

AUTHOR'S NOTE

From the Middle Ages, the Rosary has been promoted as a powerful intercessory prayer. This prayer was credited with the saving of the Christian mariners against naval forces of the Ottoman empire during the battle of Lepanto on October 7, 1571. Pope Saint Pius V instituted the feast of Our Lady of Victory on October 7th, later the feast was renamed the Feast of the Most Holy Rosary. The Rosary is still used as a prayer weapon. Pope Saint John Paul II thanked Our Lady of Fatima for insuring he was spared during an assassination attempt, May 13th, 1981. During her apparition at Fatima, Mary requested praying the Rosary. The saintly pope said to “Rediscover the Rosary in the light of Scripture...” *Rosarium Virginis Mariae (RVM)*, 43, Oct. 16, 2002. The mantra, possibly droning, of the many prayers in the Rosary can lead to boredom or distraction. However, a Scriptural Rosary avoids this because we enter into a conversation with God.

I was asked to write a scriptural rosary about men for men. The irony in this request is that as an author of twelve scriptural prayer books, seven of which are scriptural rosaries, I should have thought of this idea myself. However, the Holy Spirit brings special people into your life to witness to you, so you can witness to others. At first glance, the reader might be concerned about repetition in this prayer book, especially if you have prayed my other prayer books. However, this meditation prayer book is wholly new and holy original.

Does a scriptural rosary about men for men necessarily mean that a Marian prayer will become less Marian? On the contrary, Mary always points to Jesus. Mary, infused with extraordinary humility, will be guiding us to the foot of the Cross and through the gates of Heaven.

The Joyful Mysteries focus on the early life of Christ.

In the first joyful mystery, Mary is approached by an angel and asked if she would be the mother of God, the long-awaited Savior. While this may be sufficient meditation for some, we do not stop there, we delve into scriptures more deeply. What about St. Joseph? He also was approached by an angel, albeit in a dream. He is hailed as being of the Davidic line by two Gospel writers: Matthew and Luke. Our meditations focus on those men that preceded Joseph: Adam, Abraham, and David. Even some we may not be familiar with like, Hezekiah, Josiah, and Zerubbabel.

In the second joyful mystery, Zechariah, a priest and prophet, is the father of the last prophet bridging the Old Testament to the New. Zechariah's prayer for a son was answered because all “*children are a gift from God*” *Ps 127:3* Mary visits her pregnant cousin, Elizabeth, Zechariah's wife. But who else met? John (later called “the Baptist”) leaps for joy, albeit in the womb, when he meets his cousin, Jesus. Both children were named from the womb. In these meditations we focus on the child in the womb and Zechariah's prophecies about his son. These prophecies anticipate John

the Baptist and Jesus' meeting thirty years later at the bank of the River Jordan.

In the third joyful mystery, Mary gives birth to the Kings of Kings in a stable for there was *"no room at the inn."* Lk 2:7 If we just focus on the birth, we miss all the drama, intrigues, and deceptions swirling around Jerusalem. King Herod is all about maintaining his power base. When the magi disrupt Herod's delusion of power by the mention of the birth of the anticipated messianic king, Herod is so enraged that he orders the killing of the innocents of Bethlehem. In these meditations which include King David's Psalms, we focus on Jesus as king and the secular kings all around him. St. Joseph, King Herod, the three Magi and the King of Kings, converge, or rather collide, at this one moment in time, the *"fullness of time."* Gal 4:4

In the fourth joyful mystery, Mary and Joseph bring Jesus to the temple in Jerusalem to present him to the Lord. Simeon, priest and prophet, is at the end of a long line of prophets welcoming the coming of the Messiah. Prophets may predict the future, but they are more likely to preach repentance to the people who have fallen away from God. Each Old Testament prophet is featured in these meditations in the sequence in which the Old Testament book was written. The last verse of the Old Testament *"Lo, I will send you / Elijah the prophet / before the day of the Lord comes, / the great and terrible day."* Mal 3:24 ushers in the New Testament. Like these prophets of old, we are all called to be prophets by the right of our baptism.

In the fifth joyful mystery, Jesus, Mary and Joseph visited the temple in Jerusalem during Passover. The temple mount, Mount Moriah, was first mentioned as the site that Abraham was called to sacrifice his only son, Isaac. King David gave his son Solomon the task to build the temple on Mount Moriah. These meditations follow the journey of the building, destruction, and rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem over many, many centuries. Christ died, the temple of his body ravished, on this mount. Again, in the mid-first century, the temple in Jerusalem was destroyed.

