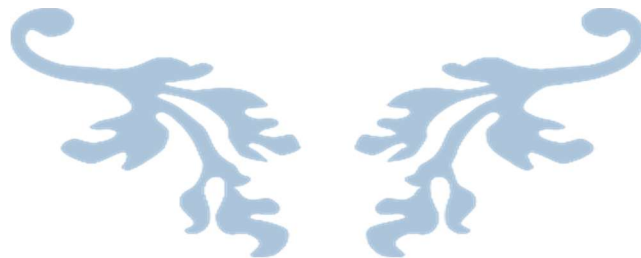


Chapter One

Say the Beads, Pray the Gospel



Say the Beads, Pray the Gospel

The Cross, the Beginning and the End

Then Jesus told his disciples, "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." ¹

The Rosary begins and ends with the Cross. The Cross is the key that opens the door to our redemption and life in Christ. When you hold the Rosary in your hand, notice that you begin at the Cross and go full circle, returning to the Cross. Every event in Jesus's life, from His Annunciation to the Passion, was directed to the Cross. The Cross was His mission and purpose for us. In the life of the Church, the People of God, the Cross is our beginning and end.

To put it another way, Our Divine Lord went to the Cross to save and redeem humanity. We, on the other hand, proceed from the redemption of the Cross. Our lives are taken up within the mystery of the Life of Christ. The mystery of the Cross reflects the life He had and the life we are called to. Our Crosses, like Our Lord's, are a mixture of Joy, Light, Sorrow, and Glory.

When you hold the Rosary in your hand, focus on the Cross. The Cross brings us to Christ, who in turn gives us the Gospel. The crucifix is connected by a circular chain with beads. The mysteries are the revelation of the Eternal Word of God. The beads are a kind of "Beaded Gospel", announcing to the heart, mind, and soul the call to repentance and holiness.

Next, we take a look at the body of the Rosary. In a future article, we can take a "bead-by-bead" look at praying the Rosary. For the time being, let's just look at the Rosary. There are now 4 sets of mysteries: Joyful, Luminous, Sorrowful, and Glorious. This cycle of mysteries is the ongoing cycle that plays out in our lives.

¹ Mt 16:24, RSVE-CE

Say the Beads, Pray the Gospel

The Rosary Chain – Compendium of the Gospel

By its nature, the recitation of the Rosary helps the individual to meditate on the mysteries of the Lord's life....”²

Sometimes, for me, trying to say the Rosary was like putting a puzzle together. I had the box with the picture on it, so I knew what it was supposed to look like. I had my little prayer book with meditations, so I had all the pieces. I knew the words to all the prayers and how to use a Rosary. But sometimes the difficulty was getting the heart and mind past the litany of Hail Maries. I could follow the mysteries, but how did the pieces fit together to make a full picture?

If you could picture the Rosary like buying a house. Before taking measurements for furniture, picking out flooring, and carpet samples, let's just walk around the house first. The Cross, as I mentioned before, is the key that opens the door to that house. Looking at the chain of beads, the Rosary is the house. The chain of beads represents the drama of our redemption that we are invited to enter. We are invited to enter into the mystery of Jesus Christ.

Each of the mysteries can be compared to the four Gospels. The Gospels present us with Jesus as the Announced Messiah, the God-Man, the Sacrificial Lamb, and the Life in the Spirit. The four Gospels correspond to the Joyful, Luminous, Sorrowful, and Glorious Mysteries. The life we are called to, the life that He led, was one of joy, sorrow, light, and in the end glory. When we pray the beads and their cycle of prayers, we enter the cycle of the Christian life with its ups and downs. Each Our Father is a prayer directed to God, praising His name and asking Him to establish His will on earth. The Father's will, His Kingdom that we are called to enter, is revealed in the mysteries for meditation. The following Hail Mary prayers continue the words of the Archangel Gabriel, announcing or proclaiming the mystery of Christ. The Hail Mary is an invitation to enter into the joy, sorrow, light, and glory that define the life of Jesus Christ. Note: RVM refers to Rosarium Virginis Mariae, Encyclical Letter of Pope John Paul II.

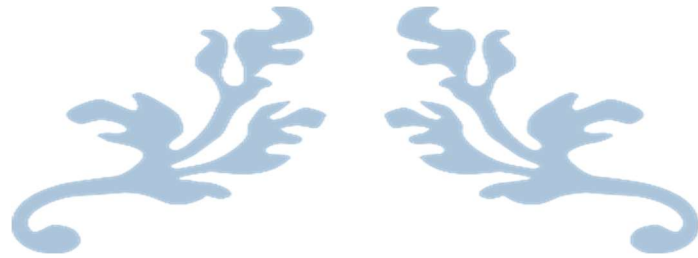
² RVM #12, Encyclical Letter, John Paul II

Say the Beads, Pray the Gospel

Conclusion

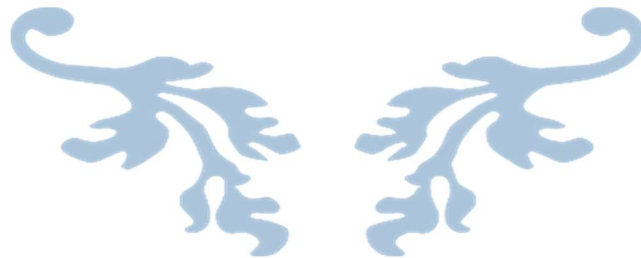
The Rosary, a chain of beads with a cross, is a kind of spiritual keychain. It is to be chained or wrapped around our hearts and minds so that we can enter the mystery of Christ. It's also the key that opens the door for Our Lord to enter our own lives. The Rosary will and does prove beneficial when we pray it as a meditation on the Gospel. We are called to unite our response to God with Holy Mary's yes. So as we walk the "beaded path" with Rosary in hand, meditate on these moments in Jesus' life, so that we may recognize them in our own. I'd like to close by mentioning that there are different ways of praying the Rosary. Each person has to find the method that works for them. It takes practice, but when done in faith, hope, and charity, the grace of Our Lord will help you get past the method and focus more on the good news of the Gospel.

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you, blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death. Amen



Chapter Two

Marian in Character, Christocentric at Heart



Introduction

In October of last year, I began what will be a series of reflections on the Holy Rosary to draw out some of the spiritual richness that the Rosary contains. In part 1, I gave a general overview of the Rosary.

In this article, part 2 of the series, we take a look at how the Rosary is a prayer and meditation on both Our Holy Mother and the Lord Jesus. The Rosary has a distinct Marian flavor with its litany of Hail Mary prayers. Mary is a prominent character who shows up in all 4 Mysteries of the Rosary. This can give the misconception of overplaying Mary in the role of her Son. Holy Mary's role is understood more clearly when seen through the life and mission of Our Lord.

The Rosary has a Christocentric flavor as well. We can say that the Life of Christ and the Mystery of our redemption is the heart and soul of the Rosary. Jesus Christ, the God-Man, is the central figure in human history and our lives. This chain of beads takes Mary as the prime example of what contemplating Christ means. Our Lord is the source of life and grace received from keeping our eyes, hearts, and minds focused on Him.

