



August 2007

Dear Friend of the missions!

Blessed Summer! I hope and pray that you have had some time to rest and regain energy during the summer. There are some important feasts to remember this month: August 6 is the Transfiguration of the Lord; August 8 is the feast of St. Dominic; August 11 is the feast of St. Clare. The Solemnity of the Assumption is August 15. There is a wonderful tradition of blessing flowers on that day. On the website, we will include that blessing. The octave of the Assumption (Aug 22) is the feast of the Queenship of Mary. Perhaps, on August 23, the feast of St. Rose of Lima, you could pray especially for our mission in Peru. Please pray for peace, it seems so elusive; pray also for all the victims of war and that a way to peace will be found for our world. All the friars are very grateful for your generosity and prayers. August 2 is a special day for the Franciscans: the Feast of Our Lady of the Angels (patron of the Portiuncola), a day to pray for pardon and the deceased. You make a big difference in the lives of many people. We always remember you and your intentions. God bless you!



The Seven Joys of Mary

By Fr. Russell Becker, OFM

Since the fifteenth century, the Franciscans have had a special rosary called the Franciscan Crown. It has seven decades, each made up of one Our Father and ten Hail Marys. At the conclusion there are two Hail Marys added so that all the Hail Marys represent the 72 years of Mary's earthly pilgrimage.

As to its origin among the Franciscans, they tell the story of a young man who would bring a crown of flowers each day to place on a statue of Mary. When he entered the friars he could no longer do this. He felt badly that he could not honor Mary in that special way. Mary appeared to him and revealed to him that she would be happy with a special crown of prayer, prayed while meditating on her seven joys. The devotion spread among Franciscans, who were allowed to wear that rosary with their habits. Franciscans are encouraged to pray it frequently, while spreading devotion to the Seven Joys of Mary.

The Seven Joys of Mary are:

- The Annunciation**
- The Visitation**
- The Birth of the Lord**
- The Adoration of the Magi**
- The Finding of the Lord in the Temple**
- The Risen Christ Appearing to his Mother**
- The Assumption and Glorification of Mary**

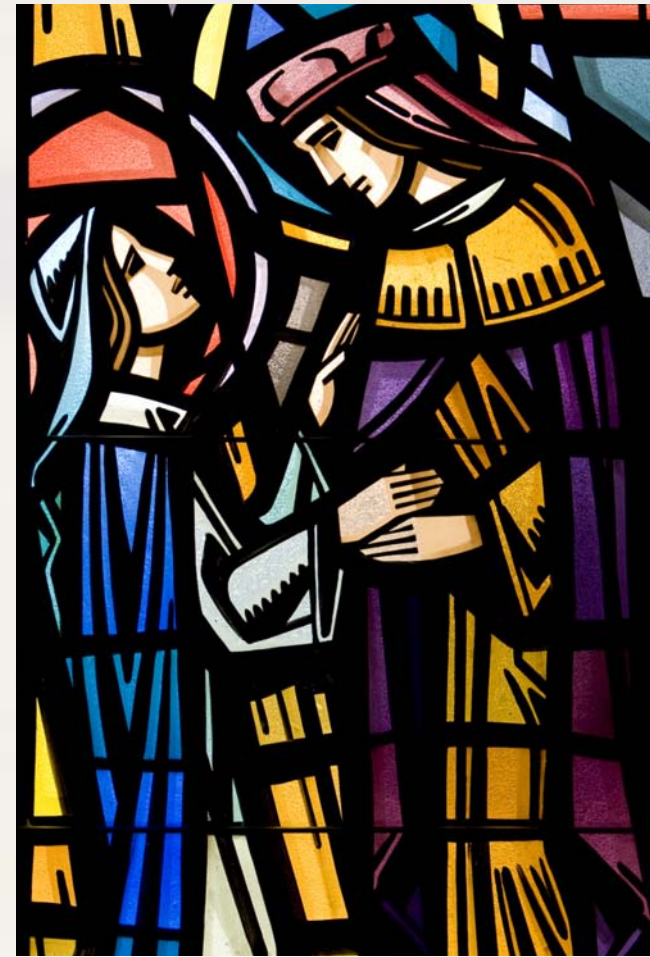
The Dominican Rosary with its mysteries takes us through the entire Gospel. The Rosary of the Seven Sorrows of Mary reminds us of the suffering and pain that comes with embracing the Gospel. The Franciscan Crown reminds us that no matter what happens there is certain joy that underpins the Gospel.



The devotion, praying the decades while meditating on one of the Seven Joys, enables the Gospel message of joy to be internalized in our hearts, and then perhaps shared with the world that we touch. Each of the joys reminds us of the joyful aspects of the Paschal Mystery that punctuated the life of the Lord and his mother. Reflecting on these events should be a great support to us as we journey through life with all that it brings.



The Annunciation. Here we recall that God is faithful in the promises that God makes and that, even though it seems as if the fabric of life unravels before of us, God is always restoring, or better, recreating that fabric, and gracing it with glory. We can rejoice in this, and have faith in God. It gives us the courage, like Mary, to say 'yes' whenever God calls.



