

# **Mary and Joseph, Bearers and Protectors Of the Divine Mystery**



**Helpers and Guides on our Spiritual Journey**



***Our Lady of the Rosary  
18 Vine Street, Fairfield***

**By way of Introduction...**

**Our spiritual life is indeed a journey, and like all journeys we require guidelines and assistance on how to reach our destination. In these series of presentations, I would like to offer you some guides who can assist us on our spiritual journey.**

**We will begin this by looking at the lives of two best guides on this journey: Mary, Our Mother and her Spouse, St Joseph. Mary cooperated with God's grace in order to bring into our world the Word who is Life. Together with her Spouse, St Joseph, she nurtured and raised Jesus in those important years prior to his public ministry. They both teach us the necessity of silence as a means of discerning the will of God in life and then, through grace to have the courage to cooperate with God's will.**

**By exploring some of the prayers and devotions attributed to Mary and Joseph, may we come to a more fruitful appreciation of their lives and how we can respond as they did to God's ways.**

**Fr Robert Bossini**

## **The Marian Litany of Loreto** **[Approved by Sixtus V in 1587]**

- *Litanies are prayers of invocation or intercession;*
- *Following Litanies are approved by the Church:*
  - *Litany of Saints*
  - *Litanies of the Names of Jesus (1886)*
  - *Litanies of the Sacred Heart (1899)*
  - *Litanies of St Joseph (1909)*
  - *Litany of the Precious Blood (19600)*
- *Usual format:*
  - *Intercession for God Mercy (Kyrie Eleison)*
  - *Trinitarian intercession*
  - *Intercessions pertaining to the devotion being prayed*
  - *Prayer to the Lamb of God*
  - *Final prayer*
- *Parts of Loreto Litany:*
  - *Mary's Holiness [3 intercessions]*
  - *Mary, the Mother [12 intercessions]*
  - *Mary, the Virgin [6 intercessions]*
  - *Symbols of Mary [13 intercessions]*
  - *Mary, the Helper [4 intercessions]*
  - *Mary, the Queen [13 intercessions]*

Lord, have mercy on us.

Christ, have mercy on us.

Lord, have mercy on us.

Christ, hear us.

Christ, graciously hear us.

God the Father of Heaven, Have mercy on us.

God the Son, Redeemer of the world, Have mercy on us.

God the Holy Ghost, Have mercy on us.

Holy Trinity, one God, Have mercy on us.

### **1. Mary's Holiness:**

1. Holy Mary,

2. Holy Mother of God,

3. Holy Virgin of virgins,

## 2. Mary, The Mother:

- **12 Invocation s** refer to Mary as Mother. Beginning (**#1-3**) and end (**#11-12**) refer explicitly to the **maternal activity** and the **addressees** (Christ, Church etc) of this activity.
- **Intermediate Invocation s (#4-10) qualify or characterise** the person of Mary as Mother, mainly with adjectives. Most of the invocation s refer to the miraculous & virginal birth of Jesus

1. Mother of Christ,
2. Mother of the Church [**added in 1980 – John Paul II**]
3. Mother of divine grace,
4. Mother most pure,
5. Mother most chaste,
6. Mother inviolate,
7. Mother undefiled,
8. Mother most amiable,
9. Mother most admirable,
10. Mother of good counsel, [**added 1903 – Leo XIII**]
11. Mother of our Creator,
12. Mother of our Saviour,

## 3. Mary, The Virgin

*Six titles extolling Mary as Virgin.*

*Stress not only the merits of virginity (prudent, venerable, renowned), but also the efficacy of virginity (most powerful, most merciful, most faithful)*

1. Virgin most prudent,
2. Virgin most venerable,
3. Virgin most renowned,
4. Virgin most powerful,
5. Virgin most merciful,
6. Virgin most faithful,

## 4. The Symbols of Mary

*Here we find 13 symbolic invocations, mostly taken from the Old Testament and applied to Mary. This highlights her virtues and her eminent role in the history of salvation*

### 1. Mirror of justice,

*Various symbolic meanings of the mirror highlight:*

- *Purity of the soul;*
- *Self-knowledge & moral integrity*
- *The mirror's ability to reflect reality.*

*Mary's soul is holy and pure: She reflects the Sun of Justice, meaning God's perfection and holiness.*

## **2. Seat of wisdom,**

*'seat of wisdom refers to the throne of Solomon. Mary is personified wisdom sitting on Solomon's throne – she comes to be the throne upon which her Son, the "Wisdom of the Father" is seated*

## **3. Cause of our joy,**

*This refers to the joy Our Lady experienced at the Annunciation and then brought to the Visitation. There is reference to Nehemiah 12:43 [They offered great sacrifices that day and rejoiced, for God had made them rejoice with great joy; the women and children also rejoiced. The joy of Jerusalem was heard far away]. Mary is the centre of joy at the encounter between her and Elizabeth-her baby leaps in her womb at the presence of Mary. This is joy of redemption being first announced.*

## **4. Spiritual vessel,**

*The noun 'vessel' does not adequately express the intended meaning of this invocation. The original meaning refers to 'tool' or 'instrument'. Therefore 'spiritual vessel' should read 'instrument of the Holy Spirit'. Mary is both the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit and His agent in the Incarnation.*

## **5. Vessel of honour,**

*This has reference to the Monstrance (transparent of and to God), the vessel in which the Blessed Sacrament is exposed. It is Mary's honour to make God visible through her sinlessness and as the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit and her Son Jesus.*

## **6. Singular vessel of devotion,**

*'Devotion' refers to total dedication and fidelity in the service of God. Mary's statement of faith: 'I am the handmaid of the Lord' expresses the meaning of this invocation. It refers also to the openness and receptivity of God's will and grace – focused – singular in this regard*

## **7. Mystical rose,**

*Mary is compared to the mysterious (mystical) rose. The rose was the symbol of mystery (antiquity) and for the early Christians of both martyrdom and paradise. References can be made to Sirach 39:13 (Open up your petals like roses planted near running streams); Sirach 24:14 (the rosebush of Jericho) and Sirach 50:8 (blossoms on the branches of springtime). These references when applied to Mary refer to her sinlessness and the incarnation. Mary is referred to as the 'rose without thorn'. Mary's mystery is that of her Virginal Motherhood.*

## **8. Tower of David,**

*The symbol of the Tower of David is taken from the Song of Songs 4:4 (Your neck is like the tower of David, built in courses; on it hang a thousand bucklers, all of them shields of warriors). Applied to Mary it symbolises her womb giving life and protection to Jesus. Mary also gives protection to all who seek refuge against temptation and danger. The tower is further symbol of Mary's undefiled Virginity and of her Immaculate Conception. The fortifications of the Tower are a symbol of her virtues. The shields refer to the heavenly protection against the devil.*

## **9. Tower of ivory,**

*This makes reference to Mary's eminent spiritual grandeur, beauty and fortitude. Ivory makes reference to the home built by Solomon (1 Kings 10:18) – the 'home' (Mary's womb) which 'housed' Jesus.*

## **10. House of gold,**

*The mention of gold here is reference to Mary being filled with the glory of God. In her own right Mary is 'the house of the Temple all in gold' (1 Kings 7). There is reference here to the Incarnation.*

## **11. Ark of the Covenant,**

*The Marian interpretation to the Ark of the Covenant is made known since Ephesus (431), when She was proclaimed the Theotokos – the Bearer of God. The Ark was the throne of God (Mary is the true Christ-bearer); the Ark contained the tablets of the Law (Mary's womb bore the one who fulfilled the Law); the Ark was precious and beautiful (Mary's soul is adorned with beauty through her virtues); the Ark was a warranty of victory against the enemy (Mary has been victorious in the battles of God); the Ark found a place in the inner sanctum of the Temple (Mary was assumed into heaven).*