The Rosary is a Contemplative Prayer

“Without contemplation, the Rosary is a body without a soul, and its recitation runs the risk of becoming a mechanical repetition of formulas.”³

In St. John Paul II's letter, he says that the Rosary *“By its nature calls for a quiet rhythm and a lingering pace helping the individual to meditate on the mysteries of the Lord's life.”⁴* Just like the liturgical year or your beating heart, there is a life-giving rhythm that sustains this devotion. Without this rhythm, it loses its meaning and purpose. This was and sometimes is where I, too, needed to re-think my approach to the Rosary.

³ RVM #12, Encyclical Letter, John Paul II

⁴ RVM #12, Encyclical Letter, John Paul II

Marian in Character, Christocentric at Heart

The rhythmic cycle of mysteries is an invitation not only think about events in the life of Jesus and Mary but to enter into them. Entering into the mysteries is best described as when a disciple becomes more fully conformed to his master. *“Just as two friends, frequently in each other's company, tend to develop similar habits, so too, by holding familiar converse with Jesus and the Blessed Virgin, by meditating on the mysteries of the Rosary, and by living the same life in Holy Communion, we can become, to the extent of our lowliness, similar to them and can learn from these supreme models a life.”*⁵

The reason for the *“lingering pace”* is to allow us to enter more deeply into that conversation or communion with Our Lady and Our Lord. The Mysteries of the Rosary reveal not only truths *“about Jesus”*, but more so, they reveal *“Christ Himself”*, who is both the *“revealer and the one revealed.”*⁶ The Rosary is meant to be a loving conversation between your heart and the heart of Jesus and Mary.

The Rosary has at its heart putting us in contact with the person of Jesus Christ. So we can say the Rosary has a Christ-centered soul or life. The more we faithfully encounter this life, the more we will be conformed to Him. Our conformity is the *“school of Christ”* where we grow in the Holy Spirit and learn from Him who is *“the Way, the Truth, and the Life.”*⁷ The Rosary also has a distinctive Marian character.

When Mary gave her yes to God at the Annunciation, she offered the humanity, the flesh that the divine Son of God would take upon Himself for our redemption. So the Rosary is also the *“school of Mary”*, where we can learn from and be assisted by the Mother of God, Our Mother. *“For he has regarded the low estate of his handmaiden. For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed.”*⁸ Let us now take a look at the body and soul of the Rosary, the two schools that give this devotion its power and richness.

⁵ RVM #14, Encyclical Letter, John Paul II

⁶ RVM #14, Encyclical Letter, John Paul II

⁷ John 14:6, RSV-CE

⁸ Luke 1:48, RSV-CE

The Marian Character or Body of the Rosary

“To contemplate the face of Christ in union with, and at the school of, his Most Holy Mother. To recite the Rosary is nothing other than to contemplate with Mary the face of Christ.”⁹

What do we mean by this ***school of Mary***, or contemplating the face of Christ with her? The simple answer is to read through the Gospel accounts. What Sacred Scripture teaches or reveals to us is her pivotal role and example in the redemption of humanity. Holy Mary was so much more than just a convenient name or character in the big picture of things.

Mary, being a young Jewish woman, would have been familiar with Judaism’s faith in the long-awaited Messiah. She would have read and heard the prophecies that Christ would reconcile all of humanity with God. She was told by the Archangel Gabriel that she would be the mother of the Messiah/Christ. That tells us that her yes was not just “yeah, ok.” God the Father was asking her to take an active part in His redemptive plan. Mary’s response, her “Magnificat,” was a full-hearted and faith-filled YES! Mary was completely responsive and submissive to the will of God.

She watched Him grow, heard Him preach, and followed His ministry. Mary was in Jerusalem when Jesus was arrested and condemned. She watched Him breathe his last breath as an offering to the Father. Mary was with the Apostles in the Upper Room and received the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. Our Lord’s life and its meaning were a constant thought and meditation for her maternal heart. She watched all this and accepted it as God’s will, even if she didn’t know all the details.

Meditating on the Rosary with Mary means to prayerfully join her heart and mind to yours, and contemplate the divine face of her Son. *“And his mother kept all these things in her heart.”¹⁰*

At the Wedding at Cana, we see another piece of the Rosary’s Marian character. It was Our Divine Lord who turned the water into wine; He alone can work miracles by His power. Mary also knew this, which is why she asked Him to do it. We can almost picture it, Jesus and Mary are at a wedding for friends, and the wine runs out. Mary leans over to Jesus to whisper in His ear, “Son, would you do Momma a favor?” The Son of God then works His miracle at His

⁹ RVM #3, Encyclical Letter, John Paul II

¹⁰ Luke 2:51, RSV-CE

Marian in Character, Christocentric at Heart

mother's request. Mother Mary has that same influence today and has not stopped "whispering in His ear" our prayers and requests.

At the Wedding Feast in Cana, Mary shows her role as mother and intercessor. Her five simple words, then directed at the servants, are now directed at Christ's disciples, "*Do whatever he tells you.*" ¹¹ So the Marian character or ***school of Mary*** is to sit with her in contemplating her son and imitating her faithful example. Mary has a love and intimacy with Jesus that she wishes to share with all of her children, His disciples. Lastly, but not least, is her simple command. Meditating on the truth and life of Christ will no doubt fill the heart with grace and a sense of mission and purpose. Mary's response that she lived out herself, and the maternal command she has for us is simply put, "*Do whatever he tells you.*"

The Christ-Centered Heart and Soul of the Rosary

"With the Rosary, the Christian people sit at the school of Mary and are led to contemplate the beauty of the face of Christ and to experience the depths of his love." ¹²

What is the Rosary but to sit in adoration of Our Divine Lord! Similar to the Incarnation, the Divine Lord joined our human flesh to His Divinity. Just as the soul animates and gives life to the body, the Lord Jesus breathes life into our prayers and devotion. The words and images are like colors on a great canvas; the Lord God is the beauty that radiates from the canvas. The decades of the Rosary put us into contact with the Father's loving plan of redemption. Praying the Mysteries places us before Our Lord to reveal not simply His mission of redemption and salvation, but also the divine love God has for humanity. This prayer, although Marian in character, has Jesus Christ as its very soul, its beating heart.

To walk and speak with the Lord through the divine mysteries is to receive from Him the whole of the Gospel in miniature. We could say the Rosary is a compendium or summary of the Gospel. We are invited to enter into communion with the God-Man, "*And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.*" ¹³ In our day and time, our personal lives and even society as a whole can seem, at times, like we're fumbling around in the dark. Our view of life can at times

¹¹ John 2:5, RSV-CE

¹² RVM #1, Encyclical Letter, John Paul II

¹³ John 1:14, RSV-CE

Marian in Character, Christocentric at Heart

be darkened by despair and anxiety. The seemingly never-ending angry activism, distrust, and pessimism can honestly take the joy out of living.

