

## Rosary Mysteries and Meditations on Each One

*May is a popular month to pray the Rosary. Its decades have a mystery. We offer a meditation for each one. You will see one of the four types of Mysteries in these May bulletins of May 8, 15, 22 and 29. They are Joyful, Sorrowful, Luminous and Glorious Mysteries of Christ and Mary. Yet if you want to get them all in one set, and on paper, then look to the periodical rack in Resurrection church for it (to the right of the holy water font in the Commons) or on the table of the Riderwood Chapel entranceway.*

**The Joyful Mysteries** [often done on Mon/Thurs. or any Christmas season day]

1. The Annunciation. *Mary said: "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word." Luke 1:38* The message the angel Gabriel brings to Mary is stunning: God chose you to become the mother of his incarnate Son. Mary's assent, "Let it be done to me according to your word," is made in such a humble and open response by Our Lady. The Angel does acknowledge that Mary is "full of grace" so that there are heavenly blessings all about her.

From the moment Mary came into being, we know she was aided by divine grace in such a way that her will would always long to choose the good. Hence her response to God's will is pure, prompt, unconditional, free and joyful. She was led by the Holy Spirit. Still, it is important to know how it was her choice.

Unfortunately, we often set after inferior things or let our pursuit of the best be tempered by our encounters with lesser goods. This weakness is a consequence of original sin which plagues us on earth. However, we are destined for heaven where all the saints enjoy the peace that comes from having wills constantly fixed on God, the highest good, and loving only what he loves. We anticipate this now when, with the help of grace, we live virtuously.

2. The Visitation. *And Mary said: "My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my savior" Luke 1:46-47* Upon Mary's arrival in the Judean hill country, Elizabeth praises God: *Blessed Is the fruit of your womb.* Mary responds in kind: *"My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord..."* The account of Mary's three month long stay in the house of Zechariah and Elizabeth begins and ends with this exchange.

While it is certainly possible to pray alone, praise of God whether in heaven or on earth is always a social affair. At our baptism we enter the society that is the Church. For the rest of our lives, we pray and merit as members of the Church in communion with all the saints living and deceased. It is a great advantage for us to be in communion with those more closely united to Christ in heaven—we enjoy the effects of their intercession for us. Similarly, we benefit from the prayers of the souls in purgatory and help them by our own prayers.

3. The Nativity *"And the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.: - John 1-14* The birth of Christ is entirely unprecedented. God took for himself a human nature and joined it to himself in such a way that he could be truly called a man while remaining God.

The Word's assumption of a human nature is marvelous, but the reasoning behind it is more so: "God became man that we might become God." (St. Athanasius) Deification, or divinization, means that we partake of the divine nature and bear its likeness. (It does not mean that the distinction between us and God disappears.) It happens to all souls in the state of grace, beginning at baptism when we are made sons of God by adoption, and continuing by degree.

We are “changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another.” (2Cor.3:18) We will not be the end product until we arrive in heaven. At that point, we will have reached the end point where, seeing God face to face, we are united to him as closely as is possible for a creature and will stay that way forever.

4. The Presentation. *“They took him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord.” Luke 2:22* Normally, women went to the temple after child birth to offer the sacrifice for their purification. Mary did this even though the unique circumstances of Jesus’ birth did not bind her to the law. St. Luke also says Mary and Joseph took Jesus to the temple to present him to the Lord.

This other purpose might also seem useless: Jesus is the second Person of the Trinity and the Persons of the Holy Trinity have always been and will always be in communion with one another. One of the consequences of this act is that it reveals some of the life of the Trinity to us. The Trinity cannot be known by human reason and it is a sign of God’s friendship with us that he lets us in on the secret of his interior life. This revelation makes us cognizant of the limits of our reason and the gift that we have received in having Jesus as a light. Second, because Jesus is God and man, we can be associated with that offering.