## **12. Gate of Heaven,**

*The origin of the Marien allegory of the Gate of Heaven can be found in the Acts of the Council of Ephesus (431 AD) in a homily for the Annunciation, which was based on Ezekiel 44:1-3 – **'Then he brought me back to the outer gate of the sanctuary, which faces east; and it was shut. The LORD said to me: This gate shall remain shut; it shall not be opened, and no one shall enter by it; for the LORD, the God of Israel, has entered by it; therefore, it shall remain shut. Only the prince, because he is a prince, may sit in it to eat food before the LORD; he shall enter by way of the vestibule of the gate, and shall go out by the same way.'** This alludes to the gate which shall remain closed since the Lord has entered by it. The expression can be found in the *Ave Maris Stella* ('O Happy Gate of Heaven - portal of the sky) and the *Alma Redemptoris* (Loving Mother of the Redeemer, Gate of Heaven, star of the sea).*

## **13. Morning star,**

*The scriptural reference is from Revelation 22:16 - **'It is I, Jesus, who sent my angel to you with this testimony for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star.'** It announces the rising sun of justice, Jesus Christ (Malachi 4:3) – **'And you shall tread down the wicked, for they will be ashes under the soles of your feet, on the day when I act, says the LORD of hosts'**. The glory of Mary's light is the light from the eternal light and praise of the never-ending light of God's love for us.*

## 5. Mary, the Helper

*This group of 4 **invocations** extol Mary's role as advocate for **spiritual** and **corporal works of mercy***

### 1. Health of the sick,

This refers to Mary's compassion, her suffering with those who suffer. It also expression the power of her intercessory prayer. We need to realise that Mary is not the ultimate source of health and redemption – it is God himself who heals our infirmities. Mary heals us through her virtues.

### 2. Refuge of sinners,

This title of Mary has some scriptural connotations. Acts 10:11-12 – the story of Peter's vision of the large sheet filled with animals. Peter had to change his opinion about what was clean and unclean in order to comply with God's will. Psalm 51.1 -

***Have mercy on me, O God,  
according to your steadfast love;  
according to your abundant mercy  
blot out my transgressions.***

Psalm 2:12 – '***Happy are those who take refuge in him.***' 1 Samuel 25:33 – the story of the rescue of Nabal, the evil rich man. His wife Abigail implores David to not take vengeance on him. David relents and praises her saying: '***Blessed be your good judgement and yourself... have prevented me from shedding blood.***' It is Mary's role to bring God's love into the world, to be the intercessor for all and to give hope and help to sinners.

### 3. Comforter of the afflicted,

Mary is the solace and comforter of our life. This title heightens Mary's reliability as consoler and comforter. She is the comforter of the afflicted because she is both Mother and intercessor with Christ.

### 4. Help of Christians,

This title recalls the invocation to, and intercession of Mary at the Battle of Lepanto (1571). This title emanates from Mary's title as Queen of the Rosary, since the Rosary was prayed throughout Europe to implore the defeat of the Turkish navy, set to invade Europe. This Marian title was one which St John Bosco (1815-1888) had a great devotion. Every work or mission that he undertook was dedicated to Mary as Help of Christians

## 6. Mary, the Queen

*This final part of the Litany is composed of **13 titles** referring to Mary as Queen: **of Saints** and the **Inhabitants of Heaven (# 1-8)**; and those emphasising her **personal holiness, distinction** and the **role of Her Queenship (# 9-13)**.*

### 1. Queen of angels,

One of the loveliest and truest titles of Mary is that of Queen—Mary, by the grace of God is Queen and Empress of the universe. St. Athanasius says: "If the Son is a King, the Mother who begot Him is rightly and truly considered a Queen and Sovereign."

And St. Bernardine of Siena: "No sooner had Mary consented to be Mother of the Eternal Word, than She merited by this consent to be made Queen of the world and all creatures." Holy Mother Church has guaranteed that royal title to Her. In the Mass of the Seven Dolors She sings: "Holy Mary, the Queen of Heaven and Mistress of the world, stood by the Cross of Our Lord Jesus Christ full of sadness;" and in the Communion Verse of the Mass of Our Lady of Mount Carmel: "Most noble Queen of the world, Mary, ever Virgin." Three of the four great Antiphons of Our Lady salute Her as Queen, the *Regina Coeli*, the *Ave Regina Coelorum* and the *Salve Regina*—"Hail, Queen of Heaven, Hail Mistress of Angels!"

## **2. Queen of patriarchs,**

The second of the twelve invocations of Mary as "Queen" praises her as "Queen of the Patriarchs" (Latin, *Regina Patriarcharum*). It appears that many Catholics invoke the Blessed Virgin Mary as "Queen of Patriarchs" without taking time to contemplate deeply about it, or probably because it makes little or no meaning to them. Nevertheless, a good understanding of this title would bring one to the realization that it is one of the most pleasing of all the titles in the litany. For it glorifies Her as Queen of Her own chosen people, the culmination of that long line of believing men and women who through moments of sorrows and joy, thick and thin, challenges and happiness, remained steadfast to the promise of God. To say that Mary is Queen of the Patriarchs illustrates continuity between the Old and the New Covenants. Patriarchs are not great parents for Jews only, but for us as well, because we recognize their importance and paternity, forming part of these people of God who were elected in Abraham; that is why St. Paul recognizes the importance of "Abraham's faith" (cf. Rom. 4:1-17; Gal. 3:7). This beautiful title intends to teach us is that the Blessed Virgin Mary is the mother and queen of all the people of God.

## **3. Queen of prophets,**

The third of Our Lady's twelve invocations as "Queen" in the Litany of Loreto praises her as "Queen of the Prophets," (Latin, *Regina Prophetarum*). Like the Patriarchs, the Prophets also predate her, except John the Baptist, obviously, the last prophet (cf. Matt. 11:9-11), who was sanctified in his mother's womb as a result of the visit of the Blessed Virgin Mary (pregnant with the Child Jesus) – Lk. 1:41-44. When the angel Gabriel announced to Mary that she would be the Mother of the Saviour, all the prophecies reached their standstill; the whole heaven waited patiently for her answer. Finally, Mary replied, "I am the handmaid of the Lord, let it be done to me according to thy word" (Lk 1:38). We could say that at that moment: "'Prophecy' became flesh and dwelt among us" (Jn 1:14). Mary's 'Yes' paved the way for the fulfilment and incarnation of all prophecies. In other words, when her yes was proclaimed, it was the TIMELIEST PROPHECY that our history has ever heard. Mary opened this door, and that is why we must invoke her as "Queen of the Prophets."

## **4. Queen of apostles,**

Devotion to Mary as Queen of Apostles is one of the oldest devotions in the Church. After Christ and with Christ, Mary is the Apostle. God continues to give all graces through Mary, just as He willed that Christ should come to us through Mary: "born of



a woman." (Gal 4:4) Every apostolate and every true apostle has life and action from Mary. So it was of Christ: " ... Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession." (Heb 3:1) Christ began his apostolate through Mary at Cana; the mission of the apostles was begun through Mary in the cenacle. Likewise, through the centuries all apostolates have received their origin and strength through Mary. Without God, nothing exists; without Mary, nothing in Christ and in the Church.

## 5. Queen of martyrs,

Mary is the "*Regina Martyrum*," the Queen of Martyrs. WHY is she so called?—she who never had any blow, or wound, or other injury to her consecrated person. How can she be exalted over those whose bodies suffered the most ruthless violences and the keenest torments for our Lord's sake? She is, indeed, Queen of all Saints, of those who "walk with Christ in white, for they are worthy;" but how of those "who were slain for the Word of God, and for the testimony which they held?" Her anguish was, as Holy Simeon had announced to her, at the time of that Son's Presentation in the Temple, a sword piercing her soul. If our Lord Himself could not bear the prospect of what was before Him, and was covered in the thought of it with a bloody sweat, His soul thus acting upon His body, does not this show how great mental pain can be? and would it have been wonderful though Mary's head and heart had given way as she stood under His Cross? Thus is she most truly the Queen of *Martyrs*.

## 6. Queen of confessors,

The sixth of the twelve invocations of Mary as "Queen" in her litany, praises her as "Queen of Confessors," (Latin, *Regina Confessorum*). Today, when the word "confessor" is mentioned, our modern minds readily focus on a priest who hears the confessions of others, gives them absolution and spiritual counsels. This problem with sticking to this definition is that it brings about a poor understanding of the Blessed Virgin Mary as "Queen of Confessors." Now, who then is a confessor? How is the Blessed Virgin Mary a confessor, and eventually "Queen of Confessors?"

