

# INTRODUCTION

## What is discernment?

In its best-known meaning or definition, the word "discernment" means knowing how to distinguish between what is good or bad, convenient or not convenient, beneficial or not beneficial for our lives. It is, therefore, that, faced with a specific situation, discernment aspires the most favorable response for those who are discerning.

Discernment is associated with moral judgment; the act of discerning is a virtue. The individual, then, assesses whether an action is good or bad. This virtue gives man the ability to deny or certify the moral value of a given situation.

Discernment, once the answer is received, must lead to the prudence of the action, since the acts will finally be the ones that judge whether what was considered good, convenient or beneficial, in reality, were indeed.

## What is spiritual discernment?

In the exercise of spiritual practice, discernment is not only the ability to distinguish only between good and evil, but between good and excellent, which always refers to the will of God.

Spiritual discernment **is the ability given by the Holy Spirit to see life through God's revelation.** Therefore, one of the fruits of spiritual discernment is the ability to walk wisely and at the same time walk in integrity of heart. The word discern is also related to knowing what to do. Before doing, I have to discern what to do.

An example of this, of the many more that we can cite in the Bible, we find in the First Book of Kings; Solomon is praying as follows: **"So give your servant a heart to understand how to govern your people, how to discern between good and evil, for how could one otherwise govern such a great people as yours?" (1 Kings 3, 9).** Solomon is asking God to give him that capacity we are talking about, but the reason he asks is to be able to differentiate, when governing, between good and evil.

## The key to spiritual discernment

Saint Ignatius of Loyola (1491 - 1563), one of the most representative and important saints in the practice of spiritual discernment and promoter of the famous "spiritual or Ignatian exercises", referring to this theme, teaches that **interior discernment consists in recognizing the spirits and their inner motions or movements.** For this reason, in his rules of discernment he emphasizes that in us there are "voices" (thoughts or motions) that can be reduced to three sources:

1. **The diabolical** (subtle temptations).
2. **The natural** (one's own taste or will).
3. **And the divine** (the inspirations of God).

### **Mary, model of spiritual discernment.**

The Virgin Mary knew that the best thing for Her, for others, and for the Kingdom of God, was to fulfill at all times, the will of the Father with joy; For this reason, in some places of the Gospels, we can glimpse in Her a woman of deep discernment. And this is particularly noticeable, in Her words, in Her silence, and in Her way of acting.

The Mother of God is for us a model that helps us to allow ourselves to be meekly guided by God. The words of Jesus could easily refer to Her, when he says: "My sheep know my voice, I know them and they follow me" (Jn 10:27).

In the Gospels, particularly in the episodes of **The Annunciation** (Lk 1, 26-38); **The Visitation** (Lk 1, 39-45); **The Magnificat** (Lk 1, 46-55); **Simeon's prophecy** (Lk 2, 33-35); **Mary and Her relatives look for Jesus** (Mk 3, 20-21.31-35); **The wedding of Cana** (Jn 2, 1-12) and **Mary at the foot of the cross** (Jn 19, 25-27); God presents in Mary a model of discernment to:

1. Distinguish the origin of thoughts and desires.
2. Know the will of God.
3. Specify and carry out the Lord's project.

Let us therefore allow ourselves to be guided by the Holy Spirit, source of all discernment, so that just as He assisted Mary at the moment of giving her "**yes**" to God and carrying out the redemptive and salvific work of humanity; we, like Her, accept God's will in our lives.

Mary, Our Lady of Discernment, be our guide and model, to bring our lives to a happy port, in search for perfection and holiness.

# Novena Prayers

## Act of Contrition.

### PRAYER TO OUR LADY OF DISCERNMENT

#### (For everyday)

O Virgin Mary, Our Lady of Discernment: You the daughter of God the Father, the Mother of the Redeemer Son and spouse of the Holy Spirit, assist us with your maternal arm, to guide our lives on the right path, the one that leads us to God.

Good mother, You, who listened to the voice of God through the archangel Gabriel and guided by the assistance of the Holy Spirit, giver of life and truth, and assumed the Will of God in your life, with your generous and determined "yes"; help us to say yes to what God wants, according to His will.

