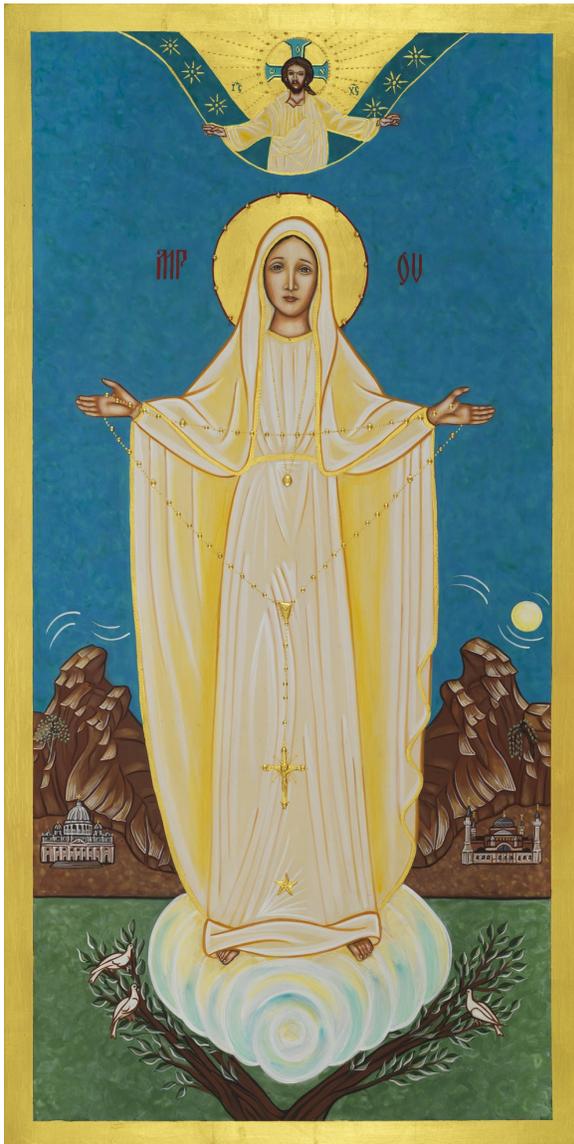

The Month of May and the Blessed Virgin Mary

There has long been a tradition in the Church across centuries and cultures of honouring Mary through special devotions during an extended period of time, although how and when this happened has varied. Since at least 1945, the particular time of the 31 days of May has been officially and universally proclaimed as a Marian month by Pope Pius XII, and is still upheld in our time. During this month, many Christians benefit from an increased special devotion for the Mother of God and our Mother.



Ukrainian Icon of our Lady of Fatima

Aside from the month of May concluding with the Feast of the Visitation of Mary, the memorial Our Lady of Fatima (May 13th) is also celebrated. This apparition in Fatima was preceded by one in Ukraine, in the village of Hrushiv. On the 12th of May, 1914, significantly two weeks before the First World War. Twenty-two people working in the fields near the Church of the Holy Trinity in the village of Hrushiv in western Ukraine witnessed an apparition of the Blessed Virgin.

It was reported that she said, “There will be a war. Russia will become a godless country. The Ukraine, as a nation, will suffer terribly for 80 years – and will have to live through the world wars, but it will be free afterwards.” Mary’s words of warning here are similar to those in Fatima, warning about the godless, atheistic leaders who would then take power for themselves and commit horrible crimes against others. Ukraine’s freedom is now being threatened once again by Russia, which seems to embrace Christianity in theory, but in practice it is through a church that follows the orders of the current regime, rather than putting Christ and his Gospel first.



There are nearly as many Marian devotions as there are people who practice them. These are just some of the typical ways to honour Mary during the month of May:

-Pray the Rosary more regularly, or change how you pray it to deepen that prayer. I enjoy taking walks while praying the Rosary, something much more enjoyable with our nice weather. Perhaps look into guided reflections to help meditate on the mysteries of our Lord's life.

-Place an image or statue of Mary in your home, especially in a place devoted to prayer. Do you have some concrete helps to aid in your personal prayer life? Images of the saints remind us of their friendship and support, which is perhaps known in a unique way in Mary, our Mother.

-Place a crown of flowers on a statue of Mary, and one for Jesus if he happens to be in her arms. God has crowned Mary as Queen of Heaven and Earth because her Son is King. A crown reminds us of the beautiful virtues and glory she lived in her earthly time, and our call to imitate her so that we might also achieve a heavenly crown.

-Rediscover the great tradition of taking a moment in your day to pray the Angelus prayer. The Angelus prayer reminds us of the Incarnation of Jesus with the event of the Annunciation with Mary. Such a core event of our faith can be a good refuge for us periodically in our daily life. This prayer was usually prayed at 6 a.m., noon, and 6 p.m, as a way to "pray always" and sanctify all moments with God's presence.

-Read a book from one of the saints on Mary. St. Louis de Montfort has some great ones! His two most notable ones are *The Secret of the Holy Rosary* and *True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary*. Such spiritual classics are an excellent example of the French school of spirituality, which places Mary and Jesus at the heart of all things.

-Singing Marian hymns and songs. Do you have some favourites? What about learning a new one? There are so many that beautifully illustrate different dimensions of Mary's role in salvation, her relationship with her Son, and with us.

I'm not sure if many of you have had the opportunity to see our parish's monstrance up close, but it powerfully demonstrates the love of Mary, who holds up her Son so all can adore him in the Eucharist, he who was given flesh and life by his mother now gives it to us that we may live. Perhaps you'd like to make May special, to stop into the church for some quiet prayer, pray the rosary and spend time before Jesus in the tabernacle. Pope Francis has asked all Christians pray the rosary each day of May for peace between Ukraine and Russia.

"For we never give more honour to Jesus than when we honour his Mother, and we honour her simply and solely to honour him all the more perfectly. We go to her only as a way leading to the goal we seek — Jesus, her Son."
(St. Louis Marie de Montfort; *True Devotion to Mary*, #94).

Totus tuus.
Fr. Brian Trueman

