



# The Holy Rosary

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***“The prayer of the Rosary is perfect because of the praises it offers, the lessons it teaches, the grace it obtains and the victories it achieves” (Pope Benedict XV)***

## THE ROSARY

**A** priest was wakened from sleep late one night by the sound of the telephone. On answering the call, it was from the local hospital to which he was Chaplain. A Staff Nurse requested that he should attend immediately as a young man had arrived by ambulance to the Accident and Emergency Unit after a serious car accident. Arriving at the hospital, the Priest was informed that the young man had to be cut out of his car by the Fire Service. The patient was unconscious throughout yet was still alive. On arrival at A & E the nurses prepared the patient to be attended to by the staff. One nurse started to go through the young man's clothing to search for some identification. It was during this search a set of rosary beads were found and as the nurse was a Catholic, she called for the Chaplain presuming the patient was also a Catholic. This is not a unique story, the presumption that if you have a set of rosary beads, then you must be a Catholic. For over 500 years, the rosary has been an identifiable traditional devotion for Catholics. For although a simple prayer, it is profound. It is taught to Catholics from childhood continuous through adulthood and into old age. Although a simple series of

Our Fathers, Hail Mary's and Glory Be's, it is easy for us to forget the majesty and graciousness of this devotion. Although a simple prayer for some, it is difficult, easy to lose concentration, be distracted and even to fall asleep while praying. It is a Marian devotion that is Christ centred as it gives us the opportunity to reflect and meditate upon the life of Jesus through the intercession of Our Lady and so reflect upon the great events of our salvation.

We pray the Rosary in such a variety of ways in groups, both private and public, in Church and at home, at services and as a personal devotion. As a daily prayer, we meditate upon each mystery leading us through the loving intercession of Our Lady, Mother of God and our Mother, to deepen our closeness to Jesus.

However, some believe that the Rosary was only a prayer in former times for the uneducated common people who were unable to read and so replaced the practice of Lectio Divina. Although this may be the case, especially when the Rosary was used as a teaching aid, yet there is a close similarity between the Rosary and Lectio Divina as it can lead us to a deeper listening in the presence of God and a deepening response to the action of the Holy Spirit and to the maternal intercession of Our Lady a strengthening and deepening of faith and hope.

Through our reflection on the individual mysteries using “Imaginative Prayer”, the repetition of the Hail Mary’s can lead us from reflection to “resting” in the loud; and from meditation to contemplation. It is praying the Rosary under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit we can achieve a place of “still silence”, where we come to understand that what is necessary is not the quantity of prayer, rather it is the quality of our prayer. It is the Holy Spirit who leads and teaches us that in praying the Rosary we, like Our Lady, have true prayer and contemplation.

It is in the “school” of Our Lady that we can learn the example of how by her consent to God (her “yes”) that we may enter into the very presence and Grace of God our Father.

## **PRAYING THE ROSARY**

**W**e know that prayer is an essential part of our lives as Catholics. Yet there are so many “ways” of praying at mass as a member of the Church community, as an individual. We pray that we may come closer to God; Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We hear so often that it is

important to pray the Rosary that Our Lady will lend us to her son, Jesus. But there are so many ways of praying the Rosary. When we pray the Rosary as an individual, we can pray with the rhythm of the Hail Mary's. We can pray by thinking of the mystery. We can pray as a meditation on the specific mystery. However, before we begin, we should say a simple prayer that the Holy Spirit will give us the gift of prayer.

We can use "imaginative prayer" to help us. This is a form of prayer which has been used for centuries to enable us to pray in a more meditative way. This is a technique which all of us can follow. First of all, sit in a comfortable position whether at home or in Church. Try to be quiet. Ask the Holy Spirit to give us the gift of prayer, then think of the scene of the mystery as though it is a movie in our head. Think of yourself as part of the scene. Picture the details of the scene, you involved or as an onlooker. Picture the characters in the scene. Think of what I said in this scene. Think of the mood in the scene; happy, tense, horrific etc. Try to listen carefully or to match carefully, then start to pray the Rosary.

If you become distracted, try not to be forceful in removing the distraction. Firstly, acknowledge your thoughts as distractions, then you can gently let it go and return to the prayer. If the distraction is very persistent, then it may be an opportunity to pray about the distraction. See everything as an opportunity to encounter the living God through the compassionate intercession of Our Lady.

