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Seasoning the Seasons™

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Late Summer Feasts of Mary

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The Month of Mary

We say that May is the “Marian” month, and that October is the month of the Rosary. But did you know that the month between August 15th and September 15th has more Marian Feasts than any other four week period of time? On August 15th we celebrate the Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. August 22nd is the Memorial of the Queenship of the Blessed Virgin Mary. On September 8th we celebrate the Feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary. September 12th is the Memorial of the Most Holy Name of the Blessed Virgin Mary. And on September 15th we celebrate the Memorial of Our Lady of Sorrows. So perhaps August 15th - September 15th is *really* the month of Mary, at least as far as the number of Marian Feasts goes!

The Assumption of Mary

On August 15th we celebrate the Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. A “solemnity” is the highest ranking Feast Day on our Catholic Liturgical Calendar. Eastern Christians refer to this Feast as the “Dormition”, or “falling asleep” of Mary. It is on this day that we celebrate the end of Mary’s earthly life and her passover into eternal life.

The Dormition of Mary has been celebrated in both the East and in Rome since at least the 5th century. In 1950, Pope Pius XII declared the Assumption of Mary to be infallible dogma.

In the Assumption of Mary, we are reminded of what God has



Dormition
15th Century - Russian
School: Tyver

said of creation since the beginning: it is very good. All creation is holy. Just as God has “harvested” Mary into heaven, body and soul, so too do we anticipate bodily resurrection.

The Assumption is a harvest festival. It is good on this day to gather some of the harvest from your garden (flowers, fruits, vegetables, herbs) and place it in your home by an image of Mary. *Catholic Household Blessings & Prayers* (©United States Conference of Catholic Bishops) includes an order of service for the Assumption Day Blessing of Produce.

The Solemnity of the Assumption is a holy day of obligation in the USA. All baptized Catholics are to attend Mass on this day.

The Queenship of Mary

The Memorial of the Queenship of the Blessed Virgin Mary is celebrated on August 22nd. This Feast is celebrated on the octave (8th day) of the Assumption.

Celebrating Mary as Queen has a long history in our popular piety. For example, the Latin text of the hymn *Salve, Regina* dates to around the year 1080. The Coronation of Mary is the 5th Glorious Mystery of the Rosary. We conclude the Rosary with the “Hail Holy Queen” prayer. And think of the popularity of the May Crowning devotion! Pope Pius XII instituted the liturgical Feast of the Queenship of Mary in 1954. It was celebrated on May 31st until the reform of the Calendar, when it was transferred to August 22nd, illustrating its close connection to the celebration of the Assumption.

The Nativity of Mary

We celebrate the Feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary on September 8th. This Feast has been celebrated for centuries in both the Eastern and the Western Church. Isn't our Liturgical Calendar wonderful! Exactly nine months to the day after we celebrate Mary's conception (December 8th - the Immaculate Conception), we celebrate her birth! Perhaps you will gain an appreciation for the importance of this Feast when you realize that we only celebrate three births in our Liturgical Year: Jesus



Nativity of the Mother of God
Dionysiou Monastery, Mt. Athos
Iconographer: George the Cretan
Mid 16th Century; Heritage: Cretan

(December 25th); John the Baptist (June 24th) and Mary (September 8th). And we do celebrate these as births - not birthdays.

The Bible does not note Mary's birth or death. But tradition, coming from the apocryphal Gospel of James and the early Church, tells of Mary's parents (Joachim and Anne - whose Feast Day we celebrate July 26th!) and of Mary's birth.

In the 5th century, on September 8th, a basilica in Jerusalem said to have been built on the site of Saint Anne's home was dedicated.

The Most Holy Name of Mary

On September 12th the Church celebrates the optional Memorial of the Most Holy Name of Mary. This celebration is a recent addition to the Universal Roman Calendar.

Why would we celebrate the name of Mary? Primarily because God is glorified by Mary's role in salvation history. The glory belongs to God! In the beautiful canticle the *Magnificat*, Mary, herself, proclaims that all generations will call her blessed. Why? Because God has looked upon her lowliness and done great things for her. In this song, Mary clearly announces that God's name is holy. (See Luke 1:46-55)

Does it still seem odd to have a Feast Day celebrating a name? Not at all! Recall that in former times, and still to this day in many cultures, a person's name day (the Feast Day of their Patron Saint) is far more important and widely celebrated than their birthday.

So on September 12th celebrate the Most Holy Name of Mary, and don't forget to send a special Feast Day greeting to all the Marys in your life, as well!

Our Lady of Sorrows

So far we have looked at some of the joyful, glorious events surrounding Mary - her birth, her assumption into heaven body and soul, and her queenship. But Mary experienced many sorrows in her life as well. By the 14th century, the Church numbered Mary's sorrows as seven: 1) The Presentation of Jesus in the Temple, when Mary was told by Simeon the destiny of her child and that she, herself, would be pierced by a sword; 2) The Flight into Egypt to escape the massacre of the Holy Innocents; 3) When

Jesus at age twelve was lost in Jerusalem (subsequently found in the Temple); 4) When Mary encountered Jesus as he carried his cross to Calvary and his execution; 5) Mary as she stood at the foot of the cross witnessing the passion and death of her son; 6) Mary's witness to Jesus' body being taken down from the cross; and 7) Jesus' burial.

We celebrate the Memorial of Our Lady of Sorrows each year on September 15th, one day after we celebrate the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross.

In the 13th century, the Italian, Jacapone da Todi, composed a sequence song for this Feast Day. It was entitled, *Stabat Mater Dolorosa*. You will recognize the English translation of this text as the hymn, *"At the Cross Her Station Keeping."* We usually associate this hymn with the devotion of Praying the Stations of the Cross. Sing this hymn as part of your prayer on September 15th - Our Lady of Sorrows. And recall both the joys and sorrows of your life as you journey with Mary.



Crucifixion: 14th Century
Andrei Rublev Museum
of Early Russian Art in Moscow