

# *The Catholic Mother*

INSPIRATION FOR LITURGICAL LIVING



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## *Looking back, looking forward*

by Kim Halloran-Fry

For young mothers, May is second only perhaps to December, cram packed with immovable deadlines and lengthy to-do lists. There are graduations: grade school, high school, college, with the gifts for teachers and parties to organize. There are end of year projects to oversee, final exams, performances of all sorts. I see you. This is hard.

This May is remarkable in my family because our youngest child will graduate high school, thus bringing to a close 35yrs of k-12 education for our children. There will be no more uniforms to return or flowers for piano recitals. So much of who I am and what my life has been about is on the cusp of

complete redefinition and reorganization.

The season of graduations and end of year awards do come to an end eventually. There is both an opportunity and a need to transition into new projects and aspects of our vocation that were not possible to pursue in earlier seasons. It is bittersweet, just as it once was to miss out on some experiences or to be unable to devote uninterrupted time to a specific endeavor. Where we may once have depended upon multi-tasking, now we may find it challenging to hone in on and focus deeply on one task. The sleep we looked forward to is still elusive, but for different reasons.

One thing is always true. We can do, if not *everything*, still so many things, but *not all at the same time*. Whatever season you find yourself in will have its unique challenges and

unexpected blessing.

Our two featured saints for May are relevant to so many of us today. St Isidore and his wife worked hard together with special affinity for the land and the animals in it. They envisioned a large farm family, but lost their only child and reworked their family mission. St Rita was first a wife and mother enduring contentious circumstances. Her later life work as a religious sister was entirely different.

This month is also dedicated to the best of Mothers, Our Lady, who arguably had more life pivots than we today could imagine. Our vocation does not end as our children grow. It changes shape and it changes *us*, to the degree that we are able to lean into and embrace it.

May our beloved saints guide our steps as we move through each changing season of Catholic Motherhood, emulating the grace and faith they model for us.

## St John Baptist de la Salle:

“Preach by  
example,  
and practice  
before the eyes of  
the young what you  
wish them to  
accept.”

(May 15th)



**TO MAKE AND DO:**

MAY AT HOME - VINTAGE CATHOLIC PRESCHOOL  
ST ISIDORE CROSS STITCH FREE PATTERN  
ST RITA COLORING  
ST RITA COLORING 2  
PENTECOST WINDSOCK CRAFT  
ASCENSION CRAFT  
MARY GARDEN LINKS  
NOVENA TO THE HOLY GHOST

**TO READ:**

ST RITA OF CASCIA  
WITH THE CHURCH, ASCENSION TO ADVENT

**TO SING:**

ON THIS DAY O BEAUTIFUL MOTHER

**TO WATCH:**

ST ISIDORE FOR CHILDREN  
ST ISIDORE STORY READ ALOUD  
THE STORY OF ST RITA (OLDER CHILDREN)

**CONFRATERNITY MOTHER'S BOOK CLUB SELECTION FOR MAY:**

THE SECRET OF MARY

**CONFRATERNITY OF CHRISTIAN MOTHERS RESOURCES:**

Members Manual Online

Why Enroll?

Pieta Sticker

Mother Love Book



# St Isidore, Rogation Days, and Ember Days

from Talks on the Sacramentals, Fr Arthur Tonne, 1950

St. Isidore, who was born near Madrid, Spain, about the year 1070, and who died May 15, 1130, is the patron saint of farmers. All his life he worked for a certain Juan de Vargas on a farm near Madrid.

Every morning before going to work he would hear Mass in the nearby city. His fellow workers were jealous of the esteem which their employer had for Isidore. They complained to their master that Isidore was always late for work in the morning. The owner decided to find out for himself. He hid in the hollow of a tree to watch. Sure enough, Isidore actually started working much later than the others. The employer was walking toward the late-comer to rebuke him and tell him to come on time, when he was surprised to see a second team of oxen, snow-white and led by unknown individuals, plowing beside Isidore. Even as he stood watching the team and drivers disappeared, proving that supernatural help had supplied all that was lacking. Others reported they saw angels assisting Isidore in the field. By attending daily Mass he had won God's special blessing.

Who, more than the farmer, needs the blessing of God on his work? So much depends on favorable weather--on the rain and sunshine and the miracle of growth, that the man who tills the soil needs constantly the help of the Almighty.

Christ chose many of His parables and illustrations from the field and the farm. Until recent times, tilling the soil was the principal occupation of men everywhere. Even today it occupies millions of people. For these reasons Mother Church gives special attention to the farmer's needs and offers a blessing for lands, seeds, harvests and animals. The Sacramentals of Agriculture are among the most numerous and necessary in the ceremonies of the Church. *We do well to think about them.*

1. Four times a year Mother Church asks us to observe Ember Week. In December, in Lent, after Pentecost, and in September the Church sets aside a week, asking us to fast and abstain on Wednesday, Friday and Saturday, principally for abundant and successful crops.

