

**July 22, 2021**  
**Novena Reflection by Father Rob Carbonneau, C.P., Ph.D.**  
**Novena Theme: Lift High the Cross**

*First Reading: Proverbs 9: 1-6*

Wisdom has built her house, she has set up her seven columns;  
She has prepared her meat, mixed her wine, yes, she has spread her table.  
She has sent out her maidservants; she calls from the heights out over the city:  
“Let whoever is naive turn in here; to any who lack sense I say,  
Come, eat of my food, and drink of the wine I have mixed!  
Forsake foolishness that you may live; advance in the way of understanding.”

*Gospel: John 19: 25-27*

Standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary of Magdala.  
When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple there whom he loved, he said to his mother, “Woman, behold, your son.”  
Then he said to the disciple, “Behold, your mother.” And from that hour the disciple took her into his home.

**Theme of Day: “Mary and the Healing Message of the Cross”**

I have one younger brother and five younger sisters.  
Both my parents were schoolteachers in West Hartford. Connecticut.  
When my father retired, he would take walks through the local neighborhood.  
This provided him exercise. Furthermore, as he walked, he talked to the people he met and sometimes had discussion with them about saving the future of the local Elmwood Faxon Branch library. He was a successful social activist,

One day he told me, “I’m never bored on these walks because I keep saying a Hail Mary for each of you kids.” Taking advantage of the moment, I asked, “Dad, which one of us gets the most prayers.?” He calmly answered.

“Believe me you all get your turns. Sometimes my prayers are for when you have sorrows. Other times I say a prayer of thanksgiving when you do things that are correct. Then he smiled at me and said: “Don’t worry, I can always pray for the grandchildren.”

I think we can imagine Good St. Ann praying for her daughter Mary.

I think we can imagine Mary praying for her son Jesus.

We know that was true when she was at the foot of the cross.

May our prayers to Mary unite us with our families, our loved ones and people throughout the world.

So many of us know the grace of saying the Rosary. So many of us identify with the sorrows of Mary.

So many of us realize we are like Mary and Jesus at the wedding feast of Cana.

How?

There does come a time for us to put our faith into action for the common good and celebrate life and bring people together.

Let us embrace life as a daily wedding feast!

**Look at the basilica. Visit the basilica. Light a candle at the basilica. Say a prayer at the basilica.**

Another grace of St. Ann's Basilica are the stained-glass windows.

St. Ann's Church was built by famed Boston architects Maginnis & Walsh and dedicated in 1929.

I would suggest meditating on these stained-glass windows and reading the local names written on the panes of glass remind us of our rich local ethnic heritage, work ethic, sufferings and healings.

Let us reflect during this Solemn Novena how art and prayer does have the possibility to empower us to enjoy life around us.

Mary, the Blessed Mother, is our example

In 2018, I was asked to write book chapter as part of the *The Cambridge Companion to American Catholicism*. My topic was Asian-American Catholics: the Japanese, Chinese, Korean, Filipino and Vietnamese experience. This book was published in July 2021. (<https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/cambridge-companion-to-american-catholicism/545B4E14674BAF075CC5E8C64A5D2E3D#>)

Honestly, I was overwhelmed by this assignment. How do I even start research on the topic That was when I took a deep breath and said "Maybe this is meant to be a gift of historical research to enjoy."

How often are there moments in life when wisdom of faith is given to us. At these moments we gain perspective a see that the challenge of faith is the gift of faith.

Thar was when I remembered the chapels and artwork of the National Basilica in Washington, D.C. From 1985 to 1992 I lived across the street from the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C. This is known as America's Catholic Church; it dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary. Mary is the patroness of the United States.

Both inside and out, it has a Romanesque-Byzantine style of its architecture. It can remind us of a church in Italy or a mosque in Turkey.

Saint John Paul II was the first pope to visit the National Shrine in Washington, D.C. on October 7, 1979. This is what he said:

This Shrine speaks to us with the voice of all America, with the voice of all the sons and daughters of America, who have come here from the various countries... When they came, they brought with them in their hearts the same love for the Mother of God that was characteristic of their ancestors and of themselves in their native lands. These people, speaking different languages, coming from different backgrounds of history and traditions in their own countries, came together around the heart of a Mother they all had in common.”

Mother Mary and the healing message of the Cross as the Mother of Jesus is such a unifying theme of prayer and meditation.

The more I did research the more I found out about the strong devotion Asian Americans have for the Allow me to share with you how we can enrich our foundation of faith in life with each other.

As I mentioned the other day, there are about the ten million Chinese Catholics in China in 2021. Chinese Catholics have told me how their strong faith of the twentieth century has been rooted in the history of the Legion of Mary. I know how Chinese Catholics go on an annual pilgrimage to the famous mountain shrine of Our Lady of Sheshan in Shanghai on May 24. I have seen the mosaic to Our Lady of China at National Basilica in Washington, D.C. It honors the Chinese martyrs of the Boxer Uprising in 1900. It was dedicated in 2002.

Next, I learned how Filipino Catholics honor the Virgin of Antipolo from 1626. She is also known as Our Lady of Peace and Good Voyage.

Vietnamese Catholics pray to Our Lady of La Vang. She is named for the site north of Huế, in Quảng Tri province. Persecution of Catholics led them to seek safety in the La Vang jungle in 1789. There, under a banyan tree, while reciting the rosary, there occurred an apparition of a beautiful and radiant woman in white holding a baby and flanked on her sides by two boys with torches. She announced her name as Blessed Mother, or *Đức Mẹ* in Vietnamese. She consoled them and made known she would answer their prayers.