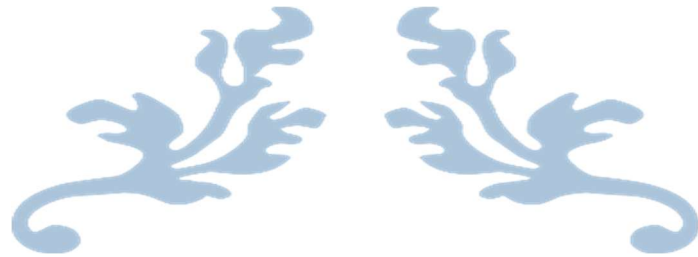
In this summary of the Gospel, the mysteries of Christ, we, standing in the darkness, are shown the Light. *"In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it."*¹⁴ By praying the Rosary, we enter not simply a story about His life, but His life itself. This is where the tires meet the road so to speak. The Lord Jesus gave us His life not simply to be reflected on but to be lived in union with our own. The Joyful, Luminous, Sorrowful, and Glorious mysteries are both our reaching up to His life and Our Lord's coming down to enter ours.

In the Rosary, its Christocentric heart is the union of your human heart and soul with His divine heart and soul. This union of hearts fills us with the life-giving grace and the radiant glow of His Divine Love. In future articles in this series, we will take the Rosary joined with the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary and unlock the beauty and richness of the prayers and mysteries.

Conclusion and a Reflection

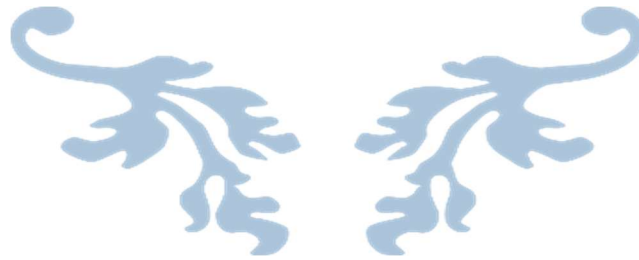
The Holy Rosary is a gift, a channel of His graces, and a spiritual weapon for training in holiness and discipleship. My hope for you is that you find the time to introduce yourself to the Rosary and strengthen your devotion to it. It's not hard to learn, and there are different methods to pray it. Remember, it's not how many or how fast you can say the prayers. It's more a question of a loving devotion and a conversation in heart, mind, and soul with Our Divine Lord and Our Holy Mother. With effort and trust, we can learn to imitate Our Holy Mother and contemplate Christ in our hearts.

¹⁴ John 1:4-5, RSV-CE



Chapter Three

The Hail Mary and the Joyful Mysteries



The Hail Mary and the Joyful Mysteries

Introduction

"Its most characteristic element, in fact, the litany- like the succession of Hail Maries, becomes in itself an unceasing praise of Christ, who is the ultimate object both of the announcement of the Angel and the greeting of the Mother of John the Baptist." ¹⁵

In the previous article, we were given a glimpse at the Rosary's Marian character and Christocentric heart. The Rosary is by design a rhythmic, meditative prayer to bring the individual into communion with Our Lord and His Mother, Mary. Pope St. John Paul II called the Rosary *a compendium or summary of the Gospel*. To pray the mysteries and simply recall the Gospel events would lead to a kind of superficial prayer. Just remembering facts about Jesus is not the same as being transformed by Him. As John Paul II wrote in his letter, *"Christ is the supreme Teacher, the revealer and the one revealed. It is not just a question of learning what he taught but of learning him."* ¹⁶

"Mary kept all things in her heart." ¹⁷ In the Gospels, Mary appears at major events in the life of Our Lord. Praying the Rosary is an imitation of Our Mother, keeping our heart, mind, and soul fixed on the life of the Divine Savior. The four mysteries, Joyful, Luminous, Sorrowful, and Glorious, reveal to us not only the Lord's life but the life you and I are called to participate in. This is the great mystery or message of the Gospel. Through constant meditation and prayer, our communion with Our Lord remains fresh and vibrant. We then, like Mother Mary, carry within us the life of Christ. By entering Jesus' life more intimately, we allow Him to enter into our lives as well.

On the one hand, the prayers are Marian. The angel greets her as *"Hail, full of grace."* ¹⁸, She is called *"blessed among women."* ¹⁹ and *"mother of my Lord,"* ²⁰ and *"all generations will call her blessed."* ²¹ Mary is the new Eve, Mother of God, and Mother of the Church. In the second

¹⁵ RVM #18, Encyclical Letter, John Paul II

¹⁶ RVM #14, Encyclical Letter, John Paul II

¹⁷ Luke 2:19, RSV-CE

¹⁸ Luke 1:28, RSV-CE

¹⁹ Luke 1:42, RSV-CE

²⁰ Luke 1:43, RSV-CE

²¹ Luke 1:48, RSV-CE

The Hail Mary and the Joyful Mysteries

part of the Hail Mary, we address her as “*Holy*” and “*Mother of God*”, asking for her maternal assistance and prayers “*now and at the hour of death*”.

*“The center of gravity in the Hail Mary, the hinge as it were, which joins its two parts, is the name of Jesus.”*²² Pope St. John Paul II mentioned in his letter that hurrying through the Rosary can make us lose focus on its center, which is the Lord Jesus. I would have to plead guilty to that one. It’s no surprise that this is probably the most common objection to the Rosary, only hearing the “*Hail Mary*”, but where does Jesus come in? Without proper focus and method, the beads become overly routine and dry. It is the Lord who is the “*blessed fruit of thy womb*,”²³ it is the Father’s will that she was “*full of grace*,”²⁴ and it is through the Holy Spirit that she conceived the Son of God. It is through the Son that Mary was given to us as a mother. It is the person and life of Jesus Christ, born of Mary, that is revealed in the mysteries.

In this article, we'll look at how the Hail Mary is praying with Mary while gazing upon her Divine Son, Our Lord.

The Mystery of Joy

“To meditate upon the 'joyful' mysteries, then, is to enter into the ultimate causes and the deepest meaning of Christian joy. It is to focus on the realism of the mystery of the Incarnation and the obscure foreshadowing of the mystery of the saving Passion.”²⁵

*“Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you.”*²⁶ The greeting of the angel, the announcement of joy, is the announcement of one of the greatest mysteries and one of the greatest gifts. This gift is, of course, our redemption and salvation, but on a deeper, more basic level, it is the Incarnation. To hail her as “*full of grace*” calls to mind the joy of redemptive holiness merited by the Passion of Jesus. This joy she possessed is expressed in her Magnificat and her “*let it be done*,”²⁷ to God’s will.

²² RVM #33, Encyclical Letter, John Paul II

²³ Luke 1:42, RSV-CE

²⁴ Luke 1:28, RSV-CE

²⁵ RVM, Encyclical Letter, John Paul II

²⁶ Luke 1:28, RSV-CE

²⁷ Luke 1:38, RSV-CE

The Hail Mary and the Joyful Mysteries

The Hail Mary in the Joyful mysteries is not only a testimony to Our Lady's purity and holiness. It's more a revelation that the redemptive process that will culminate on Calvary has begun. The Lord God himself came down to us, clothed in humanity, to close the breach between heaven and earth, mortality and immortality. We should have a great love for Our Holy Mother; her yes to God was for the salvation of humanity and to show us her maternal care.

*"Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus."*²⁸ We address her as *blessed*, and why not? As with our Patriarch Abraham, who through his faith became a blessing to the nations, so Our Holy Mother, through her faith and trust, will become the mother to all nations that will receive the *"blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus"*. Jesus Himself will bless us with His own body and blood, His own life. Mary gave the Son of God the flesh to become a man. He is the fruit of the womb that will show us the light of our salvation and redemption.

