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## **Novena natus: Nine hymns for the souls of women**

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El Rio Debajo del Rio

**What do women truly want? To be truly seen. To stand in the blessings of those who love the God of Love, and not the Sadducean God of Crabbed Views.**

Let us pray ....

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HYMNS OF GRATITUDE

-- FOR WE ARE PLEASED

BY DANGEROUS WOMEN AND THEIR WISE AND  
WILD DAUGHTERS --

-1-

**For all the elders of the world, each and every kind ever created**, those who have been carried gently by the waves, and those who have been half wrecked by any number of storms and squalls, those who have clung to wreckage long enough to make it halfway in, and thence to have gained landfall ... For elders who in all their variegations, sorrows and talents, now stand shy or certain, semi-disheveled or

pulled together, but nonetheless hip-wide and proud ... For the tribes of grand elder women ... in all their feathers and pelts, all their leaves and skins and skirts, in all their *las ropas guerreras*, warrior full dress, in their wings and sashes and shawls with their ceremonial brooches, necklaces, and staffs of authority, in all their athletic and tender pride, in all their beaks and tails and tulle and toile that flash and sashay, in all their sauntering and sensuality, in all their unexpected and outrageous behaviors, in all their eccentricities and all their tribal paint and lace, in all their clan colors and insignias of power, with all their fierce and gentle blood and shining eyes ... for all their conserving and sacrificing and generous ways... for their supreme caring that decency, creative life, and care for the soul should not vanish from the face of this earth ... for all this blessed beauty within them ...

For them ...

let us pray strength and healing

straight down into their courage bones forever.

-2-

**For all the wily older women** who are learning when time is right, to say their piece and not hold back -- or to hold back when silence will speak louder than words. For all the elders in the making, who are learning to be kind when it would be so easy to be cruel ... who can see they can cut when it is called for, and cut sharp and clean ... who are practicing telling whole truths with the wholeness of mercy. For all who transgress convention and instead clasp the hands of strangers, greeting them as though they raised them from pups and have known them forever ... for all who are learning how to rattle the bones, rock the boat -- *and* the bed -- as well as calm the tempests ... for those who are keepers of the oil for the lamp, who hold the quietude of daily practice ... for those who keep the rituals, who remember how to make fire from mere flint and floss ... for those who say the old prayers, who recall the old symbols, the old stories, the forms, the words, the songs, the dances, and what the rites were once meant to set into place in the human soul ... for those who bless others easily and often ... for those elders who are not afraid -- or who are afraid -- and who act effectively regardless ...

For them ...

may they live long,

in strength and in health,

and in huge unfurled spirit.

-3-

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**For the kitchen grandmothers** from whose hands, hearts and minds, come many nourishments -- sweet, bittersweet, sharp, smooth, spicy nourishments that last in the soul long after first taste in the mind ... for all the trailblazing, death defying, bold *Omahs* and *Bubbes*, and all the wild *Nonnas* and *Zias* who are living exemplars of what it means to be both embodied and ensouled ... for all the Traditionals, and for the *Donnas saggias*, quiet as rivers and as life-giving to those who straggle or escape to their shores. For all

the old ones who calm and help heal whomsoever they touch in whatever condition they find them ... for those who may at least once, travel far down to reach the sorely wounded whom others do not see, or will not touch ... for those who dare to give shelter to angels who arrive unannounced ... and those who take pity on abandoned creatures ... for the old ones who show up splattered in paint or festooned in radical ideas, or just simply show up for good reason when no one else dares ...

For them ...

may they ever be bold;

may their souls be protected by many other souls,

as they carry hard won resource

into our needful world.

-4-

**For all the far-seeing *Tias* and all those who stand as guardian grandmothers to any soul in need ...**

for those who take on daughters and sons, bloodline or not, and as easily and compatibly as flowers take on honey bees ... for the *khaleh*, "the endeared ones," meaning any older woman who is loved by one younger ... (five seconds younger or a thousand years older, matters not). For all the elders who are weaving a vivid life, filling the weft with at least one thread of daring, and two of threads of wildness, and three threads of wisdom ... for those *las ancianas*, ancient ones, who, *out loud*, make inspired expansions, swervings, backtrackings, forgivings, unravelings and re-mendings in their lives and relationships ... so that less experienced souls can see and learn to do likewise, and without shame. For all the root women; the *Litas* in black, all the elder church ladies in their fabulous crowns, all those in henna and saris used to veil the head in the presence of elders and holiness, those who wear the mantilla and carry the rosary, all those in saffron and maroon robings, all those who wear the dharma as their central raiment for all occasions ... for those who wear the age-old hijab and those who pull the sacred fringed tallis over their heads to be once again in the tent of ancient Sarai; for those who wear the beaded yarmulkes, and for those who wear the rainbow and star showers on their heads and fashion their hair to represent squash blossoms... for all those on sacred hills and at waterfalls, in forests and in temples made of earth and mud ... all those in "the church beneath the church" ... and all the elders still able to visit the tiny red cathedral of the heart ... for all these root women who petition for peace and love and understanding, and who thank, and praise so hard that white flowers practically burst open over their heads as they pray ...