## HISTORY

**W**e live in a time when many people are fascinated by where they come from, their ancestry. Genealogy has become very popular; questions about who am I? Where do I come from ?. So it is a question people ask about the Rosary; when did it begin? Does it come from the early Church? Who created the format we have today?

The origins of the Rosary are lost in the mist of time with many differing opinions. Some attribute the beginning to the early Desert Fathers, early third century A.D. who used “counting” strings, knotted to count prayers. We know from progress that the Desert Fathers and

Mothers honoured Our Lady. An English translation reads : “We fly to thy patronage, O Holy Mother of God; despise not our petitions in our necessities, but deliver us always from all dangers, Oh Glorious and Blessed Virgin, Amen”. Therein St. Basil The Great (died 37 g) spelling out quite clearly the unnecessary role of Our Lady, “God has ordained that she should help us in everything”.

However, there is no concrete evidence for a Rosary; the knotted strings may have been merely to count certain prayers, but we do not know the actual prayers said. It is possible that these knotted strings were used in the ancient “Jesus Prayers” (Lord Jesus Christ, Son of Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner) but nothing is certain.

What we do know is that as the Church grew in numbers (especially after the edict of Milan, 313 A.D.) lay people were anxious to develop their spiritual life. The most obvious and pertinent development was to use the Holy Scriptures, but as the Roman Empire began to demolish so their numbers of ordinary people could read Latin began to disappear, Latin being continued more and more to Monasteries and Convents. No matter what,

this did not block the laity wanting to participate in the life of the Church, even though fewer and fewer people could read. They did not want this to be a hindrance in developing their spiritual lives. A spiritual devotion was required that was practical for the individual, for families at home and for a number to come together and pray. As a result, the lay person began to pray the Our Father in multiples, there then followed adding Hail Mary's. As the practice became more common by the Fourteenth Century, it was common place to pray a standard form of repetitive prayer using Our Father, two Hail Mary's.

A most significant development, if not a defying moment came in the Twelfth century through the preaching of St. Dominic. It's a very strong tradition that he had a vision of Our Lady. In the vision, Our Lady presented him with Rosary beads complete with the appropriate prayers of Our Fathers and Hail Mary's. The name "Rosary" came from the Laity's Association of Our Lady with roses and a rose garden. It is known that St. Dominic had a great devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary and that he asked for her intercession to help in his preaching ministry. We know he encouraged devotion To Our Lady in his preaching travels. As a consequence of St. Dominic, his ordinal had an enormous influence in the growth and

spread of the Rosary throughout the Church. As a result, by the Fifteenth Century the devotion became a source of meditation and prayer as the “form” of the prayer became more consistent.

Yet another significant development in the spread of the Rosary came in 1470 when blessed Alanus de Rupe began the “Rosary Confraternity”. This consisted in saying their prayer in groups. This practice raised the profile and popularised the prayer. It was a prayer for the individual, for small groups, as worship and an essential part of the life of the Church. As the devotion spread and grew, so by the late fifteen hundreds in it’s “form” and is the Rosary as we know it today.

The next important evolution of the Rosary took place under Pope St. Pius V when he asked the whole Church to pray the Rosary and ask the intercession of Our Lady at the Battle of Lepanto (October 7, 1571). Pope St. Pius V had assembled a coalition of Catholic rulers and Countries to oppose the undefeated fleet of the Ottoman Empire. The Catholic or Papal fleet defeated the Ottoman fleet and in doing so, halted the advance of the Turkish Ottoman Empire into Europe. As a

consequence, this Empire began to break apart. As a result of this victory, the Pope inaugurated the Feast of the Holy Rosary to be celebrated in the calendar on October 7<sup>th</sup>.

Throughout the history of the Church, many Popes have written and advanced the devotion of the Rosary. Pope Leo XIII (died 1903) had a special devotion to Our Lady and praying the Rosary. He promoted the praying of the Rosary as a glorious devotion that by participating and meditating on their life of Our Lady, we would come closer to Jesus. He wrote many profound works on the Rosary including extensive letters, apostolic exhortations and encyclicals. It is true to say that because of his work, devotion to the Rosary advanced in popularity. It is due to him that the Rosary became the devotional prayer for the family. This aspect (family prayer) was emphasised by Pope Pius XII and under his influence many priests and religious Orders promoted the effectiveness of the Rosary and family life. The phrase “the family that prays together, stays together” came a rallying cry for many of the faithful. Pope John XXIII said the Rosary was a prayer for all the redeemed he taught. He taught that the mysteries of the Rosary have a three fold purpose :

1. Mystical contemplation; 2) Intimate reflection; 3) Pious intention. Pope Paul VI continued teaching the importance on meditating on the mysteries of the Rosary.