4. The Finding in the Temple. *“After three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions, and all who heard him were astounded at his understanding and his answers.” – Luke 2:46-47* Jesus’ teaching in the temple astounds those who hear it because his knowledge of God is different from anyone else’s. He had the privilege of the beatific vision, or immediate knowledge of God, from his conception.

Like those who heard Jesus, our knowledge of God is presently limited to what we can learn from the created order. And God’s revelation as it has been passed down to us. The gift of faith helps us to adhere to these truths. When our earthly pilgrimage is complete, we will see God face to face and have knowledge of him that far exceeds what we could ever obtain in this life. “We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.” (1John 3:2)

**The Sorrowful Mysteries** [often prayed on Tues/Fri/or any day in Lent]

The Agony in the Garden. *“Being in an agony he prayed more earnestly” Luke 22:44*

What else more does encourage prayer more readily than a crisis? In suffering, we experience our need acutely and we reach out to the Father with urgency and fervor.

On the night before facing His Cross---in one of the more profound manifestations of His Humanity---Jesus does the same in the Garden of Gethsemane: “My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.” (Matt 26:39) How naturally he pleads for deliverance from the suffering he knows is coming! And how comforted we can feel when we do the same in our dark moments.

What Jesus says next, however, is an attitude full of grace and one that takes supernatural courage to imitate: “Nevertheless, not as I will but as Thou wills.” In total trust, He surrenders Himself to the Father’s loving plans, knowing them to be far better than any human wisdom. He invites us to do the same, even when the circumstances appear too costly to bear and it is difficult to see the Father’s love.

2. The Scourging at the Pillar *“Then Pilate took Jesus and scourged him.” John 19:1* Pilate’s decision to have Jesus scourged is an act of appalling cowardice. Finding no just case against the

Galilean, the Governor orders this savage whipping to try and placate the violent crowd, forgetting his duty to just governance.

Jesus' response, however, is not to decry or condemn this injustice, but to face it with a silence that baffles and challenges us. He had every right to respond. In fact, was it not his duty to overturn this blatant abuse? Are we to learn from Him that silence is the correct response in the face of evil? Certainly not. Yet there is an attitude of Jesus in not facing evil by resorting to their own dark ways. This high attitude of Jesus was taught to his disciples as far back as the Sermon on the Mount, of the turning of the other cheek or of the beatitudes of hungering and thirsting for righteousness, being poor in spirit, and suffering persecution for the cause of God's good (in his Gospel). The city (or people of light and truth) should not be hidden. Truth will take a stand, and do so in love and holiness and in honor to God—quite the opposite of the worldly in their self-stands of sin and pride.

But what we are to understand in a sorrowful mystery was that Jesus was looking at this event with a vital faith in the Love and Goodness of His Father. Their intimacy was such that Jesus knew even this was within the Father's plan and that it would work for "the good of those who love him." (Rom 8:28) This intimacy with the Father's Will is pivotal for us, too, that we might discern what is right in the clamor of so many voices.'

3 The Crowning with Thorns. *"Plaiting a crown of thorns they put it on his head, and put a reed in his hand. And kneeling before him they mocked him saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!"*

Mockery is a vicious language---so vicious, in fact, that we put an end to punishments of public humiliation even before we considered withdrawing the death penalty. To degrade and shame can be more destructive than to kill; human beings can thrive only in relationship, and to tear away a person's place at home and in society is a very violent act.

This cruel severing is only secondary, however, when we consider the attack on a person's dignity that mockery entails. When we reflect on the honor due to an immortal soul made in the Image of God, we see why the Psalmist exhorts us not to sit "in the seat of scoffers" (Ps 1;1).

Yet, Jesus patiently accepts this scorn despite His Divinity and Kingship—dignity beyond anything we could possess—and lays down all claims to eternal praise that we might be reconciled to His Father in love.