In explaining its etymology and primitive meaning, the New Advent Catholic Encyclopaedia (Online) states: "The word confessor is derived from the Latin *confiteri*, to confess, to profess, but it is not found in writers of the classical period, having been first used by the Christians. With them it was a title of honour to designate those brave champions of the Faith who had confessed Christ publicly in time of persecution and had been punished with imprisonment, torture, exile, or labour in the mines, remaining faithful in their confession until the end of their lives. The title thus distinguished them from the martyrs, who were so-called because they underwent death for the Faith." The Blessed Virgin Mary is the Queen of the Confessors of the Faith; that is, of all those who are not afraid to give public testimony that they believe in Jesus and live what He preached, more than that, live as Christ lived. We could even say that Mary was the first confessor of the faith because she lived her whole life professing her faith in God ("I am the handmaid of the Lord, let it be done to me as you have said." Lk. 1:38), and putting the Word of God into practice (cf. Lk 11:27-28), to the extent that she suffered grievously on account of her faith in Christ at the Calvary. Her testimony and holiness are all special. Mary remained "blessed among all women" (Lk. 1:42) on earth because she responded to God's plan. She heard the Word of God and kept it. At the wedding feast at Cana, she said to the servants: "Do whatever He tells you" (Jn. 2:5) – this was actually a

confession of the Faith; it is to listen carefully to the Word of God and to incarnate it in our gestures, in our daily lives.

## **7. Queen of virgins,**

The seventh of the twelve invocations of Mary as “Queen” in her litany, praises her as “Queen of Virgins,” (Latin, Regina Virginum). This is quite similar to one of her titles – “Holy Virgin of virgins.” In addressing our Lady as “Queen of Virgins”, we must first understand clearly and clarify the misconceptions and objections surrounding the doctrine of her perpetual virginity. To begin with, after the apostles, martyrs, and confessors of the faith in the early days of Christianity, people who opted for the state of life that Jesus chose began to be recognized for their vocation. Those and those who did not marry but chose to dedicate themselves entirely to the community, to the Gospel, to the poor, were known as “consecrated virgins.” These drew inspiration from their Queen – the great Mother of God, Mary ever-virgin. Therefore, in remaining perpetually a virgin, Mary becomes a model for all those who follow the path of virginity; little wonder she is fittingly called “Queen of virgins.” In conclusion, we must note that Mary’s Perpetual Virginity is not only an exhortation to imitate Mary’s charity, discipleship, fidelity, continence, etc. (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, nos. 63-64), but also highlights the uniqueness of the Incarnation, of God taking the initiative to recreate the human race through His Son, the New Adam, who was born of the Virgin Mary (the New Eve).

## **8. Queen of all saints,**

The eighth of the twelve invocations of Mary as “Queen” praises her as “Queen of all Saints” (Latin, Regina Sanctorum omnium), which (somehow), in the past, summed up the invocations contained in the Litany, until few other titles were added. Put in other words, after the apostles, martyrs, confessors of the faith, and virgins, the Church honours the Blessed Virgin Mary as the queen of all those who lived an exemplary life of configuration to Christ: the saints. Holiness is this: live like Jesus lived – love like Jesus loved, feel what Jesus felt, smile like Jesus smiled, etc., ” It is possible to repeat the words of the apostle Paul: “It is no longer I who live; it is Christ who lives in me” (Gal. 2:20). This was not different with the Blessed Virgin Mary whose exemplary life obtained for her the “queenship” title and model for all those who follow the footstep her beloved Son, Jesus Christ. In her life of holiness, she became more and more like her Son, our Lord Jesus Christ; to her, it was indeed a unique case. The Blessed Virgin Mary is called the Queen of All Saints because she made the most diligent use of the rich treasure of grace given to her by God and excelled in every virtue much more than every other saint; needless to say, all the other saints call her “Blessed,” because she is superior to them. If our Lord Jesus Christ is the embodiment of all perfections and holiness, then, the Blessed Virgin Mary, through whom He came into the world in the flesh must equally bear the same trait, for “a bad tree cannot produce good fruits” (cf. Mat. 7:18) – Jesus is the Blessed fruit of the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary (cf. Luke. 1:42). Thus, all the traits of Jesus were expressed in her as faithfully as they could be expressed in any creature. As she surpasses all saints in choosing a virtuous and

meritorious life, so Mary stands higher than all the faithful in receiving glory and reward. After God, there is no greater bliss for the blessed in heaven than to behold her, their glorious Queen.

## **9. Queen conceived without Original Sin, [added in 1883 – Leo XIII]**

The ninth of Our Lady's twelve invocations as "Queen" in her Litany, praises her as "Queen Conceived without Original Sin" (Latin *Regina Sine Labe Originali Concepta*). Interestingly, approaching the end of the litany points us to two of the Marian dogmas – Immaculate Conception and Assumption.

Invoking our Lady as the "Queen Conceived without Original Sin" implies that she was free from the defilement of sin. We should have it in mind that there are two types of sins: Original sin and Actual sin. Original sin is the sin we all inherited from our first parents (Adam and Eve), which is necessarily washed away by our Baptism. While Actual sin is referred to as the sins we commit in our day to day lives. It is true that if Adam and Eve had not committed the Original sin, we won't be sinners today; because the Original sin infuses "concupiscence" (the tendency to often commit sin) in every man. Thus, the Original sin gave way for Actual sin. Having exposed this, and following the syllogism of the point above, we can say that since Mary was preserved from Original Sin, it also implies that she did not commit an Actual Sin. Now, looking at the Pauline phrase cited above "All have sinned", the first question that arises here is, have all people committed actual sins? The answer is obviously no. This is indicated in St. Paul in the letter to the Romans when he speaks of the time when Jacob and Esau were unborn babies as a time when they "had done nothing either good or bad" (cf. Rom. 9:11). Apparently, because a child below the age of reasoning, by definition, cannot sin, since sinning requires the ability to reason. Notwithstanding, the idea is that we're all sinners. Therefore, the term "all" is used to refer to the majority. Also, if Paul's statement in Romans 3 includes an exception for the New Adam (Jesus), one may argue that an exception for the New Eve (Mary) can also be made. How is this possible? The book of Genesis 3:15, says: "And God said to the serpent 'I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your seed and hers; it will crush your head while you strike at its heel.'" Now, what does the passage of Genesis have to do with Mary's Immaculate Conception? Genesis 3:15 is the first passage in the Bible that refers to Jesus defeating Satan on the cross. It is also the first verse that shows us how Mary would become the New Eve. The Seed of the "Woman", who would crush the serpent's head, is Jesus. The Woman at enmity, or hostility with the serpent, is Mary. It was God who put this hostility between Mary and Satan (the serpent), and it is believed to be in the same likeness as Christ's hostility for the seed of the serpent. What exactly do all these mean? For Mary to be like Christ in His hostility for Satan forever, it is very possible to say that this passage implies Mary's lack of sin. What better way is there to be in total hostility with Satan than to be in God's constant grace? As the New Eve, Mary undid the "NO" of the Old Testament Eve by saying, "YES" to bear Jesus. Therefore, how can someone who's in enmity with Satan be with sin, since sin is of Satan? Impossible!

## **10. Queen assumed into Heaven, [added in 1950 – Pius XII]**

We have arrived at the tenth of the twelve invocations in the Litany of our Lady that greets her as “Queen,” which is: “Queen Assumed into Heaven” (Latin, Regina in Caelum Assumpta). Apparently, the Assumption is the greatest solemnity of the Blessed Virgin Mary; it is the celebration of her solemn entrance into the glory of heaven. It is her eternal reward for remaining perpetually a virgin, for being the Immaculate Mother of God, for the ‘Yes’ she gave in response to God’s project of salvation, and for collaborating consequently as a faithful disciple of Christ her Son till the end. Like a river, which after a long run flows into the sea; today, the Blessed Virgin Mary flows into the glory of heaven: transfigured in the Holy Spirit, poured out by Christ, she is in the glory of the Father!

