

Bring flowers of the rarest.....

Creating a May Altar in your Home

Many people create a small altar in their home during the month of May. The altar is traditionally dedicated to Mary, the mother of God as May is the Marian month when Catholics give special praise and honour to Jesus' mother Mary, gifted to us as our mother too.

May is also the first month of summer, so it comes to pass that altars which are created during this time are adorned with flowers that bloom at this time of year and with particular prayers, or items of devotion such as rosary beads to decorate this special space and to express our love and honour to Mary.

Here are a couple of steps that you and your family can follow when preparing to have a May Altar in your home.....

1: Plan a nature walk

Decide upon a place to go for a walk together. On your nature walk, try to locate some of the following traditional flowers that have been used for May altars over the generations. It is good to choose wildflowers, if you can, which are far better for the environment. Cut commercial flowers can sometimes come with a big carbon footprint, which Pope Francis encourages us to try to reduce. Some flowers you might like to look for on your nature walk might include....

- Wildflowers
- Buttercups
- Primroses
- Daffodils
- Wild bluebells
- Cowslips
- Lilac



2: Pick the location for the May Altar in your home

Try and involve all members of the household in the decision-making about where your family May Altar will be placed. Ensure that this is a space which is clearly accessible to all members (and ages) in your home and of course is also visible to all visitors to your home.

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3: Pick your symbols

Decide upon which religious items or symbols you would like to include in your new sacred space.

Ensure you have the following also.....

- Statue of The Blessed Virgin Mary
- Candle
- Cloth or colourful material
- Flowers (That you have picked on your nature walk)
- Pictures of mothers and grandmothers and people in your family called Mary, Marian, Miriam, Muireann, Máire (or other Marian names)
- Other items that remind you of Mary the Mother of God

3: Involve the Family in the Decoration of the Altar

Gather the family together to set the May Altar. Let all who have gathered plan a part in the decision making of where each item is placed.

4: Pray

During this holy month dedicated to Mary the Mother of God, strive to set some time aside as family to explore prayers that are dedicated to the Blessed Virgin. This is also a great opportunity to teach some members of your family who might not be familiar in leading or praying certain Marian prayers. Before your May Altar you could explore some of the following prayers dedicated to the Mother of Christ.....

- Praying the Family Rosary each evening
- The Angelus at 12pm & 6pm
- The Memorare
- Alma Redemptoris Mater
- The Magnificat
- Conclude each gathering at your May Altar with the World meeting of Families Prayer



Photo: May Altar at Scoil Chaitríona Junior; Renmore, Co. Galway

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THE MAGNIFICAT	THE MEMORARE	OFFICIAL FAMILY PRAYER FOR WORLD MEETING OF FAMILIES; 2018
<p>My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour, for he has looked with favour on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name.</p> <p>His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever."</p>	<p>Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary, that never was it known that anyone who fled to your protection, implored your help or sought your intercession, was left unaided.</p> <p>Inspired with this confidence, I fly unto you, O Virgin of virgins my Mother; to you do I come, before you I stand, sinful and sorrowful;</p> <p>O Mother of your Word Incarnate, despise not my petitions, but in your clemency hear and answer me.</p> <p>Amen</p>	<p>God, our Father, We are brothers and sisters in Jesus your Son, One family, in the Spirit of your love. Bless us with the joy of love.</p> <p>Make us patient and kind, gentle and generous, welcoming to those in need. Help us to live your forgiveness and peace.</p> <p>Protect all families with your loving care, Especially those for whom we now pray: <i>[We pause and remember family members and others by name].</i></p> <p>Increase our faith, Strengthen our hope, Keep us safe in your love, Make us always grateful for the gift of life that we share. This we ask, through Christ our Lord,</p> <p>Amen</p>
<p>ALMA REDEMPTORIS MATER</p> <p>Loving mother of the Redeemer, gate of heaven, star of the sea, assist your people who have fallen yet strive to rise again. To the wonderment of nature you bore your Creator, Yet remained a virgin after as before. You who received Gabriel's joyful greeting, have pity on us poor sinners.</p>	<p>O Mary, You are my Mother and my hope. Keep us safe beneath your cloak, Amen.</p> <p>A Mhuire, is tú mo mháthair is mo dhóchas Tabhair dúinn foscadh faoi do chlócadh.</p>	<p>Mary, mother and guide, pray for us. Saint Joseph, father and protector, pray for us. Saints Joachim and Anne, pray for us. Saints Louis and Zélie Martin, pray for us.</p>

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<p>A Mhuire na ngrás, a Mháthair Mhic Dé, go gcuire tú ar mo leas mé. <i>Go sabhála tú mé ar gach uile oic, go sabhála tú mé idir anam is chorp.</i></p> <p>O Mary of Graces and mother of God. May I tread in the paths that the righteous have trod, And mayest thou save me from evil's control. And mayest thou save me in body and soul.</p> <p><i>Go sabhála tú mé ar muir is ar tír, go sabhála tú mé ar lic na bpian. Gárda na n-aingeal os mo chionn, Dia romham agus Dia liom.</i></p> <p>And mayest thou save me by land and by sea. And mayest thou save me from tortures to be. May the guard of the angels around me abide. May God be before me and God at my side.</p>	<p>Sé do bheatha, a Mhuire</p> <p>Sé do bheatha, a Mhuire, atá lán de ghrásta, Tá an Tiarna leat. Is beannaithe thú idir mná, Agus is beannaithe toradh do bhroinne; Íosa. A Naomh-Mhuire, a Mháthair Dé, guigh orainn na peacaigh, anois, agus ar uair ár mbáis. Amen.</p>	<p>O Mary of Graces, oh answer my plea Under crosses in trials, to thee do I flee. O teach me Sweet Mother to follow His Will. To journey with courage up Calvary's Hill.</p> <p>O Mary my Mother and Mother of all Be my guide and Protectress that I may not fall. And mayest Thou lead me to Heaven above. With Saints and Angels I'll share in Thy Love</p> <p>May a smile of thy mercy from heaven come down. When my heart would leave thee and cleave to the ground And when this poor body returns to its sod. May thy loving arms bear my soul to its God.</p>
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Don't forget!!

- Spend time at your altar each day to reflect and pray (both individually and as family)
- Share your altar with others by bringing it to the attention of those who gather your home, including family, extended family and visitors
- Remember to replenish water and flowers if needed thought the month
- As you journey through the month of May, you might also pick up meaningful prayers, symbols, intentions and objects that speak to you or have a special message or significance for your family. Make sure to add these items to the sacred space in your home