You show Yourself dear Mother, radiant and full of splendor, Your mantle represents purity, the sublime virtue with which God has rewarded You. Your smile reflects the joyous expression of one who welcomes the Divine Will with love and freedom. Your open arms, as a sign of praise, accompany the joy of welcoming the Father's will. Your Son Jesus, close to your lap, shows us the trust that we place in you as our heavenly mother and model of discernment, to draw us closer to Him and to our Father. Your foot and Your Son's, crush with force the head of the serpent, the evil spirit that leads us to sin and twists our desire for God. At your feet, kind Mother, a path is shown that is unseen on the horizon, this path is our life. Help us then, as You did, to get going, so that our life is not infertile, so that on that horizon we find the reason for our life, to find God.

Our Lady of Discernment, you are walking, with the palms of your hands in front of you, keeping a posture of balance, of discernment, of not being afraid. Your poise tells us that we must make a stop in our lives to fill ourselves with courage in the face of adversity and face tenaciously, as you did in the most difficult times, the adversities that make us lose our way and darken our horizon.

I wish, Mother of mine, oh Virgin dear, to entrust at this moment, my entire journey to Your divine intercession, so that the things that I do from now on will be illuminated and led by the same Spirit that guided You in Your mission, and thus be able to fulfill the Divine Will. Amen. (Pray a Hail Mary and Glory Be).

# FIRST DAY

## Prudence in Discernment

*"In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the House of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. He went in and said to her, 'Rejoice, you who enjoy God's favor! The Lord is with you.' She was deeply disturbed by these words and asked herself what this greeting could mean" (Lk 1, 26-29)*

Mary was reflecting and examining what that greeting could be, and if the bright and mysterious presence that appeared to Her was an angel of God or if, on the contrary, it was an angel of Lucifer, who, hidden in the form of an angel of light, appeared to confuse Her and lead Her down the wrong paths. These subtle forms of temptations to which good people are subjected is what the apostle Paul refers to when he says: "even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light." (2 Cor 14).

The man or woman who seeks to develop discernment and do God's Will is also a prudent person. Prudence will be exercised when judging the convenience or not of the proposal, as well as when judging the origin of that motion. However, let us bear in mind that prudence does not mean passivity and fear, but on the contrary, it is the intelligent concentration of force, to put it into action at the right time and in the right way.

Another point that is important to mention is the power of the word pronounced with spiritual authority, so that what the word proclaims is realized in the heart of the listener; For this reason, we read that the angel said to her: "Do not be afraid, Mary" (Lk 1,30).

Mary, by freeing herself from apprehension and natural fear of every human being, is now more prepared to perceive the voice of the Spirit of God, not only through the angel, but also in the voice of God, who speaks to the conscience of all human creatures that are attentive to listen.

Many times, our fears are subtle temptations with which Satan touches the wounds of our history and feeds distrust in the providence and power of God. For this reason, we need, like Mary, to shake off fear, and ask God what His will is for our life and prepare ourselves to fulfill it with serenity and confidence.

## Life commitment

Trusting the help of grace I will be prudent in my thoughts and actions, following the example of the Virgin Mary, distinguishing their origin.

## Verses to Our Lady of Discernment

### Response:

*Mother of Discernment, of the Spirit mansion, like a Lighthouse, show me the way, to be under Your protection, come and untie the knots of all confusion.*

### I

In the dark night of my life  
When confusion causes me anguish,  
Not knowing what to do,  
Your memory, oh Mother, brings joy to my soul  
And all my regrets begin to fade.

### II

From You consolation comes, and in moments of sad confusion,  
when I stray from the path that God has laid out for me,  
Feeling lost... I but say Your name, and you come to my side  
To give me Your help, love and compassion.

### III

You are Mother of discernment, Your life a living example,  
You said yes to the Father, with praises He has adorned You  
And with gifts he has exalted You, for having accepted,  
The Incarnation in you.

### IV

Your arms raised, Heaven  
Joyfully receives Your prayer  
And those who follow you,  
Confidently go rejoicing,  
For you are the path that leads us to the Lord.

