 Reading time: 5 min.

At the heart of St. John Bosco’s educational and spiritual work, the figure of the Madonna holds a privileged and luminous place. Don Bosco was not only a great educator and founder but also a fervent devotee of the Virgin Mary, whom he venerated with deep affection and to whom he entrusted all his pastoral projects. One of the most distinctive expressions of this devotion is the practice of the “Seven Joys of the Madonna,” presented in a simple and accessible way in his publication “The Well-Provided Young Man,” one of the most widely circulated texts in his spiritual pedagogy.

A Work for the Souls of the Young

In 1875, Don Bosco published a new edition of “The Well-Provided Young Man for the Practice of His Duties in the Exercises of Christian Piety,” a manual of prayers, spiritual exercises, and rules of Christian conduct designed for boys. This book, written in a sober and fatherly style, aimed to accompany young people in their moral and religious formation, introducing them to a full Christian life. It also included devotion to the “Seven Joys of the Most Holy Mary,” a simple yet intense prayer structured in seven points. Unlike the “Seven Sorrows of the Madonna,” which is much more well-known and widespread in popular piety, Don Bosco’s “Seven Joys” focus on the joys of the Most Holy Virgin in Heaven, the result of an earthly life lived in the fullness of God’s grace.

This devotion has ancient origins and was particularly dear to the Franciscans, who spread it from the 13th century onwards, as the Rosary of the Seven Joys of the Blessed Virgin Mary (or Seraphic Crown). In the traditional Franciscan form, it is a devotional prayer composed of seven decades of Hail Marys, each preceded by a joyful mystery (joy) and introduced by an Our Father. At the end of each decade, a Glory Be is recited. The joys are: 1. The Annunciation by the Angel; 2. The Visitation to St. Elizabeth; 3. The Birth of the Saviour; 4. The Adoration of the Magi; 5. The Finding of Jesus in the Temple; 6. The Resurrection of the Son; 7. The Assumption and Coronation of Mary in Heaven.

Drawing from this tradition, Don Bosco offers a simplified version, suited to the sensibilities of young people.

Each of these joys is meditated upon through the recitation of a Hail Mary and a Glory Be.

The Pedagogy of Joy

The choice to propose this devotion to young people was not merely a personal

preference of Don Bosco but fits entirely within his educational vision. He was convinced that faith should be transmitted through joy, not fear; through the beauty of goodness, not the dread of evil. The “Seven Joys” thus become a school of Christian gladness, an invitation to recognise that, in the life of the Virgin, God’s grace manifests as light, hope, and fulfilment.
Don Bosco was well aware of the difficulties and sufferings many of his boys faced daily: poverty, family abandonment, job insecurity. For this reason, he offered them a Marian devotion that was not limited to tears and sorrow but was also a source of consolation and joy. Meditating on Mary’s joys meant opening oneself to a positive vision of life, learning to recognise God’s presence even in difficult moments, and entrusting oneself with confidence to the tenderness of the heavenly Mother.
In “The Well-Provided Young Man,” Don Bosco writes touching words about Mary’s role: he presents her as a loving mother, a sure guide, and a model of Christian life. Devotion to her joys is not merely a devotional practice but a means to enter into a personal relationship with the Madonna, to imitate her virtues, and to receive her maternal help in life’s trials.
For the saint from Turin, Mary is not distant or inaccessible but close, present, and active in the lives of her children. This Marian vision, strongly relational, permeates all Salesian spirituality and is reflected in the daily life of the oratories: environments where joy, prayer, and familiarity with Mary go hand in hand.

A Living Legacy
Even today, devotion to the “Seven Joys of the Madonna” retains its spiritual and educational value. In a world marked by uncertainties, fears, and fragility, it offers a simple yet profound way to discover that Christian faith is, above all, an experience of joy and light. Don Bosco, a prophet of joy and hope, teaches us that authentic Christian education involves valuing affections, emotions, and the beauty of the Gospel.

Rediscovering the “Seven Joys” today also means recovering a positive outlook on life, history, and God’s presence. The Madonna, with her humility and trust, teaches us to cherish and meditate in our hearts the signs of true joy, the kind that does not fade, because it is founded on God’s love.
In a time when even young people seek light and meaning, Don Bosco’s words remain relevant: “If you wish to be happy, practice devotion to the Most Holy Mary.” The “Seven Joys” are, then, a small ladder to Heaven, a rosary of light that unites earth to the heart of the heavenly Mother.

Here is also the original text taken from “The Well-Provided Young Man for the

Practice of His Duties in the Exercises of Christian Piety," 1875 (pp. 141-142), with our own titles.

The Seven Joys That Mary Enjoys in Heaven

1. Purity Cultivated
Rejoice, O immaculate Spouse of the Holy Spirit, for the contentment you now enjoy in Paradise, because through your purity and virginity you are exalted above all the Angels and elevated above all the saints.
Hail Mary and Glory Be.

2. Wisdom Sought
Rejoice, O Mother of God, for the pleasure you experience in Paradise, because just as the sun here on earth illuminates the whole world, so you, with your splendour, adorn and make all of Paradise shine.
Hail Mary and Glory Be.

3. Filial Obedience
Rejoice, O Daughter of God, for the sublime dignity to which you were raised in Paradise, because all the hierarchies of Angels, Archangels, Thrones, Dominions, and all the Blessed Spirits honour, revere, and acknowledge you as the Mother of their Creator, and at your slightest command, they are most obedient.
Hail Mary and Glory Be.

4. Continuous Prayer
Rejoice, O Handmaid of the Most Holy Trinity, for the great power you have in Paradise, because all the graces you ask of your Son are immediately granted; indeed, as St. Bernard says, no grace is granted here on earth that does not pass through your most holy hands.
Hail Mary and Glory Be.

5. Humility Lived
Rejoice, O most august Queen, because you alone deserved to sit at the right hand of your most holy Son, who sits at the right hand of the Eternal Father.
Hail Mary and Glory Be.

6. Mercy Practised
Rejoice, O Hope of sinners, Refuge of the afflicted, for the great pleasure you experience in Paradise in seeing that all who praise and revere you in this world are

rewarded by the Eternal Father with His holy grace on earth and with His immense glory in Heaven.
Hail Mary and Glory Be.

7. Hope Rewarded
Rejoice, O Mother, Daughter, and Spouse of God, because all the graces, all the joys, all the delights, and all the favours you now enjoy in Paradise will never diminish; indeed, they will increase until the day of judgment and last for eternity.
Hail Mary and Glory Be.

Prayer to the Most Blessed Virgin
O glorious Virgin Mary, Mother of my Lord, source of all our consolation, through these your joys, which I have recalled with the greatest devotion I could muster, I beg you to obtain for me from God the remission of my sins and the continual help of His holy grace, so that I may never render myself unworthy of your protection but rather have the fortune to receive all those heavenly favours you are accustomed to bestow upon your servants, who devoutly remember these joys that overflow from your beautiful heart, O immortal Queen of Heaven.

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