For them ...

may they continue ever to show us

how to love this difficult and blessed world

and all the beings in it ...

in ways that matter most to the Soul.

-5-

**For all the smart and brave *Las sympaticas*, the *Gran meres* and Big Mamas and *Tantes especiales* ...**

for all the hearty *Bon Mamas* and humble *Mujeres Grandes* who married Love Itself, and gave birth to five unruly children named Peace, Hope, Far-seeing, Interference, and Won't Be Tamed ... for those honored ones who poured into us twenty, thirty, forty, and fifty, sixty, seventy and eighty years ago, who poured a river of advices, admonitions, who tucked in folded treasure maps for us to take into the wilderness ... for those who challenged us and prodded and nooded and pushed ... the very actions that grew us toward the exact pathways so we could grow more of our own souls ... for their kind touches, their tender looks, their odd ways that encourage us to innovate and be as brave as they ... for their whispering to us, Do not be afraid, I am with you, do not lose heart, I am right here; keep going, shine now, duck now, and no, that way not so good, and yes, this way, this way ... for their winking jokes and sultry tastes; their outrageous behaviors and endearing proprieties, for their drawing the line, holding the line, stepping up to the line, and erasing the lines that bind too hard, tightening the lines that hold too loosely. For those grand women, *Les dames*, some venerably mature in years. some old in soul time, but certainly wise, who act as True North for others -- just by being ...

For them ...

may they ever be kept safe, fed from many sources,

be shown the kinds of love and gratitudes

that keep their souls flourishing above ground

for all to see.

-6-

**And for all the dear daughters ...** for those who are learning to be whole and wise again -- or whole and wise for the first time ever ... Thus, for all the grand older women who sense they cannot exist without the young to meditate with, to teach, to learn from, to find humor in and potential for, to lean toward, to pour into ... and thus, for all the younger woman who sense they would be left to lives less well lived without the essence of a quixotic and a bit wiser woman to meditate with, to teach, to learn from, to find humor in and potential for, to lean toward, to pour into. Thereby, for all the young, mid-aged and elder daughters who will yet come to the grandmothers? fires for the first time, for the thousandth time, or for the last time ... for all the grand daughters and grand old women who will keep the fires of this tandem relationship lit through letters and books, teachings and gatherings, sayings and yoo hoos, travels with capes and feathers in their hats, and with simple next-dooriness ... to all the beautiful women, young and old and mid-stream, who seek each other, who work toward being mother-sister-daughter to and with one another, who are realizing they are *El refugio*, a true refuge for each other and for any soul ... for those who realize they are together so that the less experienced one and more experienced one can ever find home ... *home*: that soul place inhabited more enduringly as a woman gathers her wisdom years about her ... *home*: any place where there is need for, shelter for, uplifting of ... the fiery filament of Love ...

For them ...

for all their pilgrim hearts ...

may they ever find each other and never pass each other by,

but stay near and strengthen each other,

and thereby the perimeters and portals of the World Soul

they have been given to guard

will remain open...

-7-

**For all the intelligent, unknowing, wandering, and know-it-all daughters whom we prize so much ...**

for the daughters who are on the straight-away or who proceed in fits and starts ... for those who are learning to weep again or for the first time ... for those who are learning to cackle ... for all those, no matter if they are whole, or healed or not, no matter from whichever class, clan, ocean or star ... for all the daughters who were bequeathed a bounty of love by beloveds who have passed, yet who still visit nonetheless ... for all the daughters who once overheard a sage's wisdom meant for another's ears, but these 'right words at the right time' caused a spark that lit her world ever after ... for all daughters who heard wisdom, did not understand it, but saved it away for the day they would understand ... for the daughters who have rowed alone and whose chosen elders are, by necessity, found in treasured books, in guiding images from cinema, painting, sculpture, music and the dance ... for the daughters who absorb the good sense and unconquerable attitudes carried by evanescent and craggy spirits of wisdom who appear in night dreams ... for the daughters who are learning to listen to La Nuestra Señora, the quintessential old wise woman who visits often and in many ways, for the daughters who carry that kind and uncanny sense of clear seeing, intuitive hearing, sensing and enacting ... for the daughters who know that this wisdom source is like the fairy-tale pot of porridge that magically never goes empty no matter how much is poured out ... .

