SEVENTH DAY, August 16
Rural Works of Charity and Justice

Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and
decay destroy, and thieves break in and steal. But store up treasures in
heaven, where neither moth nor decay destroy, nor thieves break in and
steal.

- Matthew 6:19-20

Although Sts. Isidore and Maria de la Cabeza were very poor,
they gave of what they had to those who were poorer than
themselves. Every Saturday they would serve a meal to the
poor whom they had met in their daily visits to the churches of
Madrid. Legend has it that one day after all the food had been
given out, a latecomer arrived, hungry and destitute. Although
St. Isidore knew that his wife had already served all the food
they had in the house, he asked her to look again into the kitchen
to see if there might not be just one more serving left. St. Maria
hired up the kettle to see if there was anything remaining, and
was surprised to find that it was as heavy as it nothing had been
taken out of it.

EIGHTH DAY, August 17
Trust in Prayer

Psalm 86:1-10
All: Hear us, LORD, and answer us, for I am poor and oppressed.

Guard my life, for I am devoted to you. You are my God; save your
servant who trusts in you. Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I call to you
all day long.
Bring joy to your servant, for you, O Lord, I lift up my soul.
You are forgiving and good, O Lord, abounding in love to all who call
to you.
Hear my prayer, O Lord; listen to my cry for mercy.
In the day of my trouble I call to you, for you will answer me.
Among the gods there is none like you, O Lord; no deeds can compare
with yours.

All the nations you have made will come and worship
before you. O Lord, they will bring glory to your name. For you are
great and do marvelous deeds; you alone are God.

All: Hear us, LORD, and answer us, for I am poor and oppressed.

NINTH DAY, August 18
Rural Life Celebration

God of creation, thank you for the gift of rural life that is
lived on farms, in small towns and in rural homes. By
placing us so close to the rhythms of nature, we are given a
nearness to your creation and to your very heart. Keep us
ever mindful of this gift and help us be faithful stewards
who care for the land as you care for us. Help us find your
joy in the smell of a fresh spring rain or newly cut hay.
Remind us each time we hear the laughter of the wind or
the songs of birds that we are hearing your whisper of love to
all the earth. And in long winter nights remind us of your
constant nearness and care. Keep us mindful too, O God,
that we are part of a worldwide human family. Move us
beyond selfishness to a sincere and loving compassion for all.
We pray that with you we will walk hopefully, engage with others
gently, and work for justice that is enjoyed by all. Amen.

Catholic Charities

This novena has been adapted for the
St. Cloud Diocesan Rural Life Celebration
by Catholic Charities Social Concerns Department.

NOVENA
IN HONOR OF
Sts. ISIDORE AND MARIA
Patrons of Persons Living in Rural Areas

Life of St. Isidore and St. Maria de la Cabeza

St. Isidore the Farmer was born in Madrid, Spain, around 1110.
From childhood he worked as a farm hand on the de Vargas
estate. He was known for being very pious and could often
be found in church when not farming. He was known for his
love for the earth, animals, and the poor. St. Isidore was known
for giving his food to others, even when it meant he would not
have his fill. The landowner, de Vargas, suspected of St. Isidore
who was often late to the fields because of attending Mass, speed
on St. Isidore and reported seeing Isidore plowing with two
angels as his helpers. Hence, the saying arose, "St. Isidore
plowing with angels does the work of three farmers."

Isidore married a young peasant woman, Maris, who was also
later canonized as St. Maria de la Cabeza. They had only one
son who died in infancy. The couple was known for their
kindness and willingness to help their neighbors and the poor
in the city.

Sts. Isidore and Maria are examples of holy men and women,
known not for heroic feats or martyrdom but for simply living
kind, charitable lives. Like the many men and women today
who serve God as farmers in Minnesota, they were "partners
with God."
SECOND DAY, August 11
Family Life in Christ

Psalm 128
All: Happy are you who fear the Lord, who walk in his ways!

For you shall eat the fruit of your hard work; happy shall you be, and favored.
Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine in the groves of your home.
Your children like olive plants around your table.
Behold, this is the man blessed who fears the Lord.
The Lord bless you from Zion; may you see the prosperity of Jerusalem
all the days of your life; may you see your children's children.
Peace be upon Israel!

All: Happy are you who fear the Lord, who walk in his ways!

FOURTH DAY, August 13
Dignity of Work

"Man must work out of regard for others, especially his own family, but also for the society he belongs to, the country of which he is a child and the whole human family of which he is a member, since he is the heir to the work of generations and at the same time a sharer in building the future of those who will come after him in the succession of history. All this constitutes the moral obligation of work, understood in its wide sense." -Pope John Paul II, On Human Work

Scripture reading: 2 Thessalonians 3:8-12

FIFTH DAY, August 14
Walking in the Presence of God

Do not neglect the gift that is in you... Be diligent in these matters, be absorbed in them, so that your progress may be evident to everyone.
Attend to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in both tasks, for by doing so you will save both yourself and those who listen to you.
-1 Timothy 4:14a,15-16

Let us pray.
Breathe into our hearts, O Lord, a deep desire to walk with you, and grant that we may come, bearing in our hands the sheaves of justice, to where the blessed Sts. Isidore and Maria are with you in glory, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

SIXTH DAY, August 15
Stewardship of the Land

Reflection: To express the unity of the people of God, Christ chose the striking farm symbol of the vine and the branches. Immediately thereafter. He reminded us all of the hard reality that the barren plant must be destroyed. The text

FIRST DAY, August 10
Partnership with God

While reflecting on the stories of creation found in Genesis, the U.S. Bishops state that those who work in agriculture are called to continue God’s plan for creation which was first given to Adam and Eve. Today, caring for creation in partnership with God takes on many forms, but the bishops state that for all people it must be rooted in Catholic social teaching emphasizing the dignity of human life, commitment to community, family life, and the common good, with special concern for the poor. For those working in agriculture who live by these principles the bishops state, “For them, farming is not just a way to make a living, it is a way of life. It is not just a job; it is a vocation and an expression of faith.”

THIRD DAY, August 12
Love of Neighbor

Let love be sincere; hate what is evil, hold on to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; anticipate one another in showing honor. Do not grow slack in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, endure in affliction, persevere in prayer.
-Romans 12:9-12

Reflection: To express the unity of the people of God, Christ chose the striking farm symbol of the vine and the branches. Immediately thereafter. He reminded us all of the hard reality that the barren plant must be destroyed. The text