Then it got more interesting! Korean art shows Our Lady of Korea at the Wedding Feast of Cana. There is also an image of Our Lady of the Korean Martyrs. Korean Catholicism is a unique story. Mr. Yi was a Korean traveler who went to Beijing,

China in 1784. There he was baptized by a Jesuit. He returned to Korea and began the Catholic church there.

Later, when the first foreign missionaries arrived in Korea, you can imagine how they were to find that the Catholic faith had already been established by the Koreans people themselves!

At the National Shrine in Washington, D.C., there are over 80 chapels and oratories honor the Mother of God. They represent the cultural diversity of the United States and universality of the Catholic Church.

These art images express African, Austrian, Chinese, Cuban, Czech, Filipino, French, German, Guamanian, Hungarian, Indian, Irish, Italian, Korean, Latin American, Lebanese, Lithuanian, Maltese, Polish, Slovak, Slovenian, and Vietnamese belief. (<https://www.nationalshrine.org/history/>)

On December 12 so many people honor to our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico.

Many of our Catholic immigrant ancestors who arrived here in Scranton since the 1850s had a strong devotion to the Blessed Mother.

This is also represented by the names in the stained-glass windows here at St. Ann's Basilica.

Let me share with you an perspective on Mary that we rarely reflect upon. In the late 1980s I had the opportunity to officiate at a wedding of a Catholic woman and a Pakistani Muslim man. Soon after I was asked to teach world history at Trinity College in Washington, D.C. I asked the Muslim man to be the guest lecturer for the class on Islam.

He taught me about references to Mary in the Qur'an. When the couple lived in Pakistan, it was her Muslim mother in law who reminded this Catholic woman to live a strong and peaceful life like Mary, the Mother of Jesus.

Mary plays an important role in the Christian-Muslim dialogue. Mary is the one who hears the word of God, believes it and heroically puts it into practice her life. Mary is one of the two most important women in Islam. Fatimah is probably the most important female figure in the Islamic consciousness.

When it comes to the Nativity, however, the Quran's tells how the pains of childbirth labor drove Mary to "the trunk of a date-palm." A miraculous voice told

her: “Do not grieve! Your Lord has placed a small stream at your feet.” Mary is told to eat from the dates of the palm tree, drink from the water and trust in God.

The Virgin Mary is repeatedly mentioned in the Quran, more than she was mentioned in The New Testament.

Another insight: Prior to the Second Vatican Council, 1962 to 1965, Catholic life was centered on the Latin Mass and popular devotions.

It was Protestants knew the Bible.

Passionist Father Barnabas Ahern lived from 1915 to 1995.

He was a brilliant Scripture scholar dynamic preacher and teacher.

He convinced the Catholic bishops at the Second Vatican Council that the life and faith of Catholics would increase if they read, studied and prayed Holy Scripture and celebrated Mass in their local language.

The bishops at the Council also sought his advice because he had a strong devotion to the Blessed Mother.

During the 1960s and 1970s Father Barnabas Ahern traveled throughout the world encouraging Catholics to read the Old and New Testament.

One of his favorite lessons was remind people that Mary was a young Jewish girl. Saints Joachim and Anne were her Jewish parents and the grandparents of Jesus.

Sister Danielle M. Peters is a Schoenstatt Sister of Mary in U.S. She is an expert on Mary at The University of Dayton. She wrote the following in 2002.

“From tradition we can assume that Mary grew up as a young Jewish girl in a small town in the Palestinian Galilee. Since Mary was born into Judaism, she experienced the Hebrew Scriptures both in her prayer and her mode of life as a woman of Nazareth. Mary's education as a girl included listening to the readings of the Torah and the Prophets in the synagogue. (<https://udayton.edu/imri/mary/j/jewish-identity-of-mary.php>)

Scholars can inspire our love of Mary

Mary full of grace is revealed to us we stretch our prayer and imagination and humbly share it with others.

Two short stories to conclude.

Father Bertram Chin was a Passionist priest from Jamaica, West Indies. He was ordained in 1985. I lived with him in Chicago when he was in graduate studies for theology. Because he did not like the cold winters, he was happy to return to the island of Jamaica. About 2000 Father Bertram became ill. Tests conducted in New York City revealed that he had cancer. Unfortunately, he died in 2003.

Visits with suffering people we love are a challenge. At these moments we are at the foot of the cross with someone.

We want to be there.

We don't want to be there.

What do I say?

What if I cry?

During one visit Father Bertram said to me : "Now and the hour at the hour of our death." His statement had nothing to do with our conversation at that moment. I asked, "What are you talking about?" He answered: "Immediate peace and peace during suffering."

I still was perplexed.

He got patiently irritated with me.

"The Hail Mary, man, the Hail Mary. Say it any time. The Blessed Mother is at the foot of the cross with us. She calms our any existing confusion and offers us hope in the afterlife. So, let us be always be attentive when we say the Hail Mary. This simple prayer invites us to understand life and death for as long as we live."

Let us also be thankful that we can pray to Mary and gain respect for Islam.

The Jewish heritage of the Holy Family reminds us to pray for peace in the Holy Land.

Devout Catholics throughout the world often pray to Mary in their own respective languages.

What a gift it is when we see artistic images of Mary that look just like us that represents the land and culture of our birth.

This is an invitation to increase our faith.

Good St. Ann is the mother of Mary.

Mary brings peoples of the world together.

When we come to St. Ann's Basilica let us meditate on the local names associated with the stained-glass windows. This how art expands our faith.

May it assist us to increase and respect how we the living images of stained-glass that we see  
as we walk the streets of Scranton.  
as we walk the streets of Northeast Pennsylvania.  
and as we enter cross cultural relationships with peoples of the world.