

STUART BATHURST CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL

NEWSLETTER

special edition



MARY MOTHER OF GOD
DRAWN BY MISS WARD

MAY

THE MONTH OF MARY

MAY - THE MONTH OF MARY

Many traditions in the Church have their roots in ancient times and the month of May is no different. For May we can look back at the ancient Greeks who dedicated the month of May to Artemis, their goddess of fecundity. The month of May was also significant to the Romans who honoured Flora, their goddess of bloom or blossoms. The Romans would celebrate “floral games” at the end of April ask for Flora’s intervention to help all things that bloom.

For Catholics and many other Christians, May is an opportunity to speak to Mary and get to know her better. We can read the Gospels discover her as the Mother of Jesus and how as a young girl, she too would have felt fear of the unknown, just as many of us are feeling right now. We can also look to her faith and trust in God, knowing that He walks beside us and will catch us as we fall, always helping us to get back up again. Mary’s complete trust and obedience in God’s plan for her is inspirational, for if a young girl about to be married can so completely and absolutely put her life in God’s hands, then her example can bring us hope and comfort in these challenging days.

Why is May dedicated to Mary?

The devotion to Mary during the month of May started sometime in the Thirteenth Century and began as a way to encourage more non-religious practices to be replaced with more religious traditions and acts of worship and prayer.

During this month, Catholics will offer up prayers and adoration to Mary both in Church and at home. In these difficult times we all need the loving care of Our Mother and it is important to remember that we can pray to Mary anywhere - through formulaic prayer or spontaneous prayer and meditation.

WHO IS MARY AND WHY IS SHE IMPORTANT TO CATHOLICS?

When we think of Mary, it would be easy to think of her as some divine being that was able to become perfect through some mystical gift, however, it is in understanding her as a human being with human limitations, that we truly recognise the power of her belief and faith in God. It is in her faith that she is blessed and holy and through such faith and humility, she became the perfect instrument of God's will and was the obedient and willing servant of God.

Mary had no sense of self, just as many of our NHS workers have put aside their sense of self in caring selflessly for those struck down by the Corona Virus, and it is in this humility that Mary was free from any tainting of selfishness and she had the freedom to listen to and obey God.

Through looking up to Mary we can learn from her example and as Mary is the Mother of the Church, she becomes our guide and inspiration, as everyone one of us hopes to be a good servant and obedient to God's will – just as Mary was.

Many people aim to live by the example of Mary as they recognise how she can fill them with courage and strength. Mother Teresa was inspired by and devoted to our Lady and she said:

“Mary, give me your heart: so beautiful, so pure so immaculate; your Heart so full of love and humility that I May be able to receive Jesus in the Bread of Life and love Him as you love Him and serve Him in the distressing guise of the poor.”

KEY BELIEFS AND TITLES OF MARY

There are many, many titles given to Mary to recognise her importance and role within The Church and these help us understand all the aspects of Mary and all the ways in which we look to her for help. Here are but a few with a brief explanation of what each one means for us.

The Immaculate Conception

Mary was conceived without original sin because God blessed her. This was so she would be pure and be able to give birth to Jesus, The Incarnation of God.

The Virgin Mary

Mary never had sex throughout her life. She remained a virgin—she was pure and holy. She conceived through the power of The Holy Spirit.

The Mother of God

Through the virgin birth, Mary gave birth to God and so she gains this title.

The Mediatrix

Mary is in heaven, where she prays to God on our behalf. She pleads for us and takes our prayers to God.

The Mother of the Church

Mary is the mother of Jesus and He is the Head of the Church. So, Mary is the Mother of the Church.

The Assumption

Mary did not die a normal death. She was so holy that at the end of her life she was assumed into Heaven, she did not die, she fell into dormition. This is because she was born without original sin.

Queen of Heaven

Mary is crowned in Heaven as Queen because she served Jesus so devotedly during her life.

WHAT CAN WE DO DURING MAY?

1. Get To Know Mary

During this month - and beyond! – we can try to be a little more like Mary. If we love someone, we will want to try to get to know them better and follow in their ways. St Louis de Montfort created a list of 10 virtues which he felt Mary embodied and we can try each day to follow Mary in her:

Deep Humility,

Lively Faith,

Blind Obedience,

Unceasing Prayer,

Constant Self-Denial,

Surpassing Purity,

Ardent Love,

Heroic Patience,

Angelic Kindness,

And Heavenly Wisdom!

