

MARY

DEVOTIONS, PRAYERS & REFLECTIONS
FOR THE MARIAN MONTH OF MAY
1 - 15 MAY



THE VIRGIN IN PRAYER BY SASSOFERRATO, 1640-1650

May

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Friday, 1 May – May: A Time for Marian Devotion

Why do Catholics dedicate the month of May to Mary?

If you practise your Catholic faith you may be aware that Catholics dedicate the month of May to Mary. However, have you ever asked the reason why for this?

Here's a brief explanation.

The custom has its remote origins in the days of the Roman Empire. The ancient Greeks dedicated May to Artemis, the goddess of fecundity, while ancient Romans dedicated the same month to Flora, the goddess of blooms, or blossoms. They celebrated the festival of *ludi florals*, or floral games, starting at the end of April and invoked Flora for all that blooms. It was the same Romans who gave the month the name of May, after Maia, the goddess of Spring.



As Christianity grew within the Roman Empire it was customary for the Church to 'baptise' pagan practises or festivals and give them a Christian flavour. It would be only natural that the month of May would eventually be re-dedicated in favour of a Christian personification of Spring, fertility and new life, namely Mary. By medieval times the tradition of *Tricesimum*, or "Thirty-Day Devotion to Mary," was well established. The modern practice of a month dedicated specifically to Mary can be traced back to the 17th century, with special devotions organised on each day in May. This custom became more widespread during the 19th century and remains in practice today.

In what ways can Mary be honoured in May? The ways of honouring Mary are as varied as the people who honour her. The most common way is through praying the Rosary, either at home or in parishes. It is common for parishes to have a daily recitation of the Rosary during May, and many parishes erect a special 'May altar' with a statue or picture of Mary as a reminder of Mary's month. It's also traditional to crown a statue of Mary during May – a custom known as 'May Crowning.' Usually, the crown is made of flowers representing Mary's beauty and virtue, a reminder how we should strive to imitate Mary's virtue in our own lives.

May altars and crownings can also be done in our homes. Prayer corners can be erected in any home as a focal point for prayers and devotions. Whether fancy or simple, a prayer corner creates a special atmosphere for prayer and focus around which the family can gather. And what Marian prayers can be said together as a family? In addition to the Rosary, there are litanies and specific prayers such as the Angelus, the Regina Coeli, the Memorare, the Hail Holy Queen. Readings from Scripture can accompany these prayers, especially from the Gospels and Matthew and Luke relating to Mary's role in salvation history. Mary's great prayer of praise and thanksgiving – the Magnificat – can also be recited and/or reflected upon. Finally, May can also be a time to adopt certain popular devotions to Mary such as the Brown Scapular or Miraculous Medal and study some of her important and approved apparitions such as Guadalupe, Lourdes, Fatima, etc.

Why have devotion to Mary? Because she is Jesus' mother and hence Mother of God. At the foot of the Cross, Jesus gave Mary to St John to be our spiritual mother, to care for all the followers of Jesus day-in-and-day-out without fail, interceding before the throne of God on our behalf for all our needs. For that, Mary deserves an entire month in her honour.

Saturday, 2 May – Understanding the First Saturday Devotions

During her July apparition at Fatima, Our Lady said to Lucia, “I shall come to ask... that on the First Saturday of every month, Communions of reparation be made in atonement for the sins of the world.” Although she made no further mention of this devotion at Fatima, on December 10, 1925, our Blessed Mother again appeared to Lucia at Pentevedra, Spain, where she had been sent to the Dorothean Sisters to learn to read and write. It was there Our Lady completed her request for the Five First Saturdays and gave her great promise. In that apparition also appeared the Infant Jesus, who said to Lucia: “Have pity on the Heart of your Most Holy Mother. It is covered with thorns with which ungrateful men pierce it at every moment, and there is no one to remove them with an act of reparation.”

