

May Processions and Crowning an Image of Mary

One of the most popular devotions to honor our Blessed Mother has been the May Procession and May Crowning. In years past, it was quite common to experience these devotions in our Catholic culture. But in recent years, it is not as commonly practiced in all areas of Catholic life. Depending on where or when you “grew up” in the Catholic Church, or perhaps if you became a Catholic at a later age, you may not have had much exposure to these devotions.

Processions have had a place in religious or spiritual practice from the beginning of time. We see references to processions in the Old Testament, and even pagan cultures held processions to their “gods.” A procession is a way to honor someone of importance. In our Catholic tradition, we have processions associated with feast days of various saints, feasts of Our Lord (such as the Presentation of our Lord sometimes called Candlemas Day), and feasts to honor the Eucharist (such as Holy Thursday and Corpus Christi), and Palm Sunday. But perhaps the most popular of processions among Catholics is the annual procession held each May in honor of Our Blessed Mother.

In the early centuries of the Church, the faithful actually dedicated the month of August to Mary, as that month held the great feast of Mary’s Dormition (falling asleep) on August 15th. This feast is known to us now as Mary’s Assumption into heaven. Around the time of the middle ages, the month of May became more associated with devotions to Mary, until by the 18th century May was the month recognized by the Church as Mary’s month.

It is also customary to crown a statue of Mary as a way to show our recognition of her as our heavenly Queen. Jesus is our King...Mary, our Queen. The simple crowns, usually made of spring flowers with ribbons, are befitting the humility and simplicity of Mary’s queenship.

So, while we can, and do, show love and devotion to Mary every day and month of the year, we sort of ratchet it up in May! It is a beautiful month to gather spring flowers to place in front of an image or statue of Mary, sing the many beautiful hymns to her, crown her as Queen, offer her our hearts through prayers of dedication, and honor her with joyful procession!

O Mary, we crown thee with blossoms today,

Queen of the Angels and

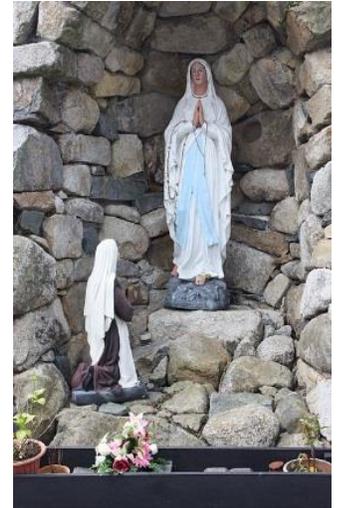
Queen of the May!



Some ideas and resources for honoring Mary in your classroom, school or parish:

- Build a “Mary Shrine” in your classroom. Move your statue of Mary to a prominent space and decorate with flowers. Perhaps children could take turns bringing a flower to place in front of Mary throughout the month of May. Use battery vigil lights. The children could offer their special intentions to Mary as they place their flowers and light the vigil.

- An idea for an art project could be to have each child make their own little “grotto” for Mary. A grotto is an outdoor shrine to Mary that usually looks like an open cave or enclosure in which a statue of Mary is placed. Each child has a shoe box (without the lid) and covers it inside and out with aluminum foil. Then place a little statue of Mary inside, or a picture of Mary pasted to cardboard or cardstock. The children could also add little flowers that they color and cut out. A battery vigil light can be added. The children can take home to have their own personal Mary grotto.



- ***Litany of Mary***, also called the ***Litany of Loreto***

This devotion offers prayer to Mary by calling on her many and varied titles. Each title of Mary conveys some aspect of our relationship to her, and she to us. You can find this prayer in many prayer books, also by “googling” the Litany of Mary.

You could pray this litany with your students, then choose some of the titles and design a banner or poster of each. These could be used to carry in a procession in your classroom or school/parish.

- Read the Annunciation account found in the Gospel of Luke 1:26-38. Discuss what it meant for Mary to say “yes” to what God asked of her. Cut out paper flowers with the word **YES** in the middle. Have children write on each petal a way that they can say YES to God as Mary did. Place the flowers in front of your Mary shrine.



- Read the story “*The Juggler of Our Lady*” by Anatole France. Have a discussion with your students about what gifts or talents they can offer to Mary.

- Pope Francis has introduced the world to the devotion to **Mary, Untier of Knots**. At the World Meeting of Families in Philadelphia in 2015, a poignant shrine was set up outside the Cathedral where visitors wrote their special intentions and prayer requests to Mary on a strip of cloth and tied it to the shrine. You can find more information and prayers to this particular devotion to Mary in books and images that are available on-line. In your classroom, you could have children write their prayer intentions on ribbon and tie to your classroom shrine during the days of May.



- Consult the “*Order of Crowning an Image of the Blessed Virgin Mary*” for an official liturgical celebration. A copy of this may be in your parish church sacristy. You can also purchase copies on-line.
- Check your Religion Text on-line support for resources on Mary. Some sites that offer resources: www.loyolapress.com -> Catholic Resources -> type *Mary activities* in the search box; www.sadlier.com/religion -> Sadlier Resources -> Catechist Café -> type *Mary activities* in search box
- Craft ideas can be found on *Pinterest* or *Catholic Icing*
- Some hymns that have traditionally been sung with May Processions:

<i>Immaculate Mary</i>	<i>Hail Mary, Gentle Woman</i>
<i>Hail, Holy Queen</i>	<i>Sing of Mary</i>
<i>Mary’s Song</i>	<i>Holy Mary, Now We Crown You</i>

- For your own self-education on all things Mary, there is a treasure trove of information at the University of Dayton’s *International Marian Research Institute* found at <https://udayton.edu/imri> -> **All About Mary**

There are hundreds and hundreds of hymns, prayers, books and devotions to Our Blessed Mother. The Catholic Church has a long tradition of honoring her, so plan to be a part of this tradition during Mary's month of May!



Immaculate Heart of Mary, pray for us!