



"News for the Soul"

A Monthly Newsletter Sponsored by the
Legion of Mary
St. Matthew the Apostle Parish
Gahanna, Ohio

O Mary, conceived without sin. Pray
for us who have recourse to you.

MAY 2023 NEWSLETTER

Mary's Month – Why May?



The month of May is traditionally dedicated to Mary in many cultures. May is considered the season of the beginning of new life. Already in Greek culture, May was dedicated to Artemis, the goddess of fecundity. In Roman culture, May was dedicated to Flora, the goddess of blossoms. The Romans celebrated *ludi florales* (literally: floral games) at the end of April, asking the intercession of Flora for all that blooms. This is also related to the medieval practice of expelling winter. First of May was considered the beginning of growth.

At one time, the custom of having a "Mary-month" was independent from the month of May. A very old tradition known as *Tricesimum* (or: Thirty-Day Devotion to Mary; also called Lady Month) was originally held from 15 August - 14 September. The exact dates or origin of this devotion are unknown, but the custom is still practiced here and there.

Mary Month, though not assigned to a specific period, has been known since baroque times. This devotion was comprised of about thirty spiritual exercises in honor of Mary.

Since medieval times, Mary and the month of May have been associated together. Then, both Mary and the month were greeted, welcomed, and celebrated on specific days in May. Now, the whole month of May has become the month of Mary.

A Prayer for Mothers

(Mothers' Day is Sunday 14 May)

O God, who entered our world through the Blessed Virgin Mary, bless the women who gave us life and fed and filled us with their love and understanding.

*Grant all mothers' patience to put up with pettiness,
mercy to forgive mistakes,
wisdom to overcome weakness,
strength to survive difficulties,
humor to lighten heavy loads,
and happiness all their days.*

*For words unspoken or unkind,
for missed opportunities,
for failing to help or hear,
forgive us, our faults, O Lord.*



*Into Your hands we commend the souls of mothers
no longer with us, and the health and wellbeing of
mothers young and old, through and with whom we
continue to enjoy and share the miracle of life.*

Amen.



Please pray for the Pope's intentions for the month of May:

For Church movements and groups

We pray that Church movements and groups may rediscover their mission of evangelization each day, placing their own charisms at the service of needs in the world.

Marian Feast Days for May:

13 May – Our Lady of Fatima

31 May – Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary

10 May - Feast Day for St. Damien of Molokai

Canonized as a saint in 2009, the man who would become St. Damien of Molokai was born Jozef De Veuster in rural Belgium in 1840. Drawn to religious life, he joined the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary as a brother, while still a young man. He took the name Damien, after a sixth century martyr.

In 1864, Br. Damien was sent to Hawaii, where his order was beginning its missionary work. He was ordained as a priest two months later and worked on the island of Hawaii for nine years. But he prayed for a special mission.

The leper colony at Molokai was established by the government of Hawaii in 1866. From 1866 through 1969, about 8,000 Hawaiians were sent to the Kalaupapa peninsula for medical quarantine. The Royal Board of Health initially provided the quarantined people with food and other supplies, but it did not have the workforce and resources to offer proper health care, and the lepers were incapable of growing their own crops or caring for one another due to the nature of the disease. While Bishop Louis Désiré Maigret, the vicar apostolic of the Honolulu diocese, believed that the lepers needed a Catholic priest to assist them, he realized that this assignment had high risk. He did not want to send any one person "in the name of obedience." After much

prayer, four priests volunteered to go, among them Fr. Damien. The bishop planned for the volunteers to take turns in rotation assisting the inhabitants.

In May 1873, the first volunteer, Fr. Damien, arrived at the isolated settlement at Kalaupapa, where there were then six hundred lepers. At his arrival, he spoke to the assembled lepers as "one who will be a father to you, and who loves you so much that he does not hesitate to become one of you; to live and die with you."

Fr. Damien worked with them to build a church and establish the Parish of Saint Philomena on Molokai. In addition to serving as a priest and spreading the Catholic faith to the lepers, he chose to live and work among them as an equal – he dressed residents' ulcers, built a reservoir, built homes and furniture, made coffins, and dug graves. Fr. Damien told the lepers that despite what the outside world thought of them, they were always precious in the eyes of God.

Father Damien provided comfort for the lepers of Molokai for 16 years. He gave the people not only faith but also homes and his medical expertise. He would pray at the cemetery for the deceased and comfort the dying at their bedsides. He himself died of leprosy at the age of forty-nine, among the lepers he knew as family.

Sources: Adapted from Catholic Online and Wikipedia.