To understand the Blessed Virgin Mary as “Queen Assumed into Heaven,” it is pertinent to note that the word “assumption” comes from the Latin root “assumptio,” meaning “to be taken up”. St. Paul teaches that we will be “assumed” (‘taken up’ or ‘caught up’) into the clouds to meet Jesus at the last day (see 1Thes. 4:17). Therefore, the doctrine of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary should not be likened to the popular usage of the term “assume” or “assuming” etc. On one hand, “to assume” means to act as if something were true without any proof. If we limit our understanding to this, then, we shall miss out the point. When we talk of the assumption of Mary, we refer to the belief that she was “taken up” by God to dwell with her beloved Son, Jesus Christ in heaven. This gives value to the afterlife of those who believe in God and in His only Son, our Lord Jesus Christ; put differently, a feast which reminds us that if we remain faithful to the end, we shall be “taken up” into the clouds to meet the Lord on the last day (cf. 1Thes. 4:17).

In honouring His beloved and precious Ark, after His Ascension into heaven, our Lord Jesus Christ, judged it worthy that His Blessed Mother be assumed (taken up) body and soul into heaven; that is why the book of Psalms makes the allusion “Go up, Lord to the place of your rest, you and the Ark of your strength...” (Ps. 132:8). In this verse, the Psalmist makes an allusion to the ascension of the Lord into heaven (cf. Luke 24:50-53) and subsequently, that of the Ark of the Lord’s strength, which is better understood as the person of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

On November 1, 1950, Pope Pius XII defined the Assumption of Mary to be a dogma of faith in his apostolic constitution “Munificentissimus Deus,” saying: “We pronounce, declare, and define it to be a divinely revealed dogma that the Immaculate Mother of God, the ever Virgin Mary, having completed the course of her earthly life, was assumed body and soul to heavenly glory.” This is called the Solemnity of the Assumption of Mary into heaven and it is celebrated every 15th day of August. It is a holy day of obligation, and Catholics are obliged to attend Mass.

## **11. Queen of the most holy Rosary, [added in 1675 – for confraternities of the Holy Rosary]**

The eleventh of the twelve invocations of our Lady as “Queen” in her litany praises her as “Queen of the Holy Rosary” (Latin, Regina Sacratissimi Rosarii).

Pope St. John Paul II placed Litany and Rosary side by side in his last Apostolic Letter: “Rosarium Virginis Mariae.” There, he says in a very beautiful way: “*The Rosary*,

*though clearly Marian in character, is at heart a Christocentric prayer. In the sobriety of its elements, it has all the depth of the Gospel message in its entirety, of which it can be said to be a compendium. It is an echo of the prayer of Mary, her perennial Magnificat for the work of the redemptive Incarnation which began in her virginal womb. With the Rosary, the Christian people sits at the school of Mary and is led to contemplate the beauty on the face of Christ and to experience the depths of his love. Through the Rosary the faithful receive abundant grace, as though from the very hands of the Mother of the Redeemer.”* (RVM, #1). He also says that in the Rosary it is the whole Church that “remembers Christ with Mary”, “announces Christ with Mary” finds Christ through “the way of Mary”.

Some people often criticize Rosary and Litany. The most common is that it is a monotonous and repetitive prayer. Those who usually say this are oblivious of the correct “contemplation technique.” In the Litany, we use the same dynamics as in the Rosary, but with a variation. The Rosary leads us to contemplate the different mysteries of Christ’s life. The Litany leads us to a dynamic Marian catechesis, which ends up leading us to the same point: the mystery of Jesus Christ. Therefore, these meditations can be very useful so that the recitation of this prayer does not become monotonous and automatic. That the Rosary ends with the “Hail Holy Queen” indicates that Mary is our queen, and through the Litany, we come to contemplate her as our catechist. Therefore, as we invoke the prayers of the Queen of the Most Holy Rosary through the daily recitation of the Holy Rosary, may we continually come to a realization of the divine will for us as contained in Scripture.

## **12. Queen of Families [added in 1995 – John Paul II]**

Aside from the original twelve invocations of Our Lady as “Queen” in the Litany, some other “queenship titles” were later introduced to also aid in building the relationship of the faithful with the Blessed Virgin Mary. The title: “Queen of the Family” (Latin, Regina familiae) was introduced by Pope St. John Paul II

As a perennial sign of the great event experienced by more than four million pilgrims, Pope John Paul II determined on December 31, 1995, the liturgical feast of the Holy Family, to incorporate the invocation “Queen of the family” into the Litany so that through the light of the example of Mary, the domestic church (the family) of God’s people may be modelled after the holy family and enjoy their maternal protection. It is awesome to see that this invocation (Queen of the family) was inserted after the invocation “Queen of the Holy Rosary” and before the invocation “Queen of Peace,” as an appropriate place to consider Mary as the mother and protector of the family, a place where the Holy Rosary is recited in common and where peace is taught in daily relations between people.

Invoking the Blessed Virgin Mary as “Queen of the family” enables us to understand her role in the family – being a place of education, learning and exercising human and Christian virtues – the virtues first exercised by the Blessed Virgin Mary. It is up to the family to imitate her in order to avail the everyday opportunity for peaceful coexistence in which the Christian values are realized in the spirit of fraternity and joy. Put differently, the figure of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the family should enable us to see the family as a teacher of virtues. The home should be the principal place of catechesis and prayer. Unfortunately, many families today allow the Church to fill that role alone. The home of Nazareth, in addition to the local synagogue, would have been the place of instruction for the Christ Child. The Holy Family taught Jesus how to pray and read,

and at the start of his public ministry, Jesus would read from the scroll and declare the passage to be “fulfilled in their hearing” (see Lk 4:21). The home of Nazareth reminds us that families have the responsibility of teaching their children the Faith and to model the virtues. Jesus had most excellent parents; Mary was without sin and Joseph is described as a just and prudent man. Parents today can learn from Joseph and Mary on how to teach their children.

### 13. **Queen of peace, [added in 1917 – Benedict XV]**

The twelfth of the original twelve invocations of our Lady as “Queen” in her Litany praises her as “Queen of Peace” (Latin, Regina Pacis). Apparently, this title could not be otherwise, since the Blessed Virgin Mary is the Mother of the “Prince of Peace.”

It is important to note that Our Lady is the Queen of Peace not only in view of the absence of war but in the positive values of the biblical shalom, of peace that is born out of fraternity, of justice, of solidarity, etc. – a full and substantial peace. The Prophet Isaiah describes the kingdom of SHALOM (Is 65: 17-23), and in Psalm 72:7, we read of a prophecy of the Kingdom of Christ, declaring that “In his days, justice shall flourish and peace till the moon fails.” Shalom is the joy of living the fruits of love, the serenity that comes from mutual trust, justice and fairness. Therefore, peace can be understood as a Messianic asset. Being a queen in this Messianic kingdom, the Blessed Virgin Mary must be the “Queen of Peace,” for in her capacity, she continually intercedes for her people in order to ensure the reign of peace (a fruit of the Holy Spirit) even in the midst of challenges and difficulties, right from the inception of the Church at Pentecost.

When we invoke Mary as “Queen of Peace,” we actually ask for her lap, intercession and example. The one who lived through the drama of her Son’s death without losing peace will teach us the way to guarantee peace between husband and wife, between young and old, peace in the streets and squares, peace in the cities and in the fields.

Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, Spare us, O Lord.  
Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, Graciously hear us,  
O Lord.  
Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, Have mercy on us.

Pray for us, O Holy Mother of God,  
That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.  
Grant, we beseech Thee, O Lord God, that we Thy Servants may enjoy  
perpetual health of mind and body and by the glorious intercession of the  
Blessed Mary, ever Virgin, be delivered from present sorrow and enjoy eternal  
happiness. Through Christ Our Lord. Amen.

