

# *My Father's House*

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## **The Rosary**

**A Way to Contemplate the Mysteries of the Life of Christ with Mary**

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### **To Jesus Through Mary**

In the Rosary, Our Lady teaches us to contemplate the life of her Son. Love for Our Lady is shown in many different ways. The Rosary has been the Marian prayer most recommended by the Church down through the ages. Rosary piety gives us a summary of the principle truths of our Catholic faith. As we consider each of the mysteries, Our Lady teaches us to contemplate the life of her Son. She, who as John Paul II teaches us, was the first to contemplate the mysteries of the life of her Son, takes us hand-in-hand and teaches us to do the same. Mary speaks to us about Jesus, about the joy of the annunciation of His birth, about her visit with Elizabeth with Jesus in her womb, about the joy of His birth, His presentation in the temple, and her finding of him among the elders.

She walks us once again through these sacred mysteries so we can make them present and operative in our own lives.

### **A Crown of Roses**

The Rosary is a crown of roses. It is the most excellent means of meditative prayer in and through Mary and thus is constituted as the mystical ground "in which the angelic salutation, the Lord's Prayer and the Doxology to the August Trinity are intertwined with the consideration of the highest mysteries of our faith. In it, by means of many scenes, the mind contemplates the drama of the Incarnation and of the redemption of our Lord" (John XXIII Encyclical *Grata Recordatio* Sept. 26, 1959).

In this Marian prayer, vocal prayer is combined with the meditation of the Christian mysteries, which is as it were the soul of the Rosary. Thanks to this unhurried meditation it is possible for all to say the same words, while at the same time each one can do his or her own personal prayer. To imagine oneself as a participant in the scenes being considered helps one to say it well. In this way, *we shall live the life of Jesus, Mary and Joseph.*

*Each day we shall do something new for them. We shall hear their family conversation. We shall see the Messiah grow up. We shall admire his thirty years of hidden life ... We shall be present at his Passion and Death ... We shall be amazed at the glory of his resurrection ... In a word: carried away by Love (the only real love is Love), we shall contemplate each and every moment of the life of Christ.*

In considering the mysteries, vocal prayer - the *Our Fathers* and the *Hail Marys* - comes to life; our interior life is enriched with deep content, which becomes a source of prayer and contemplation throughout the day. Little by little, it identifies us with Christ's feelings and enables us to live in a climate of intense devotion: we rejoice with Christ joyful, we suffer with Christ suffering, and we look forward in hope to the glory of Christ risen. Pope Paul VI said that the liturgy and the Rosary, *although existing on essentially different planes of reality, have as their object the same salvific events wrought by Christ. The former presents anew, under the veil of signs and operative in a hidden way, the great mysteries of our redemption. The latter, by means of devout contemplation, recalls these same mysteries to the mind of the person praying and stimulates the will to draw from them the norms of living.*"

### **The Family Rosary, "a Powerful Weapon"**

The Second Vatican Council asks *all the sons of the Church that the cult, especially the liturgical cult, of the Blessed Virgin, be generously fostered, and the practices and exercises of piety, recommended by the Magisterium of the Church towards her in the course of centuries, be highly esteemed.* And we are well aware of how insistently the Church as recommended saying the Rosary. It is *one of the best and most efficacious prayers in common that the Christian family is invited to recite*, and in many cases it will be an aim of Christian life for many families. Sometimes it is enough to begin by saying just one mystery, perhaps using such signal opportunities as the month of May or a visit to a shrine or chapel of our Lady. Much has been achieved if children are taught to say it from an early age.

The family Rosary is a source of good for everyone, for it attracts God's mercy to the home. *The saying of the Angelus and of the Rosary, said John Paul II, must be for every Christian and even more for Christian families, like a spiritual oasis during the course of the day, from which we can get strength and confidence.* And just a few days later, the Holy Father once again remarked: *Guard jealously that tender and confident love for our Lady, which characterizes you. Don't ever let it get cold ... Be faithful to the traditional exercises of Marian piety in the Church: the saying of the Angelus, the month of Mary, and in a special way, the Rosary. Would that there be a resurgence of that beautiful custom of praying the Rosary in the family.*

Today in our prayer we can see whether we approach the Holy Rosary as a *powerful weapon* to get from the Blessed Virgin those graces and favors which we need so much, whether we say it with the necessary attention, whether we try to deepen in its rich content, especially stopping and meditating on each on the mysteries for a few moments, and whether we try to get our family and friends to start saying it and so to have more dealings with our Mother in Heaven, and to love her more.

### **Distractions During the Rosary**

Sometimes, when we Christians try to spread the saying of the Rosary as a form of talking to our Lady every day, we come across people, even good people, who make the excuse that they are frequently distracted in saying it and that, therefore *not to say it is better than saying it badly* or words to that effect. Pope John XXIII used to say that *the worst Rosary is the one that doesn't get said.* We can tell our friends that, instead of omitting it, it is more pleasing to Our Lady that we say it as well as we can, even though we have distractions. It can also happen that *if you have*

*many distractions at prayer, that prayer of yours may well be upsetting the devil a great deal.*

The Rosary has sometimes been compared to a song: Our Lady's song. So, although we may not always follow the words consciously, the melody will lead us, almost imperceptibly, to keep our thoughts and our hearts on our Lady.