For them ...

bless all their beauties, sorrows, and seekings;

may they ever be blessed for remembering that questions  
remain unanswered

until both ways of seeing are consulted: linear and inner.

-8-

**And for all the daughters and the elders who support what is good, and who separate from blind obedience** to any over-culture that rewards flattened form only and decries creative thought ... for all daughters and elders who are becoming ever more astute climbers of mystical mountains, and sojourners over rough roads ... for those who speak ever more keenly with soul, and for soul, as well as for creatures, waters, lands and skies ... for those who keep ever deeper cauldrons, who are the magnifying isinglass for the lighthouse beacon, who rise up as solid ground where there once was none ... for those who are on fire with their teaching and learning, for those who are merely resting before they rise up with gusto again ... for those night flowers whose fragrances affect deeply and linger though the blooms are hidden and never seen ... for all the daughters and elders who keep their hands not only on the cradle, but also on the steering wheel of the world within their reach ... for those who abandoned something essential and life-giving and turned back to retrieve it ... for those who ruined something and apologized with humility for love's sake ... for those who left something undone, forgot, didn't comprehend the importance of it -- but eventually returned, rebuilt, softened, gave 'the blessing' to the best of their ability ... to all the daughters and elders who took on the role of the blameworthy and gave blood and bone to repair rending caused by

careless, cruel others ... for the daughters and elders who are ever more interested in *being loving than in being ?right? ...*

For them ...

May they realize how precious their lives are,  
how despite any shortcomings, they are the exact bulwarks,  
touchstones, ground notes, exemplars needed here and now.

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**For all the daughters and elders who are living proof** that the soul, despite cultural denigrations to the contrary, despite heart aches, despite wrong turns, despite crashes and burns ... that the soul still comes back to life, still lives, and vibrantly so ... for all daughters and elders, who have been long certain, or are newly glimmering, that despite all one's foibles, despite all ego natterings to the contrary, that they were born with a clarified wisdom in their bodies and in their souls, and that this is their golden inheritance and their golden fuse, both. For all the daughters and elders who are creating the credentials that matter most: proof that a woman is like a great tree who, by its ability to move instead of remaining unmoved, can survive the strongest storms and perils, and still be standing in the winds; still finding her way back to swaying, still carrying on the dance. For all the daughters who are themselves in training, whether they have just begun or are well on their ways to becoming "ordinarily majestic," which means as wise and wild and as dangerous as the visionary soul within them.

For them ...

for us all,

Daughter, Son

Mother, Father,

For all our young and all our elders alike ...

May we all

deepen and flourish,

ever creating from the ashes,

protecting every art, idea and hope

that we have pledged will not be allowed to perish

from the face of this earth while we are here.

For all these, may we live long,

and live strong,  
and love one another,  
forever and ever.

Amen

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## CODA

*Novena Natus*: Sometimes, in contrast to litanies above, a single word that carries a plethora of meanings, amounts to a deep prayer all in and of itself. The Latin *natus* is like that, for its meanings are: [to] Be born! Come into existence! Arise! Be produced! In which case, I encourage all souls to *Natus, natus, natus* daily and quite freely.

The word *khaleh* was taught to me by my Iranian women students many years ago, meaning a special warm familial closeness or psychic kinship with another soul. It is similar to another beautiful word I've mentioned to you previously: *comadre*, meaning, in Spanish: close-in friends who are endeared, and who act as cherishing mothers to one another... *compadre*, is the masculine equivalent.

"...the church beneath the church," is a line from a poem I wrote in the 1960s, signifying the original huge shower of sparks, the primal Ruach, which seems no simple breeze but the whirlwind of unleashed inspiration ... the essence of spirit and soul. "The church beneath the church," "the temple beneath the temple," "the place beneath the place" ... a locus where the soul goes happily and without shame or restriction ... the soul flows there easily and with greatest heart and in any condition, in order to ask for, in order to praise, and in order to give thanks for immaculate guidance and love.

"Amen" is from a long genealogy of venerable languages, finding its way into Latin, reaching back into Greek and even farther back to Hebrew ... Amen in those languages means, to shout out straight from the wise and wild soul: "True! True!" So be it! So be it!

*Natus, natus, natus*, Amen! Amen! indeed.

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