

Franciscan Crown Rosary in the *FUN Manual*

At the same time, Francis placed Mary as the Protectress of the Franciscan family: she holds a special place in our hearts and lives. There are some very authentic and specifically Franciscan ways of expressing this relationship. One option for our daily Office, for example, is the Little Office of the Virgin Mary, in its contemporary form, patterned after the Liturgy of the Hours. We have the Franciscan Crown Rosary, the “seven joys of Mary.” So, while it would be inappropriate to make the Crown our normative prayer at fraternity meetings, at certain times of the year, particularly May or October, this may be a wonderful form of communal prayer. And in all of this, like the Franciscan life in general, we must always remember that we are people of our own time, and that we cannot and should not slavishly try to imitate Medieval spirituality.

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As stated previously by Pope Paul VI, our own Franciscan tradition holds up for our consideration two devotions to Mary as alternative means of praying the Liturgy of the Hours: the Franciscan Crown Rosary and the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin. Francis noted Mary to be the first disciple of our Lord. He followed her example unreservedly. He urges us to do the same.

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The Franciscan Crown also shows honor to the Blessed Virgin Mother. It is the rosary of the seven joys of Mary and is appropriate for Franciscans to recite. The story behind the Franciscan Crown Rosary came about in the year 1422 when a young man who daily adorned a statue of Mary with a wreath of flowers was upset that he could not continue to do so since he had entered the friary. As the story is told, Mary appeared to him and asked him to give her a crown of flowers in the form of reciting seven decades of Hail Marys in honor of her seven joys: The Annunciation, the visit to Elizabeth, the Nativity, the adoration of the Magi, locating Jesus in the Temple, experiencing the Risen Jesus on Easter and her Assumption. This devotion quickly was said through the Franciscan family. At a later point in time, the seven decades were followed with two Hail Marys in honor of the seventy-two years that it is believed she lived. One Our Father and Hail Mary were also added for the intention of the pope.

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