Our Lady then spoke: “See, my daughter, my Heart encircled by thorns with which ungrateful men pierce it at every moment by their blasphemies and ingratitude. Do you, at least, strive to console me. Tell them that **I promise to assist at the hour of death with the graces necessary for salvation all those who, in order to make reparation to me, on the First Saturday of five successive months, go to confession, receive Holy Communion, say five decades of the Rosary, and keep me company for a quarter of an hour, meditating on the fifteen mysteries of the Rosary.**”

Why Five Saturdays?

Sister Lucia’s confessor questioned her about the reason for the five Saturdays asking why not seven or nine. She answered him in a letter dated June 12, 1930. In it she related a vision she had of Our Lord while staying in the convent chapel part of the night of the twenty-ninth to the thirtieth of the month of May, 1930. The reasons Our Lord gave were as follows:

- The five first Saturdays correspond to the five kinds of offenses and blasphemies committed against the Immaculate Heart of Mary. They are:
 1. Blasphemies against the Immaculate Conception
 2. Blasphemies against her virginity
 3. Blasphemies against her divine maternity, at the same time the refusal to accept her as the Mother of all men
 4. Instilling indifference, scorn and even hatred towards this Immaculate Mother in the hearts of children
 5. Direct insults against Her sacred images

The elements of this devotion, therefore, consist in the following four points:

1. **Confession:** This confession can be made before the First Saturday or afterward, provided that Holy Communion be received in the state of grace
2. **Holy Communion:** Before receiving Holy Communion, it is likewise necessary to offer it in reparation to Our Lady. Our Lord told Lucia in 1930, “This Communion will be accepted on the following Sunday for just reasons, if my priests allow it so.”
3. **Rosary:** To comply with the request of our Blessed Mother, it must be offered in reparation and said properly while meditating.
4. **15-minute meditation:** Also offered in reparation, the meditation may embrace one or more mysteries; it may include all, taken together or separately. This meditation should be the richest of any meditation, because Our Lady promised to be present when she said “...those who keep me company...”

After completing the Five First Saturdays, one may continue the devotion simply to console the Immaculate Heart of Our Lady. A tender love of our Blessed Mother will lead one to do all they can to make reparation for the sins which pierce her Immaculate Heart.

Adapted from:

<http://www.themostholYROsary.com/appendix2.htm>

<https://www.americanedsfatima.org/Our-Blessed-Mother/the-five-first-saturdays-devotion.html>

<http://www.rosary-center.org/firstsat.htm>

Sunday, 3 May – Make Your Own Marian Shrine

Creating a Prayer Space in your home is a simple and beautiful way to remind us of God's presence at all times and that prayer is an important part of our everyday life.

You can create a Prayer Space anywhere in your home, on a coffee/dining/bedside table, shelf, or even on top of a chest of drawers, just somewhere you will visit frequently.

Once you have decided where your special place will be, choose from any of the following suggested items to place on your family's prayer space. You can use a cloth, candle, bible, cross, statue, rosary beads, prayer cards, flowers, a photo of your family, book of prayers, and maybe words to your favourite hymns.

