Leuedy, for þare blisse
þat þu heddest at þe frume,
Þo þu wistest myd-iwisse
þat ihesus wolde beo þi sune,—
Þe hwile we beþ on lyue þisse
sunnen to don is vre wune—
Help vs nv þat we ne mysse
of þat lif þat is to cume.

Moder, bliþe were þu þo
hwanne þu iseye heouen-king
Of þe ibore wip-vte wo
þat scop þe and alle þing.
Beo vre scheld from vre ivo
& yef vs þine blessyng;
And bi-wyte vs euer-mo
from alle-kunnes suneging.

Leuedi, al myd rihte
þu were gled and bliþe
Þo crist þureh his myhte
aros from deþe to lyue,
THE JOY OF MARY

Pat alle þing con dihte
and wes i-boren of wyue.
He make vs clene and bryhte
for his wundes fyue.

From þe Munt of olyuete
þo þi sone to heouene steyh,
þu hit by-heolde myd eye swete,
for he wes þin heorte neyth.
Ver he haueþ imaked þi sete
in o stude þat is ful heyh,
Ver þe schulen engles grete,
for þu ert boþe hende and sleþ.

Þe king þat wes of þe ibore,
to heouene he þe vette
To þare blisse þat wes for-lore,
& bi hym-seolue sette,
Vor he hedde þe icore.
wel veyre he þe grette;
Blyþe were þu þer-vore,
þo engles þe imette.

Moder of Milce & mayde hende,
ich þe bidde as i con;
Ne let þu noht þe world vs blende
þat is ful of vre i-von,
Ac help vs at vre lyues ende,
þu þat bere god and mon,
And vs alle to heouene sende
hwenne we shulle þis lif for-gon.

Ihesus, for þire moder bene
þat is so veyr and so bryht
Al so wis, so heo is quene
of heouene and eorþe—& þet is ryht,—
Of vre sunnes make vs clene
& yef vs þat eche lyht,
And to heouene vs alle i-mene,
louerd, þu bryng, for wel þu Miht.
THE VISION OF JOY:

"LEUEDY, FOR PARE BLISSE/ PAT PU HEDDEST AT PE FRUME"

It seems strange indeed that after what has been shown of God's closeness to our souls there are so few concerned about perceiving the First Principle within themselves. Distracted by many cares, the human mind does not enter into itself through the memory; beclouded by sense images, it does not come back to itself through the intelligence; and drawn away by the concupisences, it does not return to itself through the desire for interior sweetness and spiritual joy. Therefore, completely immersed in things of sense, the soul cannot re-enter into itself as the image of God.

And just as, when one has fallen, he must lie where he is unless another is at hand to raise him up, so our soul could not be perfectly lifted up out of these things of sense to see itself and the eternal Truth in itself had not Truth, taking human form in Christ, become a ladder restoring the first ladder that had been broken in Adam.¹

"LEUEDY, FOR PARE BLISSE/ PAT PU HEDDEST AT PE FRUME"² is a prayer for wisdom in its most precise theological sense, a prayer to see God and not to be blinded by the world. The purpose of the poem is, by defining in so far
as possible the joy man will experience in heaven, to appeal to its power. The poet addresses Mary in her state, now, in heaven, and against her joy he juxtaposes man’s own present with its sorrow. As in the poems on the crucifixion, this sorrow has its theological dimensions: it springs from man’s limited view of suffering or his separation from God by sin. In this poem the poet seeks to transform both man’s limited vision to light and his state of separation to union with God by defining step by step the events of Mary’s increasing awareness of joy and closeness to her Son.

With the opening of his poem, the poet does not address Mary as Maiden Mother or Queen of Heaven, but simply as “Leuedy.” He speaks to her as one with courtly power, in recognition that she is the mother of God, and he appeals to her by virtue of her joy at this. In contrast to “Glade us maiden, moder milde,” the event of the first joy is not made into a name for Mary. Rather, it is described as the state of awareness Mary had which came from her realization—“Þu wistest myd-iwisse”—that her son would be Jesus. The qualifying phrase “at þe frume” recognizes that the first joy, the annunciation, was the beginning of Mary’s present joy in heaven and also the beginning for man of the ultimate joy which he will experience in his final union with Christ.