Pope St. John Paul II said : “The Rosary is my favourite prayer”. His encyclical “Rosariu M Virginis Mariae” (2002) is a wonderful source of inspiration to all the faithful in praying the Rosary. It was in this Apostolic letter that the Pope added the “Luminous Mysteries” (The mysteries of light). He explains why it is appropriate to add these “new” mysteries to the existing Rosary.

After this brief history of the Rosary, it is appropriate now to outline the mysteries of the Rosary as if in constituted now.

# **THE MYSTERIES**

## **THE JOYFUL MYSTERY**

(Said on Monday & Sunday)

- 1.The Annunciation of The Lord to Our Lady.
- 2.The visitation of Our Lady to Elizabeth.
- 3.The Nativity of Our Lord.
- 4.The Presentation.
- 5.Finding Jesus in the temple aged 12.

## **THE SORROWFUL MYSTERIES**

(Said Tuesday and Friday)

- 1.The Agony in the Garden.
- 2.The Scourging at the Pillar.
- 3.Crowning with Thorns
- 4.Jesus carries the cross.
- 5.The Crucifixion.

## **THE GLORIOUS MYSTERIES**

(Said Wednesday & Sunday)

- 1.The Resurrection of Jesus.
- 2.The Ascension of Jesus into Heaven.
- 3.The Descent of the Holy Spirit.
- 4.The Assumption of Our Lady into Heaven.
- 5.Our Lady is crowned Queen of Heaven and Earth.

## **THE LUMINOUS MYSTERY (MYSTERY OF LIGHT)**

(Said on Thursday)

- 1.The Baptism of Jesus in the River Jordan.
- 2.The miracle of the wedding feast at Cana.
- 3.The Proclamation of the Kingdom.
- 4.The transfiguration of Jesus.
- 5.The Institution of the Eucharist.

We begin each decade of the Rosary by praying to the Holy Spirit to come upon us and teach us how to pray, to give us the grace of prayer.

## **ACT OF FAITH**

O my God, I firmly believe that you are one God in three divine persons; Father, Son and Holy Spirit. I believe that your divine Son became man and died for our sins and that he will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe these and all the truths which the Holy Catholic Church teaches, because you have revealed them who are eternal truth and wisdom; who can neither deceive or be deceived in the faith I intend to live and die. Amen.

## **THE GLORIOUS MYSTERIES**

### **THE RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST**

The resurrection is the culmination of the incarnation but it is through the encounters with the risen Christ we know the reality of the risen Christ. The resurrection narratives show us that the resurrection is real and personal, that Jesus the Christ, is not limited by time and space. The resurrection narratives confirm our faith that Jesus is the Son of God. The resurrection shows us that this is the mystery of our redemption for it completes the passion and death of Jesus. The resurrection allows us to know that we are created out of love, not just human love, but also divine love. So the mystery of the incarnation cannot be fully understood unless it is united to the mystery of the resurrection that we can begin to understand the depth of love Jesus has for us. By recognising the love of the risen Christ can we ever be free from sin. Sin is a conditional love; I will “when”, I will love “because”, I will love “I”, but by his resurrection, Jesus shows his unconditional love for us. By the sacrifice of Jesus and by his resurrection we are redeemed and free to live in his love that we may reach out to love others. The Father’s plan for each of us is that we are redeemed in the risen Jesus. In his

resurrection, we are a new creation, a creation based on love, our love for God; Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Trinity lives within us through our Baptism. Through accepting God's grace we can encounter the living God. When we understand, recognise and know that the risen Christ lives within us then we can reach out and recognise his face in those around us; your husband, your wife, your children, your parents, the sick, the elderly, the unemployed, the sufferings, those suffering injustice, the abused, the neglected and the lonely. Through the resurrection, Jesus made new our humanity by his love which endures to eternity. Our Lady, even in the midst of new guiding's, the example of this new creation by her Son's resurrection. Just as she stood by his cross so now she rejoices in his glorious resurrection and is with us to assist us by her prayers.

### **SALVE REGINA**

Salve, Regina, Mater, misericordiae, vita, dulcedo, et spes nostra, salve.

