

Devotions are "external practices of piety" which are not part of the official liturgy of the **Catholic Church** but are part of the popular spiritual practices of **Catholics**.

At **St Monica and St Lucy Parishes**, there are many examples of devotions that are practiced by parishioners, either individually or as a group. Some may be unfamiliar and others commonly practiced.

Marian Devotions

Of the various devotions, there are several that are directed to Mary the Mother of God. A **Marian devotion** in **Christianity** is directed to the person of the **Blessed Virgin Mary**.

Such prayers or acts may be accompanied by specific requests for Mary's **intercession** with **God**. There are many Marian devotions, ranging from multi-day prayers such as **Novenas**, the veneration of **icons** in **Eastern Christianity**, and activities which do not involve prayers, such as the wearing of **scapulars**

(Special note here, St Monica Parish is a sister parish to the Mary Mother of God Parish in Vladivostok, Russia.)

Devotion to the Virgin Mary does not amount to worship - which is reserved for God; e.g. both Catholics and the Eastern Orthodox view Mary as subordinate to Christ, but uniquely so, in that she is seen as above all other creatures. In fact, in 787 AD the **Second Council of Nicaea** affirmed a three-level hierarchy that applies to God, the Virgin Mary, and then to the other **saints**.

A wide range of Marian devotions are practiced by Roman Catholics and the **Catechism of the Catholic Church** item 971 states: "The Church's devotion to the Blessed Virgin is intrinsic to Christian worship".

In his Apostolic Letter *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, **Pope St John Paul II** emphasized the importance of **Marian** devotions by quoting Saint **Louis de Montfort**:

Since Mary is of all creatures the one most conformed to Jesus Christ, it follows that among all devotions that which most consecrates and conforms a soul to our Lord is devotion to Mary, his Holy Mother, and that the more a soul is consecrated to her the more will it be consecrated to Jesus Christ.

Roman Catholic teachings and traditions includes specific devotions as *Acts of Reparation to the Virgin Mary* for insults that she suffers. The **Raccolta** Catholic prayer book (approved by a Decree of 1854, and published by the **Holy See** in 1898) includes a number of such prayers.

Devotions to the **Immaculate Heart of Mary** date back to **St. Bernard** and in the 17th century **Saint Jean Eudes** obtained the approbation and the first book on the devotion to the **Hearts of Jesus and Mary**. However, the 1830 reported **vision** of Saint **Catherine Labouré** which introduced the **Miraculous Medal** depicting the thorn-crowned Heart of Jesus and the pierced Heart of Mary had a significant impact on the devotion. One Marian devotion which is near and dear to us at St Monica is the yearly Novena of the Miraculous Medal.

Pope **Pius XII** consecrated the human race to the Immaculate Heart on December 8, 1942. Other doctrine-based devotions include the **Immaculate Conception** which was declared a dogma in 1854 In the 20th century Saint **Maximillian Kolbe** encouraged **consecration to the Immaculata**, partly relying on the 1858 messages of **Our Lady of Lourdes**.

Devotions involving the recitation and contemplation of the Mysteries of the Rosary are part of the popular spiritual practices of Catholics.

Mysteries of the Rosary

The **rosary** is part of Catholic veneration of Mary, which has been promoted by numerous popes. In the 16th century, **Pope Pius V** associated the rosary with the **General Roman Calendar** by instituting the Feast of Our Lady of Victory (later changed to **Our Lady of the Rosary**), which is celebrated on 7 October.

Pope **Leo XIII**, known as "The Rosary Pope", issued twelve **encyclicals** and five **apostolic letters** on the rosary and added the invocation *Queen of the most Holy Rosary* to the Litany of Loreto. **Pope Pius XII** and his successors actively promoted veneration of the Virgin in **Lourdes and Fatima**, which is credited with a new resurgence of the rosary within the Catholic Church. **Pope John Paul II** (whose pontificate had major Marian themes) issued the Apostolic Letter *Rosarium Virginis Mariae* which built on the "total Marian devotion".

On 3 May 2008, **Pope Benedict XVI** stated that the Rosary was experiencing a new springtime: "It is one of the most eloquent signs of love that the young generation nourish for Jesus and his Mother". To Benedict XVI, the rosary is a meditation on all important moments of salvation history.

The **Congregation for Divine Worship's** directory of popular piety and the liturgy emphasizes the Christian meditation/meditative aspects of the rosary, and states that the Rosary is essentially a contemplative prayer, which requires "tranquility of rhythm or even a mental lingering which encourages the faithful to meditate on the mysteries of the Lord's life." The Congregation for Divine Worship also emphasizes the importance of the rosary as a formative component of spiritual life.

