

Novena to Our Lady Undo-er of Knots: United with Prayers for the Cenacolo Community world-wide.

Why the Novena and with whom?

In recent years I have become aware of the complexity of the lives of so many young men. Their lives are all 'knotted -up', there are so many issues that contribute to real confusion about their personal identity and their purpose in life.

There is suffering in many families because of addictions [alcohol, drugs, illegal medicines, abusive life-styles].

Traditionally on Monday evening our Mass and Rosary prayers were focussed on the work of the Cenacolo Community where traditional prayer, communal life and daily offering to the Lord provide healing for many young people. Lives that are all 'knotted up' begin to find a new poise and serenity. It is an arduous commitment of prayer for the suffering young. We can assist by sharing at least in the burden of prayer.

The Novena will focus on the way in which Our Lady Untier [Undo-er] of Knots can assist us to a less complex way of living and a more free openness to the problems of others, and a humbler acceptance of our own frailties.

The Marian devotion entitled 'Mary Untier of Knots' shares its name with a painting depicting Our Lady untying the knots of a white wedding ribbon. This painting played a significant role in the history of Mary Undo-er of Knots Devotion.



Its origins are to be found in the tradition that a German nobleman, Wolfgang Langenmantel was distressed when he that found his wife Sophia was planning to divorce him.

To save his marriage, Wolfgang sought counsel from the wise and pious Fr. Jakob Rem a Jesuit priest, who was known to have a strong devotion to Our Lady, Mary. As he was dedicated to his marriage Wolfgang brought Sophia to meet Fr. Rem four times in twenty-eight days. On their fourth visit on 28 Sep 1615, the Langenmantel's brought their wedding ribbon. At that time, it was customary for the maid of honour to

tie together the arms of the bride and groom. This uniting of arms with a ribbon symbolized their union for life.

Before an image of Our Lady of Snows, Fr. Rem took the white ribbon and untied the knots one by one. When he finished the ribbon was seen to be dazzling white. This was taken as confirmation that Mary had heard their prayers. Fortunately, the divorce was averted, and the Langenmantels remained happily married.

In 1700, more than eighty years later, Wolfgang's grandson Fr. Heironymus Ambrosius Langenmantel donated a family altar. He commissioned Johann Melchior Georg Schmittner to provide a painting representative of the Langenmantel family. Schmittner became inspired by the story of Wolfgang and Sophia, and depicted the narrative within his painting. The original Baroque painting of 'Mary Untier of Knots', was completed and the image came to be venerated as 'Mary Undoer of Knots'.

The painting has survived wars and revolutions and continues to draw people to it. Today the original still hangs over the family altar found at the Church of St. Peter am Perlach in Augsburg, Bavaria, Germany.



Pope Francis, when he was the young Fr Jorge Bergoglio SJ, studying in Germany saw the image Of Our Lady Undo-er of Knots. On returning to Argentina he promoted her veneration, which is now widespread in Latin America. The painting portrays Mary dressed in a blue mantle with twelve stars above her head, standing on the serpent, crushing evil and untying the knots. Mary is seen as one who intercedes for us to her Son, helping us to let go of what binds us, what ties us to this world, what causes discord, violence and despair, freeing us from the struggles and the "knots of our lives."

This is an appropriate Novena for us to reach out in prayer for all those whose lives are 'knotted up', and in despair. We link our Novena with the Confident and Hopeful work of the Cenacolo Community

The Cenacolo Community was founded in 1983 by Sr Elvira an Italian nun. It is now world-wide.



The UK house is near Kendal, and there is an Irish house at Knock.

A Cenacolo house is a place of hope! It is not a “Detox” or a “Rehab”. It is a place of hope, certainly for those seeking to escape from addiction (drug/alcohol/gambling etc) but also for those disaffected by life who want to experience a simpler life in a Christian environment.

In Cenacolo there are neither psychiatrists nor social workers : this is a “peer-led” community where men [and women, for there are some separate houses for women] live together, respecting each other, growing in respect for themselves also, all within the firm rules of the Community, sharing a Common Life in the Body of Christ. Members are among friends who will generally have gone through similar experiences themselves. Friendship, Work and Prayer. In this way self-esteem and self-confidence grow.

This is the work of the Lord in Word and in the Blessed Sacrament, much assisted by the Prayers of Our Lady.

The Novena, Nine Days of Prayer, is our share in the work of Jesus.



Jesus, Mercy: Mary Pray