Ad te clamamus essules fillii hieve,

Ad te suspiramus, gementus et elentes in hic lacrimarous valle

Eic, ergo, advocate nostra, ill ios tvos misericoudes oculus ad nos convute;

Et Jesum, benedictum, Esuctum ventris tui,  
Nolsis post hoc exsilium ostende,  
Oclemeus, Opia, Odulcis Virgo Maria

### ***THE ASCENSION OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST***

We human beings like the drama of life to have a neat pattern, usually a beginning, a middle and an end. The Apostles and Disciples had their hopes dashed at the Crucifixion, then restored at the resurrection. Their fear was overtaken by the great joy of Jesus among them after his resurrection. Jesus rises on that first Easter day as the Son of God and the Son of Man. I often wonder if Our Lady after sharing in the softening of her son, knew in some way that he would rise from the dead only to return to the Father.

For us, the Ascension is a reaffirmation of our faith in Jesus and the Gospels as well as Heaven. It leads us to understand that our vocation is to witnesses of the Passion, death and resurrection of Jesus for our own times. As witnesses, we proclaim by our words and example that Jesus is victorious over sin, death, injustice and violence and that we must be alive in love for God

and our neighbour. Now we can identify ourselves as pilgrims living in the presence of God and we have Our Lady as our model who lived her whole life in the presence of the Holy Trinity. We can turn to our Lady to pray for us, no matter our circumstances that we can live in peace and freedom. For our hope is founded on the inheritance Jesus has won for us. Though we may be sinners we encounter the living Jesus, we know this forgiveness, his mercy, his compassion and above all his love and that we are redeemed in Jesus name. Our God and Saviour, Jesus Christ is with us to the end of time. Our life's every moment of our life, is a "sacred history" lived in the presence of God as a child of God, brother or sister to Jesus and with Our Lady as our Mother. Through our Baptism, our Confirmation and the Holy Eucharist every circumstance, every situation, no matter how small is part of the greatest event in history, namely the incarnation of Jesus and his Redemptive Mystery. Every moment of our lives takes place as a part of the Mystery of Christ. Just as Our Lady was full of grace and lived her life totally in the presence of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, so we live in the same presence through our faith and hope that our life will be transformed and restored in the love of Jesus to live in eternity.

**Regina Caeli, Laetare, Alleluia.**

- R. Qua quem meruisti portare, Alleluia  
V. Resurrexit, sicut dixit Alleluia  
R. Ora pro nobis deum, Alleluia  
V. Queen of Heaven, rejoice Alleluia  
R. For he, whom thou most worthy to bear Alleluia  
V. Has risen from the dead Alleluia  
R. Pray for us to God Alleluia

***THE DESCENT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT***

Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your spirit and they shall be created. And you shall renew the face of the earth.

Electricity is one of the greatest discoveries of the modern age. We may know it is generated but it is still a wonder that when we click a switch in our homes, the power is there instantly making our lives easier and more comfortable.

Through our baptism, our Confirmation and Holy Communion, we have the power of the Holy Spirit flowing through us. The Holy Spirit was there at creation, spoke through the prophets, came upon Our Lady and at Pentecost came upon the Apostles and Disciples. After the Resurrection, and Ascension, the Apostles were still afraid for their own lives and uncertain about what they had to do. Then on that first Pentecost they were filled with the Holy Spirit and their mission became clearer, they were the witnesses to the Risen Christ and proclaim the Gospel to the world. They remembered that at the Last Supper, Jesus told them he would send another Advocate and when the Holy Spirit descended upon them in that upper room, all present were filled with joy, confidence and courage and knowledge of the presence of God and his love.

We may also ask ourselves how we can use the gifts of the Holy Spirit in our lives? Because of our Baptism, our Confirmation and Holy Eucharist the Holy Spirit, the same Holy Spirit who filled Our Lady and the Apostles at Pentecost, is always with us. This same Holy Spirit is always at work with us in our hearts and soul to realise and guide us in our vocation as the followers of Jesus. The Spirit directs us in our hope and prepares us for our