The theologian **Romano Guardini** thus defined the Roman Catholic emphasis on the rosary as "participation in the life of Mary, whose focus was Christ."^[6] This view had been endorsed by Leo XIII who viewed the rosary as a vital means to participate in the life of Mary and to find the way to Christ.

During the Pontificate of **Pope Saint John Paul II**, an additional set of mysteries for reflection were introduced -The **Luminous Mysteries**- which complemented the 'original' three sets of Mysteries-The Joyful, Sorrowful and the Glorious Mysteries. With this addition, the complete Rosary, represents the entire spiritual cycle of Christ on earth from the beginning Annunciation to Mary of Christ within her, through His life, His gifts to His people, His suffering and glorification and finally the honor bestowed on Mary by her Assumption and Glorification in Heaven.

Our Knights of Columbus Council has made available a small booklet explaining all the mysteries. It is titled: "How to pray the rosary". These booklets are located on the table at the back of the Church. Take one to keep in your pocket, wallet, or purse, and don't forget to take it out and use it too!

Devotions involving the recitation and contemplation of the Mysteries of the Rosary are part of the popular spiritual practices of Catholics. The First Saturday Devotion to Our Lady of Fatima is one of these.

First Saturday Devotion to Our Lady of Fatima

Our Lady of Fátima is a title referring to the Virgin Mary, based on [apparitions](#) reported to be experienced by three shepherd children at [Fátima](#), a small town just north of Lisbon, Portugal.

The apparition is also referred to as [Our Lady of the Rosary](#) (a term first used in 1208) because the children said the apparition called herself the "Lady of the Rosary". A combination of these titles is also seen, i.e. **Our Lady of the Rosary of Fátima**.

The events at Fátima gained fame due to elements of [secrets](#), [prophecy](#) and [eschatology](#), particularly with regard to [World War II](#) and possibly more World Wars in the future. Chief among these is also the urgent need for the [Consecration of Russia](#) to the [Immaculate Heart of Mary](#).

Three Portuguese children, [Lucia dos Santos](#), [Jacinta Marto](#), and [Francisco Marto](#), were young and uneducated when they reported the apparition of Our Lady of Fátima in 1917. The local administrator- a Communist- initially **jailed the children** and threatened that he would boil them one by one in a pot of oil. The children were consoled by the other inmates in the jail, and then led the inmates in praying the Rosary.

The Apparitions of the Blessed Virgin to the children occurred in five consecutive months (May – October, 1917) and involved conversation, visions and warnings to the world. The final Apparition also included a phenomenon visible not only to the children but to the tens of thousands who had gathered to watch the “Miracle of the Sun” during which the sun appeared to “dance in the sky”, and indeed, to fall to the earth.

The reported visions at Fatima gathered widespread respect. After a canonical enquiry, the visions of Fátima were officially declared "worthy of belief" in October 1930. [Pius XII](#), [John XXIII](#), [Paul VI](#), [John Paul II](#) and [Benedict XVI](#) voiced their acceptance of the supernatural origin of the Fátima events. John Paul II credited Our Lady of Fátima with saving his life following an assassination attempt on the Feast of Our Lady of Fátima, in 1981.

Secrets of Fatima- as revealed to the children involved a vision of hell, a prediction and a request, and finally a message for the Holy Father alone.

The second secret included Mary's instructions on how to save souls from hell and convert the world to the Christian faith, as revealed by Lúcia in her Third Memoir:

"You have seen hell where the souls of poor sinners go. To save them, God wishes to establish in the world devotion to my Immaculate Heart. If what I say to you is done, many souls will be saved and there will be peace. The war is going to end: but if people do not cease offending God, a worse one will break out during the Pontificate of [Pius XI](#). When you see a night illuminated by an unknown light, know that this is the great sign given you by God that he is about to punish the world for its crimes, by means of war, famine, and persecutions of the [Church](#) and of the [Holy Father](#). To prevent this, I shall come to ask for the consecration of [Russia](#) to my Immaculate Heart, and **the Communion of reparation on the First Saturdays**. If my requests are heeded, Russia will be converted, and there will be peace; if not, she will spread her errors throughout the world, causing wars and persecutions of the Church. The good will be martyred; the Holy Father will have much to suffer; various nations will be annihilated. In the end, my Immaculate Heart will triumph. The Holy Father will consecrate Russia to me, and she shall be converted, and a period of peace will be granted to the world."

