

Marian procession seeks prayer for Los Angeles on city's 'birthday'

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A major Marian procession will course through the streets of downtown Los Angeles on Sept. 3, to commemorate the city's founding and to ask Our Lady of the Angels to pray for the city.

"Be there for this historic event as we renew our forebears' ancient call to Our Lady in celebration of the City of Angels' birthday on September 4, 1781 and Our Lady's Feast Day," a promotional flyer declares. "All of Mary's friends are invited to participate in this joyful observance!"

Organizers of the event describe it as "a grand European-style procession" which will include a processional crucifix and a statue of the Virgin Mary in a processional carriage. The procession will have flowers, banners, flags, color guards, singers and bagpipers, the California Catholic Daily reports.

"Processions have been events in public life – religious or secular – for as far back as there are written records," said the Queen of Angels Foundation, the event's sponsor. "In every culture, public anniversaries, triumphant heroes, religious festivals, and innumerable other events have been marked by parades of local leadership and activists ... In this way, the entire community is able to reaffirm its values and traditions, while inspiring onlookers with a sense of purpose."

The name of California's largest city derives from the longer Spanish name, "El Pueblo de Nuestra Señora de Los Angeles." It was named after Our Lady of the Angels, a title of the Virgin Mary.

On the city's first birthday in 1781, the central plaza was dedicated with solemn ceremonies and a Mass in honor of Our Lady of the Angels. A grand procession – including a processional cross, banners, candlesticks and ceremonial musket fire – took place to invoke the Virgin Mary's protection.

"In this way, the founders of the City and their descendents faced the dangers of the unknown by seeking the aid and protection of Our Lady of the Angels, as the Patroness and Protectress of the infant Pueblo," said the foundation, which reported that the processions continued for more than a century.

The Sept. 3, 2011 procession will begin at 3 p.m. at La Placita Plaza near Queen of Angels Church. Participants will walk through downtown Los Angeles to the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels, with a scheduled arrival time of 4 p.m. After a 4:30 p.m. rosary in the Cathedral Plaza, the procession will continue into the sanctuary for a 5:30 p.m. votive Mass.

At Mass, participants in the procession will ask Jesus, the Virgin Mary, and the archangels and guardian angels to come to the aid and protection of the Archdiocese and the City and County of Los Angeles – which, as the Queen of Angels Foundation notes, "all bear Our Lady's name" in the form of her abbreviated title.

There will be a reception in the Cathedral Plaza at 6:45 p.m.

The procession is part of the Queen of Angels Foundation's declared mission "to rally the Family of God around the feet of Our Lady, bringing them home to Mother Church," and to ask the Virgin Mary's "blessings upon Los Angeles and all the children of Eve everywhere."

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