## The Most Holy Rosary

- *The origins of the rosary are “sketchy” at best. The use of “prayer beads” and the repeated recitation of prayers to aid in meditation stem from the earliest days of the Church and has roots even in pre-Christian times.*
- *Evidence exists from the Middle Ages that strings of beads were used to help a person count the number of Our Fathers or Hail Marys recited. Actually, these strings of beads became known as Paternosters, the Latin for “Our Father.” For example, in the 12th century, to help the uneducated better participate in the liturgy, the recitation of 150 Our Fathers served as a substitute for the 150 Psalms, and became known as “the poor man’s breviary.”*
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- *The structure of the rosary gradually evolved between the 12th and 15th centuries. Eventually 50 Hail Marys (or more) were recited and were linked with verses of psalms or other phrases evoking “the joys of Mary,” i.e. scenes in the lives of Jesus and Mary. In 1409 Dominic of Prussia, a Carthusian monk, popularized the practice setting 50 phrases about the lives of Jesus and Mary with 50 Hail Marys. During this time, this prayer form became known as the rosarium (“rose garden”), actually a common term used to designate a collection of similar material, such as an anthology of stories on the same subject or theme. Eventually, “the sorrows of Mary” and “the heavenly joys” were distinguished, bringing the number of Hail Marys to 150. Eventually, the 150 Hail Marys were joined to the 150 Our Fathers, a Hail Mary following each Our Father.*
- *In the early 15th century, Henry Kalkar (d. 1408), another Carthusian, divided the 150 Hail Marys into groups of 10, with each group marked by an Our Father. By the 16th century, the structure of the five-decade rosary was based on the three sets of mysteries — joyful (Annunciation, Visitation, Nativity, Presentation and Finding in the Temple), sorrowful (Agony in the Garden, Scourging, Crowning with Thorns, Carrying of the Cross and Death) and glorious (Resurrection, Ascension, Pentecost, Assumption and Coronation). In 2002, our beloved late Holy Father, Pope John Paul II, instituted the luminous mysteries: Baptism at the Jordan, Wedding Feast of Cana, Proclamation of the Kingdom of God, Transfiguration and Institution of the holy Eucharist. Also, after the apparitions of Our Lady at Fatima in 1917, the prayer Mary taught to the children has generally been added at the end of each decade: “O my Jesus, forgive us our sins, save us from the fires of hell. Lead all souls to heaven, especially those in greatest need of Thy mercy.”*
- *Tradition does hold that St. Dominic (d. 1221) devised the rosary as we know it. Moved by a vision of our Blessed Mother, he preached the use of the rosary in his missionary work among the Albigensians, a group of fanatical heretics. The Albigensians, named after the town of Albi in southern France where they lived, believed that everything material was evil and everything spiritual was good. For this reason, they denied the incarnation of our Lord; for them, Jesus the true God becoming also true man and accepting our human nature was simply unthinkable.*
- *St. Dominic not so much “invented” the rosary as he preached its use to convert sinners and those who had strayed from the Faith. Moreover, at least a dozen popes have mentioned St. Dominic’s connection with the rosary in various papal pronouncements, sanctioning his role as at least a “pious belief.” The first such mention was made by Pope Alexander VI in 1495.*
- *Introduced by the Creed, the Our Father, three Hail Marys and the Doxology (“Glory Be”), and concluded with the Salve Regina, the rosary involves the recitation of five decades consisting of the*

*Our Father, 10 Hail Marys, and the Doxology. During this recitation, the individual meditates on the saving mysteries of our Lord's life and the faithful witness of our Blessed Mother. Journeying through the Joyful, Luminous, Sorrowful and Glorious mysteries of the rosary, the individual brings to mind our Lord's incarnation, His public ministry, His passion and death, and His resurrection from the dead. In so doing, the rosary assists us in growing in a deeper appreciation of these mysteries, in uniting our lives more closely to our Lord and in imploring His graced assistance to live the faith. We also ask for the prayers of our Blessed Mother, the exemplar of faith, who leads all believers to her Son.*

## **THE BIBLICAL BASIS OF THE ROSARY**

- **We are lucky to have the Rosary, a summary of the Bible; a way of revising the mysteries of our salvation as we praise God and our Spiritual Mother (Jn 19:26) & Intercessor (Jn 2: Cana).**

**CREED:** Summary of the articles of our faith and mysteries of our salvation.

- **Mt 6:9-13 God the Father**
- Genesis 1-2 Creator
- 1 Jn 5: 6-12 Jesus Christ, His only Son
- Lk 2:1-13 Born of the Virgin Mary
- Lk 23; 24 - Crucified under Pontius Pilate
- Lk 24:6: He rose from the dead
- Acts 1:9: He ascended into heaven
- Mt 25:31-46 He shall come to judge the living and the dead
- Jn 20:22 Holy Spirit: "He breathed on them and said receive the Holy Spirit"
- Mt 16:18: On this rock I will build my Church
- Rev 7:19-20 Communion of the saints
- Mt 28:19 "Make disciples of all nations =universal/Catholic; Baptizing them...
- Mt 6:14: Forgiveness of sins: "If you forgive...."
- Mt 22:31-32 The resurrection of the body
- Mt 19:29: Life everlasting
- Jn 17: Oneness

**OUR FATHER: Mt 6:9-13 & Luke 11-4**

**HAIL MARY:**

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**"Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you"**

**Luke 1:26-28** – *In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you!"*

**"Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb"**

**Luke 1:39-45** – *In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a city of Judah, and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit\* and she exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! And why is this granted me, that the mother of my Lord should come*



*to me? For behold, when the voice of your greeting came to my ears, the babe in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfilment of what was spoken to her from the Lord.”*

*\*filled with the Holy Spirit – this language is used to describe someone who is given prophetic insight.*

## **“Jesus”**

**Philippians 2:8-11** – *And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow\*, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

*\*at the name of Jesus – there is immense power in the name of Jesus, and his name is at the very centre of this prayer, making it literally a Christocentric prayer. St. John Paul II called it the “hinge” of the Hail Mary. He said, “The centre of gravity in the Hail Mary, the hinge as it were which joins its two parts, is the name of Jesus. Sometimes, in hurried recitation, this centre of gravity can be overlooked, and with it the connection to the mystery of Christ being contemplated. Yet it is precisely the emphasis given to the name of Jesus and to his mystery that is the sign of a meaningful and fruitful recitation of the Rosary.”*

## **“Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death.”**

**Luke 1:8** – *And Mary said, “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word”\**

*\*let it be to me – Mary’s Fiat, her yes to God, is exactly what we seek to emulate. This part of the Hail Mary is where we ask Our Lady to intercede for us, so that we may accept Jesus into our hearts as she did.*

- **GLORY Be...**: Lk 2:14: Angels “Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace...” before the shepherds.
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### **JOYFUL MYSTERIES [Mondays & Saturdays]**

- I: Lk 1:26-31 The Annunciation
- II: Lk 1:39-40 The Visitation
- III: Lk 2:7 The Nativity
- IV: Lk 2:22-24 The Presentation in the Temple
- V: Lk 2:46 The Finding of the Child Jesus in the Temple

### **SORROWFUL MYSTERIES [Tuesdays & Fridays]**

- I: Mt 26:37-38 The Agony in the Garden
- II: Mt 27:26 The Scourging
- III: Mt 27:29 The Crowning with Thorns
- IV: Jn 19:17 Jesus Carries His Cross
- V: Jn 19:18 The Crucifixion

### **GLORIOUS MYSTERIES [Wednesdays; Sundays & Solemnities]**

- I: Lk 24:6 The Resurrection
- II: Lk 24:51 The Ascension
- III: Acts 2:1-4 The Descent of the Holy Spirit Cf. Jn 20:22: Receive the Holy

- Spirit
- IV: The Assumption: Dogma by Pope Pius XII in “Munificentissimus Deus” of Nov. 1<sup>st</sup>, 1950. Cf. Jn 14:3 “I will come back again and take you to myself” used by Pope John Paul II on Aug. 15<sup>th</sup>, 2004, at Lourdes, as proof of the assumption.
- V: Rev. 12:1-2: The Coronation (Regina Caeli): A woman with 12 stars representing the 12 tribes of Israel and the 12 Apostles, hence representing the Church

The Church called Mary “Queen” since 4<sup>th</sup> Century; Pope Pius XII, in his encyclical “Ad Caeli Reginam”, Instituted a feast for the Queenship of Mary; Cf. Vatican II LG 59.