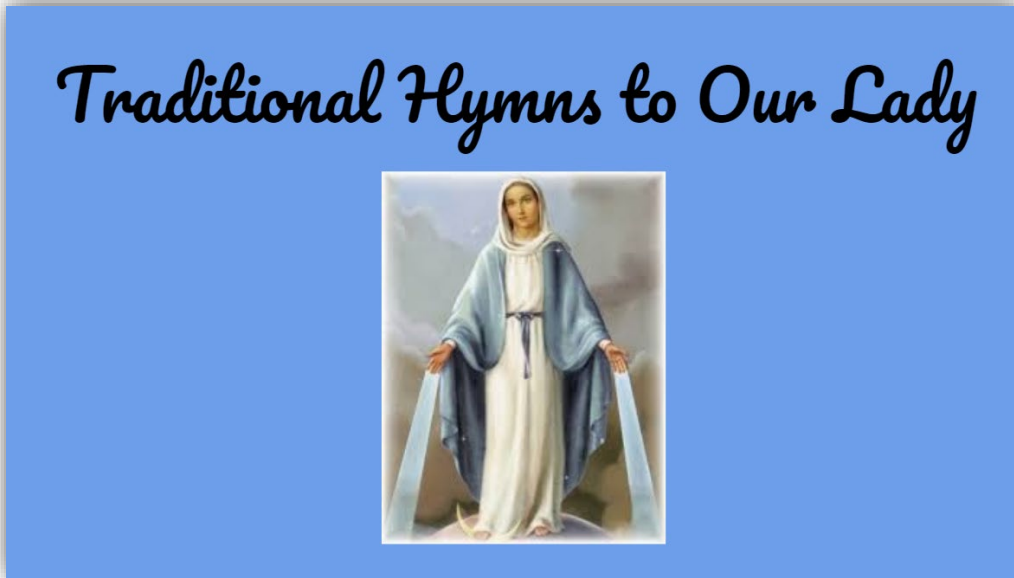
You may like to place a ribbon or change the colour of your cloth to suit the colours of the Church's liturgical year. The colour white for Christmas and Easter, green for seasons of Epiphany and post-Pentecost (ordinary time), red for Pentecost, and purple for Lent and Easter.

To help you set up your prayer space for May, Month of Mary, click [here](#) to find a printable resource on how to make your own Marian Shrine.



Monday, 4 May – Traditional Hymns to Our Lady

Click image below for the 'Traditional Hymns to Our Lady' slideshow presentation.



Tuesday, 5 May – Our Lady of the Rosary: Reflecting on the Joyful Mysteries

Click image below for the 'Our Lady of the Rosary: Reflecting on the Joyful Mysteries' slideshow presentation.



Our Lady of the Rosary

Reflecting on...
The Joyful Mysteries

May 5th

Wednesday, 6 May – Our Lady of Loreto

Did you know? Tradition holds that the house of Jesus, Mary and Joseph was transported out of Nazareth by angels in 1291. Today, the house is found in the small Italian town of Loreto.

According to historians, the home of the Holy Family remained in Nazareth for 13 centuries after Jesus' death. On 10 May, 1291, it suddenly disappeared. Tradition has it that the Holy House was transported out of Nazareth by angels to several locations (including Croatia and parts of Italy) before landing in its current location of Loreto, Italy. Why 1291? The possible reason for its transportation out of Nazareth is the 1294 Muslim invasion of Nazareth that could have resulted in its complete destruction.



In 1296, one year after the Holy House arrived in Loreto, the Catholic Church appointed 16 envoys to travel to Nazareth, Croatia and Loreto to investigate the mysterious moving of the house and to conduct extensive studies at each of the locations. Incredibly, measurements of the marks left in the ground by the house were exactly the same at all 3 locations. Centuries later, scientists conducted a chemical analysis of the stones of the walls and the wood in the ceiling of the Holy House. Both the stones in the walls and the wood used for the ceiling are unique to the area of Nazareth.

Other striking facts about the house in Loreto are that it has no foundations. The walls rest on a plot that was part field and part road, a sure indication that it was not built there but placed there. The style of the house of Loreto is not Italian but Eastern; the original door was on the long side of the house, indicating that it was a dwelling and not a church.



In the 16th century, a fortified basilica was completed around the Holy House to protect it; a [marble encasement](#) was later added to fortify the structure even more.

Since the arrival of the Holy House in Loreto, close to 50 popes have affirmed its miraculous transportation by angels, sometimes referred to as the “translation” of the Holy House. Many saints over the centuries have also made a pilgrimage to Loreto to see this unique relic that not only housed the holiest of families, but is said to have been the childhood home of Mary and therefore the home where Mary was immaculately conceived and the Archangel Gabriel appeared to Mary. As pilgrims enter the small precinct, they read on the threshold, “*Hic Verbum caro factum est*” – “Here the Word became flesh”. Above the altar inside the holy house is an ancient statue of Our Lady holding the Infant Jesus, known as **Our Lady of Loreto**.