These are not all easy to do to and certainly not all of the time but we can try especially hard during May to become better people, less focused on self and more focused on others.

2. Call On Mary For Strength

One way we can see Mary, is as the ‘general in our army’ who we can call on to help us and ask God for strength and courage. St Francis de Sales called on Mary in his darkest hour and she answered his prayers and saved him from giving in to despair – something many of us may be feeling right now as we look ahead to the months ahead.

3. Read and Reflect

Read about Mary in the Gospels and in Pope Saint John Paul II letters as he asks us to see Jesus through the ‘eyes and heart of Mary’.

4. Become a Marian Apostle

St Maximilian Kolbe was devoted to the catholic tradition of Miraculous Medals which he called ‘spiritual bullets’. Kolbe believed Mary would give the strength and conviction to overcome any obstacle and his inspirational sacrifice and martyrdom is a clear illustration of his faith.

5. Pray the Rosary

In Fatima, Portugal in 1917 just before The Great War, Mary appeared to three children and asked them to pray the Rosary to help save the world. Pope Saint John Paul II too insisted that everyone pray the Rosary for the peace and salvation of the family.

MARY IN ART AND CULTURE

Mary is important to Catholics and Christians all over the world and she is Our Mother in the full and inclusive use of the word 'our'.

Artists have enjoyed exploring how Mary is visually represented in cultures across the world and her love and care is felt by all.

Paintings of Mary often show her in blue.

Blue was historically perceived to be a colour which was sacred and mystical as it was not a naturally occurring colour and was hard to get hold of. It was around the 5th Century that blue became the colour for Our Lady and has remained so ever since.



AFRICAN
MADONNA
AND CHILD



CHEYENNE
MADONNA
AND CHILD



MARY THROUGH THE
EYES OF THE ORIENT

TRADITIONAL CELEBRATIONS FOR THE MONTH OF MAY

In the community – May Queen Processions

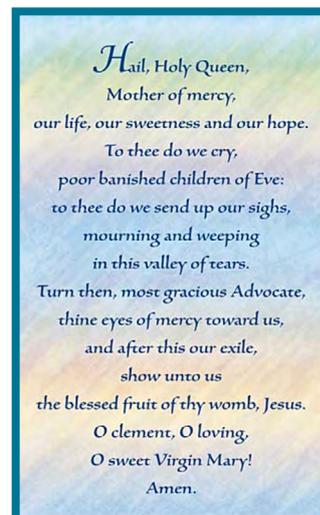
We gather together to celebrate the May Queen and a statue of Our Lady is crowned with a crown of spring flowers to recognise her as our Mother and Queen of Heaven. Many Churches enjoy the tradition of processing carrying a statue of Our Lady with parishioners following behind in joyful processions. Although we cannot do that this year, we can watch previous celebrations on YouTube and reflect on how we can still meditate and pray to Mary within ourselves and together as a family.

At school, each year we have enjoyed a May procession and liturgy and each year, each one of our Year 7 cohort have brought flowers to lay before our school statue of Mary as an offering of our prayers and intercessions before the final crowning of Our Lady takes place.

Prayers to Mary

As the Mother of God, Mary has a unique place whereby she can intervene on the behalf of humankind and ask God to answer people's prayers. Catholics pray to Mary and offer her adoration but we do not worship her as worship is for God and God alone.

There have been many prayers, hymns and poems written to Our Lady. To help you in your daily prayers, the most well known are below:



THE ROSARY

Although October is the month held by the Church as the Month of the Rosary as the liturgical feast of Our Lady of the Rosary is celebrated on the 7th October, many Catholics pray the Rosary during May as a dedication to Mary and a petition to God to intervene for the good of the world. The Rosary can be understood as set of beads held during prayer but it is in focusing on the prayers in a particular order that The Rosary is said.

The Rosary was first introduced by St Dominic in 1214 who received it in a vision from Our Lady who asked him to use it as a means to bring people to the faith and closer to God.

What Do the Beads on The Rosary Represent?