### V

Your life was a test from beginning to the end,  
To be the mother of the Redeemer, with its high price...  
But your unshakeable faith, was always your support  
And in the Divine Will, was never ever doubt.

## **VI**

In trust to You I came, seeing my light dimming,  
For You are in my life, that lighthouse that never goes out,  
That compass always accurate, and with your discernment teaching everyone,  
True prudence.

## **VII**

"Let Your will be done in me," You said to the angel that day,  
And although a little surprised, you did not hesitate,  
In your womb the fruit of our joy entered,  
The Son of the Most High, Who came to rescue us.

## **VIII**

"Blessed among women," Elizabeth sang to Mary,  
Recognizing the mother, of the coming Messiah,  
For in Her the promised hope was fulfilled,  
That the Holy Spirit would dwell in Her womb.

## **IX**

At that last hour, Your strength was tested  
For the work of redemption consummated on the Cross,  
Without someone to hold You,  
In silent union with the Father, you were in prayer.

## **X**

In the afternoon, when Love examines my life,  
Guide my way, to reach the promise made...  
To reach God's Glory,  
I trust in Your help, oh Mother!

## Final prayer for every day

(It is prayed after the commitment of life of the corresponding day)

Beloved Virgin Mary: I come to Your presence, so that, through Your intercession and through the power of the Holy Spirit, the one Who assisted You and conceived Your dear Son Jesus Christ, may attain the much-needed gift of discernment.

I want to entrust to You at this moment, oh dear mother, all my life journey, so that the things that I think and do, from now on, will be enlightened by Your most kind and maternal goodness, in order to be able to fulfill the mission for which God has granted me life and at the same time, to be able to enjoy, with balance and maturity, all the blessings that He has for me and mine.

Mary, Our Lady of Discernment, help me to discover the riches that the Spirit of God sows in my heart, to read, in His inspirations, the lines of the project that God, from all eternity, has caressed in His heart for me. Help me to recognize the obstacles that arise in my heart for the realization of this work, and to be the model of a life lived in discernment to seek the Will of God and carry it out in my daily life. Amen.

## DAY TWO

### The Questions of discernment

*"Mary said to the angel, 'But how can this come about, since I have no knowledge of man?'"  
(Lk 1, 34)*

Mary at the Annunciation, before the presence of God (through the archangel Gabriel who bursts into Her life with a brilliant and mysterious intervention), reflects and asks wishing to know the "how" of the divine action and "what" to do to be a useful instrument in the hands of God. The danger is not in asking questions about how and when, but rather in playing deaf and not listening, or not accepting the answers and proposals that come from God, as was the case of the rich young man, to whom Jesus invites to leave everything to follow him, but the young man turned around and walked away, carrying sadness with him (Mt 19, 16-22).

Mary receives mysterious answers, not easily understandable, which She nevertheless accepts and meditates in Her heart. It is a meditation that helps Her to progress in faith and in the ability to discern, to see the presence of God in Her life, in the life of the world, as She shows in Her singing of the Magnificat.

Mary tells us how She has discovered God's loving way of intervening in Her history, in the history of the world and in how She can open Herself to the Spirit, "Who covers Her," to carry out His marvelous work in Her.

**Asking God, and then pausing to wait patiently for His answer, is an essential step in the discernment process.**

We may wonder, but how does God respond? The answer is not that simple. Much of the ability to hear the whisperings of the Holy Spirit consists of, after Mary's example:

- Lower the level of mental or emotional noise that is caused by anxiety.
- Exercise inner listening, trying to distinguish those thoughts that come from God to others that come from our own humanity.
- Ask for the grace of indifference, which does not mean that one does not care about anything, but rather **that one is willing to do what God asks, even when this means a great renunciation.**
- Be aware that God speaks to us through the needs of humanity and the Church, and that He provides some people with adequate capacities and talents to respond to those needs.
- Learn to read the signs of the times, which are part of the language of God. In the case of the Virgin Mary, She knew that the people were waiting for the Messiah and that they were in need of the Savior.

