

Good afternoon and welcome to the October First Saturday devotions. The elements of the First Saturdays are: (1) To go to confession ... I apologize that this month we are a bit short-handed as far as priests to hear confessions. I encourage you to approach your parish priest within the next 8 days; or else coming up in a few days at St. Hyacinth we will have the Rosary Novena, and there will be an opportunity for confession before the 7:00 pm Mass. (2) To receive Holy Communion. (3) To pray five decades of the Rosary. (4) To meditate for 15 minutes on any one or several of the Mysteries of the Rosary. (5) To do all of this in a spirit of reparation for the blasphemies and neglects committed against Our Lady's Immaculate Heart.

Today is the memorial of St. Francis of Assisi. Often portrayed as effeminate and perhaps as a garden statue or bird bath ... St. Francis lived a very rough life. To consider his lifestyle in light of our modern sensibilities, he lived like a homeless person. He didn't complain about the Muslim incursions into Christian lands. Rather, he went there himself with the purpose of converting the Muslims. His courage and boldness impressed the Sultan who gave him free passage. The custody of many of the sites in the Holy Land, to this day, remains with the Franciscans because of the courage of St. Francis in his own day.

The followers of St. Francis have had an immense effect on the Church's theology of Mary over the centuries.

St. Anthony of Padua, who lived in the 13th century, preached many sermons on Our Lady ... explaining the doctrines of her Immaculate Conception and her Assumption - which were declared dogmas 600 and 700 years after his death.

Blessed Duns Scotus, born around the time of St. Anthony's death, vigorously defended the teachings on Our Lady's Immaculate Conception. He argued that the merits of Christ's saving death were applied to Our Lady arguing that "God could do it, it was appropriate, therefore He did it". This formula was applied nearly 600 years later by Pope Pius IX (the ninth) when he declared Mary's Immaculate Conception a dogma of the Church in 1854.

Other medieval Franciscan theologians and writers have given us reflections on the Hail Mary prayer, the hymn Stabat Mater - known in English as At the Cross Her Station Keeping, the Seven Joys of Our Lady (also known as the Franciscan Crown).

Other Franciscan saints who contributed to the Church's theology on Our Lady include St. Lawrence of Brindisi in the 16th century, and St. Maximilian Kolbe in the 20th century.

Indeed, more than a garden statue, St. Francis of Assisi ... and his followers ... have provided us with a development of the doctrines on Our Lady as well as shaping the dogmas that surround those teachings.

As we approach this altar to receive the Sacred Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ ... let us ask for the intercession of St. Francis of Assisi ... and all the Franciscan Saints and Blesseds ... to strengthen us in our resolve to live out our Christian life in imitation of the life of Our Blessed Lord and His Immaculate Mother. And may we experience in our hearts, our families, our homes ... in our diocese, and in our country ... and especially in the world ... may we know and live the Triumph of the Immaculate Heart of Mary.