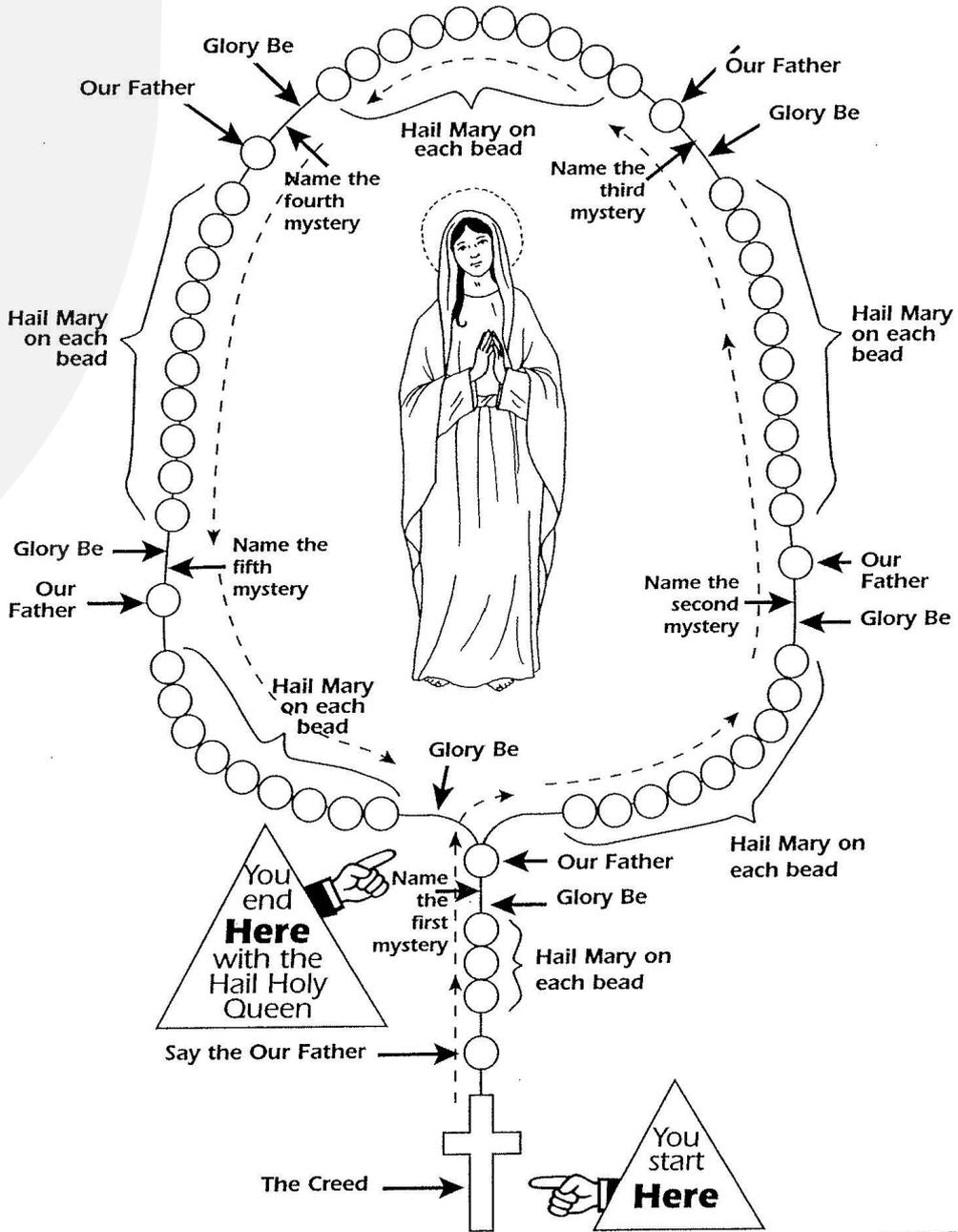
The Medal: At the end of the string, which is the beginning of the large circle of beads, there is usually a religious medal. The medal is the beginning and end of one set of mysteries. The first time the medal is held, an Our Father is prayed as the beginning of the first mystery is prayed.

Decades: There are a set of ten beads, followed by a single bead. On each of the ten beads a Hail Mary will be prayed and on the single bead a Glory Be will be prayed to mark the end of one mystery. On the same bead, an Our Father is then prayed to mark the beginning of the next mystery. Between these two prayers, it is now the usual custom to also recite the, 'Oh my Jesus' Fatima Prayer.