The Visitation. Mary runs to help her cousin, she is carrying Jesus in her womb. She brings him to that difficult situation. Mary also sings the Magnificat. She is able to find joy because she knows that God is with her even in her lowliness. We can always rejoice that God will constantly come to us through others and that we, too, bring the Lord to those we help and serve.

The Birth of the Lord. Mary and Joseph filled with joy at the birth of their son. We, too, rejoice for the Lord is born into every age and every life. We should recognize and proclaim that birth to all for it makes a big difference in the destiny of humanity.



The Adoration of the Magi. People came from the distant coast lands to honor the new born king. Mary rejoices at the honor given to her Son. We can rejoice that Jesus has come for all, and the best honor we can give is to share him with others.

The Finding in the Temple. Life brings with it all kinds of anxieties and worries. Mary and Joseph experience one of the severest anxieties: fear that something happened to their child. Finding the child must have been a great relief. We can rejoice that, in our anxieties and troubles, we too will find the Lord.

The Risen Christ appears to his Mother. On Good Friday, Mary was able to stand by the cross when so many fled. Imagine her joy when she sees her risen son. We can rejoice, that in the Risen Lord, we are Easter people. The power of the resurrection still hold strong today over the power of death, and we encounter the risen Lord, especially in “the breaking of the bread.”

The Assumption and Glorification of Mary. Mary is the first to receive the fulfillment of the promises of Easter. We rejoice because we can count on God’s faithfulness, and will be privileged to share in that glory.

There is a certain confidence and peace that this Gospel joy brings. It will see us through the difficult times, as it did Mary, and it will deepen the joy we have in recognizing God’s blessings. It is interesting that, in some of the Gospel passages associated with the Joys, an angel appears and tells people “Do not be afraid!”

True Gospel joy dispels our fears and helps us to embrace a life of hope. This hope is not an impossible dream. In the joy of the Gospel, hope becomes a way of life.



St. Francis always saw himself as a herald of the joy of the Gospel and encouraged his followers to go through the world, bringing joy where ever they went. This is one of his sayings: **Who are we, God’s servants, but his minstrels who inspire the hearts of people and stir them to spiritual joy.**



Questions for Reflection:

1. Do you know the joy of the Gospel?
2. With Mary, the joyful Mother of the Lord, as an example, how do you witness to the joy the underpins the Gospel message?

*Please pray for our missionaries
on their birthdays:*

Bishop Benedict Coscia, O.F.M. (Brazil): August 10

Fr. David Hyman, O.F.M. (Southern U.S.): August 22

Fr. Aloysius Siracuse, O.F.M. (Brazil): August 30

*May God give them many years of health,
peace and energy!*

*Please remember
our missionaries who are ill:*

Fr. Peter Sheridan, O.F.M. (Home Missions)

Fr. Arthur Murray, O.F.M. (Home Missions)

Bishop Benedict Coscia, O.F.M. (Brazil)

Bro. Rosario Vieira, O.F.M. (Brazil)

Fr. Robert Nee, O.F.M. (Brazil)

Fr. Ignatius McGeady, O.F.M. (Brazil)

Fr. Charles Finnegan, O.F.M. (Brazil)

Fr. Aloysius Siracuse, O.F.M. (Brazil)

Fr. Clement Healy, O.F.M. (Jamaica)

Fr. Campion Lally, O.F.M. (Japan)

Fr. Stanislaus Widomski, O.F.M. (Japan)

Fr. Finian Riley, O.F.M. (Africa)

May God grant them health and peace!



**Give
God**
glory
in all that you do
and Watch
God
do great Things
for you

Devotion in Honor of the Seven Joys of Mary

(From FRANCISCANS AT PRAYER)

(This may be a wonderful way to observe First Saturdays in a Franciscan way)

Let us give praise and thanks to God.

**Through the intercession of the joyful Mother of our Savior
we give to God all honor and blessing..**

The First Joy: The Angel Announces Good News to Mary

Reading: The angel Gabriel was sent from God to virgin named Mary. The angel said to her: “Rejoice, O highly favored daughter! The Lord is with you. Blessed are you among women. You have found favor with God. You shall conceive and bear a son and give him the name ‘Jesus.’” And Mary said: “I am the handmaid of the Lord. Let it be done for me as you say.”

(Luke 1,26-33)

Response: Let us thank God for his presence in his Word. (Silent Prayer)

Prayer: Almighty God, you have revealed the beauty of your power by exalting the lowly virgin of Nazareth and making her the mother of our Savior. May the prayers of this woman bring Jesus to the waiting world and fill the void of incompleteness with the presence of her child, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

All recite Hail Mary

Virgin, most holy, pray for us!

