

## SODALITIES

Sodalities have existed in the Church for many centuries. Essentially they are spiritual organizations created for the purpose of strengthening the Catholic faith and practice of their members, and directing them toward assisting those less fortunate by acts of practical charity. Sodalities conducted in the United States were often placed under the patronage of the Blessed Mother and called "The Children of Mary." The sodalities were very popular ways in which to come together with other members of the Church to pray, learn and share social activities according to the age of the Sodalists.

Sodalities were established in parishes and schools throughout the country and were very strong in San Francisco from which the Sisters of the Holy Family took it to the many outlying districts in which they ministered.

The Sodality of the Blessed Virgin Mary, for boys and for girls, was a vibrant, active and practical youth organization. It followed a similar outline for all groups, adapted to the age of the participants. There was a weekly meeting, and each month the Sodalists were to receive Communion together. The organization planned and carried out activities for the benefit of others, and its members were expected to live as very good Catholics, attend meetings and live out the spiritual and corporal works of mercy according to their ability. There were Sodality breakfasts, picnics and excursions to places of interest.



One photograph from the archives, a little difficult to date (possibly somewhere around 1900) shows a group of Sodalists on a picnic at Tiburon in Marin County, where the Sisters had a piece of property. They often took young people there for a picnic and a swim. There are a few boys in the picture, although you might have to look closely to find them.

A period of probation was undergone before aspirants to the organization were allowed to make an act of consecration to God through Mary. The division to which the Sodalist belonged might have a secondary name, to differentiate between the groups and ages of the members.

For Elementary School children, there were the Sodalities of the Holy Child, the Holy Angels and the Sacred Heart. Consecration into the Children of Mary was not permitted until young men and women were in Junior and Senior High School, and the names of their divisions also became the designation of adult groups - the Sodalities of the Immaculate Conception and the Holy Name. Units of the Holy Name Society are still active in many parishes.



A particular devotion of the Sodalities was the annual May Crowning of the Blessed Mother, a ceremony also part of every Catholic school, CCD class and parish. With this article are presented a few photographs of May functions in ministries conducted by the sisters. Among the photos are some representations from San Jose. The item from May 16, 1929, shows boys carrying a small float topped by Mary's statue for a procession.

The 1940s photo shows the after school children of St. Elizabeth's Day Home on the stage of the facility, one of their number taking the role of Mary, the children singing in honor of the Mother of Jesus.



An interesting photo of an elaborate breakfast setting for a Sodality May Day, is from the Cathedral of St. Mary of the Assumption, San Francisco. The picture was taken in 1901, identified on the back of the photograph by Sister Dolores Armer. An art piece representing the Immaculate Conception holds pride of place above the tables set with linen and china for the party.



The photos from the 1950s were both chosen from the Oakland area. One shows a group of CCD children in the parish of Santa Maria in Orinda, gathered with their parents and other interested adults for a May crowning.

The other is from Mary, Help of Christians, Oakland, May, 1954. It shows the front of the old Church and the Knights of Columbus as the honor guard on the occasion of the crowning, carried off nicely by the High School girls of the parish.





A photo from 1962 shows the May Queen and her court gathered around the shrine of Mary in Kailua-Kona, Hawaii. One can see the traditional leis, which drape the shrine in honor of the day.

The Sodalties of Mary were a strong organization of faith, service and social experiences for young people in the Catholic Church of the United States. The Sisters of the Holy Family are delighted to share their memories and images of that reality.