The five beads: The beads on the string that begins with the crucifix are divided into a 1,3,1 arrangement. On the first bead an Our Father will be prayed, on the next three Hail Marys will be prayed and on the last one a Glory Be. Often these prayers are offered for the Pope's special intentions, The Crucifix: Holding the crucifix at the start of the Rosary, the person reciting the Rosary will say the Apostle's Creed.

The Medal: On returning to the medal, a full set of mysteries will have been prayed. This time, whilst holding the medal, the person will say the final Glory Be, final 'Oh my Jesus' prayer and usually the seasonal antiphon to Our Lady, such as the Hail, Holy Queen.

THE ROSARY



HOW TO SAY THE ROSARY

The Rosary begins with the Apostles Creed, followed by one Our Father, three Hail Marys (traditionally offered for an increase in faith, hope, and charity for those praying the Rosary), a Glory Be, and, if desired, the Fatima Prayer. Next come five mysteries, each consisting of one Our Father, ten Hail Marys, a Glory Be, and, if desired, the Fatima Prayers. Conclude with the Hail Holy Queen.

As people say the Rosary they focus on four Mysteries as given by The Church and these provide inspiration and reflection for our prayers:

The Joyful Mysteries

The Annunciation: The Archangel Gabriel “announces” to Mary that she shall conceive the Son of God.

The Visitation: Mary visits her cousin Elizabeth, who is pregnant with John the Baptist.

The Nativity: Jesus is born.

The Presentation: Mary and Joseph “present” Jesus in the Temple where they meet Simeon.

The Finding in the Temple: After losing Him, Mary and Joseph find young Jesus teaching the Rabbis in the Temple.

The Luminous Mysteries

The Baptism in the Jordan: The voice of the Father declares Jesus the beloved Son.

The Wedding at Cana: Christ changes water into wine, his first public miracle.

The Proclamation of the Kingdom: Jesus calls to conversion (cf. Mk 1:15) and forgives the sins of all who draw near to him.

The Transfiguration: The glory of the Godhead shines forth from the face of Christ.

The Institution of the Eucharist: Jesus offers the first Mass at the Last Supper with his apostles, establishing the sacramental foundation for all Christian living.

HOW TO SAY THE ROSARY

The Sorrowful Mysteries

The Agony in the Garden: Jesus sweats water and blood while praying the night before his passion.

The Scourging at the Pillar: Pilate has Jesus whipped. The Crowning with Thorns: Roman soldiers crown Jesus' head with thorns.

The Carrying of the Cross: Jesus meets His mother and falls three times on the way up Calvary.

The Crucifixion: Jesus is nailed to the cross and dies before His mother and His apostle John.

The Glorious Mysteries

The Resurrection: Jesus rises from the dead.

The Ascension: Jesus leaves the Apostles and bodily "ascends" to heaven.

The Descent of the Holy Spirit: The Apostles receive the Holy Spirit in tongues of fire in the upper room with Mary.

The Assumption: Mary is taken bodily--assumed--into heaven by God at the end of her life here on earth.

The Coronation: Mary is crowned Queen of Heaven and Earth.

Pope Saint John Paul II was a great devotee of Our Lady and saying the Rosary and he gave guidance for how to say the Rosary and suggested that the following focus be followed when saying the Rosary:

Monday: Joyful

Tuesday: Sorrowful

Wednesday: Glorious

Thursday: Luminous

Friday: Sorrowful

Saturday: Joyful

Sundays during Lent: Sorrowful

Sundays during Advent and Christmas: Joyful

Other Sundays: Glorious

NEWS FROM THE VATICAN

Letter of His Holiness Pope Francis to the Faithful for the Month of May 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The month of May is approaching, a time when the People of God express with particular intensity their love and devotion for the Blessed Virgin Mary. It is traditional in this month to pray the Rosary at home within the family. The restrictions of the pandemic have made us come to appreciate all the more this “family” aspect, also from a spiritual point of view.