For nearly eight centuries, the Most Holy Rosary consisted of fifteen decades in three groups of mysteries – the Joyful, Sorrowful, and the Glorious. The joyful mysteries ended with Jesus as a boy of twelve in the temple and the sorrowful mysteries began with Jesus' Passion in the Garden of Gethsemane. Pope Saint John Paul II recommended an additional set of mysteries, the Luminous Mysteries. These mysteries of light *"bring out fully the Christological depth of the Rosary"* RVM 19 and filled in the chronological gap of the Rosary mysteries.

The Luminous Mysteries focus on Jesus' public life and ministry.

In the first luminous mystery, John the Baptist and Jesus meet. John's ministry will now begin to decrease while he ushers in through Baptism, the increase in Jesus' ministry. The proclamation from his heavenly Father

and overshadowing of the Holy Spirit is a trinitarian revelation. The Son of God is the second person of the Blessed Trinity. If we focus on Baptism we can see our role in the work of the Trinity. Some of the mystery of the Trinity is revealed one Scripture verse at a time in these meditations. However, we do not know how the *"three are of one accord."* 1 Jn 5:8 Through our baptism we are *"made sharers in the priestly, prophetic, and kingly functions of Christ."* LG 31. This is our trinitarian mission.

In the second luminous mystery, Jesus' first miracle occurred at the urging of his mother during the wedding at Cana. Jesus was reluctant at first but honored his mother's request. Do we need signs, or do we believe without extraordinary wonders? Jesus knew that once the miracle was known, the people would start believing in him and try to make him an earthly king. This is what concerned the chief priest and the pharisees that *"all will believe in him."* Jn 11:47-48 These meditations highlight some of Jesus' miracles. My favorite story is the curing of the ten lepers. Ten lepers beg to be cured; they are. Jesus sends them to the priest, however, only one returns to thank "the Priest." When we do not expect thanks for the little good that we do, we are truly living in imitation of Christ.

In the third luminous mystery, Jesus proclaimed the gospel for three years and was crucified for his message. St. Paul proclaimed the gospel of Jesus Christ and was martyred for it. These meditations offer a "twist" on the proclamation of the kingdom. We meditate not so much on Jesus' proclamation but on St. Paul's. St. Paul considered himself the least in the kingdom. St. Paul was highly schooled in the Jewish law, present at the stoning of Stephen, and tried to persecute the fledging church. St. Paul's writings as listed in the order in which they were written and serve as meditations for this mystery. These chronicle his transformation from persecutor to being persecuted for spreading the word of Christ. Evangelization is never easy – but we have a model in St. Paul – sinner those he was. We can put on the *"armor of God."* Eph 6:11 How are we proclaiming the gospel 2,000 years later?

On a mountain, Moses was given the law, the ten commandments. On a mountain, Jesus gave us a new law, the Beatitudes. Jesus and Moses meet at the Mount of the Transfiguration. In the fourth luminous mystery, while there were others on the mountain, Elijah, Peter, James and John, the focus of these meditations highlights the ten commandments and metanoia. With a conversion of heart our life is transformed to look towards the things of God. St. Augustine in his confessions said that a Bible verse that moved him to finally give up his old life was *"Let us then throw off the works of darkness; ... let us conduct properly, ... not in orgies and drunkenness, not in promiscuity and licentiousness."* Rom 13:12-13 This verse is the opening meditation for the sixth Hail Mary. If we have not yet made that final leap to metanoia, let us find a meditation verse that will move us to a closer walk with Jesus so that our heart will only find rest in him.

In the fifth luminous mystery, Jesus is the bread of life that came down from heaven. The Eucharist *"is it not a participation in the body of Christ?" 1 Cor 10:16* It is food that feeds us spiritually. The Our Father prayed before receiving Communion at Mass reminds us of the need for daily bread.

The Sorrowful Mysteries focus on the passion and death of the Messiah.