In 1916, Pope Benedict XV issued a decree establishing 10 December as the annual liturgical Feast of the Translation of the Holy House. In 2019, Pope Francis decreed “that the optional memorial of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Loreto should be inscribed in the Roman Calendar on 10 December, the day on which the feast falls in Loreto, and celebrated every year...Therefore, the new memorial must appear in all calendars and liturgical books for the celebration of Mass and the Liturgy of the Hours.”

Adapted from:

Consecration to St Joseph: The Wonders of our Spiritual Father by Fr Donald Calloway (2020)

<https://www.americanneedfatima.org/Our-Blessed-Mother/our-lady-of-loreto.html>

<https://cruxnow.com/vatican/2019/10/pope-adds-feast-of-our-lady-of-loreto-to-universal-calendar/>

Thursday, 7 May ~ Our Lady of Guadalupe

Click image below for the 'Our Lady of Guadalupe' slideshow presentation.



Friday, 8 May ~ Floral Reflections on the Hail Mary for Mother's Day

Click image below for the "Flower of Flowers" slideshow presentation.



'Flower of Flowers'

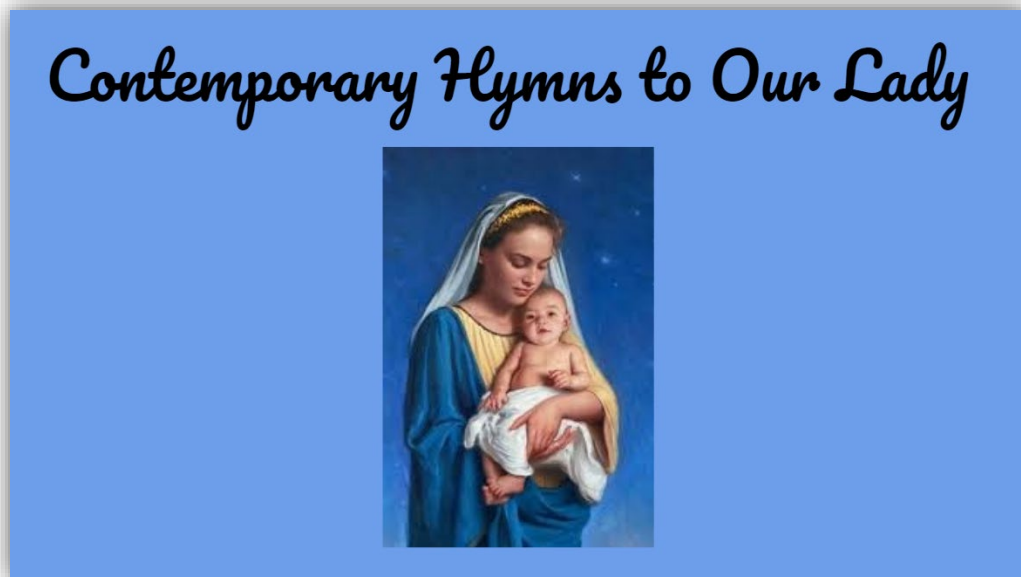
Flower Species	Mary's title	Image
Amaryllis	"Beautiful lady"	
Baby's breath	"Lady's veil"	
Bachelor's buttons	"Mary's crown"	
Bleeding heart -	"Mary's heart"	
Bluets - <i>Houstonia caerulea</i>	"Madonna's eyes"	
Buttercup	"Lady's locks"	
Carnation	"Mary's love of God"	
Chamomile	"Lady's flower"	
Columbine	"Our Lady's shoes"	
Dandelion	"Mary's bitter sorrow"	
Fern	"Lady's hair"	