***Devotions** involving the reflections on Christ and His Divine Mercy have been with the Catholic Church and people since earliest times as part of the popular spiritual practices of **Catholics**. The celebration of **Divine Mercy Sunday**, resulting from revelations to Sister (now Saint) Faustina Kowalska is one of these.*

The Divine Mercy Message and Devotion

The message and devotion to **Jesus** as **The Divine Mercy** is based on the writings of Saint Faustina Kowalska, an uneducated Polish nun who, in obedience to her spiritual director, wrote a diary of about 600 pages recording the revelations she received about God's mercy. Even before her death in 1938, the devotion to The Divine Mercy had begun to spread.

Through St. Faustina, the Merciful Savior has given the aching world new channels for the outpouring of His grace. These new channels include the *Image of The Divine Mercy*, the *Feast of Mercy* (Divine Mercy Sunday), the *Chaplet*, the *Novena to The Divine Mercy*, and prayer at 3 o'clock in the afternoon, *the Hour of Great Mercy*.

Although these means of receiving God's mercy are new in form. They all proclaim the timeless message of God's merciful love. They also draw us back to the great Sacrament of Mercy, the Holy Eucharist, where the living Lord, who suffered and died on the Cross and whose Heart was pierced with a lance, pours forth His mercy on all mankind, and grants pardon to all who draw near and honor Him. As Jesus told St. Faustina:

My Heart overflows with great mercy for souls, and especially for poor sinners...[I]t is for them that the Blood and Water flowed from My Heart as from a fount overflowing with mercy. For them I dwell in the tabernacle as King of Mercy. (Diary, 367)

The message of **The Divine Mercy** is simple. It is that God loves us – all of us. And, he wants us to recognize that His mercy is greater than our sins, so that we will call upon Him with trust, receive His mercy, and let it flow through us to others. Thus, all will come to share His joy.

The Divine Mercy message is one we can call to mind simply by remembering ABC:

A - Ask for His Mercy. God wants us to approach Him in prayer constantly, repenting of our sins and asking Him to pour His mercy out upon us and upon the whole world.

B - Be merciful. God wants us to receive His mercy and let it flow through us to others. He wants us to extend love and forgiveness to others just as He does to us.

C - Completely trust in Jesus. God wants us to know that the graces of His mercy are dependent upon our trust. The more we trust in Jesus, the more we will receive.

The message and devotional practices proposed in the *Diary of Saint Faustina* and set forth in publications of the Marians of the Immaculate Conception are completely in accordance with the teachings of Church and are firmly rooted in the Gospel message of our Merciful Savior. Properly understood and implemented, they will help us grow as genuine followers of Christ.

Pope Francis declared December 8 as the start of a “Holy Year of Mercy” with a call to “be Merciful just as your Father is Merciful”. With this in mind, spend time to learn more about the mercy of God, learn to trust in Jesus, and live your life as merciful to others, as Christ is merciful to you.

Devotions to Jesus through Mary the Mother of God are many and form an integral part of the popular spiritual practices of Catholics. The Miraculous Medal devotion has become increasingly popular since its inception in the 1830's.

Miraculous Medal Devotion

The Medal of the Immaculate Conception, popularly known as the Miraculous Medal, is unique among all medals. The Miraculous Medal was created in response to a request from the Blessed Virgin Mary the Mother of God, who entrusted us with our mission. No wonder, then, that it gives such extraordinary graces to those who wear it and pray for Mary's intercession and help. Our Lady manifested the Medal to St. Catherine Labouré on November 27, 1830, in the motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul and St. Louise de Marillac, in Paris.

Catherine saw Our Lady standing on a globe, with dazzling rays of light streaming from her outstretched hands. Framing the figure was an inscription: "O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee." Then Mary spoke to Catherine: "Have a medal struck upon this model. Those who wear it will receive great graces, especially if they wear it around the neck."

The vision then seemed to turn to show the reverse of the Medal: the letter M surmounted by a cross with a bar at its base; below this monogram, the Sacred Heart of Jesus crowned with thorns, and the Immaculate Heart of Mary pierced with a sword.

With approval of the Catholic Church, the first medals were made in 1832 and were distributed in Paris. Almost immediately the blessings that Mary had promised began to shower down on those who wore her medal, and soon all of France was clamoring for what the people referred to as the "Miraculous Medal." Use of the Medal spread from country to country and now blankets the world. Everywhere, the Medal is still drawing down from God blessings for body and soul.



As far as we know, the photograph above reveals what the first Miraculous Medals looked like when they were made and distributed in the 1830s. This would be about two years after Our Lady manifested the Medal to St. Catherine Labouré on November 27, 1830, in the Apparition Chapel of the motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity in Paris.

