joy. She believes that Mary's simple message to pray for the conversion of sinners and to teach the children what they should know for salvation is the message of hope for families.

Sarah Sand is a daughter of God, wife and mother from the Diocese of Green Bay. She has experienced the smile of Our Lady of Champion and tries to bring it to others. She believes in the transformative power of prayer to convert hearts and strengthen families. In turning to Christ and Our Blessed Mother, all sufferings can become treasures.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Father Richard Cannuli has been a consecrated Augustinian religious since 1970. He was ordained a Roman Catholic priest in 1999. As a professional artist, he has designed and worked with stained glass windows, fabric, mosaic, and liturgical furniture. He is a Certified Liturgical Design Consultant and has assisted cloistered religious communities with their choir and chapel spaces. He conducts workshops on the painting of icons, and he lectures worldwide on liturgy and the arts.

In 1985, he began his formal training as an iconographer and continues his studies with a Master Iconographer. His icons have been commissioned by parish communities and private individuals, and, on behalf of Villanova University, his icon, "Do Not Weep for Me Mother," was presented to His Beatitude and Eminence Patriarch Nasrallah Peter Cardinal Sfeir. One of his icons was recently accepted into the permanent collection of the Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine at Sinai, Egypt.

AN INVITATION TO PILGRIMAGE

May this Novena encourage your walk with the Lord by visiting with Mary. The National Shrine of Our Lady of Champion invites you to continue your faith journey with a pilgrimage to Mary's Shrine.

Plan a Pilgrimage to Our Lady of Champion

Pilgrims from around the world have been coming to the National Shrine of Our Lady of Champion since 1859. And the number of pilgrims has steadily increased since 2010, when the shrine became the first and only Church-confirmed Marian apparition site in the United States. Explore the grounds where Adele first encountered the Blessed Virgin Mary and where she started her mission.

If you have a group that is visiting as part of a tour or pilgrimage, our rural grounds offer a peaceful setting for single or multiple-day retreats. Working with our pilgrimage coordinator will allow us to prepare for your visit and tailor programs to meet the needs of your retreat. Please visit championshrine.org to plan your pilgrimage today!



PRAYER OF THE FAMILY: THE THRESHOLD OF FAITH

God, our loving Father and Creator, you invite families to participate in your unique plan for salvation by entrusting to us the lives of our children, inscribing your Divine image in their souls. This image or “icon” illuminates our families with your face, transfiguring our homes into domestic churches.

You stand at our thresholds knocking, waiting for us to throw open our doors and invite You to enter more fully into our family life. Let us not ignore Your repeated knocking, but welcome You, embracing the graces You wish to give.

May these graces enable us to pass on the gift of our Catholic Faith to our children, giving them what they need for salvation and growth in holiness. It is from the threshold of our domestic church that our families will bring glory to You and hope to the world.

Our Lady of Champion, Queen of Heaven, implore your Son to strengthen families in order to teach our children what they should know for salvation.

Amen.