In the first sorrowful mystery, following a night of prayer, while his apostles slept, Jesus was betrayed by Judas – sold for silver to the Pharisees, chief priest and the entire Sanhedrin. The garden of agony was the beginning of Jesus' passion and the road to redemption. The Garden of Eden was the location of the first sin and is closed to man and guarded by an angel. However, the garden of paradise awaits us provided we follow in Jesus' footsteps. Especially prayed during the days of Lent, meditations from the seven penitential psalms (*Ps 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, 143*) draw us into pondering deeply on the agony of Jesus.

In the second sorrowful mystery, Jesus was scourged at the pillar probably beyond the 39 lashes as dictated by the Old Testament as too much to bear. Just like Job, we are called to be suffering servants, in imitation of the Suffering Servant. In the meditations for this mystery, we have a braid of three suffering servants, meditations from Isaiah's songs of the Suffering Servant (*Is 42:1-4; 49:1-6; 50:4-7; 52:13-53:12*), Job's torment and laments, and our own walk of suffering as a living example of *"Christ who lives in me."* Gal 2:20

In the third sorrowful mystery, there is silence. Jesus has spent the last three years teaching and preaching on mountains and in synagogues. He said everything he was going to say. Those who did not listen during his years of ministry, why would they listen now? So, silence, even amidst the badgering and questioning. Sometimes, like Jesus, we too must be in a place of silence – when all we can do is wait on the Lord. With the cacophony of wailing around us, we must be quiet and pray. Perhaps when an overwhelming day can get to us – perhaps we find a quiet spot – maybe in front of the Blessed Sacrament and just pray this one decade – slowly, intently, and silently.

In the fourth sorrowful mystery, Jesus carries the wood and climbs the mount towards his Crucifixion. Isaac, prefigured Christ and climbed the mount with the wood for the sacrifice. While Abraham was willing to sacrifice his son Isaac, the hand of God prevented it. Later God the Father provided the Lamb for the sacrifice, Jesus his only begotten Son, hung on the wood of the tree. Redemption from the sin at the tree in the Garden of Eden is achieved on the tree of the cross by the destruction of the temple – the body of Jesus. The book of Lamentations in which Jeremiah laments the destruction of Jerusalem. The meditations from this book are fitting meditations for the *Via Dolorosa* as Jesus ascends the mount in Jerusalem to the destruction of the temple of his body.

It has been nearly three years since we have seen the Blessed Virgin Mary. She has not been mentioned in the last seven mysteries. In her humility she was in the background. However, because all of Jesus' friends and apostles deserted him, she along with other women and St. John the Evangelist are now at the foot of the cross. In the fifth sorrowful mystery, in the meditations we do highlight some groups of men. There were men of faith, greed, and hatred – the two thieves, the centurion and his men, men who greedily played dice for the cloak of Jesus and the burial team of Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea. These men are seen through the praying of Psalm 22. Tradition tells us that Jesus prayed the entire Psalm 22 on the cross, not just its opening line – *“My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?” Ps 22:2*

The Glorious Mysteries reveal the triumph of Jesus Christ as shared with the world and his Blessed Mother.

In the first glorious mystery, the Resurrection is Jesus' victory over the cross. *“Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved.” Acts 16:31* is more than a tent revival platitude. In these meditations we see the witnesses of the Resurrection, two on the Way to Emmaus, the apostles, in particular, Thomas, and many of his disciples. They would need these visitations and encouragement so that the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church could have a firm foundation.

In the second glorious mystery, the King of Kings ascended to heaven and took his place on the throne at the right hand of God. He receives *“glory, majesty, power and authority.” Jude 25* The apostles and the future church will be charged with the task of evangelization of all nations prior to the triumphant return of the King.

When Jesus was on earth, he worked signs and wonders. In the third glorious mystery, following the outpouring of the holy Spirit, his apostles and disciples worked signs and wonders and the early church grew.

Jesus promised to prepare a place for us. In the fourth glorious mystery, Mary is already sharing in this promise of the heavenly realm. While we cannot know what heaven is like, Jesus gave us parables as a way of explaining our heavenly home.

In the fifth glorious mystery, the Blessed Virgin is the ultimate example of one who sought first the kingdom of God. She has received a glorious crown of twelve stars. The meditations focus on how we are to follow Jesus and Mary to the gates of heaven by seeking first the kingdom of God.

In conclusion, this scriptural rosary views the mysteries from a wholly new perspective. It is about the men who followed, but, also badgered Jesus. These meditations view the mysteries as more human, viewing the ordinary people who were part of Jesus' world.