

WHAT ARE THE ORIGINS OF THE MAY CROWNING?

The origins of the May Crowning are hard to pinpoint, although devotion to our Blessed Mother Mary originates in the earliest days of the church. Concerning the significance of the month of May, toward the end of the 18th century, Father Latomia of the Roman College of the Society of Jesus (in Rome) instituted the practice of dedicating this month to our Blessed Mother. His desire was to promote devotion to Mary among the students as a way to counteract infidelity and immorality. From Rome, the May devotion spread throughout the Jesuit colleges, and eventually throughout the whole church. Pope Pius VII in 1815 granted a partial indulgence for participating in either a public or private devotion honoring Mary during the month of May; Pope Pius IX made the indulgence plenary in 1859. (This particular indulgence is no longer listed in the present Enchiridion of Indulgences, although numerous devotions to our Blessed Mother are, such as the recitation of the rosary or the Litany of Mary.

May probably seemed most appropriate because the liturgical calendars, former and present, mark several feast days honoring our Blessed Mother: Our Lady, Queen of Apostles (the Saturday following the Ascension); Our Lady of the Most Blessed Sacrament (May 13); Our Lady of Fatima (May 13); Mary, Help of Christians (May 24); Mary, Mediatrix of All Graces (May 31); and the Visitation (May 31).

The May devotions also were energized by the four authenticated apparitions of our Blessed Mother. In 1830, Mary appeared to St. Catherine Laboure and instructed her to have the Miraculous Medal struck with the inscription, "Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee." In 1846, she appeared to the children of La Salette, France, and tearfully lamented the lax practice of the faith. In 1858, she appeared to St. Bernadette at Lourdes, identifying herself as the "Immaculate Conception." Finally, she appeared to the three children at Fatima May 13, 1917, where she instructed the people to pray the rosary daily for peace.

Regarding the crowning, the image of Mary (as well as Jesus) wearing a gold crown is found in the earliest forms of iconography, especially in the Eastern Churches. In the West, the pious practice of publicly crowning an image of the Blessed

Mother gained popularity in the 19th century. In Rome, the image known as *Salus Populi Romani* — of our Blessed Mother holding the Child Jesus — is enshrined at the Basilica of St. Mary Major. Tradition holds that St. Luke painted the image. Pope Clement VIII (1592-1605) added two crowns to the icon, which were at some point later lost. Nevertheless, on Aug. 15, 1838, the Feast of the Assumption, Pope Gregory XVI with great solemnity, again added the crowns, and thereupon the practice of crowning the image of the Blessed Mother became popular, especially during the month of May.

... the Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship, to help celebrate the Marian Year declared by Pope St. John Paul II in 1987 to prepare for the new millenium, issued a ritual, *Order of Crowning an Image of the Blessed Virgin Mary*, which captures the significance of this pious practice: "The queen symbol was attributed to Mary because she was a perfect follower of Christ, who is the absolute 'crown' of creation. She is the Mother of the Son of God, who is the messianic King. Mary is the Mother of Christ, the Word Incarnate ... 'He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High; the Lord will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of His kingdom there will be no end.' Elizabeth greeted the Blessed Virgin, pregnant with Jesus, as 'the mother of my Lord.' Mary is the perfect follower of Christ. The maid of Nazareth consented to God's plan; she journeyed on the pilgrimage of faith; she listened to God's Word and kept it in her heart; she remained steadfastly in close union with her Son, all the way to the foot of the Cross; she persevered in prayer with the Church. Thus, in an eminent way, she won the 'crown of righteousness,' 'the crown of life,' 'the crown of glory' that is promised to those who follow Christ."

... let us be sure to honor our Blessed Mother in our hearts and our homes. The recitation of the family rosary each day, images of our Blessed Mother, having a special shrine in our yard, and having our own family May Crowning are wonderful ways not only to foster devotion and faith, but also to draw us closer to the heart of Our Savior.

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THE CORPORAL WORKS OF MERCY

As part of the mission of the Church, the Sacred Heart PSR students this year focused on the seven **Corporal Works of Mercy** (see Matthew, chapter 25). Each month, the children assisted in Jesus' command to assist those in need.

1) **Feed the Hungry:** Food was collected and delivered to the Salvation Army in October. 2) **Give Drink to the Thirsty:** in November we collected Cases of water and given to New Life Ministries. 3) **Welcome the Stranger / Shelter the Homeless:** Used and/or new children's books were collected in December and given to "First Step Family Violence and Intervention Services" for children displaced from their homes due to domestic violence. 4) **Clothe the Naked:** Articles of clothing (a full pick-up load) was donated to Shepherd's Christian Assembly in January. 5) **Comfort the Sick** and 6) **Visit the Imprisoned:** in February and March, cards were created and sent to specific people hospitalized or in poor health, and to those who are homebound or in nursing homes, or otherwise unable to leave their homes.

To focus on the seventh and final Corporal Work of Mercy, **Bury the Dead**, a number of the students and their parents gathered at Our Lady of Lourdes Cemetery on Saturday, May 5 for a prayer service, picnic, and worked to clean out the flower area

around the monument, plant new flowers, and plant two trees in the field near the cemetery.



