

The Franciscan Crown

The Seven Joys of Our Lady

As we noted in yesterday's presentation from the very beginning, Christians continued the Jewish tradition of praying and singing the 150 psalms as part of their sacred routine of daily prayer.

By the Middle Ages, a largely illiterate population could neither appreciate the historical events to which the psalms referred, nor could they memorize and recite the psalms in Latin.

What became known as the rosary was the recitation of the Our Father and Hail Mary that were counted off on a ring of beads numbering 150. [Before the introduction of the Mysteries of Light by Pope John Paul II].

The mysteries of the New Testament were meditated upon within the "mirror" of the 150 Old Testament psalms.

The repetition allowed for a rhythmic breathing, leading the participants to an inner place of peace and calm.

The rosary eventually became a favoured personal devotion among many people, include the learned laity and religious.

The name *rosary* was derived from the rose, a flower having a great depth of symbolism. One of the spiritual titles given to Our Lady, *Mystical Rose*, referred to her womb as the developing flower of Christ the Saviour.

Also, the patient unfolding of the five concentric petals of the rose was likened to our own patient mastery of the five senses, the integration of all the creative and life-communicating energies of a human person.

Yet the blossoming of the spiritual life could only be achieved and maintained by the defensive “thorn” of daily perseverance.

The Franciscan rosary, or as it is properly called, *The Franciscan Crown*, dated to the early part of the 15th century. At that time a young man who found spiritual joy in weaving a crown of wild flowers for a beautiful statue of Mary decided to enter the Franciscans.

After entering the community, he was saddened when he no longer found the time to gather flowers for his personal devotion. One evening while feeling tempted to leave the Order, he received a vision of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

The Virgin Mother encouraged the young novice to persevere by reminding him of the joyfulness of the Franciscan spirit. She also instructed him to meditate daily on seven joyful events from her own life as a new form of the rosary.

Instead of a crown of flowers, the novice would weave a crown of prayers. Before long, many other Franciscans began to pray the *Crown* and soon it spread to the entire Order, becoming officially established in in 1422.

In addition to developing this Marian devotion, the Franciscans are credited with adding the final words to the Hail Mary, *Holy Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death.*

A Franciscan pope, Sixtus IV (~471-85), introduced the feast of the Immaculate Conception and the feast of Saint Joseph as *husband* of Mary. He also issued the first papal pronouncement encouraging the rosary as an invaluable instrument of personal and public conversion.

What are these seven joyful events in the life of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

[Powerpoint]

1. The Annunciation
2. The Visitation
3. The Birth of Christ
4. The Adoration of the Magi
5. The finding of the Child Jesus in the Temple
6. The meeting of Christ after the Resurrection

7. The Assumption and Coronation of the Blessed Virgin as Queen of Heaven and Earth.

Two Hail Mary's are added after the seventh decade to make a total of 72, a number honouring the traditional belief of Mary's 72 years of life on earth.

Antiphon from the *Office of the Passion*:

Holy Virgin Mary,
among the women born into the world,
there is no one like you.
Daughter and servant
of the most high and supreme King
and of the Father in heaven,
Mother of our most holy Lord Jesus Christ,
Spouse of the Holy Spirit,
pray for us
with Saint Michael the Archangel,
all the powers of heaven
and all the saints,
at the side of your most holy beloved Son,
our Lord and Teacher. (FA:ED, 1:141)