### **LUMINOUS MYSTERIES [ St George Preca [1880-1962] &Pope John Paul II (On the public ministry of Jesus)**

- I: Mt 3:13-17: Baptism of Jesus in the Jordan River
- II: Jn 2: The Wedding at Cana
- III: Mk 1:15: Jesus announces the Kingdom of God
- IV: Lk 9:28-36: The Transfiguration
- V: Lk 22:19: The Institution of the Holy Eucharist

### **Litany of St. Joseph**

- *The Litany of St Joseph, approved by Pope St. Pius X (1903-14), shows the growing devotion to Saint Joseph in the 20th century. Pope John XXIII (1958-63) also had a deep devotion to Saint Joseph, and he composed A Prayer for Workers, which is addressed to Saint Joseph.*
- *The list of titles applied to Saint Joseph, followed by his saintly attributes, reminds us that the foster father of Jesus is a perfect example of the Christian life. Fathers and families, in particular, should cultivate a devotion to Saint Joseph.*
- *The litany of St. Joseph, one of only six approved by the Church for public as well as private use, sums up qualities that made him such an important part of the Holy Family (pictured above).*
- *Although he does not appear much in scripture, this “just man” (as he is called in Matthew 1:19), a humble carpenter, served our Lord and the Blessed Virgin Mary faithfully as His “foster-father” and her “chaste guardian,” as he is called below.*
- *In referring to St. Joseph as a “diligent protector” of Christ, this litany brings to mind his important role in taking Mary and the infant child Jesus to Egypt to protect our Lord from being killed by King Herod (Matt 3:13-16).*
- *The Litany of St. Joseph, in referring to him as a “patron of the dying” gives one of many examples of his patronage. The faithful ask for his assistance for workers, home buyers (and sellers) and, of course, carpenters, among many others!*
- *The Litany of St Joseph follows the structure of litanies:*
  - *Invocation for the mercy of God*
  - *Invocation to the Blessed Trinity*
  - *Invocations proper to St Joseph*
  - *Invocation to the lamb of God*
  - *Final prayer to St Joseph*

Lord, have mercy on us  
Christ, have mercy on us.  
Lord, have mercy on us.  
Christ, hear us, Christ, graciously hear us.  
God the Father of heaven, have mercy on us.

God the Son, Redeemer of the World, have mercy on us.  
God the Holy Spirit, have mercy on us.  
Holy Trinity, one God, have mercy on us.

Holy Mary, pray for us.  
St. Joseph, pray for us.

These titles tell us something **ABOUT** St Joseph: His entire identity is founded on Christ, Salvation History and Mary

1. Renowned offspring of David, pray for us.
2. Light of Patriarchs, pray for us.
3. Spouse of the Mother of God, pray for us.
4. Guardian of the Redeemer, pray for us. **[added 2021 – John Paul II Guardian of the Redeemer 15/8/1989]**
5. Chaste guardian of the Virgin, pray for us.
6. Foster father of the Son of God, pray for us.
7. Diligent protector of Christ, pray for us.
8. Servant of Christ, pray for us. **[added 2021 – from homily of Paul VI 19/3/1966]**
9. Minister of salvation, pray for us. **[added 2021 – from St John Chrysostom quoted in With a Father's Heart – Francis 8/12/2020]**
10. Head of the Holy Family, pray for us.

These Titles tell us something of the **VIRTUES** of St Joseph

11. Joseph most just, pray for us.
12. Joseph most chaste, pray for us.
13. Joseph most prudent, pray for us.
14. Joseph most strong, pray for us.
15. Joseph most obedient, pray for us.
16. Joseph most faithful, pray for us.

These titles reflect a life of **CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP** and how St Joseph **leads people, especially men to a holier life** lived **in union with the Trinity and Our Lady**

17. Mirror of patience, pray for us.

18. Lover of poverty, pray for us.
19. Model of artisans, pray for us.
20. Glory of home life, pray for us.
21. Guardian of virgins, pray for us.
22. Pillar of families, pray for us.
23. Support in difficulties, pray for us. [added 2021 – Francis: With a Father's Heart, 2020]
24. Solace of the wretched, pray for us.
25. Hope of the sick, pray for us.
26. Patron of exiles, pray for us. [added 2021– Francis: With a Father's Heart, 2020]
27. Patron of the afflicted, pray for us. [added 2021– Francis: With a Father's Heart, 2020]
28. Patron of the poor, pray for us. [added 2021– Francis: With a Father's Heart, 2020]
29. Patron of the dying, pray for us.
30. Terror of demons, pray for us.
31. Protector of Holy Church, pray for us.

Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, spare us, O Jesus.

Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, graciously hear us, O Jesus.

Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, have mercy on us, O Jesus.

He made him the lord of his household And prince over all his possessions.

Let us pray: O God, in your ineffable providence you were pleased to choose Blessed Joseph to be the spouse of your most holy Mother; grant, we beg you, that we may be worthy to have him for our intercessor in heaven whom on earth we venerate as our Protector: You who live and reign forever and ever. Saint Joseph, pray for us.

***A Father who is, BELOVED, TENDER & LOVING, OBEDIENT, ACCEPTING, CREATIVELY COURAGEOUS; WORKING; IN THE SHADOWS;***

**[Pope Francis: With a Father's Heart 8<sup>th</sup> December 2020]**

## **Liturgical Celebrations of Mary and St Joseph**

### **Important Marian Feasts**

According to Pope Paul VI, in *Marialis Cultus*, the 4 most important Marian feasts in the Calendar are: Mary's Divine Motherhood, her Immaculate Conception, her Assumption and the Annunciation of the Lord (#6 at 18). Of these four feasts, the feasts of Mary's Divine Motherhood, her Immaculate Conception and her Assumption are holydays of obligation under The Code of Canon Law: Canon 1246(1). Although the Bishop's Conference can, with the prior approval of the Apostolic See, suppress certain holydays of obligation or transfer them to a Sunday: Canon 1246(2). In Australia, the only Marian feast which is a holyday of obligation is the Assumption. When the Assumption falls on a Saturday or a Monday, no obligation is attached to that feast that year. While they are recommended, no obligation to attend Mass is attached to the Marian feasts of the Divine Motherhood and the Immaculate Conception.

In Australia the feast of Our Lady Help of Christians is also important as she is the Patroness of Australia under that title.

True devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary can be summed up in the phrase: "To Jesus through Mary." It is therefore fitting that Marian feasts are celebrated by the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. In this way Marian Devotion leads directly and clearly to Christ, the second person of the Blessed Trinity as should always be the case with true Marian devotion.

Also, several Marian feasts are joint feasts of Mary and her Son, Jesus Christ; for example, the Annunciation. This is so because immediately after Mary consented to become the Mother of God the Incarnation took place, that is, God the Son the second person of the Blessed Trinity became man - a small unborn child in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Similarly, at Our Lady's Visitation to her cousin Elizabeth she was greeted as the Mother of God and John the Baptist was sanctified in Elizabeth's womb by the grace of the Divine Redeemer, Jesus Christ.

The Calendar does not include all celebrations in honour of the Blessed Virgin. It is for individual calendar to include Marian Feasts proper to the different local churches. (Marialis Cultus #9 at 20) The Marian feasts in the Calendar of the Catholic Church approved for use in Australia are described below.

### **SOLEMNITY OF MARY, MOTHER OF GOD - 1 JANUARY SOLEMNITY**

Mary's Divine Maternity is considered to be the greatest gift from God and the one from which all others flow. Although not a holyday of obligation in Australia every Catholic should try, if possible, to go to mass on this day.

According to St. Bonaventure, in Our Lady's motherhood of Jesus Christ, Almighty God conferred the greatest dignity on the Blessed Virgin. St. Thomas of Aquinas adds that in her motherhood the Blessed Virgin possessed a dignity that might almost be termed infinite, in a certain sense.