This is our heartfelt thank you to Mary for the joy and grace that Jesus will bring. It's also a cause to reflect on what kind of fruits we produce. Does our closeness with the Lord produce blessings and joy? The fruit of her womb is the answer to every question and the light of life in the darkness of sin.

"Holy Mary, Mother of God". The *"Holy Mary"* prayer was added to the Hail Mary sometime in the Middle Ages. The Council of Ephesus in 431 AD, traced the title *"Mother of God"* back to scripture when Elizabeth greeted Mary as *"the mother of my Lord."*²⁹ Mary was, in every sense, Jesus' mother. It was through Jesus that we are reconciled as children of the Father and brothers/sisters to the Son.

So it would naturally follow that as Jesus was man and God, Mary is the mother of man (us) and mother of God. *"Holy Mary"* reminds us of the great gift that the Father has given us. His sons and daughters on this earth have recourse to a woman of great love and holiness and a powerful intercessor, the very Mother of God herself. *"Pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death"*. The risen Lord Jesus stands forever as High Priest before the Father, interceding for us on earth. At the wedding in Cana, Mary went to her son, Jesus, on behalf of the couple who had run out of wine.

²⁸ Luke 1:42, RSV-CE

²⁹ Luke 1:43, RSV-CE

The Hail Mary and the Joyful Mysteries

Just as Mother Mary asked Jesus to work His first miracle, she stands before Him in heaven, ready to tell Him on our behalf, "*they have no wine*". She will take our prayers and concerns to the one person who can fill our wineskins with new wine and, at death, welcome us to the new life purchased by Jesus, her son.

Conclusion and Reflection

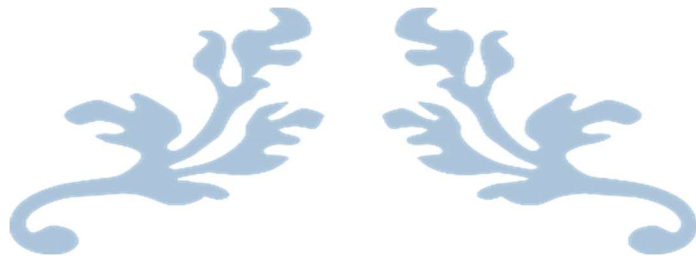
Jesus, the Incarnate Word of God, is the source and summit of Christian joy. Life is a puzzle, and sometimes a real messed-up puzzle at that. Jesus is *THE* way to put the pieces back together.

As we reflect on the Joyful mysteries, consider how and where the Gospel shines in your life.

Do we, like Mary, carry Jesus within us wherever we go? Do we see our faith as something private or a message to be shared?

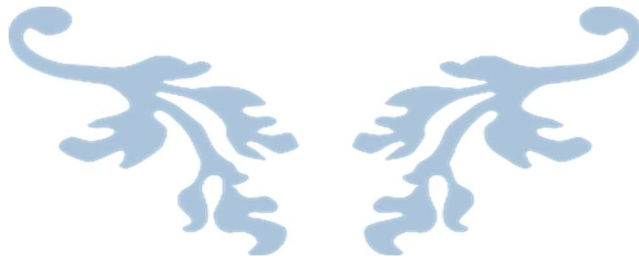
To pray the Joyful Mysteries is to be like the shepherds or the wise men on Christmas morning.

Find His mother and ask her to show you the fruit of her womb, Jesus.



Chapter Four

The Hail Mary and the Luminous Mysteries



The Hail Mary and the Luminous Mysteries

Introduction

“The Jesus that each Hail Mary recalls is the same Jesus whom the succession of mysteries proposes to us now as the Son of God, now as the Son of the Virgin.”³⁰

The mysteries of the Rosary play out like a great drama, in this case, a divine drama with eternal ramifications. The mysteries, like the beads, are connected in that one leads or prepares for the next.

In 2002, St John Paul II added a new set, the Luminous Mysteries to enhance and bring into clearer focus the revelation of Jesus Christ and His gospel. The Joyful Mysteries called to mind the joy of the heart and soul at the advent and announcement of the Messiah. *“Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel” which means, God with us.*³¹

For our humanity that was languishing in the darkness of sin, the dawn of a new era in existence has come. One has come that will save us from sin and reconcile us with the Father and with each other. The Joyful Mysteries announce the intervention of the Lord God in the life of humanity. With the Luminous Mysteries, we now ask, what does He have to say?

The Mystery of Light

“Certainly, the whole mystery of Christ is a mystery of light. He is the “light of the world.”³²

The Star of Bethlehem was the guiding light in the darkness of night, leading the way to the Christ child. His advent and birth were proclaimed by the prophets and now by Gabriel the Archangel. In turning to the Luminous Mysteries, we turn to the divine light that has shattered the darkness of sin. This divine light is the very Word of God, Jesus the Christ.

In the Luminous Mysteries, we encounter the person and mission of Christ. Our Lord Jesus takes center stage, as He reveals the Father’s plan of reconciliation and redemption. It is not only Jesus’ life but the life that we are called to in His name. In the Luminous Mysteries, Jesus is the message that Our loving Father wished to speak to His children. So let us as disciples sit with Our Mother and listen to her Son, Jesus.

³⁰ RVM #18, Encyclical Letter, John Paul II

³¹ Mtt 1:23, RSV-CE

³² John 8:12, RSV-CE; RVM, Encyclical Letter, John Paul II

The Lord's Prayer ³³

"Our Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name." ³⁴ Jesus, in proclaiming a new Kingdom, is also proclaiming a new relationship with the Father. It is in and through Jesus that we will be restored to God the Father as His children, no longer estranged by sin.

Therefore, through the merits of Jesus and His gospel, we can call God "Father".

"Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as in heaven." ³⁵ Our Lord came to announce the advent of the Kingdom or reign of God in the hearts, minds, and souls of humanity. We seek the fulfillment of the Gospel, we seek the Gospel of Christ. We ask that Our Lord reveal His glory as He did at the Transfiguration, to fill us with the new wine of His love and the Holy Spirit. In seeking the Kingdom, we enter into the sometimes mysterious journey of conversion of life to the Lord.

"Give us the day, our daily bread, and forgive us our sins as we forgive others." ³⁶ Like a loving Father, God wishes to sustain and strengthen His children on their pilgrimage of faith. We ask for the graces needed every day to allow the light that is Christ to shine in us. In the Eucharist, Jesus offers us His body and blood as food for the soul and a source of sanctifying grace. Sanctifying grace, in simple terms, is the very life of God, living in your heart, mind, and soul. As Jesus reconciled us to the Father, we should copy His example by reconciling with others.

"Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil." ³⁷ God would never lead us into temptation; instead, we ask to be protected and strengthened against temptation. Evil is opposed to the light of the Gospel; it is opposed to Christ and all who follow Him.

So we ask our heavenly Father to protect us from the darkness of the Evil One, who wishes to rob us of our Baptismal graces and lead us away from the Kingdom of God. To pray these words are a statement of faith and trust that whatever we ask of Him, He will give us.