Flower Species	Mary's title	Image
Forget-me-not	"Eyes of Mary"	
Foxglove	"Our Lady's gloves"	
Geranium	"Lady beautiful"	
Honeysuckle	"Lady's stick"	
Impatiens	"Our Lady's earrings"	
Iris	"Mary as Queen"	
Larkspur	"Mary's tears"	
Lily-of-the-valley	"Our Lady's tears"	
Marigold	"Mary's gold"	
Morning glory	"Our Lady's mantle"	

Flower Species	Mary's title	Image
Ox-Eye daisy	"Mary's star"	
Pansy	"Our Lady's delight"	
Petunia	"Lady's praise"	
Rose - a symbol of Mary herself	"Mystical Rose"	
Rosemary	"Mary's nosegay"	
Sweet pea	"Our Lady's flower" or "Mary's foot"	
Sweet William	"Lady tuft"	
Tulip	"Mary's prayer"	
Violet	"Our Lady's modesty"	
Zinnia	"Little Mary"	

Saturday, 9 May – Contemporary Songs to Our Lady

Click image below for the 'Contemporary Songs to Our Lady' slideshow presentation.



Sunday, 10 May – Family Rosary Relay for the Archbishop's Intentions

Special Intention for 10 May: Engaged Couples

From the 1st to the 31st of May, you are invited to participate in the [Archbishop's Rosary Relay](#). Families, couples and individuals are asked to nominate and pray one decade of the rosary on a day of their choice.

Today we pray from a Scriptural Rosary the 2nd **Luminous Mystery: The Miracle at the Wedding of Cana** for the intention of Engaged Couples.

Lord, grant me the grace of fidelity.

Our Father...

1. On the third day there was a wedding at Cana and the mother of Jesus was there. (Jn 2:1) - **Hail Mary....**
2. Jesus and his disciples were also invited to the wedding. (Jn 2:2) - **Hail Mary....**
3. When the wine ran short, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine." (Jn 2:3) - **Hail Mary....**
4. Jesus said to her, "Woman, how does your concern affect me? My hour has not yet come." (Jn 2:4) - **Hail Mary....**
5. His mother instructed those waiting on table, "Do whatever he tells you." (Jn 2:5) - **Hail Mary....**
6. Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water." And they filled them to the brim. (Jn 2:7) - **Hail Mary....**
7. Then he told them, "Draw some out now and take it to the headwaiter." (Jn 2:8) - **Hail Mary....**
8. And when the headwaiter tasted the water that had become wine without knowing where it had come from, he called the bridegroom. (Jn 2:9) - **Hail Mary....**
9. And said to him, "Every man serves good wine first; and when men have drunk freely, an inferior one, but you have kept the good wine until now." (Jn 2:9-10) - **Hail Mary....**
10. Jesus did this as the beginning of his signs in Cana of Galilee, and so revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him. (Jn 2:11) - **Hail Mary....**

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

O my Jesus, forgive us our sins. Save us from the fires of Hell; lead all souls into Heaven, especially those in most need of Thy mercy. Amen.

Monday, 11 May - Mary under the title of 'Regina Coeli- Queen of Heaven'

The Regina Coeli is one of four Marian antiphons, traditionally said or sung after night prayer (Compline or Vespers), immediately before retiring for sleep. The antiphon is said throughout Eastertide (from Easter Sunday the Resurrection through to Pentecost, the seventh Sunday after Easter).

The other three Marian antiphons are:

1. Alma Redemptoris Mater – Advent to the Presentation of the Lord
2. Ave, Regina Coelorum - Presentation of the Lord to Wednesday of Holy Week
3. The Salva Regina – Pentecost to Advent



In the week prior to Jesus' death we see Mary at the foot of the Cross, having followed his sorrowful passion, her heart pierced by a sword of sorrow as Simeon foretold at the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple. In the Stations of the Cross Mary met Jesus on the way to Calvary and each station with the verse from the *Stabat Mater Dolorosa* hymn (the Sorrowful Mother was standing) reminding us of Jesus' suffering and Mary's seeing her son suffer. Now at the resurrection she rejoices, the Alleluia once silent, returns.