2. She sets aside the Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday before Ascension Thursday as Rogation Days, to beg, which is the meaning of Rogation, God's protection over people and crops.

3. In the Litany said on these days we offer this fitting prayer: *"We beg of Thy goodness, O Almighty God, that the fruits of the earth...may be penetrated by the dew of Thy blessings; grant to this people always to thank Thee for Thy gifts; that the fertility of the earth may enrich the hungry.. and that the poor and the needy may celebrate Thy glory.... May the blessing of Almighty God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, descend in plenty on the fields and on all these good things, and remain there forever."*

4. Mother Church also blesses grain from the moment of planting to the day of harvest. She prays: "We beg of Thee, O Lord, deign to bless these seeds, to foster them with the mild breath of a serene heaven, to render them fertile by dew from above, and to bring them unharmed to fullest maturity for the use of souls and bodies."

She blesses the growing grain; she blesses the crops; she offers the first fruits to God; she blesses the granary, the mill and their contents; she asks God to appoint an angel to watch over the crops and their owners.

5. Farm animals, their barns and their food have a blessing. In blessing a stable Mother Church recalls the ox and ass at Bethlehem. She blesses hay and salt and pasture lands. True and tender Mother that she is, the Church blesses animal pets like dogs and cats, canaries, parrots and monkeys. At Rome she blesses the horses of the cabmen, and in 1939 along with the horses she blessed two circus elephants.

6. Especially interesting are the blessings of bees and silkworms. The prayer for bees refers to the beeswax candles used in divine worship. It asks God to bless *"these bees and this beehive...so that their fruits may be dispensed unto Thy glory, and that of Thy Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and of the Blessed Virgin Mary."*

The Church asks God *"to bless these silkworms, to foster and multiply them by kindness,"* so that the silk may be used to adorn the altar and glorify God.

7. There are numerous blessings for products of the earth and farm--for bread, fruits, eggs, oil, butter, cheese, lard, for beer and wine. Each blessing asks health for soul and body of those who eat the food.

Here is part of the blessing for bread: *"O Lord Jesus Christ...Thou living Bread of eternal life, deign to bless this bread...that all who partake thereof may obtain the desired health of body and soul."*

There is even a special benediction for colored Easter eggs, as symbols of creation and resurrection.

These and many other blessings for things on the farm are what we call the Sacramentals of Agriculture, the Sacramentals of the Farm. These sacramentals set aside the things which God has created, the things which God has caused to grow, that we may use them for the glory of God, that we may use them for our own health of soul and body.

Every man who tills the soil, and every thinking person who to any extent has an understanding of the life of the farmer, will see at once the value, the need, the beauty, and the inspiration of these farm blessings.

**Just as St. Isidore prayed for the blessing of God every day at Mass,  
and visibly had the help of God's angels in his work,  
so every tiller of the soil should ask God's blessing,  
the blessing of God's Church on his work and the fruits of his work.**

Amen.





## THE POPE SPEAKS ON RURAL LIFE

Pope Pius XII - 1946

Your lives are rooted in the family — universally, deeply, and completely; consequently, they conform very closely to nature. In this fact lies your economic strength and your ability to withstand adversity in critical times. Your being so strongly rooted in the family constitutes the importance of your contribution to the correct development of the private and public order of society. You are called upon for this reason to perform an indispensable function as source and defense of a stainless moral and religious life. For the land is a kind of nursery which supplies men, sound in soul and body, for all occupations, for the Church, and for the State.

So much the more, then, must great care be taken to preserve for the nation the essential elements of what might be called genuine rural culture. We must preserve the qualities of industriousness, simple and honest living, respect for authority, especially for parental authority, love of country, and loyalty to traditions which have proved a source of good throughout the centuries. We must preserve readiness to aid one another within the family circle and amongst families, from home to home. All of these qualities we must have animated with a true religious spirit, for without such a spirit these very virtues tend to degenerate into unbridled greed for profit.

May the fear of God and faith in God, a faith which finds daily expression in prayers recited together by the whole family, sustain and guide the life of the workers of the fields.



## ST RITA OF CASCIA - MAY 22ND

THIS holy woman was the daughter of pious parents, Antonio and Amata (Fersi) Mancini, and was born at Kocea Parena, near Cascia, in Umbria. She was their only child.

Four days after her birth, A.D. 1381, she was baptized in the parish church. An exquisite legend relates that the day after her baptism a swarm of beautiful snow-white bees—symbols of her purity and innocence, and of the irresistible sweetness of her words, which drew so many souls to God—was seen issuing from the child's mouth, where they had left behind them a comb filled with luscious honey.