encounter with Jesus in our daily life and tasks. It is the Spirit who allows us to connect the circumstances and situations of our lives with the love of God. It is through the action of the Holy Spirit that we know we are created in love by God and that we are made in his image. It is through the movement of the Holy Spirit that we can reach out to others. It is the Holy Spirit living within us, is the source for us to understand that we are the children of God and so are effective in building the Kingdom of God. Our Lady is the example for us of a creature, called by the Father, who lived her whole life in the powers of the Holy Spirit. So we can turn to her, as our advocate, for her intercession that we too may be workers for the Kingdom by living out our vocation. It is through the Holy Spirit that we make straight the Good News and make present the Risen Christ. It is through the power of the Holy Spirit and the gifts we received at Confirmation, we make present the love of God in our community, our family and the world. However, this does not mean we require great speeches, work miracles or great works, but rather in the small, ordinary activities of life; going to work, cleaning the house, encouraging children, showing affection, affirming those around us. It is in the ordinary, when done in Christ, we make present the love of Christ. Again, Our Lady is the model, it was in the ordinary life of Nazareth, in her lowliness she is great

and called blessed. When we, like Our Lady respond to the Love of Jesus by loving him then we grow in the image of God. When we are filled by love, our vocation, it will pour out to touch those around us.

We must pray to the Holy Spirit in the situations of our lives that the gifts we received at Confirmation will be effective : wisdom, understanding, courage, knowledge, piety, reverence and care. We receive these gifts and the fruits of the Holy Spirit to assist us in our lives. Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self control.

We should pray that all these are active in our lives.

Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your spirit and they shall be created. And you shall renew the face of the earth. Amen.

### ***THE ASSUMPTION OF OUR LADY INTO HEAVEN***

Bernadette Soubirous at the age of 13 (1858), with two companies went off to the River Gave to collect some

firewood. Bernadette was startled and on looking up towards a grotto in the small caves on the riverbank and noticed one was filled by a bright light. Lifting up her eyes she saw a lady of great beauty, dressed in a pure white robe with a blue sash, her head was veiled, a Rosary in her hand and yellow roses at her feet. The beautiful lady smiled at Bernadette and asked her to say her Rosary. Bernadette obliged. The next Sunday, Bernadette returned and she again saw the beautiful lady who asked her to return for the next fifteen days. The beautiful lady asked Bernadette to tell the priests to build a Chapel there and told her to drink water from the stream and to pray for the conversion of sinners. Bernadette did as she was asked. On March 25<sup>th</sup>, the lady told Bernadette that she was Mary, Mother of Jesus. During the visions, the lady called herself "I am the Immaculate Conception". This is a title, a humble young girl in a small southern French village would not know it was decreed by Pope Pius IX as "Ineffabilis Deus" in 1854.

The importance of this Doctrine refers to the annunciation where Our Lady is addressed by the Angel Gabrielle as "full of grace". Also, it returns us to the visitation and the great prayer of the magnificent. Our Lady lived her entire life united to her Son, a life of grace,

of peace and of joy. She was permanently and forever in the presence of God, as she suffered with Jesus in his passion, his death and his resurrection. After his resurrection and ascension, Our Lady waited with patient joy to be reunited with her son. No decay of death would touch her body. So when her earthly life was ended, she fulfilled her vocation by being assumed into Heaven. This was devised in 1950 by Pope Pius XII in “Munificentissimus Deus”.

The assumption in the completion of Our Lady’s great humility, her poverty, and her love of God and her neighbour. She is the wonderful example of the Christ in life. Her purity, her courage, her patience, her total trust in God, her constant faith and her constant hope is the example we hope to follow. She is the Ark of the new covenant. She is the mother of the Church and our Mother.

***Our Lady of Lourdes, pray for us.***

***Our Lady assumed into heaven, pray for us.***

## **MEMORARE**

Remember, O Most Gracious Virgin Mary that never was it known that anyone who fled to thy protection implored thy help, or sought thy intercession was left unaided. Inspired with this confidence, I fly to thee, O Virgin of Virgins, my Mother; to thee do I come; before thee I stand, sinful and sorrowful. O Mother of the world incarnate despise not my petitions, but in thy mercy heal and answer me. Amen.

### ***OUR LADY CROWNED QUEEN OF HEAVEN***

Pope Pius XII affirmed this feast day in 1954 in “Ad Caelic Reginam”.

Our Lady is the highest of our race through her humble and total commitment to the will of God. As she followed her Son in this life, now she continues in the glory of heaven. Our Lady is the splendour of all the Saints. Her reward for fulfilling her vocation, her “yes” to God is to be reunited with her son as preeminent among the Saints. She now enjoys perfect joy, peace and love. She is Queen of Heaven to pray for us continually; to protect us from all harm, to comfort us, to console us, to intercede for us.