## **Life commitment**

I will ask myself if what my heart desires is moved by a divine motion (it adjusts to the Divine Will) or a natural motion (self-will).

## **Final prayer for every day**

(See first day)

# **THIRD DAY**

## **Response to discernment**

*"Mary said, 'You see before you the Lord's servant, let it happen to me as you have said.' And the angel left her." (Lk 1, 38)*



In the silence of the heart, as an echo that surrounds the entire universe at that moment, which does not know the scope of the miracle that is about to take place, Mary pronounces these words, *"Here is the handmaid of the Lord"*, words that changed the course of history, words - reality- that open the doors of the world to the Word of God. Only God would hear them.

It is the humble God who lowers Himself (kenosis, as Saint Paul says) and asks Her if She wants to be the mother of His Son. Before Her, God bows down and waits for the creature to be disposed for His incarnation.

Mary in the announcement of the angel discovers that Her authenticity consists in passing from existing for Herself to existing for another; from the self for myself, to the discovery of the hospitable self, the self that owes everything to the other self, which finds its own identity in being for the other. Mary finds Her identity in Her belonging to God and as such, in being God's slave.

But being a slave should not be understood from the submission or coercion of one's own freedom, it is not a slavery understood from the human pressure of the one who, subdued in his dignity, is there to serve the desires and whims of another who has subjugated or dominated him or her.

The "slavery" in Mary must be understood coming from love and freedom from whom, free in Her own conscience and with great determination, has decided to give Herself fully to serve God -Her Lord, Her Abba. Therefore, the "slavery" of Mary can only be understood from Her generous surrender, without selfishness, without reservations, without limits, without conditions. It is only understood, as a self "loving oblation".

## **Life commitment**

Mary, make me realize that finding God and accepting His call changes my life.

## **Final prayer for every day**

(See first day)

# **FOURTH DAY**

## **From discernment to promptness of action**

*"Mary set out at that time and went as quickly as she could into the hill country to a town in Judah. She went into Zechariah's house and greeted Elizabeth." (Lk 1, 39-40)*

Mary understands that Her life and activities are not exhausted in the mission of being a

mother and carrying the Messiah, the Son of God, in Her womb. She understands that Her mission is not achieved in passivity, waiting for things to happen, or for things to arrive.

On the contrary, Mary manifests the responsibility of Her mission, with an active attitude and disposition, manifested in the virtue of serving others, in this case, Her cousin Elizabeth.

The expression "*Mary set out*" underlines the vigorous impulse that leads Mary to go to Elizabeth's aid.

Mary does not do it to satisfy a personal need (to feel useful, to look good, to be praised) but to respond to a need that, in a way, disrupts Her plans. And She does it with **dignity** (not like a slave but like a sister), **carefully** (not done any old way but paying attention to detail), **promptly** (not reluctantly but with a cheerful and willing spirit).

Whoever has discerned, like Mary, the will of God in his/her life, understands that such will is always directed, as the ultimate goal, to the service of others, in a disinterested and well-intentioned way. Thus, the fruit of service will be a satisfaction, which reverberates in a good for others and joy in those who have served.

Contemplating Mary in this way, in Her attitude of service, we understand to what extent God's grace can bear fruit in human beings, what kind of humanity arises when God "graces" a person who is willing to accept His gift.

## **Life commitment**

Mary, help me, oh tender mother, to make Your attitude of service transparent in my life, with a big heart and a determined spirit.

## **Final prayer for every day**

(See first day)

# **FIFTH DAY**

## **Feelings that spring from discernment**

*"And Mary said: My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior; because he has looked upon the humiliation of his servant. Yes, from now onwards all generations will call me blessed, for the Almighty has done great things for me. Holy is his name, and his faithful love extends age after age to those who fear him."*

**Mary of the Visitation, offers us, with Her song of the Magnificat, the result of Her search, of Her discernment.**

Mary has discovered how God intervenes in Her and why and how He intervenes in the world. Mary celebrates - because in her discernment in faith She has seen it - the paradox of the messianic salvation that began humbly, with the conception of Jesus, nothing for the proud, everything for the humble.