Under the zealous and watchful care of her parents, she grew up in sanctity, and at an early age evinced a leaning, for a conventual life. Tenderly devoted to the Cross and to Our Blessed Lady, her early life was passed in works of piety and penance. Her aged parents, desiring to see her provided for before their death, constrained her to marry. In this they were grossly deceived, for, as it turned out, she had been committed to the keeping of a brutal savage.

For eighteen years she suffered persecution and outrage, but grew more exalted and spiritualized under the fierce pressure of affliction. But, like St. Monica, she had the supreme consolation of seeing him at the last hour, in answer to her prayers, die a death of fervent and sincere repentance.

At the age of thirty, having lost her two sons, she found death had severed the last tie that bound her to the world, and her pure heart, so long enchained, entered its true home, the convent. For forty-four years she passed a life of physical suffering, prayer, and penance within the convent walls. After nearly five hundred years, it is said, her body is today incorrupt without the aid of embalming or other human bar to dissolution. This saintly woman was beatified by Pope Urban VIII, July 16th, 1627.

Blessed Rita was canonized May 24, 1900, by Pope Leo XIII.

Her picture shows her contemplating the crucifix with an angel hovering above her head lifting a crown of thorns, one of which can be seen pierced in her forehead.

### PRAYER

O most compassionate Jesus! Thou alone art our salvation, our life, and our resurrection. We implore Thee, therefore, do not forsake us in our needs and our afflictions, but by the agony of Thy most Sacred Heart, and by the sorrows of Thy immaculate Mother, succor Thy servants whom Thou hast redeemed by Thy most Precious Blood. Amen.



Source : The Faith That Never Dies, Imprimatur 1900

## THE IMPORTANCE OF RECREATION

I was recently chatting with a friend about the modern day dearth of genuine hobbies. Screens have taken over much of the time and attention formerly devoted to recreational skill building. When a person does become proficient in a given pursuit, there is often pressure to “make it count” and monetize it. It is as though we cannot justify time spent not working or working skillfully at an endeavor that brings only joy and personal satisfaction.

A few years ago I confessed to a priest my guilt over sometimes enjoying pastimes when my work was not *completely* finished. He challenged me to consider if I was being actually neglectful, shirking duty, or was it that the work of a household or a property is never truly finished? He affirmed the necessity of incorporating regular rest and recreation times into my schedule, not reluctantly, but as an objective need for balance and refreshment. I have been encouraged by the words of the saints which echo his counsel:

St. Paul of the Cross: *Let everything in creation draw you to God. Refresh your mind with some innocent recreation and needful rest, if it were only to saunter through the garden or the fields, listening to the sermon preached by the flowers, the trees, the meadows, the sun, the sky, and the whole universe.*

St. Francis de Sales: *“We need to occasionally relax the mind, and the body requires some recreation also. Do not marvel then if I slacken my mental efforts from time to time, and recreate myself, in order to return more vigorously to contemplation... Walking, harmless games, instrumental or vocal, field sports, etc. are such entirely lawful recreations that they need no rules beyond those of ordinary discretion, which keep everything within due limits of time, place, and degree... Only one must avoid excess, either in the time given to them, or the amount of interest they absorb; for if too much time be given up to such things, they cease to be a recreation and become an occupation; and so far from resting and restoring mind or body, they have precisely the contrary effect.”*

St Thomas Aquinas: *Now this relaxation of the mind from work consists on playful words or deeds. Therefore it becomes a wise and virtuous man to have recourse to such things at times. Just as man needs bodily rest for the body's refreshment, because he cannot always be at work, since his power is finite and equal to a certain fixed amount of labor, so too is it with his soul, whose power is also finite and equal to a fixed amount of work. Consequently when he goes beyond his measure in a certain work, he is oppressed and becomes weary, and all the more since when the soul works, the body is at work likewise, in so far as the intellectual soul employs forces that operate through bodily organs. **Now just as weariness of the body is dispelled by resting the body, so weariness of the soul must needs be remedied by resting the soul: and the soul's rest is pleasure.**”*



COME, Holy Ghost,  
fill the hearts of Thy faithful,  
and kindle in them the fire of Thy love.

V. Send forth Thy Spirit, and they shall be  
created;

R. And Thou shalt renew the face of the earth.

*Let Us Pray*

O God, Who hast instructed the hearts of the  
faithful  
by the light of the Holy Ghost,  
grant that by the same Spirit we may be always  
truly wise,  
and ever rejoice in His consolation.  
Through Christ our Lord.  
Amen.

(From the Roman Missal)