The visions at Fatima happened between May and October 1917. Our Lady appeared to three children; Lucia, Jaciuta and Francisco, on the thirteenth of every month. Our Lady asked the children to do penance for sinners and to pray the Rosary every day and that the daily praying of the Rosary was the way to personal peace and peace in the world.

***Hail, Holy Queen, Mother of Mercy, Hail our life, our sweetness and our hope. To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve : to thee do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this veil of tears. Turn then, most gracious advocate their eyes of mercy towards us, and after this, our exile, show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus, O merciful, O loving, O Sweet Virgin Mary. Amen.***

# **THE SORROWFUL MYSTERIES**

## ***THE AGONY IN THE GARDEN***

It is possible to describe the 20<sup>th</sup> Century as the era of psychiatry and psychology. Through the work of Freud, Adler and the behaviourist we have come to a better understanding of our human condition. It is through the endeavours of psychiatry that we recognise the frailty of our human condition.

Yet it is here in the agony in the Garden of Gethsemane we have the example of Jesus sharing in our human condition. After the celebration of the Last Supper, Jesus goes with his Disciples to the Garden of Gethsemane and here we realise his submission and obedience to the Father's will. Here we see the true humanity of Jesus and his sense of anguish at the future sacrifice he must face as the sacrifice that takes away the sins of the world. It is here we begin to understand the depth of his love for us. It is here that we begin to see the psychological turmoil that Jesus must face, his sadness of heart. It is here that we begin to sense the emotional strife that he must face as he understands the physical sacrifice that awaits him. It is here that his understanding of rejection awaits him. It is here his

alienation and anguish confronts him before his capture, torture and brutal death awaits. Yet it is here we can see the example of Jesus conforming to the Father's will. And so we turn to Our Lady that she, united in his suffering, is with us in our times of mercy, anguish, tribulation and trial to strengthen us in the knowledge that no matter how dark our situation may seem, God is with us. Through Our Lady's intercession we come to know that God does not abandon us, God does not reject us even when we may hesitate to do his will or when we are fearful of what the future. No matter the trial or tribulation we have the grace of God which enables us to endure. "If we endure, we will also reign with him" (2 tim 2:12)

It is when we are at our weakest if we allow the grace of God to flow in us then we are strong. Through the intercession of Our Lady when we are at our lowest, when we feel failures we are strengthened by the grace of her Son. Through Our Lady's intercession, when we turn to her our anxiety, our fears; illness, losing a job, being rejected, feeling isolated, the insults of others, ridicule by others will be conquered and overcome by the grace of Jesus who experienced these emotions in this garden. When we turn to Our Lady she will

intercede for us with her Son that we will endure for then we will understand God will not test us beyond our capacity.

***O my Jesus, forgive our sins, save us from the fires of hell; lead all souls to Heaven, especially those who have most need of your mercy.***

### ***THE SCOURGING AT THE PILLAR***

Some historians describe the 20<sup>th</sup> Century as the most brutal in history. Two world wars where millions died in the industrial and mechanised warfare. The torture and death of millions in the holocaust. Also, the millions who suffered and died in the Soviet Union and China. Yet brutally has been part of human history; torture, slavery and warfare has been part of the human story for millennia.

The Roman empire had developed brutality to a professional purpose. The severity of the scourging was intended to weaken the victim through pain and blood loss that they could determine how long the victim would survive on the ultimate cause of death, namely the Cross.

Our Lady would have been a witness to the torture of her Son. The flogging was done by a short whip with several single braided leather thongs of variable lengths in which small iron balls or sharp piece of bones were tied at intervals. The naked victim had his hands tied to the upright post and two soldiers would flog the victim tearing into the flesh. Our Lady had to witness this cruel and horrendous sight. She suffered with her Son, her emotional and mental suffering was intolerable.

During this savagery, Jesus was silent, no accusations made against his accusers or torturers. His physical distress is in his sharp contrast to our obsession with body image that seems so perverting today. Jesus was treated as an “object”, rather than a human person. So easily we can become preoccupied by the way we look. We judge others by their looks, by their clothing, by the possessions of life. Material “things” become the standard by which we view others. When this becomes excessive, we see others as “things”, either to help or hinder us. We need Our Lady to assist us in seeing the image of God in others. When we become too attached to material possessions, we become selfish and self-centred, thinking only of ourselves. Materialism leads to being forgetful of the needs of others.