The antiphon reminds Mary, the crowned Mother of the Redeemer of the promise fulfilled in the angel's words, "He is not here; he has been raised, as he said". (Matthew 28:6)

Mary is a Queen of joy and rejoicing because Jesus has risen – all of those aspects contribute to the whole hope of our faith. Lent is over; death is over; fasting and the somber season are over. It is time to sing with Mary, the hope that our destiny may share this Resurrection.

According to Catholic Tradition, during a procession with an image of the Blessed Virgin that was held to pray for the ending of a pestilence in Rome, St Gregory the Great heard angels chanting the first three lines one Easter morning in Rome, while following barefoot in the religious procession of the icon of the Blessed Virgin painted by St Luke the Evangelist. He was thereupon inspired to add the fourth line, after which he saw at the top what in consequence is called the Castel Sant'Angelo a vision of an angel sheathing his sword, thus signifying the cessation of the plague.

Queen of Heaven, rejoice, alleluia.
For he, whom you did merit to bear, alleluia.
Has risen as he said, alleluia.
Pray for us to God, alleluia.

V. Rejoice and be glad, O Virgin Mary, alleluia.
R. For the Lord is truly risen, alleluia.

Let us pray: O God, who gave joy to the world through the resurrection of thy Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, grant we beseech thee, that through the intercession of the Virgin Mary, his Mother, we may obtain the joys of everlasting life.
Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

Tuesday, 12 May – Mystical Rose

Prayerful Reflection

Mystical Rose, Immaculate Virgin, Mother of Mercy, I venerate thee that I might honour thy Divine Son and thereby win His mercy. I ask for thy help in the clemency of thy Maternal Heart in all confidence that I will be heard.

Hail Mary.....

Mystical Rose, Mother of the Saviour, Queen of the Holy Rosary and Mother of the Church, Christ's Mystical Body, I beseech thee on behalf of a war-torn world enslaved by sin, be merciful to those about to be lost for all eternity, especially those who have no one to pray for them, and pray for us, your children through consecration. **Hail Mary.....**

Mystical Rose, Queen of the Apostles and the clergy, grant to priests' hearts docile to thee and thy Motherly Heart, holy zeal for souls and a love of poverty in union with thee and Jesus Christ. I beg thee on behalf of those priests who know you little and seek not thy friendship in the Holy Rosary: pour on them thy mercy and solicitude. **Hail Mary.....**



Mary's Garden, art by Sieger Köder

The Hail Holy Queen – Salve Regina

HAIL, holy Queen, Mother of mercy.

Hail, our life, our sweetness, and our hope!

To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve;

To thee do we send up our sighs,
mourning and weeping in this vale of tears.

Turn then, most gracious advocate,
thine eyes of mercy toward us.

And after this our exile show unto us
the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary.

Mystical Rose,

Help of Christians, pray for us.

Mystical Rose of the Immaculate Conception,
protectress of priests and the consecrated, win them the favour of Jesus Christ!

V. Pray for us, O holy Mother of God.

R. That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Amen

May: devoting 30 days to Mary is called *Tricesimum*,
which was also known as “Lady Month.”

Wednesday, 13 May – Feast of Our Lady of Fatima

Click image below for the 'Our Lady of Fatima' slideshow presentation.



Thursday, 14 May – Our Lady and the Holy Rosary (Part 1)

Our Lady encourages the recitation of the Holy Rosary

The Rosary was not given to the Church in any direct way by Our Lady but rather arose out of popular piety. Nonetheless Our Lady has repeatedly encouraged us to recite it and that fact alone should be enough for those who love her and to endeavour to please her by carrying out her wishes.

Our Lady herself appeared to St Dominic in the 13th century and urged him to use the Rosary in combatting the Albigensian heresy (a heresy which claimed that the God of the Old Testament was evil and that Jesus was not the Son of God, but rather just an angel or a messenger).