Inspired by God, Elizabeth was quick to recognise and acknowledge Our Lady as the mother of Christ with the words "Blessed is the fruit of thy womb Jesus. Why should I be honoured by a visit from the mother of my Lord?" Despite her exalted position the Blessed Virgin acknowledged that her gifts were from God, and setting an example for all, praised God with the Magnificat.

### **OUR LADY OF LOURDES - 11 FEBRUARY - OPTIONAL MEMORIAL**

This optional memorial is in memory of the appearance of Our Lady to Saint Bernadette of Lourdes in 1858.

Between 11th February and 16th May 1858 Our Lady appeared 18 times to a fourteen year old named Bernadette Soubirous in a cave of Massavielle near Lourdes in Southern France. Lourdes has now become one of the most famous Marian centres of pilgrimages in the world. Our Lady requested that a church be built at the place of her apparitions. A small church was constructed but when this proved to be too small the Rosary Church was constructed in 1901.

Pope Pius X, in 1907, extended to the Universal Church the observance of this feast with its special office and Mass, which had been authorised by Pope Leo XIII.

Lourdes is best known as a place where the sick and disabled go to be cured of their affliction by bathing in the miraculous waters. A feature of Lourdes is the almost continuous recitation of the Rosary by pilgrims of all nationalities. But, most of the cures have occurred during the daily procession of the Blessed Sacrament into the Rosary Square at the front of the Basilica. Lourdes is an example of the true value of devotion to Mary and how that devotion leads to Christ.

### **THE ANNUNCIATION OF THE LORD - 25 MARCH - SOLEMNITY**

The First Joyful Mystery of the Rosary. Today the Church celebrates that day when the Archangel Gabriel requested Our Lady to be the Mother of God. Mary accepts and declares herself to be the handmaid of the Lord.

The Annunciation is one of the three most ancient feasts of Our Lady. The feast probably dates from the Council of Ephesus in 431, when Our Lady was proclaimed the Mother of God. This proclamation was because of a heresy which denied Mary's Divine Motherhood. It was also the Council of Ephesus which added the following words to the Hail Mary: "Holy Mary Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death, Amen."

This feast has been known by many names over the years including: "the Feast of the Incarnation," "the beginning of the Redemption," "the Conception of Christ" and "the Announcing of the Christ."

### **THE IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY - APRIL - MEMORIAL - MOVABLE**

This feast was started by St. John Eudes in 1644 as the paternal feast of his congregation of Priests. The feast was extended to the Universal Church in 1944 by Pope Pius XII. Its extension to the Universal Church was strongly influenced by the Apparitions of Our Lady at Fatima in Portugal in 1917.

At Fatima, on 13 July 1917, Our Lady said "... Our Lord wishes to establish in the world devotion to my Immaculate Heart . . ." A principle means of honouring the Immaculate Heart is the practice of the "First Saturdays."

Our Lady, on 10 December 1925, appeared to Sister Lucy (the remaining seer of Fatima) and said: "... I promise to help at the hour of death, with the graces necessary for salvation, all those who, on the first Saturday of five consecutive months, shall confess, receive Holy Communion and recite five decades of the Rosary, while meditating on the fifteen mysteries of the Rosary, with the intention of making reparation to me." (Fatima in Lucia's own words, pg 195).

Again we see the importance of the Rosary, but more importantly we see how it is to lead to Sacramental Confession, the Mass and Communion. That is, the sacraments instituted by Christ at the establishment of the Catholic Church.

This feast is celebrated on the first Saturday after the feast of the Sacred Heart which is celebrated on the first Friday after the feast of Corpus Christi. Corpus Christi is celebrated on the eleventh week of ordinary time in the Church's year.

## **OUR LADY HELP OF CHRISTIANS - 24 MAY - SOLEMNITY**

Our Lady Help of Christians is the Patroness of Australia.

Pope Pius VII was imprisoned by Napoleon in 1808, but after the battle of Leipzig the 74 year old Pontiff was set free, and in 1814 returned to Rome in triumph. After Napoleon's "Hundred Days" had been brought to an end in 1815 by the allied victory at Waterloo, Pope Pius VII established today's feast for the Papal States in thanksgiving to God and the Blessed Virgin, and to commemorate the anniversary of his return from Napoleonic captivity (Saints Companion at 145).

Still, it was not until 1878 that a country celebrated the feast on a national basis. That country was Australia.

It is also under the title of Our Lady Help of Christians that St. John Bosco had his famous vision about Christ's Church and the Blessed Virgin in the 20th Century.

## **THE VISITATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY - 31 MAY - FEAST**

The Second Joyful Mystery of the Rosary. Today the Church celebrates Our Lady's visit to her cousin Elizabeth.

After the Archangel Gabriel leaves, Mary hastens to visit and help Elizabeth. Inspired by God, Elizabeth greets Mary for the first time as the mother of God with the words "Blessed is the fruit of thy womb Jesus." John the Baptist leaps for joy in the womb of his mother, sanctified by the grace of the Divine Redeemer. Mary responds with the Magnificat. Tradition holds that Mary stayed with Elizabeth for three months, until the birth of her son or even until his circumcision.

This feast was first heard of in 1263, when it was adopted by the Franciscan Order at the suggestion of St. Bonaventure. The feast was extended to the Universal Church by Pope Urban VI in 1389 in thanks for the end of the Great Schism.

Again see the person of central importance in this feast is not Our Lady, but Jesus. Elizabeth worships the fruit of Mary's womb, Jesus. John the Baptist is sanctified by the promised redeemer and Our Lady gives praise to her son for his gifts to her and the world.

## **OUR LADY OF MOUNT CARMEL - 16 JULY - OPTIONAL MEMORIAL**

On this day, in 1251, Our Lady appeared to St. Simon Stock (the then General of the Carmelite Order) in Cambridge England and presented to him the Brown Scapular. Mary assured him that all who were invested and wore it with love would be saved from final damnation. This does not mean that a person can go about sinning with impunity simply because they wear the Scapular. The Scapular, it is said, should be wore around the heart. The Brown Scapular is the most indulgenced and widely used. Sadly, since Vatican II the Brown Scapular has fallen into to disuse. Our Lady once revealed to St. Dominic that she would convert the world through the Rosary and the Scapular, let us use this powerful gift from Our Lady to renew the Church.

## **THE ASSUMPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY - 15 AUGUST - SOLEMNITY**

The Fourth Glorious Mystery of the Rosary. This celebration originated in the 5th or 6th Century. St. Juvenal of Jerusalem stated as early as the Council of Chalcedon in 451 that Our Lady, after her death, was assumed body and soul into heaven.

Pope Pius XII, on 1 November 1950, in *Munificentissimus Deus* officially defined the doctrine of the Assumption as an article of the Catholic Faith. He stated:

". . . By the authority of Our Lord Jesus Christ, of the Blessed Apostles Peter and Paul, and by Our Own authority, We pronounce, declare, and define as divinely revealed dogma: The Immaculate Mother of God, Mary ever Virgin, after her life on earth, was assumed, body and soul to the glory of heaven." [III, 44]

St. Alphonsus de Liguori, in *Glories of Mary*, wrote:

"Since death is the punishment for sin, it might have seemed proper that the Divine Mother should have been exempt from it. But it pleased God to have Mary resemble Jesus in all things, and so He willed that even she should die, but a sweet and happy death. Three things tend to render death bitter: attachment to the world, remorse for one's sin, and the uncertainty of one's salvation. But Mary's death was entirely free from these causes of bitterness; for what soul was ever more detached from earthly goods and more united to God? Nor was it thinkable that any remorse of conscience could trouble her. who had been free from the least taint of actual or original sin; and she also had the fullest certainty of possessing divine grace. Death to her was very sweet, for it would unite her more closely to God by an eternal bond. The Doctors and Holy Fathers of the Church generally assert that she died from no infirmity, but from pure love" at 407.

## **THE QUEENSHIP OF MARY - 22 AUGUST - MEMORIAL**

Pope Pius XII in the Papal Encyclical *Ad Coeli Reginam* proposed the traditional doctrine on the Queenship of Mary and established this feast for the Universal Church. Originally this feast was celebrated on 31 May each year, but was changed after Vatican II to the present date. As Pope Paul VI stated in *Marialis Cultus* the Calendar "was revised in such a way as to give fitting prominence to the celebration on appropriate days of the work of salvation" (#2 at 14). Fittingly the Solemnity of the Assumption is now prolonged in the celebration of the Queenship of Mary, which occurs seven days after the Assumption (*Marialis Cultus* #6 at 18).

