May is known as the month of Mary and there is a traditional ceremony of her crowning with flowers. Although the idea of Mary as Queen flowered in the late Middle Ages, when many great works of art depict her coronation, it has very ancient origins. St John in his Revelation describes his vision of "a woman crowned with the stars", and as early as the fourth century a great Syrian hymn writer sang of her as "majestic and heavenly maid, lady, queen," praying that she might keep us under her wing to protect us from the evil one. These royal images reflect of course a very different political situation from modern England - our present picture of constitutional monarchs is far from what the Bible had in mind.   In our democratic days it can be difficult for us to engage easily even with the traditional language of Christ as King, but we might be grateful that this is balanced by the more feminine image of Mary as Queen. We cannot avoid the Bible's language about God as Father and Jesus as Son, even though we know that God is beyond sex and gender. So there is something very special about our ability to feel ourselves under the protection of a mother as well as a father. Mary may well have been the humble and obedient virgin who accepted God's commission to bear the incarnate Word, but God's choice also gave her a royal role in succession to the other great female figures the gospels present among the ancestors of Jesus.

All this lies behind the Regina Caeli, the traditional devotion that replaces the Angelus during Eastertide:

Joy to thee, O Queen of Heaven, alleluia.
He whom thou wast meet to bear, alleluia.
As he promised, hath arisen, alleluia.
Pour for us to him thy prayer, alleluia.

Rejoice and be glad, O Virgin Mary, alleluia.
For the Lord has risen indeed, alleluia.

O God, by the Resurrection of your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, you have brought joy to the whole world: grant that, by the help of his mother, the Virgin Mary, we may obtain the joys of everlasting life; through Christ the Lord.
Amen.