CATHOLIC WOMEN'S CLUB TEA LUNCHEON

On Sunday, May 6th, the Catholic Women's Club (CWC), under the leadership of Ana Opie and Reni Akers, hosted a tea luncheon for the women of Sacred Heart Parish, (SHP). The CWC supplied delicious food served upon their own lovely china for their church family; the dishes and decorations containing the essence of beauty, warmth and comfort from their own homes and their own family celebrations of recent and generations past. Dan Opie provided an attractive spring setting photo opportunity for attendees, and Matthew Shannon offered classical guitar as subtle background music. The tea was well attended, (125 RSVPs), and the women interviewed shared their appreciation for the special event honoring SHP mothers. Just as Jesus felt like "Home" to all who sought Him and were open to His message, the CWC adeptly serve others as a crucial component of their faith.

In brief conversations with the women at the tea, faith issues were discussed. Gwen Bordenkircher stated her major prayer intention is that her family will continue to grow in faith, as they consistently rely upon it during their daily life. In her husband's role as mayor of West Lafayette, she and Steve don't overtly discuss their faith, but try to serve the community as positive role models.

Dottie DeCenzo, Lori, Janelle, and Jillian Given span four generations at Sacred Heart Church. Lori's parents, Ray and Dottie, were the greatest influence upon her faith development as she saw how steadfast they were as parents because of their strong faith. Lori offers consistent prayer to alleviate the messiness of our world today. Dottie relies upon Our Lord daily and she prays for the protection of her family. She expressed a deep gratitude for the many blessings in her life: her Catholic faith, her family, her parents, and her sister and brother, who were such good people. Janelle, Jason's wife, said the greatest impact she has experienced in her faith development has been Lori and Dottie's support when she became a convert. Jillian is being raised to understand how service to others is a major component of faith.

Joyce, Renee, Ursula, and Sam Corbett attended the tea together, and they also span four generations. Renee wrote a book, Families and Bottles, where she stressed how faith and Mary McCabe dramatically turned her Dad's life around from his previous alcoholism. Ursula expressed gratitude for her Aunt Bee and Uncle Bob Visintainer, who modeled devout faith in the midst of great pain, as their daughter battled cancer and she and her parents were faithful to God up to her last breath. Ursula stressed the importance of faith shared in the context of the entire family; she and her husband rotate work schedules so they can always attend Mass as a family. Joyce gratefully stated Ursula and Renee played a major role in their husbands' faith development and maintenance. Sam said her faith development was due to parents Dave and Renee's strong commitment to God. Both Sam and Renee play guitar and sing, (sometimes together); Sam also plays the piano and composes music,

while Renee writes songs. They have sung at funerals to provide comfort to the families and to honor the deceased.

Bobbi Shannon explained she was baptized Catholic as an infant and was raised in a devoutly Catholic Cleveland neighborhood. Even though Bobbi attended a public school, the Catholic principal and all the Catholic students sustained a Catholic culture; for example the principal took them to the neighborhood Catholic Church on holy days. Bobbi's daughter Mary Margaret Cameron said she also perceived her childhood in Cleveland as encompassing in terms of her faith development. Mary said she felt her mom has greatly impacted all areas of Mary's life through her thriving faith. Mary and her mom both pray as an ongoing daily dialogue with God about pretty much everything.

Dr. Brenda Lozowski focused upon family faith customs. She explained that the family prays the rosary whenever possible. She emphasized, "We pray together to stay together". On Good Friday, the family fasts all day, and from noon to 3PM they maintain silence to immerse themselves in Christ's Passion and death. Sacrifices like giving up entertainment, fasting, reading, and attending daily Mass are ways the family honor God during the holy Easter season. Gretchen claimed her parents are the major influence upon her faith; her mom as PSR teacher and dad as a deacon helped form the background for her faith. MaryAnn said her youth minister Frank Cichon is a great influence, as he is so good at helping the youth determine how to apply and maintain faith in their lives today.

Reni Akers also has four generations of SHC members. She shared that her German neighborhood was predominantly Catholic, and she attended Catholic schools as a child. Her parents ran a restaurant which prevented their Sunday church attendance, but it did not deter her father from making sure Reni and her sister went. Here Reni realized to get her kids to live their faith, she needed to show them how it is done by serving as an example for them. Her daughter Andree Thomas is most grateful for her relationship with God. Andree is overwhelmed at the care He has showered upon her, by sending the Holy Spirit prior to events that could be devastating to her if she had not been offered the comfort, peace, and love prior to her great need. Only through God's gifts was she able to withstand the agony of losing her baby son 14 years ago. Lisa Akers was raised Episcopal as a child. When her oldest brother Bob converted to Catholicism, Lisa attended church with him and her Catholic friends. Lisa dated Joe in high school, and as the relationship between the two deepened, so did Lisa's commitment to the Catholic faith. The wedding respected both faiths as Father Hall and Father Metzger co-celebrated the wedding Mass. Lisa soon converted afterwards, and her parents finally supported her decision, after she had demonstrated respect for her parents' faith over the years.

SHP thanks Ana, Reni, and CWC for all their hard work in hosting the successful Mother's Tea event.