³³ Mtt 6:9-13, RSV-CE

³⁴ Mtt 6:9, RSV-CE

³⁵ Mtt 6:10, RSV-CE

³⁶ Mtt 6:11-12, RSV-CE

³⁷ Mtt 6:13, RSV-CE

The Hail Mary and the Luminous Mysteries

Hail Mary, Holy Mary

*“Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you.”*³⁸ We begin the “Hail Mary” with gratitude to Our Mother Mary. Her yes to God was not an isolated or solitary act. Mary willingly cooperated with the will of the Father in becoming the Mother of the Savior for our sake. Her Son would save humanity from sin and establish a new covenant relationship between God and His people.

She was *“full of grace,”* and the *“Lord was with her”*. In Mary, we see the promise or a foretaste of the new light coming into the world. The Kingdom of God or the reign of Christ over our hearts will fill us with His life, and He will dwell in us.

This is the life and mission we are called to: to have the light of Christ within us and carry Him to the world. *“You are the light of the world...Let your light shine before men, so they might give glory to your Father in heaven.”*³⁹

*“Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus.”*⁴⁰ Through the Gospel, Jesus wishes that we, too, become *“blessed”*. Our Lord spoke several times about our lives and our faith bearing fruit. The *“fruit of her womb, Jesus”*, is the very seed of sanctity that is to be implanted in the soil of our souls in Baptism. It is in our souls that we, like Mary, carry Our Lord within us. On the one hand, we express our thanks to Our Holy Mother, while hoping, dare I say desiring, that our heart and soul become pregnant with the Gospel of Christ and the Holy Spirit.

“Holy Mary, Mother of God, Pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death”. We ask the Mother of God, who is also our Mother, to pray for us. When Jesus turned the water into wine at Cana, Mary had a simple request, or you could call it motherly advice. She said, *“Do whatever He tells you.”*⁴¹ The miracle He performed was to excite the faith of His disciples. This new wine is the new spirit that Christ wants to fill us with.

³⁸ Luke 1:28, RSV-CE

³⁹ Mtt 5:14,16, RSV-CE

⁴⁰ Luke 1:42, RSV-CE

⁴¹ John 2:5, RSV-CE

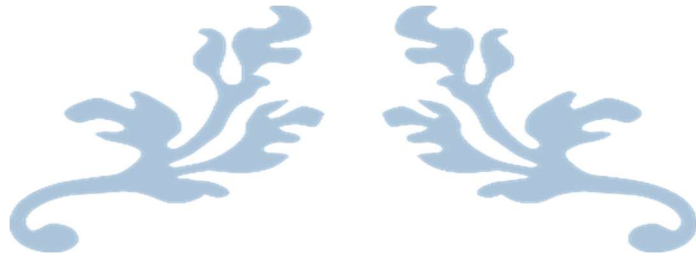
The Hail Mary and the Luminous Mysteries

The wine, like the Eucharist, also points to His Passion and death. We ask Our Mother to pray for us, to copy her faithful example of following Christ and having Him reign over her heart.

Conclusion and Reflection

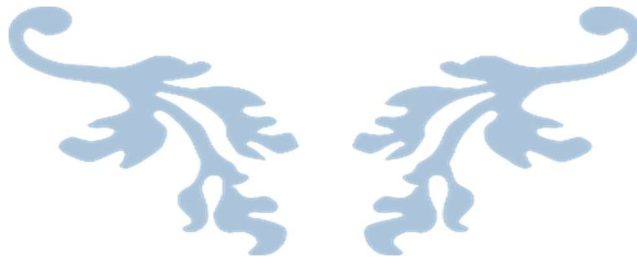
The Luminous Mysteries- The Baptism of Our Lord, the Wedding Feast at Cana, the Proclamation of the Kingdom, and Call to Holiness, the Transfiguration of Our Lord, and the Institution of the Eucharist.

- To what degree has the light of Christ transfigured or changed you?
- Have you ever thought about what being baptized means?
- Where in your life does Our Lord need to change your water to wine, and fill you with His light and truth?
- How have you responded to the proclamation of the Gospel and the Call to Holiness?
- Does the Lord Jesus reign over every aspect of your life?
- May the light of Christ fill your soul like the sun fills the sky at dawn.
- Reflect on these words of Our Lord and Our Lady, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt 4:17) and "Do whatever He tells you." (Jn 2:5).



Chapter Five

The Hail Mary and the Sorrowful Mysteries



The Hail Mary and the Sorrowful Mysteries

Introduction

“From the beginning, Christian piety, especially during the Lenten devotion of the Way of the Cross, has focused on the individual moments of the Passion, realizing that here is found the culmination of the revelation of God's love and the source of our salvation.”⁴²

Why is this mystery called sorrowful?

When Our Divine Lord was in the Garden of Gethsemane, His human heart, His human nature was confronted with the sinfulness of man. The Lord saw the price to be paid to satisfy divine justice and redeem humanity. He saw the plight of our condition, and it saddened Him. *“And being in agony, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down upon the ground.”*⁴³

Through Christ, our sinful humanity had to be put to death, so that, joined to Him, it would be brought to new life. At the foot of the cross, we join the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Her maternal heart was pierced through in anguish at Jesus' passion and death, but at the same time, she contemplated the fullest expression of God's redemptive love for us.

The Mystery of Sorrow

“Not my will but yours be done.”⁴⁴

Ecce homo: the meaning, origin, and fulfillment of man are to be found in Christ, the God who humbles himself out of love “even unto death, death on a cross.”⁴⁵

Picture a child waking in the middle of the night from a nightmare. There is a scream for help in a room filled with darkness. At once, the light is turned on, and the child is comforted by a loving parent. The child's fear is replaced with the consolation of the dark room, now filled with light and the knowledge that they are not alone.

⁴² RVM #22, Encyclical Letter, John Paul II

⁴³ Luke 22:44, RSV-CE

⁴⁴ Luke 22:42, RSV-CE

⁴⁵ Phil 2:8, RVM #22, Encyclical Letter, John Paul II

The Hail Mary and the Sorrowful Mysteries

In this example, we see the Joyful and Luminous mysteries. Humanity's nightmare is the loneliness and darkness of being separated from the Father. Like the child, we cannot comfort or save ourselves, so we cry out for help.

The Joyful Mysteries are hearing the stirring of the Lord God who comes to our dark place and announces His presence. The Luminous Mysteries can be seen as Our Lord turning on the lights to chase away the darkness of sin and evil. Like a loving parent, the Lord announces to us that there is nothing to fear. He teaches us to have hope, faith, and trust in Him. If we do the Father's will, then we have nothing to truly fear because He has overpowered the darkness.

So now we enter the Sorrowful Mysteries.

On the one hand, the Passion of Our Lord is God Himself reaching down into the sorrowful plight of humanity. These mysteries are not to be seen as "look what you made me do", but instead, "See what I have done for you". When the Divine Lord took upon Himself our humanity, he entered into the depths of the human experience to save it.

The Sorrowful Mysteries reveal to us the very depth of divine mercy and love. Our Lord literally loves us to death!! Jesus shows us how to respond to the Kingdom of Heaven, to the Father's will. Jesus, Our Lord, took our weaknesses upon Himself and put them to death on the cross.

On the other hand, the Sorrowful Mysteries stand as both a proclamation and a question.

In Luke's Gospel, Our Lord says, *"If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake, he will save it."* ⁴⁶

As St John Paul II wrote in his letter on the Rosary, *"This Yes of Christ reverses the No of our first parents in the Garden of Eden"*. ⁴⁷ So the proclamation is that Jesus has reversed our pitiful state. He broke the stranglehold of sin and prepared for us a new life, one animated by the life of Christ Himself.