Link to the full letter [HERE](#)

Pope encourages faithful to pray Rosary at home - 25/04/2020

For this reason, I want to encourage everyone to rediscover the beauty of praying the Rosary at home in the month of May. This can be done either as a group or individually; you can decide according to your own situations, making the most of both opportunities. The key to doing this is always simplicity, and it is easy also on the internet to find good models of prayers to follow.

I am also providing two prayers to Our Lady that you can recite at the end of the Rosary, and that I myself will pray in the month of May, in spiritual union with all of you. I include them with this letter so that they are available to everyone.

Dear brothers and sisters, contemplating the face of Christ with the heart of Mary our Mother will make us even more united as a spiritual family and will help us overcome this time of trial. I keep all of you in my prayers, especially those suffering most greatly, and I ask you, please, to pray for me. I thank you, and with great affection I send you my blessing.

Rome, Saint John Lateran, 25 April 2020
Feast of Saint Mark the Evangelist

PRAYERS TO MARY

Prayer 1

O Mary,
You shine continuously on our journey
as a sign of salvation and hope.
We entrust ourselves to you, Health of the Sick,
who, at the foot of the cross,
were united with Jesus' suffering,
and persevered in your faith.
"Protectress of the Roman people",
you know our needs,
and we know that you will provide,
so that, as at Cana in Galilee,
joy and celebration may return
after this time of trial.
Help us, Mother of Divine Love,
to conform ourselves to the will of the Father
and to do what Jesus tells us.
For he took upon himself our suffering,
and burdened himself with our sorrows
to bring us, through the cross,
to the joy of the Resurrection.
Amen.
We fly to your protection,
O Holy Mother of God;
Do not despise our petitions
in our necessities,
but deliver us always
from every danger,
O Glorious and Blessed Virgin.

Amen

PRAYERS TO MARY

Prayer 2

“We fly to your protection, O Holy Mother of God”.

In the present tragic situation, when the whole world is prey to suffering and anxiety, we fly to you, Mother of God and our Mother, and seek refuge under your protection.

Virgin Mary, turn your merciful eyes towards us amid this coronavirus pandemic. Comfort those who are distraught and mourn their loved ones who have died, and at times are buried in a way that grieves them deeply. Be close to those who are concerned for their loved ones who are sick and who, in order to prevent the spread of the disease, cannot be close to them. Fill with hope those who are troubled by the uncertainty of the future and the consequences for the economy and employment.

Mother of God and our Mother, pray for us to God, the Father of mercies, that this great suffering may end and that hope and peace may dawn anew. Plead with your divine Son, as you did at Cana, so that the families of the sick and the victims be comforted, and their hearts be opened to confidence and trust.

Protect those doctors, nurses, health workers and volunteers who are on the frontline of this emergency, and are risking their lives to save others. Support their heroic effort and grant them strength, generosity and continued health. Be close to those who assist the sick night and day, and to priests who, in their pastoral concern and fidelity to the Gospel, are trying to help and support everyone.

Blessed Virgin, illumine the minds of men and women engaged in scientific research, that they may find effective solutions to overcome this virus. Support national leaders, that with wisdom, solicitude and generosity they may come to the aid of those lacking the basic necessities of life and may devise social and economic solutions inspired by farsightedness and solidarity.

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PRAYERS TO MARY

Prayer 2 continued...

Blessed Virgin, illumine the minds of men and women engaged in scientific research, that they may find effective solutions to overcome this virus. Support national leaders, that with wisdom, solicitude and generosity they may come to the aid of those lacking the basic necessities of life and may devise social and economic solutions inspired by farsightedness and solidarity.

Mary Most Holy, stir our consciences, so that the enormous funds invested in developing and stockpiling arms will instead be spent on promoting effective research on how to prevent similar tragedies from occurring in the future.

Beloved Mother, help us realize that we are all members of one great family and to recognize the bond that unites us, so that, in a spirit of fraternity and solidarity, we can help to alleviate countless situations of poverty and need. Make us strong in faith, persevering in service, constant in prayer.

Mary, Consolation of the afflicted, embrace all your children in distress and pray that God will stretch out his all-powerful hand and free us from this terrible pandemic, so that life can serenely resume its normal course. To you, who shine on our journey as a sign of salvation and hope, do we entrust ourselves, O Clement, O Loving, O Sweet Virgin Mary.

Amen.