

Spiritual Message: October 2010

On October 4th we celebrate the solemnity of our Seraphic Father Francis and we recall his rich legacy that he passed on to us as we seek to live the Gospel of Christ Jesus as Franciscans. Among the charisms of St. Francis we recognize his great love and understanding of the role of the Blessed Virgin Mary in our salvation and in the life of the Church.

The Church has traditionally promoted the month of October as the month of the Holy Rosary. As Franciscans we also have the beautiful devotion of the Seven Joys of Our Lady - the Franciscan Crown in which we contemplate with Our Lady the joys of her participation in the mysteries of salvation; the joy of knowing and receiving the goodness of God which in Our Lady can be seen in Her fullness of Grace. The Rosary and Crown have been described as the Gospel on beads. From our devotion to the Rosary and to the Crown, we learn to see the face of the merciful Christ with the faith and trust of Our Lady. We recall the mysteries of our salvation in union with the Mother of God and assisted by Her to grow in the virtues of the recalled events, such Mary's obedience to the Father, Her trust in Christ, Her charity and faith, and Her docility to the Holy Spirit. Her Immaculate Heart teaches us to direct our hearts in union with Her total obedience and surrender to the will of God. Our Blessed Mother helps us to live as minors that we may first seek the Kingdom of God.

The tradition of the Franciscan crown goes back to the late 14th century. A young man who had entered the Franciscan Order was no longer allowed to offer a crown made of flowers that he used to collect for Our Lady each day. The Mother of God appeared to the young novice who had become saddened by this. The Blessed Virgin encouraged him in joyful perseverance of his vocation by a daily meditation of the seven joys of Her life. Instead of offering a daily crown of flowers to Mary, the novice would now offer a daily crown of prayers to Our Lady. This devotion spread and became officially established in 1422.

The seven Joys are prayed as seven decades, followed by prayers for the Pope's intentions and an extra two Hail Marys so that the crown consists of 72 Aves to honour the Franciscan tradition of the seventy-two years our Lady lived on earth.

The Seven Joys are as follows:

1. The Annunciation.
2. The Visitation.
3. The Birth of Our Lord.
4. The adoration of the Magi.
5. The finding of the Child Jesus in the Temple.
6. Our Lady meets Christ after His Resurrection.
7. The Assumption and Coronation of Our Lady.

Maybe as a fraternity we could recite the Crown together and offer the Joys for the various intentions we bring to Jesus through Mary. As Australians we should pray in

thanksgiving for our new Saint Mary of the Cross (MacKillop). Let us pray that her life will be an inspiration that will encourage many to live lives in service to Christ especially for the needy of our society and our youth. As Our Lady encouraged the young novice, may Our Lady help us to encourage our youth today especially to see the great gift of the Franciscan life whether as religious or seculars. Many of our youth have no joy in their lives. They are frustrated, confused and bored. We have been particularly asked by the Church as Secular Franciscans to try and reach out to them. How can we do this through our local fraternities? How can we guide our youth towards Christ? Let us entrust these challenges especially to Our Lady, for She truly knows that with God all things are possible.