To this beginning joy of Mary’s life on earth the poet opposes the present sorrow of himself and his listeners. While in this life, he says, it is our custom perpetually to sin. Yet this perpetual kind of sin, as life itself, has really only an apparent perpetuality, for it will reach an end at the end of each man’s life, when man will be eternally separated from or eternally united to God. Just as Mary’s joy is a foreshadowing of man’s perpetual joy, so man’s perpetual sinning in this life is the reflection of the perpetual sorrow man may enter in the next. It is against this sorrow and in the awareness of Mary’s perpetual joy and her first joy that the poet appeals to Mary. Help us now so that we do not miss that life of joy which is to come. Implied in the term “þat lif” is the possibility also of being cut off from life, for to miss that life, eternal joy, would be to come to hell, which is not life, but eternal death.

Mother, the poet addresses Mary the second time, in stanza two, describing the joy she had in her motherhood, you were happy when you saw the King of Heaven born of you without pain. Now in the poem, with “Þu iseye” we recognize that Christ has become bodily manifest to the world. But “Þu iseye” has a double sense, the outer one referring to the joy of Mary at seeing her Child after His birth, and the inner one referring to the mystery of Mary’s giving birth without pain. Giving birth to her Child without pain
affirmed her knowledge that this was God Whom she had borne, King of Heaven "\(\text{\textit{hat scop be and alle \textit{bing}.}}\)" With this last phrase the poet echoes the words so frequently used in the summer liturgy to honor Mary's motherhood: "Hail, holy mother, who didst bring forth in childbirth the king who ruleth over heaven and earth for ever and ever"; and also "Blessed and to be venerated art thou, O virgin Mary, who without touch of shame wast found mother of the Saviour. V. O virgin mother of God, he whom the whole world cannot contain enclosed himself in thy womb, and was made man." 

Not only did Mary bear the Child without pain, but the Child she held within her was He Whom the whole world cannot contain: He to Whom you gave birth is He Who made you and every created thing. Thus the poet spells out the full implications of the Child she contemplated then, the knowledge which was the basis of her second joy.

That the appeal of the second half of the stanza is by virtue of this second joy is implicit. As he would appeal to a mother, the poet appeals to Mary to protect us during the interval of this life, that she be our shield from our foe. And, he asks her, give us your "blessyng"; that is, give us the joy that you had—literally, give us God Himself. The same paradox stated in relation to the joy, that Mary bore her Creator, is implied also in the petition. By virtue of the fact that Mary bore the King of Heaven and Creator of all things, now we may ask for Him as our own. The last two lines of the stanza develop the request for protection, extending it to cover every moment of time, every kind of defection from life, "alle-kunnes suneging": Protect us forever from every kind of sinning (or from all mankind's sinning).

Again, in stanza three, the poet addresses Mary as "Leuedi," as he speaks of the joy she experienced when Christ rose from the dead: With good reason were you glad and joyful when Christ through His own power rose from death to life. Mary was right not only to rejoice at the fact that Christ rose from the dead, but that He did it through His own power. According to Brown's edition, the petition in this stanza comprises only the last two lines, and lines twenty-one and twenty-two develop the meaning of Mary's joy. Christ's resurrection is seen to be a second birth which the poet presents in light of the first as another action by the Creator. It was fitting that He "\(\text{\textit{hat scop be and alle \textit{bing},}}\) He "\(\text{\textit{hat alle \textit{bing con dihte},}}\) Who ordained all things, "and wes i-boren of wyue," Whom Mary had seen born from her, should rise. And just as the last stanza contained the paradox that God Who made all things should be born of a woman, so this presents the paradox that a man born of woman should raise himself from the dead. The fact that a
man should rise from the dead prepares the ground for the rest of the joyful events and the final petition of the poem.

In this stanza of joy at the resurrection, the poet recalls in his petition the efficacy of the passion, the necessary condition of the resurrection, as he prays: Let Him make us clean and bright by His five wounds. With its indefinite verb tense, the appeal seems to cover an indefinite time, reaching even into the next life where man will be in the purity and light of eternal joy. But because the poem is a prayer for vision, the petition by the virtue of Christ's five wounds may have a special significance. The Ancrene Riwle, for example, applies Christ's five wounds to cleanse the five senses: "Ah, Jesus, grant me Thy mercy; Jesus, hung on the cross for my sins, by those five wounds from which Thou didst there bleed, heal my soul, bleeding from all the sins with which it has been wounded through my five senses. Grant this in remembrance of Thy wounds, dear Lord." The poet here may mean, let the five wounds of Christ purify the five senses that we may be bright and clear and thus see God. Perhaps, too, the poet had in mind the numerical correspondence of the wounds to the five joys which he is using to come to eternal light.