In the apparition to St Bernadette in Lourdes in 1858, Our Lady appeared with the Rosary in her hand and recited it together with Bernadette.

And, in Fatima, in 1917, she again appeared holding the Rosary and encouraged the faithful to be diligent in praying the Rosary. In the final apparition of Fatima, Mary identified herself as “the Lady of the Rosary.” She showed the children three tableaux, representing the joyful, sorrowful and glorious mysteries of the Rosary.

Summing up the message of the Rosary at Fatima, Sr Lucy of Fatima, the oldest of the three children, who saw Our Lady there, wrote in a letter to Mother Teresa which was printed in the Portuguese Weekly “A Ordem” in 1978, “Our Lady asked and recommended that we pray the Rosary everyday. She repeated it in all the apparitions, as if wanting to put us on guard so that in these times of diabolical disorientation we would not allow ourselves to be deceived by false doctrines, weakening in the raising of our soul to God in prayer.”

Adapted from:

Understanding the Rosary, Fr John Flader (2011)



Friday, 15 May - Our Lady of Perpetual Succour

The icon of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour (Perpetual Help) is one of the most well-known and loved images of the Blessed Virgin known to Catholics. In the Eastern Orthodox Church the image is known as the “*Virgin Theotokos of the Passion*”

The original icon, enshrined in the Redemptorist Church of St Alphonsus Liguori (formerly the Church of St Matthew and the Church nominated by Our Lady for its veneration) in Rome can be traced back to the thirteenth century to the Keras Kardiotissas Monastery on the island of Crete.

The icon depicts our Blessed Mother Mary, under the title “Mother of God,” (MP-OY) holding the Child Jesus (IC-XC). The Archangels Michael and Gabriel, hovering in the upper corners, hold the instruments of the Passion– St. Michael (OAM) (in the left corner) holds the spear, the wine-soaked sponge, and the crown of thorns, and St. Gabriel (OAT) (in the right corner) holds the cross and the nails.



Original icon

The intent of the artist was to portray the Child Jesus contemplating the vision of His future Passion. The anguish He feels is shown by the loss of one of His sandals. Nevertheless, the icon also conveys the triumph of Christ over sin and death, symbolised by the golden background (a sign of the glory of the Resurrection) and the manner in which the angels hold the instruments, i.e. like trophies gathered up from Calvary on Easter morning.

The eight-pointed star on Our Lady’s veil tells us that she is the Star of the Sea, the Star that leads us to Jesus, highlighting her role in the plan of salvation as both the Mother of God and our Mother. The small ornate cross to the left of the star reinforces this concept. In iconography, Mary here is represented as the *Hodigitria*, the one who guides us to the Redeemer.

Mary’s mouth is small to indicate her spirit of silence and prayer. Her eyes are large, for they see all of our troubles and needs, and are always turned toward us.

Christ’s hands, turned palms down into His Mother’s, indicate that He has placed the graces of the Redemption in her keeping. Our Lady’s hand does not clasp those of her Son, but remains open, inviting us to put our hands in hers along with those of Jesus.



Crowned icon

The Child Jesus wears the colours of royalty, while Our Lady’s red tunic was the colour worn by virgins at the time of Christ. The dark blue mantle was the colour worn by mothers in Palestine. Both Jesus and Our Lady have golden halos, but Christ’s halo is decorated with a cross as a sign of His divinity.

Pope Pius IX placed the golden crowns on the picture (the right side) in 1867 as a token of the many miracles wrought by Our Lady invoked under the title of “Perpetual Succour” (“Perpetual Help”) and centuries of faithful devotion and pilgrimage. In 1865 Pope Pius IX told the Redemptorist Superior General Fr Mauron: “make her known to the world!”

The feast day of the image is celebrated on 27 June, with novena devotions (a *novena* is a nine day period of private or public prayer to obtain special graces).