

The Joys of Mary

Traditionally, the Church contemplates Mother Mary's sorrows. Here is a devotion based on her joys. You are invited to ponder her ecstatic moments, feeling the peace, the triumph, the surprise, the relief, the wonderment and the gratitude that she experienced.

1/. She is greeted by the Angel Gabriel: "Rejoice, you who enjoy God's favour! The Lord is with you... Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favour with God. Behold, you will conceive in your womb and give birth to a son, and you shall name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High."

2/. She is affirmed by Elizabeth who, filled with the Holy Spirit, calls her "the mother of my Lord."

3/. She can no longer contain her exhilaration and bursts out in song, humbly admitting to Elizabeth: "My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour, for he has looked upon the lowliness of his handmaid. Behold, from now on, all generations will call me blessed. For the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name."

4/. The Lord's angel tells Joseph in a dream to take Mary as his wife: what is conceived in her is by the Holy Spirit. Their Son would save his people from their sins.

5/. Joseph and Mary arrive in Bethlehem, city of ancestor David. They find a place to stay. Jesus is born. Mary is bathed in rapturous jubilation as she gazes upon her beautiful Son, pressing him ever so tenderly to her maternal heart.

6/. The angel of the Lord appears in glory to shepherds and announces that the new-born baby wrapped in swaddling clothes lying in a manger in Bethlehem is the Saviour, Messiah and Lord. They come to tell Mary and Joseph. Mary treasures all these things and ponders them in her heart.

7/. At the presentation in the temple, Simeon, guided by the Holy Spirit, sees baby Jesus. Satisfied that he is the Christ, he prophesies about him. Also, the holy prophetess Anna thanks God and speaks of Jesus to many.

8/. Led by a star, wise men come with gifts from the East to adore Jesus – referring to him as the infant king of the Jews.

9/. The angel of the Lord alerts Joseph in a dream to get up, take the child and his mother, and depart for Egypt by night. They are to stay there until further notice. They escape slaughter by Herod. The three wise men likewise returned home unharmed.

10/. When Herod dies, the angel of the Lord tells Joseph in a dream to go with child and mother to Israel. Informed by the angel in another dream, Joseph withdraws to Galilee, settling in Nazareth. Again and again, Joseph proves to be guided by the Lord. Mary is very happy to have a holy and totally trustworthy husband.

11/. At age twelve, unknown to his parents, Jesus stays behind in Jerusalem after the customary days of celebrating the Passover feast, while Mary and Joseph travel homeward to Nazareth. After three days of anxious searching, they find him safe and sound in the temple sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. Mary is glad to hear the teachers' admiration and praise of Jesus for his understanding and his answers. She is also happy to hear Jesus himself say: "Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" She keeps these in her heart.

12/. Jesus lives obediently under his parents in Nazareth, and grows up a very good boy, increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.

13/. Around the age of thirty, Jesus is baptized by John at the River Jordan. Immediately afterwards, the heavens open, and the Spirit of God descends on him like a dove. A voice from heaven is heard, certifying, "This is my beloved Son, with him I am well pleased."

14/. Before beginning his ministry Jesus is publicly identified by John the Baptist as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

15/. At the wedding feast in Cana of Galilee, prompted by his mother, Jesus works his first miracle, changing water into wine. It manifests his glory; and the disciples believe in him.

16/. In the power of the Spirit, Jesus goes about the Holy Land doing good, preaching, healing, performing miracles, and proclaiming the Kingdom of God. His followers multiply in number.

17/. On Palm Sunday, Jesus enters Jerusalem triumphantly. The people honour him, crying aloud: "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest."

18/. At the Last Supper, Jesus institutes the Holy Eucharist. Henceforth, he is physically present on earth with his Church, and nourishing her members with his own body and blood.

19/. Jesus' love is boundless. He does not hesitate to give his life as a ransom for his people; he allows himself to be humiliated, mistreated and crucified. From the cross, he tells his Father: "Father, forgive them; they do not know what they are doing." There is no bitterness.

20/. Jesus assures the repentant thief, "This day you will be with me in Paradise!" Mary is overjoyed to see her Son rescuing his people, for that was why he came into the world.

21/. Jesus does not forget his mother; to her, and then to the beloved disciple he says: "Woman, this is your son! ... This is your mother!" And from that hour the disciple takes her into his own home.

22/. The Son of God is the only person who can redeem the world. Jesus does not appeal to his Father for legions of angels to call off his suffering and death. He exclaims: "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit."

23/. With his last breath, Jesus declares: "It is fulfilled." Seeing how Jesus died, the Roman centurion asserts: "Truly, this man was the Son of God."

24/. Jesus is placed in the tomb. He suffers no more. He descends to the dead to free the holy souls.

25/. On the third day Jesus rises after his holy death. He is vindicated in glory. The bodies of many righteous people who died are raised, and coming out of the tombs they appear in Jerusalem.

26/. Jesus shows himself to his friends and disciples. He spends forty wonderful days with them in Galilee.

27/. Jesus is taken up to Heaven and sits at the right hand of God.

28/. "Then the apostles returned to Jerusalem from the hill called the Mount of Olives, a Sabbath day's walk from the city. When they arrived, they went upstairs to the room where they were staying... They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers." (Acts 1:12-14, NIV)

29/. At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit comes upon all of them. Filled with the Holy Spirit, the disciples go about the country and beyond, doing good, preaching, healing, performing miracles, and proclaiming the Kingdom of God and the sacred and imperishable good news of eternal salvation.

Mother Mary is overwhelmed with surprise and joy to see the uneducated fishermen so suddenly become full of spiritual knowledge and eloquence, and miraculous powers.

Thousands are converted.

30/. When the course of her earthly life is completed, Mary is taken up body and soul into Heaven.

31/. Mary is exalted by the Lord as Queen over all things.

32/. In Heaven, the Mother of God continues to care for her children. Throughout the centuries, countless miracles are attributed to her manifold intercession. At various times, God sends her to appear on earth to guide the Church.

33/. At this very moment, as you bring her and her history into your heart, and speak with her, she is joyful beyond words.