4 The Carrying of the Cross. *As they led Jesus away, they seized one Simon of Cyrene, who was coming in from the country, and laid on him the cross, to carry it behind Jesus."* - Luke 23:26

From our youngest years, we develop a keen sense of 'fairness', and few images prompt a charge of 'Unfair!' so readily as Simon of Cyrene carrying another man's cross. It goes against everything, then, that this moment is an incredible grace for Simon—the first to truly 'take up his cross and follow (Jesus)' (Matt 16:24).

When we suffer, it is easy to draw lines as to how much is 'Fair' for us to endure. Hearing God's invitation to follow the Crucified Christ, we have strong arguments for what is justly required of us—and we will accept nothing more.

But when we reflect on Jesus' innocence and the *absolute* trust He had in the Father during this awful trial, we see that another economy is at work. The chance to offer ourselves without calculating reserve is actually a gift that unites us to God and opens the way to the redemptive miracle of self-giving love.

5 The Crucifixion. *“They brought him to the place called Golgotha...and they crucified him.” – Mark 15:22,24*

When we consider the martyrs, it is tempting to think that their glory is purely in the suffering they underwent—I think of a St. Lawrence statue standing proudly with the grill that roasted him. It was not the martyrs’ pain, however, that saved them so much as their impenetrable faith in God’s Goodness, even beyond the finality of *death*, bears ‘witness’ (k. *’martur’*) to the victorious power and fidelity of God. As in all things, Christ is our model for this faith and His death on the Cross is the perfect exercise of a trust in the Father that perseveres beyond every human limit. It is also a *promise*, and the very evidence that God can and has one through the darkest door possible and returned from it by the surpassing power of His Resurrection.

### **The Luminous Mysteries [Prayed on Thursday. Sometimes on holy days, Sacrament days.]**

1. The Baptism of Jesus. *“When Jesus was baptized, he went immediately from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, alighting on him.” –Matthew 3:16*

When Jesus approached St. John on the shore of the Jordan, the Baptist was initially reluctant to baptize him. He was troubled that he should be seen to minister to the Lord—could a baptism of repentance ever be meaningful in relation to the Holy One of God, so far above these human needs?

His obedience, however, immediately makes way for the opening of the Heavens and he sees that Jesus—the Word made flesh—comes to reconcile God with His creation, separated by sin. Jesus’ presence touches and sanctifies the water of the river, turns it to the Father’s heavenly purpose.

With Him we too are able to reach out in our human nature, in basic elements like water, and through His Church be sure that the Spirit of God sanctifies these “earthen vessels” (2 Cor. 4:7).

2. The Wedding Feast at Cana. *“Jesus said to them ‘Fill the jars with water.’ And they filled them to the brim.” –John 2:7*

The performing of Jesus’ first miracle at the Wedding Feast at Cana was preceded by an instruction. It was an instruction rich with significance, since the water jars Jesus asked to be filled were those used for the ritual purification of the wedding guests.

The touch of Heaven began with a request of those on earth and the measure of wine that Jesus poured out over the assembly was directly related to the measure of fidelity to that request.

St. John tells us that they filled the jars ‘to the brim’.

How full are our lives with these waters of purification? How readily do we invite the realities of Heaven into our hearts and make them present in our world?

The more we welcome the Holy Spirit’s purifying love, the greater will be the outpouring of His sweetest fruits, and the more we will see the “coming of the Lord in ...Glory” (Mar 13:26). We must first put ourselves at His disposal.

3. Proclamation of the Kingdom. *“Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying: ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel.’”—Mark 1:14-15*

With the beginning of Jesus’ public ministry, the early manifestations of His glory are multiplied a hundredfold: healing, deliverance from evil spirits, the feeding of the multitude—all these are reality and Heaven is made utterly present.

In sending out His disciples to continue this work, Jesus joins their human frailties to His true Body and their own flesh is made a wonderful outlet for the continuing of His Father’s work on the earth.

Likewise, through our baptism we are made one with Him in His Body, the Church, just as “[He] and the Father are one” (John 1:21) and our lives manifest His Kingdom by our prayers, sufferings and good works. Thus, by His grace, the Kingdom is always “at hand”.