From þe Munt of olyuete
þo þi sone to heouene steyh,
Þu hit by-heolde myd eye swete,
for he wes þin heorte neyh.

When your Son ascended from Mount Olivet to heaven, the poet continues, you beheld His ascension with sweet eye, because He was near your heart. With the fourth joy the poet tells of the climax of Mary's spiritual joy. Her spiritual joy is signified by the joy of her "eye" which is the window of her soul. Beholding Christ's ascension, her eye was "swete." She was gladdened because her Son, near to her heart, went into the glory of His godhood from which He had so mysteriously descended by being born and by dying. Her joy was a spiritual joy, for He was bodily apart from her whose flesh He was, not with her as He had been on earth. Now He has been manifested in His full power, but His power has literally separated Him from Mary.

Just as Christ's resurrection has prepared the ground for man's reunion with God, so this joy prepares for Mary's ultimate joy, and in the structure of the poem there is a modification. In the first three stanzas, complementary to Mary's vision of joy, the poet had juxtaposed man's petition from his present
state of sorrow. But in this stanza and the next there is no direct appeal by man. Instead the poet shuts out the perspective of present time and restricts the view to the past. The next four lines are a prophecy:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Per he haue\text{\textregistered} imaked } & \text{bi sete} \\
\text{in o stude } & \text{\textregistered} \text{at is ful heyh,} \\
\text{Per } & \text{\textregistered} \text{schulen engles grete,} \\
\text{for } & \text{\textregistered} \text{u ert bo\text{\textregistered}e hende and sleyh.}
\end{align*}
\]

In his imagination the speaker has projected himself into the past moment after Christ has ascended and left Mary on earth. As did the poet of “Als i lay vp-on a nith” who imagined what Mary knew at Christ’s birth, he enters the limitations of what Mary must have understood at the moment of the ascension, as she felt joyous for Christ’s joy, but sad to be separated from Him. And in place of his petition, the poet speaks to Mary, almost as though to console her for her loss of Christ: There, he says, He has made your seat, in a place that is very high; there angels shall greet you, for you are both “hende and sleyh.” Because of her beauty and grace Christ will send for her. She will be assumed into heaven. The poet again describes Mary in courtly terms, as he would speak of a noble lady, as he will speak of her when she is Queen of Heaven (line 41).

By dwelling on the moment of Christ’s ascension the poet has effected a pause in the narrative of the five joys. He has emphasized the event in the past when the situation of Mary was most like the present situation of the poet and his audience who now appeal to her. In the place of man’s appeal the poet has prophesied Mary’s assumption. By prophesying her desire’s fulfillment, the poet has uttered the desire of Mary’s heart. The language of the foretelling appears as the grammatical inverse of man’s appeal in the other stanzas, and the declarative statement could be rephrased into man’s supplication to Christ for his own experience of eternal joy: There make our place in heaven. There let us see the court of heaven and Your glory. By virtue of Your five wounds, make us bright that “we ne mysse/ of \textregistered}at lif \textregistered}at is to cume” (line 8).

By the fifth joy the prophecy of the fourth is fulfilled: The King Who was born of you fetched you into heaven, to that bliss that was lost, and set you beside Himself. In “Glade us maiden, moder milde” the fact that man had lost his joy was explained at the same time as the poet told of Christ’s death which brought back man’s joy, in order to show the purpose of His death.
Here, in line thirty-five, man’s lost joy is mentioned in order to define the significance of the joy of heaven into which Mary is assumed. At the same time it defines why, in the first stanza, the poet had described the first joy of Mary as “bare blisse/ ṭat ṭu heddest at ḋe frume.” The first joy of Mary by virtue of the Incarnation and its consequences literally was the beginning again of the joy that had been forfeited by man.

Not only does it define the first joy accurately, but the mention of lost joy defines the meaning of joy itself. Just as the source of sorrow is separation from God, so the source of joy is union with God. Up to this event in the poem the poet has described three aspects of Mary’s union, first the nature of the One to Whom Mary will be united, second the completeness of her experience of union, and third the movement of uniting. Throughout the joys of the poem the godhood of Christ, first mysteriously hidden during His birth in the flesh through a woman, yet signified by the fact that the birth was painless and that Mary remained a virgin, has been manifested until in His full glory He ascends to heaven. Mary’s experience of joy has increased as Christ’s godhood became more manifest, and as He ascended it became most deep. Yet her experience of joy could not be full until she was with Him in body as well as spirit. The means of Mary’s final union has been the movement of the events of sacred history which join man to God, the birth, death, and resurrection of Christ, His ascension, and in this stanza, Mary’s assumption.