⁴⁶ Luke 9:23-24, RSV-CE

⁴⁷ RVM #22, Encyclical Letter, John Paul II

The Hail Mary and the Sorrowful Mysteries

When we are baptized, we are baptized into the death of the Lord. Our Lord's death was and is our death to sin. To be reborn in Christ, the old self must die. The Sorrowful Mysteries stand as the path leading from a life of sin to eternal communion with God the Father, through God the Son, in God the Holy Spirit. So, the question remains, do we follow Him? Do we give up our lives to follow Him? Do we take up the Cross and lay ourselves bare before the mercy of God?

The Lord's Prayer ⁴⁸

"Our Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name." ⁴⁹ It is the Father's divine will that man be saved and reunited with Him. Life on earth is a probation period, where we are given the choice of acknowledging God as our Creator and Father. Is God master over us, or are we masters of ourselves?

To enter the path before us, we call out to God, who is holy, to show us the way. Like the child waking in the middle of the night, we are anxious, even afraid. So we call out, "Father in Heaven!"

"Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as in heaven. Give us the day, our daily bread, and forgive us our sins as we forgive others." ⁵⁰ The Passion cleared and revealed for us the path to be taken. I must do my Father's will. The path will not be easy and does require sacrifice. Jesus gave Himself completely to the will of the Father; here we ask for the grace to do the same. We are asking the Lord to show us the crosses we will carry and then follow Him.

"Our daily bread" is not strictly speaking material bread, but divine grace that will be necessary to strengthen us on our way of the cross. Asking for the forgiveness of sins is a prayer for the spirit of penance. In asking to be forgiven, we are acknowledging Christ as our Redeemer and Savior. *"As we forgive others"*, in humble gratitude for salvation, do we imitate the Christ who forgives all offenses? Does the love and mercy of God soften our hearts to become like His?

⁴⁸ Mtt 6:9-13, RSV-CE

⁴⁹ Mtt 6:9, RSV-CE

⁵⁰ Mtt 6:9-12, RSV-CE

The Hail Mary and the Sorrowful Mysteries

*“Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.”*⁵¹ The cross broke the Devil’s power over humanity. As human beings, we still have to choose whether or not to accept the Father’s offer. The Devil, although ultimately defeated, still plays on our weaknesses. The Devil, in his hatred of God, would love to make us fall as he did. We ask the Lord for the wisdom and strength to recognize the lies of the Devil and resist him.

Satan or the Devil has no real power over the person who stays on the path of Christ and resists him, but we must resist him. Rely on the mercy and strength of God against the temptations of the enemy, and we will overcome him.

Hail Mary, Holy Mary

“Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you. Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus.”⁵²

Exorcists have stated that the Devil and his demons *“hate that woman.”* We thank the Lord for giving us Mary Immaculate, *“that woman”*. She is *“Theotokos”* or God-Bearer. She is the faithful virgin who will undo the *“No”* of Eve with her *“Let it be done to me, according to your word.”*⁵³ The *“fruit of your womb, Jesus,”* will undo the devastation of the Devil’s lies and deceit. The God-Man within her will be the sin offering on the altar of the Cross to satisfy the Father’s divine justice and bring about humanity’s redemption.

“Holy Mary, Mother of God, Pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death.” In these words, we see Mary’s vocation as Mother of the living. Our Lady is the perfect example of being a disciple. Mary stood at the cross and witnessed the crucifixion firsthand. So, she knows the sorrows and anxieties we will feel. Her heart broke not only as the mother of Jesus but as the mother of us all. Holy Mary knew the path her Son was to take and knew that we as disciples must follow Him.

Assumed into heaven, this same mother sits at Our Lord’s feet, bringing to Him our petitions and praying for us.

⁵¹ Mtt 6:13, RSV-CE

⁵² Luke 1:28,42

⁵³ Luke 1:38

The Hail Mary and the Sorrowful Mysteries

Conclusion and Reflection

Jesus Christ saved our lives with His death; it is for us to accept death to sin to have true life. It must die! My sinful passions, my resistance to the will of God. It's a part of our fallen nature to resist and see letting go as a loss and to see pain and discomfort as a weakness.

When God the Father created the Angels, they were created good. Some chose to serve God and remain in God's presence. Others rebelled and followed the voice of "*I will not serve*" and became the Devil and his demons.

We were also created good, made in the image of God (*imago Dei*). The lies and temptations of the Devil promised a false sense of freedom, a chance to be our own gods, bringing us eternal death. Through the Passion and Death of Our Lord, our humanity was put to death to sin, to be raised again in glory.

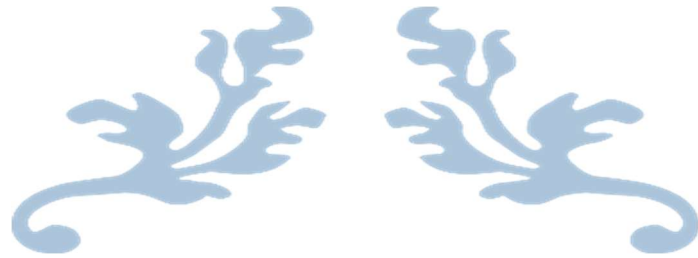
As we contemplate Christ on the Cross, where in my life is there resistance to the Father's will?

Am I afraid of suffering?

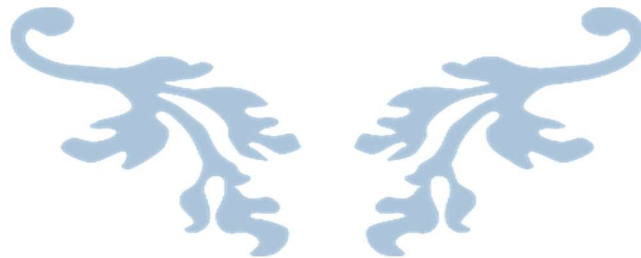
What crosses am I being called to carry?

What is it in my life that needs to meet Jesus on the cross?

Do we have the desire and will to say "*Father, into your hands I commit my spirit*", Mt 23:46?



Chapter Six
*The Hail Mary and the Glorious
Mysteries*



The Hail Mary and the Glorious Mysteries

Introduction

“Contemplating the Risen One, Christians rediscover the reasons for their faith.”⁵⁴

The Glorious Mysteries have a two-fold message, on the one hand, the message is “mission”, and on the other hand, the message is the “promise” of what awaits us after our way of the cross. This last set of mysteries is the icing on the cake, so to speak. The glory of God and the glory of heaven are the final goal and destination of the mysteries of joy, light, and sorrow.

It is here that we find the answer to the question, why are we here? What is the purpose of life? What is God’s plan for me? The Glorious Mysteries are both the last and first steps in our lives and the lives of others.

They are the last steps, in that it is the fulfillment of the process of having received the joy of the gospel. In receiving the joy of the gospel, guided by the light of faith, we cooperate with the grace and will of God to carry our crosses in the hope of the Resurrection. They are also the first steps in the fulfillment of what was hoped for.

The Glorious Mysteries are the beginning of that eternal life the Lord Jesus came to give us.

