

THE MAGNIFICAT

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 is 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 children for ever. Amen.

THE MEMORAE

Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary,
that never was it known
that anyone who fled to your protection,
implored your help,
or sought your intercession,
was left unaided.
Inspired by this confidence, I fly unto you,
O Virgin of virgins, my Mother.
To you do I come, before you I stand,
sinful and sorrowful.
O Mother of the Word Incarnate,
despise not my petitions,
but in your mercy hear and answer me.
Amen.

A PRAYER TO MARY FROM THE OLD IRISH

Holy Virgin Mary, you are the joy of my soul.
You are the dew of heaven to relieve my parching
thirst.
You are the stream of God's grace,
flowing out from his heart into mine.
You are the light of my darkened soul.
You are the healing of my wounds.
You are the strength of my weakness.
You are the consolation of my hardship.
You are the easing of my trouble.
You are the loosing of my chains.
You are the help of my salvation.
Hear me, I beg you, O Virgin most faithful.
Take pity on me.
Turn not away from my need.
Let my tears move you.
Let your own compassionate heart move you.
I cry to you, Mother of God and lover of the
human race.
Hear me, poor sinner that I am, and grant me the
grace I ask from you,
O Mary, my Mother.
Amen.

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Our Church: A TIME FOR HOPE

These have been bad years for the Church. First, there were the reports into the abuse of children in Church-run institutions in Ireland going back many decades, as well as into the sexual abuse of children by priests and religious in Dublin and elsewhere. And then the scandal spread further afield, to Germany, Holland, Belgium, Austria, touching even the Vatican itself. It seems like almost every day there is a new revelation, a new scandal, and yet another apology by someone in authority.

All of this has been traumatic for members of the Church. We have felt shocked, dismayed, angry and scandalised by what is being revealed. Our faith has been tested like never before. We wonder about the Church and its future.

This is the context in which we celebrate this year's novena. It is also the focus of our prayer and preaching over the next nine days.

The revelations of abuse and cover-up have been painful and sickening but they are also an opportunity. They are a chance for us to think about our Church and what it means to be part of it today. They are a chance for us to reflect on the kind of Church we are called to be and what each of us can do to make a difference. They are a chance for us to look at what it means to say that We are the Church.

As Christians, we believe in the Resurrection. We believe that out of darkness and the shadow of death comes new life. We gather for this novena because we know that the Risen Christ is with us and with his Church, even in its brokenness. We gather because we are a people of hope.