4. The Transfiguration. *“Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain apart by themselves; and he was transfigured before them.”—Mark 9:2*

In taking Peter, James and John “apart by themselves”, Jesus reveals to them the ultimate promise of God. His Transfiguration is not only a sign of His Resurrection Glory, but also of God’s complete will for His people. It is in this privileged moment that these three disciples understand: God has not come down just to touch the earth, but intends those who follow Jesus to be raised up with Him into the very life of the Blessed Trinity.

Our earthly life, then, is but the beginning. Though our outworking of the Kingdom in this world is critical, it is our drawing aside with Jesus on “the high mountain” that points us to the true fulfillment of all that God desires for us. It is in our prayer that we begin to see him more and more as He is and there that we are conformed to His true and Heavenly likeness.

5. Institution of the Eucharist. *“This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”—Luke 22:19*

Jesus knew that the world His disciples would face was violent and hostile to the life-giving Word. Not only that, but He knew the enemy was “prowling around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour” (Pet 5:8). He knew that in their own strength, His followers would never be able to carry out the mission His Father had given them.

So He did the only thing that would make it possible—He gave them Himself. The remembrance we celebrate in the Eucharist is not a mere memory of Him, but the actual “making present” of His body, blood, soul and divinity. As He did all through His time on earth, He makes Himself present among us and intimately touches our innermost being. We are never alone.

### **The Glorious Mysteries Prayed on Sundays and Wednesdays and in Easter time days**

1. The Resurrection. *Mary turned and saw Jesus standing there, though she did not know that it was Jesus. He said to her: ‘Woman, why are you weeping? Whom do you seek?’—John 20, 14-15*

Oh Risen One, Oh gentle door-keeper, Oh humble lamb, you are the gardener who, having opened the gates of the heavenly garden that is paradise, you offer us the flowers and the fruits of the eternal Deity. And now I know for certain that you have spoken the truth...When you appeared as a traveler to two of your disciples and told them that the Christ must suffer and that it

was by way of the Cross that he enters into his glory... And what was your Glory, oh sweet and loving Word? It was Yourself and it was necessary for you to suffer in order to enter your Glory.

↑So said Saint Catherine of Siena, 1347-1380

There is nothing more to search for, Mary: you have found the one you will never lose again. You will no longer see him in death's hands on the cross. You will no longer go to his tomb to embalm him in the perfumes of charity. You will no longer seek him from anyone on earth; nor from anyone in heaven, himself least of all, because he is your soul and your soul is he. Separated for a brief spell, you're now joined together in that place where nothing at all can prevent union and unity.

Fr. Henri-Dominique Lacordaire, 1802-1861

Prayer: *Our Lady of the Rosary, teach us to give thanks for this new Life which has been given to us by the Resurrection of Christ.*

2. The Ascension. Therefore it is said, 'When he ascended on high he led a host of captives and he gave gifts to men.—Eph. 4, 8

The mystery of the Ascension takes us with the Lord into the kingdom of the Father and closes off the purely human routes. "If you have risen with the Christ, seek the things that are above." says the Word. But this raising up of ourselves, this going up is to take place in the footsteps of Christ. (It is clearly just by His Way so proclaims John 14:6 "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life.")). It is the power of the Resurrection that carries us and draws us onwards just as it was Jesus' love for the Father that drew him along the path of his Passion. We too can only join Christ on the paths he himself trod: abjection, poverty, contempt, because it is He and not another who is the Way. So says in a commentary by John Tauler, 1300-1361

He, the most Powerful of the powerful, has made the devil captive, and he has gone up to heaven in all his power. There, in splendor and the sublimity of his glory, he rejoices with his Father in all the heavenly blessings. King of life eternal, he makes us his co-heirs, his co-sharers, he the contemplation of whom satisfies the desires of all the angels; he who is so beautiful that no creature can cease to admire him, he whose appearance, whose words, are beyond description! It is he who is our reward. -----Blessed Columba of Rieti, 1467-1501

