

The New Memorial of Our Lady, Mother of the Church



“Mary is at once Mother of Christ, the Son of God, and mother of the members of his Mystical Body, which is the Church.”

One way of honoring Our Lady, Mother of the Church, daily might be to pray this threefold Angelus

Fr. Stanley Smolenski, SPMA

On Nov. 21, 1964, during the Second Vatican Council, Blessed Pope Paul VI gave official status to the title of “Mother of the Church” to Our Lady. He then named an ancient image of her as such and dedicated an altar in her honor in St. Peter’s Basilica. In 1975 a Votive Mass in honor of her under this title was presented with no specified date for its celebration. In 1981, St. John Paul II placed a beautiful mosaic reproduction of her on the Apostolic Palace overlooking St. Peter’s square.

On Feb. 11, 2018, the Vatican issued a Decree for the establishment of an obligatory memorial Mass of Our Lady, Mother of the Church, to be celebrated on the Monday after Pentecost. The Decree states that the purpose is “to encourage the growth of the maternal sense of the Church.” This document presents three important mysteries that are foundational to that theme: the Annunciation, Calvary and Pentecost.

There are an additional three Masses honoring Our Lady as the Image and Mother of the Church presented in the special volume of *The Masses of the Blessed Virgin Mary*. The text for the first one is the same as that of 1975 found in the Roman Missal. The individual Prefaces for each presents the theme of that particular Mass.

The first is ‘Mary is the Image and Mother of the Church’ emphasizing the three moments in Mary’s life which develop her Motherhood of the Church. The first is the Annunciation. Many early theologians saw in this mystery Mary’s conception of not only of Christ’s physical body but also spiritually as well, that is, his Mystical Body of which he is the head, making her Mother of the Mystical Body of Christ, and therefore of the Church. The second event was her presence on Calvary where she maternally ‘welcomes all people in the person of the beloved disciple, John.’ He, in turn, accepts her ‘with filial affection’, as a model for other disciples. The third episode is Pentecost, where she assumes her maternal role ‘as a caring guide to the emerging Church.’

The theme of the second Mass is ‘Our Lady as an Example of True Worship.’ The focus here is on her spiritual disposition. Its Preface presents her as the Virgin who listens and treasures God’s word with joy. As the Virgin of Prayer, recalling her hymn of praise at the Visitation, she sings of God’s mercy; then, at Cana she intercedes for the needs of the bride and groom, and then prays with the apostles at Pentecost. She becomes not only the Virgin Mother of Christ, but, at the foot of the cross, is also proclaimed the mother of the people of the New Covenant. She is the Virgin who offers, sharing in the self-offering of her Son at the Presentation in the Temple. Finally, she is the Virgin who keeps vigil, awaiting with unwavering hope, the resurrection of her Son and looking forward to the coming of the Holy Spirit.

The theme of the third Mass is the Blessed Virgin as the Resplendent Image of the Church in its Future Glory – by her unsurpassed purity of faith, a bride of Christ in an unbreakable bond of love. Then follows a litany of descriptions: united with his suffering, a mother by the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit, filled with loving concern for all her children, a queen adorned with jewels of grace, robed with the sun and crowned with stars, sharing in the eternal glory of her Lord.

These three Masses in honor of Mary, Mother of the Church, recall all the major themes of Mariology for our meditation and growth in the appreciation of the glory of our celestial Mother.

We should recall that the Church is experienced on four levels: the universal level as well as the local/diocesan level, also on the parochial and domestic levels. So, she is Mother of the Universal Church, the Mother of our Local Church [Diocese] and the Mother of our Parish and Mother of our Family. St. Paul refers to the local communities in his Epistles as Churches whereas ‘diocese’ is a canon law term. The Book of Revelations opens with Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia.

One way of honoring Our Lady, Mother of the Church, daily is by praying this threefold Angelus – which follows the three mysteries presented in the Decree.

A THREEFOLD ANGELUS
REMEMBERING OUR LADY AND MOTHER AT MORNING, NOON AND NIGHT

(Imprimatur granted April 23, 2018, by Most Reverend Robert E. Guglielmo, Bishop of Charleston, South Carolina)

The Joyful Angelus – Incarnation
[Morning]

- V.** The Angel of the Lord declared unto Mary
R. And she conceived by the Holy Spirit....**Hail Mary...**
- V.** Behold the handmaid of the Lord,
R. Be it done unto me according to your word....**Hail Mary...**
- V.** And the Word became flesh
R. And dwelt among us... **Hail Mary...**
- V.** Pray for us, O holy Mother of God.
R. That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Let us pray:

Pour forth, we beseech you, O God, your grace into our hearts that we to whom the Incarnation of Christ, your Son, was made known by the message of an Angel, may be his passion and cross be brought to the glory of his resurrection. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Sorrowful Angelus – Redemption
[Noon]

- V.** Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother
R. And the Apostle whom he loved....**Hail Mary...**
- V.** Jesus said to his mother, “Woman, behold your son.”
R. And to his disciple, he said, “Behold your mother.”....**Hail Mary...**
- V.** And from that hour,
R. He made a place for her in his home....**Hail Mary...**
- V.** Pray for us, O Sorrowful and Immaculate Heart of Mary.
R. That we may be worthy of the promises of Christ.

Let us pray:

Eternal Father, as your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, hung on the cross for our redemption, his mother stood by him to the end. Grant that we who commemorate her compassion may imitate her fidelity by carrying our cross daily. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Glorious Angelus – Sanctification [Evening]

- V. All were in constant prayer
R. With Mary, the mother of Jesus....**Hail Mary**...
- V. Tongues of fire appeared
R. And rested on each of them....**Hail Mary**...
- V. All were filled with the Holy Spirit
R. And spoke of the wonderful works of God....**Hail Mary**...
- V. Pray for us, O Mary, Mother of the Church,
R. That we may become worthy of the promises of Christ.

Let us pray:

O God, you empowered the Apostles and disciples of Jesus with the Holy Spirit as they prayed with Mary, his mother. Grant that, by her intercession, we may become worshipers and witnesses in spirit and in truth. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Fr. Stanley Smolenski, SPMA, is rector of the Shrine of Our Lady of South Carolina, Mother of Joyful Hope, in Kingstree, South Carolina.