The Virgin Mary celebrates what God has done in Her and, prophetically, “sets” forever, the way that God intervenes in human history. It is the deep inner gaze of Mary that leads Her to intuit on how She can cooperate so the Spirit "that covers Her" proceeds without obstacles, making the Virgin Mary’s Jesus to grow.

Pope Saint John Paul II said: “With Her knowledge of sapiential history, Mary leads us to discover the criteria of the mysterious action of God. The Lord, reversing the judgments of the world, comes to the aid of the poor and the small, in detriment of the rich and the powerful, and, surprisingly, fills the humble with good things who entrust their existence to Him. These words of the canticle, while showing us a concrete and sublime model in Mary, help us to understand that what attracts the benevolence of God is above all humility of heart”.

Humility of heart is an essential requirement in spiritual discernment, since whoever disposes his/her heart with humility can better understand what God wants. More than tuning the ear, it is tuning the heart, to get in tune with the divine will.

*“Speak, Yahweh, for your servant is listening!”* (1 Sm 3,10), this is how Samuel responded to God's call, in this way he opened his heart to accept his mission. The "yes" of Mary, Her "fiat", has opened not only Her heart, but Her whole being to the one She recognizes as Her God, Her father and Her everything.

## **Life commitment**

Like Mary, I will recognize and meditate on the wonders that God has done in me, recognizing in them His Love and Mercy.

## **Final prayer for every day**

(See first day)

# **SIXTH DAY**

## **Discernment implications**

*"As the child's father and mother were wondering at the things that were being said about him, Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, 'Look, he is destined for the fall and*

*for the rise of many in Israel, destined to be a sign that is opposed -and a sword will pierce your soul too- so that the secret thoughts of many may be laid bare." (Lk 2, 33-35)*

Mary has discerned in freedom, accepting the Divine Will and accepting to be the mother of Jesus, the Son of God and the Savior of humanity. However, She is now that Her son has been born, facing a situation that will reveal that Her mission did not culminate with the conception of Her Jesus.

After having complied with the Jewish tradition of presenting all first-born males in the Temple to be consecrated to God, Mary has an encounter with Simeon (a pious man who awaited the liberation of Israel), in which the path of Her mission is revealed.

Simeon's words carry great weight in the understanding of the role of Mary with respect to Jesus. These words, predicting pain and suffering, make Mary understand what it has meant to be The Mother of The Son of God.

The last sentence of Simeon, is addressed personally to Mary. *"A sword will pierce your heart"*, that is, Her entire person. The image of the sword springs forth from presenting Jesus as a cause of ruin and for the rising of many in Israel, Mary is part of that people, and, therefore, has to run Her fate.

The image of the sword, which pierces the most intimate personality of Mary, suggests the difficulties in understanding that obedience to the Word of God is above all even the most sacred family ties.

It is thus, that Mary assimilates, that the divine will moves Her to accept the path Her son has to travel, and that She, as a silent witness, but not an inactive one, will walk alongside of Him until the final moment.

## **Life commitment**

Meditate on the following phrase from Saint Alfonso María de Liguori: “<< All our perfection is encrypted in loving our most lovable God. But all the perfection of love is founded on conforming our will with the will of God >>”.

## **Final prayer for every day**

(See first day)

# **SEVENTH DAY**

**Doubts in discernment?**

**"He went home again, and once more such a crowd collected that they could not even have a meal. 21. When his relations heard of this, they set out to take charge of him; they said, 'He is out of his mind.'" (Mk 3, 20-21)**

In the prophecy that Simeon made to Mary, he had already warned Her what the figure of Her Son would mean for the people of Israel, for some it would mean hope, salvation, but for others, it would be a cause of rejection and contradiction.

Now Mark highlights the latter, the public ministry of Jesus, the force of His words, the authority of His teaching, generates disapproval and generates doubt about His state of mind. Even His own relatives consider Him crazy, "he's out of his mind."

And Mary, His mother, who knows Her Son well. What did She think of Jesus? Is He really crazy? The opinions She heard, have they sown doubt in Her?

