

**Homily for the Fourth Night of the Novena in Honor of the Immaculate Conception
Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception
Springfield, Illinois**

December 2, 2025

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Reverend Fathers, Deacons, and my dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

It is good for us to be here for this Fourth Night of the Novena in Honor of the Immaculate Conception. Each night has offered a reflection on one of the prayers honoring the Blessed Virgin Mary. On Saturday, Father Daniel McGrath began our Novena with a reflection on the Hail Mary prayer. On Sunday, Father Dominic Vahling spoke about the *Angelus* prayer. Yesterday, Father Brian Alford reflected on the *Memorare* prayer. Tonight, we consider a prayer known as the *Regina Coeli*, Latin for “Queen of Heaven.” In fact, I first learned this prayer in Latin, and we always sang the *Regina Coeli* rather than recite it. The *Regina Coeli* goes like this:

Regina caeli, laetare, alleluia.

Quia quem meruisti portare, alleluia.

Resurrexit, sicut dixit, alleluia.

Ora pro nobis Deum, alleluia.

Then there is a response and a prayer.

V. Gaude et laetare, Virgo Maria, alleluia.

R. Quia surrexit Dominus vere, alleluia.

Oremus.

Deus, qui per resurrectionem Filii tui, Domini nostri Iesu Christi, mundum laetificare dignatus es: praesta, quaesumus; ut per eius Genetricem Virginem Mariam, perpetuae capiamus gaudia vitae. Per eundem Christum Dominum nostrum. Amen.

The English translation is as follows:

Queen of Heaven, rejoice, alleluia.

For He whom you did merit to bear, alleluia.

Has risen, as he said, alleluia.

Pray for us to God, alleluia.

Rejoice and be glad, O Virgin Mary, alleluia.

For the Lord has truly risen, alleluia.

Let us pray.

O God, who gave joy to the world through the resurrection of Thy Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, grant we beseech Thee, that through the intercession of the Virgin Mary, His Mother, we may obtain the joys of everlasting life. Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

According to the [Vatican News website](#), “The antiphon *Regina Coeli* (‘Queen of Heaven’) is one of four traditional Marian antiphons, the others being *Alma Redemptoris Mater*, *Ave Regina Coelorum*, and *Salve Regina*. It was Pope Benedict XIV who, in 1742, enjoined the recitation of the *Regina Coeli* in place of the *Angelus* during Eastertide, that is, from Easter Sunday to the end of Pentecost. It is recited standing as a sign of Christ’s victory over death. Like the *Angelus*, the *Regina Coeli* is said three times a day, at dawn, at noon, and at dusk, in order to consecrate the day to God and the Virgin Mary. This ancient antiphon arose, according to a pious tradition, in the 6th century; it is attested in documentary sources from the first half of the 13th century, when it was inserted in the Franciscan breviary. It is composed of four short verses, each ending with an ‘alleluia.’ With the *Regina Coeli*, the faithful turn to Mary, the Queen of Heaven, to rejoice with her at the Resurrection of Christ.”

The [story of the *Regina Caeli*](#) dates from when St. Gregory the Great was the Holy Father. Pope Gregory had a vision and heard the angels singing the Marian antiphon on April 25, 590, when a plague was raging in Rome, causing countless deaths. A 1914 translation of the 13th-century book, *The Golden Legend*, by Jacobus De Voragine, tells the story of Gregory leading a procession around Rome to ask for the Blessed Virgin Mary's help to stop a plague that was taking the lives of many people. Gregory carried "an image of Our Lady, which, as is said, St. Luke the Evangelist made. ... the mortality ceased, and the air became pure and clear, and about the image was heard a voice of angels" singing the first three lines of "this anthem: '*Regina Caeli laetare, etc.,*' and St. Gregory put thereto: '*Ora pro nobis Deum, alleluia.*' At the same time St. Gregory saw an angel upon a castle which made clean a sword all bloody, and put it into the sheath; and thereby St. Gregory understood that the pestilence of this mortality was passed, and after that it was called the Castle Angel," or as it is known in Italian, Castel Sant' Angelo.

Let us look at each line of the *Regina Coeli*.

Queen of Heaven, rejoice, alleluia.

The hymn starts by recognizing that Mary is the Queen of Heaven. As Queen, Mary is recognized as the most important disciple of Our Lord in

Heaven. She is the Queen Mother – mother of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. But it is her discipleship that makes Mary the model for all Christians to emulate as followers of her Son. Mary is then invited to rejoice.

The next two lines tell us why Mary should rejoice:

For He whom you did merit to bear, alleluia.

Has risen, as he said, alleluia.

We recognize that Mary indeed was a fitting mother to carry Our Redeemer in her womb for nine months because she was conceived without original sin, hence her title, the *Immaculate Conception*. The fact that Jesus her Son has Risen from the dead is affirmed as a true fact, and since it is true, Our Lord's resurrection is cause for rejoicing!

We then make a request of Mary: *Pray for us to God, alleluia.*

Since Mary is the model disciple and is Queen of Heaven, she is the one most suited to intercede for us with her Son, Jesus, pleading for us in our need for God's grace so that we might live for all eternity with Mary, the Queen of Heaven, her Son, Christ the King, God the Father, God the Holy Spirit, and all the saints and angels in heaven, where we hope to be reunited one day with all our loved ones.

May God give us this grace. Amen.