Involuntary distractions do not cancel the fruits of the Rosary, or of any other vocal prayer, provided one is struggling to avoid them. St. Thomas points out that a vocal prayer may be the object of a threefold attention: correct pronunciation of all the words; special concentration on the meaning of the words; and attention to the final goal of our prayer, namely God and the thing we are praying for. This last is the most important and necessary kind of attention, and can be had by people who are not very well educated or who don't understand clearly the meaning of the words they are saying, and *can be so intense that it transports the mind to God.*

If we try, we can say the Rosary well each time: watching our pronunciation, pauses, attention, stopping a few moments to consider the mystery we are about to say, offering a decade perhaps for a specific intention - the Universal Church, the Roman Pontiff, the intentions of the bishop of the diocese, our family, priestly vocations, the apostolate, peace and justice in a particular country, or some matter that worries us - trying to ensure that these *roses* offered to Our Lady never become bedraggled or faded through routine, or allowing more or less voluntary distractions to take over ... Avoiding all distractions is very difficult, on occasions practically impossible, but Our Lady knows that too and accepts our good will and our efforts.

To say the Rosary devoutly, it is important to say it at a suitable time. *A sad way of not praying the Rosary is leaving it for the end of the day.*

*If you say it when going to bed, it will be done at best badly and with no meditation on the mysteries. It will be difficult then to avoid routine, which is what drowns true piety, the only piety worth the name. You always leave the Rosary for later, and you end up not saying it at all because you are sleepy. If there is no other time, say it in the street without letting anybody notice it. It will, moreover, help you to have presence of God.*

The Rosary has the advantage that it can be said anywhere: in the church, in the street, in the car, alone or in family, while in a doctor's waiting room or while waiting in line to get some forms. Very few Catholics can say sincerely that they don't have time to pray *the prayer most beloved and recommended by the Church.*

One day our Lord will show us the consequences of having prayed devoutly, albeit with some distractions too, the Holy Rosary: disasters that were avoided by our Lady's special intercession, assistance to loved ones, conversions, ordinary and extraordinary graces for ourselves and for others, and the many people who benefited from this prayer and whom we didn't even know.

This prayer which is so efficacious and pleasing to our Lady will in many moments of our life be the most effective channel for petition, for thanksgiving, and for making atonement for our sins: *"Immaculate Virgin, I know very well that I am only a miserable wretch, and all I do is increase each day the number of my sins..." You told me the other day that was how you spoke to Our*

*Mother.*

*And I was confident in advising you with assurance to pray the Holy Rosary. Blessed be that monotony of "Hail Marys" which purifies the monotony of your sins!*

### **Pope John Paul II's Favorite Prayer**

The Rosary is my favorite prayer. A marvelous prayer! Marvelous in its simplicity and in its depth. In this prayer we repeat many times the words that the Virgin Mary heard from the Archangel, and from her kinswoman Elizabeth. The whole Church joins in these words. It can be said that the Rosary is, in a certain way, a prayer commentary on the last chapter of the Constitution "*Lumen Gentium*" of Vatican II, a chapter which deals with the wonderful presence of the Mother of God in the mystery of Christ and the Church.

In fact, against the background of the words "Ave Maria" there pass before the eyes of the soul the main episodes in the life of Jesus Christ. They are composed altogether of the joyful, sorrowful and glorious mysteries, and they put us in living communion with Jesus through, we could say, his Mother's heart.

At the same time our heart can enclose in these decades of the Rosary all the facts that make up the life of the individual, the family, the nation, the Church, and mankind. Personal matters and those of one's neighbor, and particularly of those who are closest to us? Who are dearest to us. Thus the simple prayer of the Rosary beats the rhythm of human life.

### **Jubilee Heritage**

John Paul II has left us a Jubilee Heritage, which he calls his program for the third millennium. He translated it into eight pastoral initiatives adapted to the needs of each community. They are:

- 1) holiness, striving to think and love and act like Jesus;
- 2) prayer, which he calls a reciprocal conversation;
- 3) frequent reception of the Eucharist and Eucharistic Adoration;
- 4) frequent confession to be cleansed of all sin and Unforgiveness;
- 5) to live by grace, constantly listening to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit;
- 6) meditating upon the Scriptures and the New Catechism to give the mind of Christ and His Church;
- 7) the new evangelization so that we may be apostles of truth, love and action, thus becoming lights to a darkened world;
- 8) daily and frequent recitation of the Rosary.

He encouraged all of us to gaze constantly toward the Lord so as to discover the full manifestation of his boundless wisdom, love and power. He sums up the essence of his new vision in second six of his encyclical on the Eucharist wherein he states: "I would like to rekindle this Eucharistic amazement by the present encyclical letter, in continuity with the Jubilee Heritage which I have left to the Church in the Apostolic Letter, *Novo Millennio Ineunte* and its Marian crowning, *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*. To contemplate the face of Christ, and to contemplate it with Mary, is the program which I have set before the Church at the dawn of the third millennium, summoning her to put out into the deep on a sea of history with the enthusiasm of the new evangelization."