



PASTORAL REFLECTION ~ CROWNING AN IMAGE OF THE BLESSED MOTHER

From the Office of Worship of the Diocese of Dallas

INTRODUCTION

The Second Vatican Council saw to it that, in the writing of *Lumen Gentium* (the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, 1964), Mary is “united to all those who are to be saved”¹ and that she was hailed as a significant and outstanding model of faith and charity. Mary’s own life was a pilgrimage of faith. While the Second Vatican Council did not intend to promote a new vision of Mary, the Council fathers supported devotions to Mary *through the fullness and glorification of Jesus*. Pope Paul VI called for theologians to note the situations of women today in a modern world and asked that Mary not be characterized as the passive, humble maid. He asked that Mary be presented as a *model of faith*, by the way that she fully and responsibly accepted the will of God (cf. Luke 1:38). Pope Paul VI noted that Mary could be appreciated

“based on what we find in Scripture. For example, the Mary we find in the Gospels is a woman who is willing to make decisions that will have an impact on the direction of the world. She gives her active consent, not to the solution of a contingent problem, but to [an] ‘event of world importance,’ the Incarnation of the Word.”²

THE OFFICIAL RITE OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Order of Crowning an Image of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Summary of Guidelines

1. The rite of crowning an image of the Blessed Virgin Mary can take place either within Mass or outside of Mass. The official rite provides text for either event. The rite is best celebrated on a Marian solemnity or feast, but should never happen on a solemnity of Our Lord or on a penitential day (so, not during Lent). The crowning is not technically restricted to the month of May. If it is planned for within Mass, it takes places **after the homily**.
2. If the crowning takes place outside of Mass, it is best planned during Vespers of Our Lady or at a Liturgy of the Word.
3. **What is needed:** candles, flowers, a vessel of holy water and a sprinkler, plus the crown for the image. The candles and flowers should be arranged around or near the image, not blocking the sight lines to the image.
4. **What about the crown**—fresh flowers or silk? Many resources actually suggest that a crown be made of a precious metal with precious stones—but this type of lavishness would certainly be misunderstood. The crown should be in harmony with the image, and

¹ *Lumen Gentium*, n. 53

² Campbell, James P. *Mary and the Saints*, The National Conference for Catechetical Leadership, Chicago, IL : Loyola Press, 2002. p.79.

it seems sensible that it be “permanently crafted” of silk flowers. Fresh flowers would be difficult to maintain for any period of time.

5. **Who is the “minister” of the crowning and how does it happen?** During the Mass, the priest (or bishop) stands after the homily is finished. The congregation stands also. The servers, some of the lay faithful, a family, or others designated should bring forward the crown to the priest. The priest uses the ritual and says the prayer of thanksgiving. The server brings a vessel of holy water and the sprinkler to the deacon (if there is one), and the priest sprinkles the crown. The priest or the bishop may then take the crown to the image and carefully place it on/near it. (Remember that the image can be a statue, a painting, or even a mosaic.) A lay person may also crown an image of the Blessed Mother. **Outside of Mass**, a priest, deacon or lay minister could lead the Liturgy of the Word or a Vespers service.
6. Sometimes, if the image cannot be brought into the sanctuary, it is blessed and crowned where it is located, perhaps in the back/side of the church or even outside in a prayer garden area. If the crowning needs to happen in a place outside of the body of the church, then it makes sense to do it after Mass, using a Liturgy of the Word service. Sometimes a teacher may plan for a crowning of an image of Mary within a school classroom. August 22nd is the Feast of the Queenship of Our Lady. This is an example of a time to plan a Liturgy of the Word and crown an image of the Blessed Virgin Mary, outside of the traditional month of May.

MUSIC NOTES

Crowning during the celebration of Mass:

- Marian hymn/music (any language) sung after the blessing of the crown, to support the procession to the place of crowning
- Song about/to the Blessed Virgin Mary during/after the crowning

During a Sunday celebration, it is not appropriate to replace the psalm response with a Marian antiphon, although another Marian hymn or song may be performed during the Preparation of the Gifts. It is more appropriate to plan a Closing Song that reflects the congregation being sent forth in mission, to become Jesus Christ to one another, rather than to sing another Marian hymn or song.

APPROVED TEXT

There is an approved set of texts that are found in the ritual book *Order of Crowning an Image of the Blessed Virgin Mary*. The texts include suggestions for readings (for Liturgy of the Word, which would be the type of celebration that you plan for outside of Mass), and they provide a script for the presiding minister. Please contact the Office of Worship and we will send you copies of the approved text. The texts are in English.

This is what the ritual book looks like. It is currently out of print. (You may want to search your parish sacristy for a copy.) Copies are usually available online through www.amazon.com if your parish is interested.