Pope Pius IX said of Mary: "Turning her maternal Heart toward us and dealing with the affair of our salvation, she is concerned with the whole human race. Constituted by the Lord Queen of Heaven and earth, and exalted above all choirs of Angels and the ranks of Saints in Heaven, standing at the right hand of Her only-begotten Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ, she petitions most powerfully with Her maternal prayers, and she obtains what she seeks."

Pope XII added: "We commend that on the festival there be renewed the consecration of the human race to the Immaculate Heart of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Upon this there is founded a great hope that there will rejoice in the triumph of religion and in Christian peace.



Therefore, let all approach with greater confidence now than before, to the throne of mercy and grace of our Queen and Mother to beg help in difficulty, light in darkness and solace in trouble and sorrow . . . . Whoever, therefore, honours the lady ruler of the Angels and of men - and let no one think themselves exempt from the payment of that tribute of a grateful and loving soul - let them call upon her as most truly Queen and as the Queen who brings the blessings of peace, that She may show us all, after this exile, Jesus, who will be our enduring peace and joy."

### **THE BIRTHDAY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY - 8 SEPTEMBER - FEAST**

The feast of Our Lady's birth originated in Syria or Palestine at the beginning of the 6th Century. The feast was introduced in Rome some 100 years later.

Our Lady's birthday has been described as "the hope of the entire world and the dawn of salvation" (Marialis Cultus #7 at 7 quoting the Roman Missal, 8 September, Prayer after communion). St. Alphonsus de Liguori in the Glories of Mary wrote:

"Having been destined to become the Mother of the Eternal Word, this child was enriched with so great a grace that, even at the moment of Her Immaculate Conception, she exceeded all the Saints and Angels in sanctity, for she was given a higher order of grace, which corresponded to her dignity as Mother of God.

She was born a great saint! Mary's soul was the most beautiful soul that God ever created.

How delightful a sight to heaven and earth must have been the beautiful soul of this happy child! Let us rejoice with our beloved infant who was born so holy, so dear to God, and so full of grace" at 318.

### **OUR LADY OF SORROWS - 15 SEPTEMBER - MEMORIAL**

This is the feast in honour of Mary's seven sorrows. The seven sorrows (or seven dolors) are: Simeon's Prophecy, the flight into Egypt, the loss of Jesus in the Temple, Mary's meeting with Jesus on his way to Calvary, Jesus's crucifixion, Mary receiving the dead body of Jesus and Jesus's burial.

Our Lady of Sorrows is the patron of the Order of Servants of Mary ("the Servites"). Today's feast was granted to the Servites in 1668. Pope Pius VII extended the feast to the Universal Church in 1814 in gratitude for his return from exile in 1814.

### **OUR LADY OF THE ROSARY - 7 OCTOBER - MEMORIAL**

In the 16th Century Eastern Europe had been overrun by the Moslems. The Moslems intended to continue their push and conquer the rest of Europe and destroy the christian religion. Pope Pius V in order to save Christendom called for a crusade. In 1571, Spain and Italy responded by sending a fleet of 255 ships and 65,000 men under Don John of Austria to meet the Turkish fleet.

Pope Pius V and the faithful spent the whole of the night of 6-7 October 1571 in public recitation of the Rosary praying for victory. The Christian forces also spent three hours on that faithful morning praying the Rosary for victory. That morning the opposing forces met in the Bay of Lepanto-today known as the Bay of Pathos (this is near the shores of Gappoli now called ANZAC Cove). The Turkish fleet consisted of 290 ships and 88,000 men. That evening the Christian fleet had sunk 240 Turkish ships and killed over 33,000 men. The forces of Don John of Austria crushed the Turkish fleet and put its remnants to flight.

The Feast of the Most Holy Rosary (also known as the Feast of Our Lady of Victories) is celebrated on 7 October and started by Pope Pius V in gratitude for Mary's aid in the great naval victory over the Turks. The feast was extended to the Universal Church in 1716, when Prince Eugene won another important victory over the same enemy in Hungary.

### **THE PRESENTATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY - 21 NOVEMBER MEMORIAL**

This feast commemorates the presentation of the child Mary, in the temple in Jerusalem, when she was three.

Ancient writings say Joachim and Anne brought their daughter Mary to the Temple in Jerusalem so that she might be educated by the holy woman.

This feast originated in Syria in the 8th Century and was extended to the West while the popes were at Avignon in France. This feast symbolises the Blessed Virgin's Mary consecration to the Lord.

### **IMMACULATE CONCEPTION - 8 DECEMBER - SOLEMNITY**

The Immaculate Conception is the dogma of faith stating that the Blessed Virgin was from the first instant of her conception, by a singular privilege and grace of God, preserved from all stain of original sin. Not only is Our Lady free from original sin she is also free from actual sin. That is, she never committed any sin during her life, even the smallest venial sin.

From the time of the Fathers of the Church up to the Middle Ages we find explicit reference to the freedom of Mary from sin from the first moment of her conception. The Eastern Church as early as the second half of the 7th Century celebrated the feast of the Immaculate Conception under the title "Conception of Saint Anne."

In the Western Church the feast was first celebrated in Ireland. By 840 the feast was also celebrated in Italy and Spain. Pope Pius V in 1567 condemned Baius for holding that "no one but Christ was without original sin, and therefore the Blessed Virgin Mary died in consequence of the sin contracted through Adam, and endured affliction in this life, like the rest of the just, as punishment for actual and original sin." (The Catholic Catechism, JA Hardon at 154). In the following year the great Dominican Pope extended the Feast of the Immaculate Conception to the Universal Church and made it a holy day of obligation. Although still considered one of the most important feasts of Our Lady it is not a holy day of obligation in Australia.

Pope Pius IX on 8 December 1854 issued the Apostolic Letter *Ineffabilis Deus* in which he defined as an article of Catholic Faith infallibly the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception. Pius IX condensed the definition into the following single paragraph:

"To the honour of the holy and undivided Trinity, to the glory and adornment of the Virgin Mother of God, to the exaltation of the Catholic faith, and the increase of the Catholic religion, We, by the authority of Jesus Christ, Our Lord, of the Blessed Apostles, Peter and Paul and by Our Own, declare, pronounce, and define that the doctrine which holds that the Blessed Virgin Mary, at the instant of her conception, by a singular privilege and grace of the omnipotent God, in consideration of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of mankind was preserved free from all stain of original sin, has been revealed by God, and therefore to be firmly and constantly believed by all the faithful."

Shortly after this dogma was defined Our Lady appeared to Bernadette Soubirous at Lourdes in 1858 and described herself as the Immaculate Conception.

### **FIRST SATURDAY**

This pious practice developed because of Our Lady's apparitions at Fatima. Besides the practice of the First Saturdays, Masses on each Saturday are frequently offered in honour of the Virgin Mary in reparation for sins.

On August 13, 1990, *L'Osservatore Romano*, the Vatican Newspaper, printed a picture of Pope John Paul II kneeling in prayer above the courtyard of his villa in Castel Gandolfo. The caption read " . . . As is his custom, the pope led the recitation of the First Saturday Rosary with crowds gathered in the courtyard below . . ."

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***The Saturday Memorial Mass of Our Lady is also a popular devotion. This Mass is celebrated on Saturdays where no other memorials, Feasts or Solemnities are celebrated. Pope Francis also instituted the memorial of Our Lady, Mother of the Church which is celebrated on the first Monday after the Solemnity of Pentecost.***

### **Liturgical Celebrations of St Joseph:**

March 19 <sup>th</sup>	Joseph, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary – Solemnity
May 1 <sup>st</sup>	Joseph the Worker – Optional Memorial

The Votive Mass of St Joseph can also be celebrated on Wednesdays if no other memorial, Feast or Solemnity is celebrated