Prayer: *Our Lady of the Rosary, teach us to always long for Heaven.*

3. Pentecost. *They were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.—Acts 2, 4*

May the grace of the Holy Spirit be with us! Holy Spirit, you inspired the prophets so that they could proclaim in advance the wonders of the Messiah. You purified the Apostles so that they could carry the message of Christ to the whole world. Your breath enabled human beings to become spiritual. You bring together in one widely different languages and customs. With your heavenly touch, you have taught the saints in all centuries. You have yourself today endowed the Apostles of Christ with the most extraordinary and hitherto unknown gifts. You have made glorious this day of Pentecost. Amen. Alleluia! ----Blessed Humbert of Romans, 1194-1277

The precious and incomparable gift which, unfortunately, had formerly been lost through sin in the earthly paradise, has now been restored to us. Yes, the treasure which we had formerly lost through disobedience, I mean the Holy Spirit, the riches, depth of love and fullness of which no mind, heart or intelligence is capable of comprehending, had been restored to us. He descended

on the apostles. He gave himself abundantly, without measure. He filled them all to the full, interiorly and exteriorly, with his grace. -----John Tauler, 1300-1361

Prayer: *Our Lady of the Rosary, teach us to be docile to the breath of the Spirit.*

4. The Assumption. *He who is mighty has done great things for me: henceforth all generations will call me blessed. –Luke 1, 48-49*

If Our Lady's body is with her in the glory of Heaven, that is because throughout her earthly life and in spite of her exceptional graces, she never attached herself to any good, spiritual or corporal, interior or exterior... By means of this deep interior poverty, we too share a little in this purity of Mary, in this 'lightness,' thanks to which she never placed the slightest obstacle in the way of the grace which was raising her to God. The Assumption begins, like the Resurrection, in our daily life here below. -----John Tauler, 1300-1361

This heavenly and glorious Queen who, while on earth, seemed to be no more than a little piece of earth, I know that today she is above all the spheres, as the Church teaches. He who established her as Queen of the Seraphim, and who took real human flesh from her womb, comes down through the heavenly spheres in order to honor her and to crown her. What rejoicing in the depths of heaven, in the midst of those shining spirits, at the moment of her wonderful assumption! -----Fr. Girolamo Savonarola, 1452-1498

Prayer:

*Our Lady of the Rosary, teach us always to go to Christ through you. Ad Jesum per Mariam!*

5. The Coronation. *A great portent appeared in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and on her head a crown of twelve stars – Rev 12, 1*

My daughters [the nuns in Bologna] are decked and adorned indeed... They shall be brought to the King, our Lord, after her who is the Queen, the Virgin Mary, his incomparable mother, for she alone is his dove, his beautiful one, she who is all fair and there is no blemish in her... She is full of charity and love, full of grace, she that is blessed among women and the Lord is with her. After her shall the brides of Christ be brought into this temple of the King, that temple which is not made with human hands; and there the Bridegroom shall rejoice over the Bride... You shall come into Sion with praise, and everlasting joy shall be upon your heads, that everlasting crown which is called joy...-----Blessed Jordan of Saxony, 1185-1237

Gaze upon the sweet Queen of the heavenly Kingdom, so dear to your heart, who is bending tenderly over her Beloved, surrounded by roses and lilies of the valley. Gaze upon her exquisite beauty that fills the entire heavenly army with joy. Oh! Now take a look which will thrill your heart and your spirit! Behold the Mother of Mercy who has gently turned her eyes, her merciful and loving eyes, to look at you and at all sinners, in order to protect them with her power and reconcile them with her beloved Child. ----Blessed Henry Suso, 1295-1366

Prayer: *Our Lady of the Rosary, teach us to love you always more and better, as worthy daughters and sons of The Blessed Son, and by the intercession of his friend, Saint Dominic, Rosary patron.*