The Mystery of Glory

***“I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me,
though he dies, yet shall he live.”***⁵⁵

“The glorious mysteries thus lead the faithful to greater hope for the eschatological goal towards which they journey as members of the pilgrim People of God in history. This can only impel them to bear courageous witness to that “good news” which gives meaning to their entire existence.”⁵⁶

⁵⁴ RMV #23, Encyclical Letter, John Paul II; 1Cor 15:14 RSV-CE

⁵⁵ John 11:25, RSV-CE

⁵⁶ RMV #23, Encyclical Letter, John Paul II

The Hail Mary and the Glorious Mysteries

You and I, as human beings, don't always respond well to suffering or when it seems that the world around us is going to hell in a handbasket. We will be tempted to give up and say it isn't worth the effort. We may even see our failings and sins as the final act in our drama of life. The Glorious Mysteries remind us to look at the cross **AND** the empty tomb.

The Gospels don't end with the crucifixion. When Our Lord walked out of that tomb, three days later, death and sin had been defeated. This is one of the reasons we can say "Jesus is our hope". By rising from the dead, the Lord God shows His people that their sins and failings are **NOT** the last words.

In Jesus' Ascension to the Father, Our Father, He goes to intercede for us as the Eternal High Priest and to prepare a place for us. The Lord goes, where we will one day join Him. We were dead to God through sin. But God, by taking our humanity upon Himself, by putting it to death and raising it again, gave us new life.

That new life is given through the Holy Spirit, our Divine Advocate. We will receive this new divine life of grace in the sacraments. The Holy Trinity will enter the temple of your redeemed soul to be with you always. This is the hope, the promise that should drive us to repentance and allow the grace of God to transform us into the image of Christ. We do not fear out of shame, but instead, have great **HOPE!**

Let us not forget Our Lady, Mother Mary. Mary joined the disciples in the upper room after the crucifixion, where she prayed with and for the infant church. Mary said yes to God from the start. But just saying yes doesn't spare us from life's troubles, no matter how faithful we are. She stood under the cross as the Lord took his last breath and then prepared His body for burial. For three days she waited, trusted, and hoped.

One could imagine her maternal heart wanting to explode with joy when Jesus appeared to her and the Apostles. Mother Mary would be assumed into heaven, body and soul, and crowned as our Queen Mother, who continues to care for her children on their pilgrimage home to the Father.

Pope John Paul II mentions "*bearing courageous witness to that good news.*" ⁵⁷ At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit set the hearts and souls of the Apostles hiding in the upper room on fire. This

⁵⁷ RVM #3, Encyclical Letter, John Paul II

The Hail Mary and the Glorious Mysteries

fire is the love of God and for the Gospel. Our Catholic faith is not one religious practice among many. The faith we have received is to be shared, not hidden.

The Holy Spirit we received in confirmation serves to strengthen and guide us. Bearing witness can take many forms; sometimes we're the teachers, and sometimes we need to be taught. And don't be surprised when it's sometimes both. The Lord gave us new life so that others may see it and not lose hope.

Jesus came to preach the Gospel and make disciples. As disciples of the Lord, we are called to spread the truth of our faith to others. The call to holiness and spreading the good news is the vocation of all the baptized.

Consider the Second Vatican Council's Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, "Each layman must stand before the world as a witness to the resurrection and life of the Lord Jesus and a symbol of the living God. All the laity as a community and each one according to his ability must nourish the world with spiritual fruits. They must diffuse in the world that spirit which animates the poor, the meek, and the peacemakers— whom the Lord in the Gospel proclaimed as blessed. In a word, "Christians must be to the world what the soul is to the body." ⁵⁸

The Lord's Prayer ⁵⁹

"Our Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name." ⁶⁰ These opening words of the Lord's Prayer are a taste, a glimpse of the future glory that the Lord Jesus merited for us. With these words, we participate in the glorification of God the Father. It is through the power of the Holy Spirit and the grace of Baptism that we are enabled to address God, not as strangers, but as the children of God addressing their Father.

"Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as in heaven. Give us the day, our daily bread, and forgive us our sins as we forgive others." ⁶¹ We remain hopeful in waiting for the day when

⁵⁸ Lumen Gentium #38, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, Second Vatican Council

⁵⁹ Mtt 6:9-13, RSV-CE

⁶⁰ Mtt 6:9, RSV-CE

⁶¹ Mtt 6:10-12, RSV-CE

The Hail Mary and the Glorious Mysteries

we will be reunited with God and all of His people in the eternal kingdom. We wait for the day when Our Divine Lord reigns supreme in the hearts and minds of all men and women. As we wait for that day to come, while on our pilgrimage back to the Father, we ask Him with trust and faith to continually feed and strengthen us with His graces. Last but not least, for the spirit of repentance and forgiveness so that we may be peacemakers, the children of God.

*“Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.”*⁶² In recognizing our weaknesses and our need for heavenly help, may the Lord teach us the ways of holiness and wisdom. We ask because we need the help of the Holy Spirit to recognize the deceptions of the Devil and the power to resist him. We know that God’s divine providence governs the world. The Lord God Himself is not distant from us, so we can with hope and faith in His love and mercy, *“deliver us from evil, amen”*.

Hail Mary, Holy Mary

“Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you. Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, Pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death.”⁶³

We turn now to Our Holy Mother in gratitude for her faithful example of what it means to be a disciple of the Lord. We look to Mary's assumption and being crowned in heaven as what awaits us at the end of our mortal lives.

Mary does not replace Our Lord as the one mediator; she is instead the path to Jesus. Our Holy Mother was in the Upper Room at Pentecost and received the Holy Spirit.

Now she stands before the throne of God, praying for all of the Lord’s brothers and sisters. She lovingly dishes out her maternal care for all the Lord’s faithful as we embrace the vocation of a disciple.

⁶² Mtt 6:13, RSV-CE

⁶³ Luke 1:28,42, RSV-CE

The Hail Mary and the Glorious Mysteries

Conclusion and Reflection

“The contemplation of this scene, like that of the other glorious mysteries, ought to lead the faithful to an ever greater appreciation of their new life in Christ, lived in the heart of the Church.... This can only impel them to bear courageous witness to that “good news” which gives meaning to their entire existence.”⁶⁴

The Glorious Mysteries are not the end of a lengthy meditation; they are instead the beginning of a new life. As I mentioned before, the Glorious Mysteries are both the promise of future glory and our mission. It was for the Son of God to redeem and save humanity from the clutches of death and sin. It was God the Father and God the Son that sent the Holy Spirit to sanctify and teach us *“all things.”*

To accept our salvation, to accept our being children of God and His disciples, is to accept His divine will. That divine will is the fulfillment of His command to *“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and behold, I am with you, always until the end of the age.”*⁶⁵

If we look at our daily lives, how and where do we spread what Our Lord has taught?

In what ways can I or do I work at making disciples of others and being a disciple myself?

No matter your age, your wealth or poverty, no matter your education level, we are called to be disciples and evangelize.

Ask the Lord to send the Holy Spirit and show you how He wants to turn you into an instrument of His grace, love, and mercy.

May the Lord open your heart and mind to the mission and vocation that His divine providence has planned for you. May you have the grace and strength to imitate Our Lady and say yes to God. Amen.