The distorted popular rumor, would be that this overflowing activity of Jesus was consequence of His delusions and insanity? Thirty years of hidden life, without study with rabbis, and suddenly beginning His work of preaching and miracles, was still surprising, even more so for His relatives, unaware of the mystery of His divinity. He was not a prophet in His homeland, "nor in His home" (Mt 13,57). They could have come looking for Him, out of family pity, to take Him with them. His relatives, except Mary, could have believed this.

Indeed, the knowledge that the Virgin had of Him excluded Her from this. Her presence is well justified. A mother is on a son's side in the face of any rumor. The fact that He went with relatives does not mean that He shared their feelings. She knows that there is something mysterious in all of it.

For Mary, it did not have to be easy to be the mother of the incarnate Son of God. She accepted with pleasure that God wanted to use Her for the fulfillment of His plans, but at the same time we see that sometimes She did not understand what Jesus was doing or what was happening with Him, but in Her mother's heart the fulfillment of the divine will always cleared up any doubt.

## **Life commitment**

Meditate on those situations or things that make me doubt in my discernment process and, following the example of Mary, confidently, abandon ourselves into the hands of God.

## **Final prayer for every day**

(See first day)

# EIGHTH DAY

## Discernment at the service of the Kingdom

*"On the third day there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee. The mother of Jesus was there, and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited. And they ran out of wine, since the wine provided for the feast had all been used, and the mother of Jesus said to him, 'They have no wine.' Jesus said, 'Woman, what do you want from me? My hour has not come yet.' His mother said to the servants, 'Do whatever he tells you.' " (Jn 2, 1-5)*

Regarding the role of Mary in the public ministry of Jesus, Pope Saint John Paul II said in his catechesis (1997):

"In the episode of the wedding at Cana, Saint John presents the first intervention of Mary in the public life of Jesus and highlights Her cooperation in the mission of Her Son.

Right from the beginning of the story, the evangelist notes that "the mother of Jesus was there" (Jn 2: 1) and, as if to suggest that this presence was at the origin of the invitation addressed by the spouses to Jesus Himself and His disciples. He adds: "*Jesus was also invited to the wedding with his disciples*" (Jn 2: 2). With these words, Saint John seems to indicate that at Cana, as in the fundamental event of the Incarnation, Mary is the one who introduces the Savior.

The meaning and the role assumed by the presence of the Virgin is manifested when the wine is lacking. As an expert and caring housewife, She immediately realizes this and intervenes so that everyone's happiness does not decline and, first of all, to help the spouses in their difficulties. Addressing Jesus with the words: "*They have no wine*" (Jn 2, 3), Mary expresses Her concern about this situation, hoping for an intervention that will resolve it. More precisely, according to some exegetes, the Mother expects an extraordinary sign, since Jesus did not have wine.

The choice of Mary, who might have been able to obtain the necessary wine elsewhere, shows the courage of Her faith because, up to that moment, Jesus had not performed any miracles, neither in Nazareth nor in public life.

At Cana, the Virgin shows once again Her total submission to God. She who, at the Annunciation, believing in Jesus before seeing Him, had cooperated with the prodigy of the virginal conception, here, trusting in the still undisclosed power of Jesus, contributes to His "first sign", the prodigious transformation of water into wine.

In this way, Mary precedes the disciples in faith who, as Saint John refers, will believe after the miracle: Jesus *"manifested His glory, and His disciples believed in Him"* (Jn 2:11). Furthermore, by obtaining the prodigious sign, Mary brings them support in their faith.

Jesus' response to Mary's words: *"Jesus said, 'Woman, what do you want from me? My hour has not come yet.'"* (Jn 2: 4), expresses an apparent rejection, as if to test the faith of His mother.

According to one interpretation, Jesus, from the beginning of His mission, seems to question His natural relationship as a son, before the intervention of His mother. Indeed, in the spoken language of the place, this phrase implies a distance between people, excluding the closest ones.

With the expression: "Woman, what do you want from me?", Jesus wishes to place Mary's cooperation in the plan of salvation, which by compromising Her faith and hope, demands Her to overcome Her natural role as mother.