This stanza, then, embodies what Mary’s full joy means. Christ has fetched her into heaven. Whereas at the ascension Christ was called Mary’s “sone” to heighten the sense of their human separation, now in heaven, to reflect His glory, Christ is called King—yet linked still to His mother and manhood by the relative clause “ḥat wes of ḋe ibore,” echoing line eleven. The King fetched her to heaven, to the joy that had been lost, and placed her beside Him. For, the poet explains, to express Christ’s love for Mary by showing Christ desired her, “he hedde ḋe icore,” He had chosen her. How fairly He greeted her! And “Blyȝe were ṭu ber-vore,” the poet claims, echoing the opening of stanza two which described Mary’s joy in beholding God both physically and spiritually at His birth.

Now, having prepared both the full definition of Mary’s joy and the full definition of man’s desire by showing his present state and indicating his joys in the future, the poet concludes his poem on the five joys with an appeal to Mary and an appeal to Christ, in the present, the direct appeal that he had omitted from his description of the ascension and assumption. The poet asks,
as he had prepared his audience to ask by the last four lines of the ascension stanza, for what he and his listeners desire.

Mother of Mercy and courteous maid, the poet addresses her, referring both to her maiden motherhood and to her heavenly beauty (line 32): I pray to you as I know how. Do not let the world blind us, the world that is full of our foes. In so far as I can see, I pray that we may see. How fittingly the poet’s prayer for vision comes, defining those foes from which he had appealed in stanza two (line 13) that we be shielded. And as he had asked for Mary’s blessing then (line 14), now he asks with the implications of the blessing having been made clear: Do not let us be blinded, but help us at our lives’ end, you who have borne God and man. Mary’s title Mother of Mercy is used in its full sense to mean Mary the mother of Christ Who is our mercy, Who has been fully manifested as both God and man to restore our joy. The last two lines complete the meaning of the help the poet requests at “vre lyues ende”: When we shall lose this life, send us all to heaven.

Now in relation to Christ the poet and his audience stand exactly as Mary had stood in the fourth stanza, looking up after Christ Who has ascended into heaven. The second part of the final petition addresses Christ:

Ihesus, for þire moder bene
þat is so veyr and so bryht
Al so wis, so heo is quene
of heouene and eorþe—& þet is ryht,—
Of vre sunnes make vs clene
& yef vs þat eche lyht,
And to heouene vs alle i-mene,
louerd, þu bryng, for wel þu Miht.
Jesus, for Your mother's prayer who is so fair and so bright—the poet appeals to Christ through a power of Mary which comes from Christ; that is, through her beauty, which is the radiance of her joyous state. Just as wise she is as she is queen of heaven and of earth—and that is right—the poet continues to describe Mary in terms of her glory. "Wis" is a fitting adjective for Mary in the context of the poem, for the poet has shown that of all creatures she is wisest; that is, in the words of Bonaventure with which we opened this section, Mary has been most perfectly "lifted up" to see herself and the "eternal Truth in itself." Her position as Queen of Heaven is both the source and the fruit of her wisdom. "Wis" is in keeping also with Mary's traditional definition in the liturgy, which applies to her passages from Ecclesiasticus in which Wisdom speaks. For man, folly, which is the sin opposing wisdom, consists in his "plunging his sense into earthly things, whereby his sense is rendered incapable of perceiving Divine things." It was just this sin from which in the previous stanza the poet appealed to Mary to defend himself and his audience, "Ne let þu noht þe world vs blende" (line 43).

In this final petition to Christ the poet has rephrased his appeal, summarizing the petitions of the whole poem into one by using the two fundamental sources of man's distance from joy, his sin—his state—and his distance in time. For the sake of Your mother's prayer, who is beautiful and wise, and thus with right the queen of heaven and earth, he prays, cleanse our sins so that we may have light, so that like Mary we may experience Your joy. And, as You brought Mary into bliss, bring us too in time all to heaven, "for wel þu Miht." As You are God "þat scop . . . alle þing" (line 12), Who "aros from deþe to lyue" (line 20), and "þat alle þing con dihte" (line 21), and by virtue of the fact that You fetched Mary "to þare blisse þat wes for-lore" (line 35), well do You have that power to bring us to heaven if You choose. Mary's full vision and power and Christ's glory and power have been fully defined and invoked to be in turn the power by which man may cross that gap between himself and the sovereign Good.