The Miraculous Medal Novena was for many years a perpetual novena at St. Monica and was widely attended. Today, in accordance with liturgical norms and other parish activities it is celebrated annually as a true "Novena" of nine weeks duration and is still widely attended.

Consider reflecting on the words of St Catherine Labouré:

'When I go to the Chapel, I place myself before the good God and I say to Him: 'Lord, here I am, give me what You will.' If He gives me something, I am very pleased, and I thank Him. If He gives me nothing, I still thank Him because I do not deserve anything. And then again, I tell Him all that passes through my mind; I recount my pains and my joys and ... I listen. If you listen to Him, He will speak to you also, because with the good God it is necessary to speak and to listen. He will always speak to you if you go to Him simply and sincerely.'

Devotions to Jesus through Mary the Mother of God are many and form an integral part of the popular spiritual practices of Catholics. The First Friday(s) Devotions come directly from the Lord Jesus Christ and are directed to Him.

First Friday(s) Devotions

The **First Friday Devotions** are a set of **Catholic devotions** to especially recognize the **Sacred Heart of Jesus**, and through it offer **reparations for sins**. Visions of Christ were reported by **St. Margaret Mary Alacoque** in the 17th century. St. Margaret Mary was a **French Roman Catholic nun and mystic**, who worked to prove the genuineness of her vocation and her **visions of Jesus and Mary** relating to the **Sacred Heart**. The devotion to the **Sacred Heart** was officially recognized 75 years after Alacoque's death. In his encyclical *Miserentissimus Redemptor*, **Pope Pius XI** stated that Jesus Christ had "manifested Himself" to Saint Margaret and referred to the conversation between Jesus and Saint Margaret several times.^[3]

Several promises were made to those people that practiced the **First Fridays Devotions**. According to the words of Christ through His apparitions to **St. Margaret Mary**, there are several promises to those that practice the First Friday Devotions:

*"In the excess of the mercy of my Heart, I promise you that my all powerful love will grant to all those who will receive **Communion on the First Fridays, for nine consecutive months**, the grace of final repentance: they will not die in my displeasure, nor without receiving the sacraments; and my Heart will be their secure refuge in that last hour."*

The devotion consists of several practices that are performed on the first Fridays of nine consecutive months. On these days, a person is to 1) attend **Holy Mass**, 2) receive **communion** and 3) if in order to receive communion in a state of grace, a person should also make use of the **Sacrament of Penance** before attending Mass.

The specific promises made in the visions in addition to the singular one quoted above follow.

1. I will give them all of the graces necessary for their state of life.
2. I will establish peace in their houses.
3. I will comfort them in all their afflictions.
4. I will be their strength during life and above all during death.
5. I will bestow a large blessing upon all their undertakings.
6. Sinners shall find in My Heart the source and the infinite ocean of mercy.
7. Tepid souls shall grow fervent.
8. Fervent souls shall quickly mount to high perfection.
9. I will bless every place where a picture of my heart shall be set up and honored.
10. I will give to priests the gift of touching the most hardened hearts.
11. Those who shall promote this devotion shall have their names written in My Heart, never to be blotted out.
12. They shall not die in My disgrace nor without receiving their sacraments; My Divine Heart shall be their safe refuge in this last moment.

Devotions to Jesus in the Eucharist form an integral part of the popular spiritual practices of Catholics. Eucharistic Adoration and Holy Hours, are pre-eminent among these.

Eucharistic Adoration and Holy Hours

ADORATION

Adoration is the first attitude of man acknowledging that he is a creature before his Creator. It exalts the greatness of the Lord who made us and the almighty power of the Savior who sets us free from evil. Adoration is homage of the spirit to the "King of Glory," respectful silence in the presence of the "ever greater" God. Adoration of the thrice-holy and sovereign God of love blends with humility and gives assurance to our supplications. —*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 2628

The importance of Eucharistic Adoration is shown in the fact that the Church has a ritual that regulates it: the Rite of Eucharistic Exposition and Benediction.

This is an extension of the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament which occurs in every Mass: "Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb."

Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament flows from the sacrifice of the Mass and serves to deepen our hunger for Communion with Christ and the rest of the Church. The Rite concludes with the ordained minister blessing the faithful with the Blessed Sacrament.

HOLY HOURS

Holy hours are the Roman Catholic devotional tradition of spending an hour in Eucharistic Adoration in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. The bishops have created a variety of holy hours that focus our prayer to Jesus Christ on peace, life, vocations, healing, and other topics that are at the heart of the life of the Church and the world.