Much stronger is the motivation formulated by Jesus: *"My hour has not yet come"* (Jn 2: 4).

Jesus gives Mary to understand that He no longer depends on Her, but must take the initiative to carry out the work of the Father. Maria, then, meekly stops insisting before Him and instead turns to the servants to invite them to follow His requests.

In any case, the trust in the Son is rewarded. Jesus, to whom She has completely left the initiative, performs the miracle, recognizing the courage and docility of His mother: *"Jesus tells them: 'Fill the jars with water'. And they filled them to the brim"* (Jn 2: 7).

Mary's exhortation: "Do whatever He tells you", retains an ever-current value for Christians of all times, and is destined to renew its marvelous effect in the life of each soul. It invites confidence without hesitation, especially when the meaning and usefulness of what Christ asks is not understood.

In the same way as in the story of the Canaanite woman (cf. Mt 15: 24-26) the apparent rejection of Jesus exalts the woman's faith, so the words of the Son "My hour has not yet come", together with the realization of the first miracle, they manifest the greatness of the Mother's faith and the strength of Her prayer.

## **Life commitment**

Reflect and meditate around the beatitudes that Jesus teaches us in His doctrine and discover what feelings, like those of Mary, move me to work at the service and construction of the Kingdom of God.

## **Final prayer for every day**

(See first day)

# NINTH DAY

## Discernment, acceptance of the divine will up to the last consequence.

*"Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary of Magdala. Seeing his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing near her, Jesus said to his mother, 'Woman, this is your son.' Then to the disciple he said, 'This is your mother.' And from that hour the disciple took her into his home." (Jn 19: 26-27)*

When we look at Jesus crucified, we also see Mary present at the foot of the cross. We contemplate what the Virgin lived at the foot of the cross and what She also wants to teach us on our way of discerning the Divine Will.

It is worth underlining the communion of feelings and prayers that united Mary with those of Her beloved Son at the moment of His death on the cross. And it is true that, in the days after this event, Mary "meditated in Her heart" on this experience lived at the foot of the cross.

Let us remain with Mary at the foot of the cross, let us meditate with Her on the words that Jesus, Her son, through Her, gives to all humanity.

We can wonder if Jesus' greatest pain during His crucifixion was seeing His mother, standing by His side, suffering with Him. Jesus knew that, when He died, His mother would be left a widow and without Her only Son; again, His thoughts are focused not on Him but on His mother. He entrusts Her to the beloved disciple. He is aware of the importance of the faith and of the advice of Mary to His disciples in the days, years and centuries to come. Jesus entrusts to His mother the responsibility of the beloved disciple and of all the beloved disciples to come, that is to say, "us". This is one of the reasons why Mary appears throughout the centuries to manifest Her maternal presence and Her teachings faithfully following Her Son.

At this crucial moment for Jesus and for Mary, perhaps She was able to remember those words pronounced at the Annunciation *"Here is the handmaid of the Lord, let it be done to me according to your word"* (Lk 1, 38).

The abandonment to the will of God is expressed by the diligence in accepting everything that will happen as coming from the hand of God. She could not foresee that, later, this attitude would lead Her to the foot of the cross. We ask ourselves how could She ask God how did the Cross form part of His project, to the point of offering forgiveness to those who caused Her Son so much suffering. But Jesus set the example. Since He forgave those who made Him suffer, She must too. How much She must have thought and pondered these words!



## **Life commitment**

As an act of faith and reparation, I will offer this prayer asking Mary to give us the ability to say yes to God up to the last moment, standing firm, like She did with Her Son, at the foot of the cross.

*“Oh, Virgin Mary at the foot of the cross, full of grace and courage. Teach us to look at the cross and to accept the value of suffering. Also, today we live the unreasonable situation of violence that becomes flesh in the weakest. Do not allow us to fall in desperation. That by looking at Your Son on the cross we can believe in a new dawn. Teach us to stand next to the one who suffers, to be bearers of hope. Give us the necessary courage to assume the Gospel in its radicality. Teach us to walk with Jesus and to remain like You next to Him. Amen”.*

## **Final prayer for every day**

(See first day)