⁶⁴ RVM #23, Encyclical Letter, John Paul II

⁶⁵ Mtt 28:19-20, RSV-CE

Notes

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In honor of Our Lady and the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception,
an additional article was added below.

The Immaculate Conception

“The New Eve and Mother of Redemption”

By Timothy Andries

December 2021



“We define the doctrine that the most Blessed Virgin Mary, in the first instance of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege granted by Almighty God, in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, was preserved free from all stain of original sin.” ⁶⁶

Introduction

1. In Pius IX’s Apostolic Constitution, defining the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception, the Holy Father explained not only the doctrine’s long history going back to early Christianity but also its Scriptural foundation. The dogmatic statement also sheds light on the fact that Mary, Our Mother, was predestined to have an active role in the Father’s divine plan of redemption.

2. Our Holy Mother, by providential design, is the “*New Eve*” as her son Jesus is the “*New Adam*”. We can be tempted at times into thinking this is another example of “*too much emphasis on Mary*”. I have to be honest and admit that I was at one time tempted to think the same way. If you look at the litany of titles and names for Mary, it’s easy to get that impression.

⁶⁶ Ineffabilis Deus, Defining the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception, Pius IX

3. So what is the Immaculate Conception, and how did that make her a participant in our redemption? When I was younger, I thought it meant the conception of Jesus, because He was conceived by the Holy Spirit. It's only after I looked deeper into the history of the teaching that I gained a better and deeper understanding. Looking closer at Scripture and the Catechism and seeing the parallels between Mary and Eve allowed the pieces to fall together. The picture I now saw was not an *"overdose of Marian Dogmas"*, but instead a glimpse into Mary's role in the plan of redemption for the human race.

4. So let's take a look at Mary the New Eve and Mother of Redemption. I wish to emphasize that at no time is the necessary role of *Jesus Christ, the only Redeemer*, called into question or in any way *"sidelined"*. Mary is the *"New Eve"*, not the *"New Savior"*. While Our Lady needed redemption just like us, she still played an active role in our redemption according to God's design.

I.

Eve and the Promise of Redemption

"I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; He will strike at your head, while you strike at His heel." ⁶⁷

5. We are taught from the Book of Genesis that *"God created man and woman in His image and likeness."* ⁶⁸ Adam and Eve were to be the first parents of the children of God. Both were created without sin, that is, they were created with the fullness of grace. They were filled with the life of God and were obedient to Him. They lived in the perfect charity and friendship of God.

6. Eve was to be the *"mother of all the living."* ⁶⁹ As long as Adam and Eve remained in God's perfect friendship, their offspring would share in that same life of grace and divine friendship. But because our first parents fell into sin, humanity and their children would share the same judgment. Human nature was now tainted and unable to hold up under temptation and resist the devil.

⁶⁷ Gen 3:15, RSV-CE

⁶⁸ Gen 1:26, RSV-CE

⁶⁹ Gen 3:20, RSV-CE

7. So here we have part of the background scene with our first parents falling. In doing so, humanity would now forever carry, like a genetic trait, the stain of impurity and disobedience. Humanity now gropes in the dark for something it cannot find and searches for someone it cannot see. Our future at this point is dark and uncertain.

8. The rest of the background is Our Father's plan. It was His will that humanity share in His divine life for eternity. It **IS** His will that man and woman live in His goodness and friendship. So instead of leaving us adrift, wallowing in our sin, the Lord God promised that He would redeem and save us. In Gen 3:15, "*enmity*" means being hostile or opposed to something or someone. So from the start, God set the offspring of Eve in opposition to the offspring of the Devil. Added to that is the promise that the offspring of the woman would crush the head of the serpent. The woman and her child would be the Devil's undoing.

II.

The New Eve, Mother of the Redeemer

"Rightly therefore the holy Fathers see her as used by God not merely in a passive way, but as freely cooperating in the work of human salvation through faith and obedience. For, as St. Irenaeus says, she "being obedient, became the cause of salvation for herself and the whole human race." ⁷⁰

9. When you and I watch a movie, we can only see each scene as it is shown. Because we see it time and time again, we have to watch pieces of the drama play out piece by piece over a given period of time. Almighty God, who is all-knowing and all-seeing, exists in eternity. So if God were to watch that same movie, He would see every character and every scene at once. So, picture if you will, God seeing the first moments of creation before time began to the fall of Adam and Eve through to the Ascension to the Final Judgement in one shot.

10. In God's providential design, Mary received "preventative redemption", unlike ours, which is liberating. We were liberated from original sin, whereas Mary's redemption prevented her from contracting original sin. ⁷¹ This preventative measure on the part of God, by the foreseen merits of Christ, prepared her for the role of Mother of God, Mother of the Church, and Mother of Redemption.

⁷⁰ Ineffabilis Deus, Defining the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception, Pius IX

⁷¹ Theology for the Laity: Defending Our Lady's Privileges, Dominican Fathers, Western Province

11. Mary's Immaculate Conception was an act of sanctification, giving her the fullness of grace so that this new Eve would cooperate fully with the divine will of the Father. We see this in Scripture with the Archangels' greeting, "*Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you!*"⁷² and in her response, "*And Mary said: Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to thy word*".⁷³

12. The angelic salutation and Mary's Magnificat reveal that Mary understood that her child was "*Emmanuel*" or *God-With-Us*.⁷⁴ Any Jewish woman would have recognized the fulfillment of prophecy about the promised Messiah (*Mashiacah in Hebrew*). Her sanctification before birth would, on the one hand, provide a suitable dwelling for the divine Word of God. Her sinless humanity would be taken up by the Son of God and offered to the Father for the redemption of the world.

13. Through Mary's yes to God and faithful cooperation, our Lord and Redeemer was born. She raised and nurtured Him into manhood and followed His mission to Calvary. In a real sense, she sacrificed her own heart and flesh on the cross for our salvation. In doing so, the Mother of the Redeemer became Mother of Redemption. The devastation of sin and disobedience brought by Adam and Eve was reversed by the perfect faith and obedience of Jesus and Mary, the New Adam and New Eve.

III. Conclusion

14. The Immaculate Conception is a gift from God's own loving heart to His children. It is a testament from the Father of His paternal care and promises to bring us back to Him. Mary is that most precious gift, full of grace, immaculate, humble, and faithful. Mary Immaculate is our new Ark that contains the new and everlasting covenant.

15. Mary Immaculate, the New Eve, continues her role as the Mother of the Living. The mother of those united through baptism to Christ's Mystical Body, the Church. Just as she prayed for the Apostles in the Upper Room, she continues to pray and intercede for us today. Let us turn to Our Immaculate Mother to ask her intercession and imitate her virtues so that we, too, may carry the Word of God alive within us.

⁷² Luke 1:28, RSV-CE

⁷³ Luke 1:38, RSV-CE; CCC #494 Catechism of the Catholic Church

⁷⁴ Mtt 1:21-25, RSV-CE



Prayer to Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception

O most Holy Virgin, immaculate in body and
spirit, look kindly on me as I implore
your powerful intercession.

O most Holy Mother, receive my prayers as I
present them to God.

(state your intentions here)

O Mary, Mother of Jesus and our Mother, you
intercede for us with your Son.

O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us
who have recourse to thee.

Amen.

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