The Second Joy: Mary visits her Cousin Elizabeth

Reading: Mary set out, proceeding in haste to a town of Judah. She entered Zechariah’s house and greeting Elizabeth. Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and cried out: “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. Blessed is she that trusted that the Lord’s words to her would be fulfilled.” The Mary said: “My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord. My Spirit finds joy in God my Savior.” (Luke 1,39-47)

Response: Let us thank God for his presence to us through others.
(Silent Prayer)

Prayer: Eternal and loving God, you inspired the Virgin Mary, mother of your Son, to visit Elizabeth and assist her in her need. Keep us open to the working of your Spirit, and, with Mary, may we praise you for ever. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

All recite Hail Mary

Mary, Ark of the Covenant, pray for us!

The Third Joy: Mary Gives Birth to Jesus the Savior

Reading: Joseph went from the town of Nazareth to Bethlehem to register with Mary who was with child. While they were there she gave birth to her first-born son and wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger. (Luke 2,4-7)

Response: Let us thank God for his presence to us in Jesus. (Silent Prayer)

Prayer: O God, source of light in every age, the virgin conceived and bore you a Son who is called Wonderful God, Prince of Peace. May her prayers, the gift of a mother’s love, be your people’s joy through all ages. May her response, born of a humble heart, draw your Spirit to rest on your people. Grant this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

All recite Hail Mary

Mother of our Savior, pray for us!

The Fourth Joy: The Magi Adore Mary’s Child

Reading: After their audience with King Herod, the Magi set out. The star, which they had observed at its rising, went ahead of them until it came to a standstill over the place where the child was. On entering the house, they found the child with Mary, his mother. They prostrated themselves and did him homage. Then they opened their coffers and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. (Matthew 2, 9-11)

Response: Let us thank God for his presence in the wonderful of creation.
(Silent Prayer)

Prayer: God of light, ever-unchanging, you revealed your Son to the nations by the guidance of a star. Your light is strong, your love is near. Lead us to your glory in heaven by the light of faith. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen

All recite Hail Mary

Mary, Mother of Christ, pray for us.

The Fifth Joy: Mary Finds Jesus in the Temple

Reading: As Mary and Joseph were returning from Jerusalem at the end of the feast, the child Jesus remained behind. Mary and Joseph returned to Jerusalem in search of him. On the third day they came upon Jesus in the temple sitting in the midst of the teachers, listening to them and asking questions. (Luke 2,43-46)

Response: Let us thank God for his presence when we gather together in his name. (Silent Prayer)

Prayer: O God, creator of all, teach us the sanctity of human love, show us the value of family life. Help us to live as the holy family, united in respect and love. Bring us to the joy and peace of your eternal home. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

All recite Hail Mary

Mother, comforter of the afflicted, pray for us!

The Sixth Joy: Jesus Appears to Mary on Easter Morning

Reading: Very early on Sunday morning the women went to the grave carrying the spices they had prepared. They found the stone rolled away from the entrance to the grave, so they went in; but they did not find the body of Jesus. Suddenly, two men in bright shining clothes stood by them. Full of fear, the women bowed to the ground. The men said: “Why are you looking among the dead for the one who is alive? He is not here; he has been raised.” (Luke 24,1-6)

Response: Let us thank God for the presence of the risen Lord.
(Silent Prayer)

Prayer: O God of all the ages, by raising Christ your Son you conquered the power of death and opened for us the way to eternal life. Raise us up and renew our lives by the Spirit that is within us We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

All recite Hail Mary

Mary, seat of wisdom, pray for us!

The Seventh Joy: Mary is Assumed into Heaven and Crowned Queen of Heaven and Earth

Reading: Now a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman, adorned with the sun. She was standing on the moon with twelve stars on her head for a crown. (Revelation 12,1) With jewels set in gold, and dressed in brocades, the king’s daughter is led to the king. (Psalm 45,14-15)

Response: Let us than God for the gift of eternal life. (Silent Prayer)

Prayer: All-powerful, and ever-living God, you raised the sinless Virgin Mary, mother of your Son, body and soul to the glory of heaven. May we see heaven as our final goal and come to share her glory. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

All recite Hail Mary

Mary, Queen of all men and women, pray for us!

All pray: Remember, most loving Virgin Mary, never was it heard that anyone who turned to you for help was left unaided. Inspired by the confidence, though burdened by my sins, I run to your protection for you are my mother. Mother of the Word of God, do not despise my words of pleading but be merciful and hear my prayer. Amen.

Closing prayer: O God, you made the spirit of your most holy Mother to rejoice in you with wondrous joys. By your mercy, grant that, relying on her merits, we may be ever filled with heavenly consolation. For you live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

With Mary, let us praise the Lord and give him thanks. Amen.

The Blessing of the flowers

Almighty God,
we praise and glorify you
on the feast of the Assumption
of your daughter, Mary.
She believed in your promise
and enjoys the fullness
of resurrected life.

Bless these flowers,
the first gifts of the harvest.
Through the intercession of Mary
help us to enjoy them
and the beauty they reveal
for our own good
and the good of others,
so that we may praise your goodness
and give you glory.

Loving God, we praise you
through Jesus Christ
your Son and our brother
for ever and ever.