It is in the silence of Jesus we become more aware of his love for us. It is in his silence we become more aware of his forgiveness for our sins. Forgiveness is an essential part of love. It is in his physical suffering we grow in recognising the depth of his unconditional love for us.

As Our Lady was united in the suffering of her Son, so she is the example for us of living like Jesus. He is the great model of our lives journey and his life is the model we will follow. There will be times of praise, times of suffering, rejection and isolation. We, like Our Lady are united to Jesus by her “yes” to God, Our Lady shows us her love for God, by her acceptance of the Holy Spirit, she shows her love and by her Motherhood of Jesus, she shows her love. Now we ask her prayers and intercession that we may love as she did. When we refuse to respond to the love of Jesus, that is sin. Sin is a refusal to love; God and our neighbour, it is a mingling of a conditional love and self love, selfishness. It is the pride of living, only for our self. The scourging at the pillar shows us the unconditional love of Jesus, no matter the circumstances of life and in the example we must follow.

***O My Jesus, forgive us our sins, save us from the fires of hell, lead all souls to Heaven, especially those who have most need of your mercy.***

## ***JESUS IS CROWNED WITH THORNS***

In Countries with a Monarchy, a coronation is a time to rejoice and celebrate. However, this “coronation” of Jesus is a continuation of his torture. As though the scourging was not cruel enough, the Roman soldiers mockingly dressed the flesh torn Jesus in a purple robe and thrust a crown made from a thorn bush on his beaten head. Then they beat him about the face and mocked, ridiculed and laughed at him. The soldiers were playing “the King game”. Usually the soldiers played dice to chose one of the condemned to ridicule as a phony King before leading the victim out to be crucified.

Jesus was silent throughout his torture, his passion. No accusations came from the innocent man. Throughout his passion, we see the love and forgiveness of Jesus. As we look on the face of Jesus, crowned with thorns, we recognise in his beaten and blooded face, eyes wet with tears, they are tearful for our sins. He weeps for us that we may change our hearts to accept his grace. In this battered face, Jesus looks into our hearts, into our souls and knows our weaknesses, our sins, our failure to love. In the shattered face of Jesus, in eyes racked with pain,

we only see love, a love reaching to the depth of his being. A face of redemption, not judgement.

Our Lady is there as a witness and suffers with her Son. Her tear filled eyes, her broken heart sees what others have done to her Son. She hears how her Son is rejected, tortured while only a short time before they wanted to make him their King. She is indeed the Mother of sorrows, the Queen of Martyrs. It is to her we turn, especially Mothers, when we are disappointed in children who do not reach our expectations. When your child sins turning away from Jesus, when your child suffers, Our Lady is there with empathy for she experienced the ultimate pain and suffering of a parent. We must turn to her for consolation, for help, for her intercession. When you feel betrayed, rejected, let down, abandoned and denied, turn to Our Lady. Our Lady is there as her Son is humiliated and her immaculate heart bleeds for the body of Christ, the Church. As the soldiers removed roughly the purple robe to dress him in his own clothes, they tear his flesh. Our Lady remembers with a Mother's love how she dressed her child. As she watches, her immaculate heart reaches out to each one of us, her children. She sees

our trials, our cares, our worries and in turning to her she intercesses on our behalf.

***O my Jesus, forgive us our sins, save us from the fires of hell, lead all souls to Heaven, especially those who have most need of your mercy.***

### **JESUS CARRIES THE CROSS**

In the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, we hear constantly that “to be happy” is the purpose of life. Parents speak of “so long as you are happy” to their children. Even the constitution of the U.S.A. speaks about being “happy”. However, the purpose of life is to love and be loved.

As Jesus continues on his way of Calvary he shows his unconditional love for us. As the Roman soldiers roughly place the crossbar of the Cross on his shoulders and tie him to it, his physical suffering continues. Having been scourged, beaten the deep lacerations continue to bleed that he is still losing blood, his clothes stick to him and the pain is intensive. Emotionally and psychologically he suffers humiliation, rejection, denial and betrayal. His miracles long forgotten, his word repressed by the

crowds following him. So as the open wounds soak his clothes, there is no one to support him, no one will help him. His weakened state causes him to be unbalanced as his bare feet struggle to carry the weight on the uneven road. Yet his Mother is still there with him. As she moves through the crowd to follow him, she experiences the heartbreak of his suffering, yet is helpless to comfort him. Then a glance, no words, but the saddest meeting in history and Jesus knows his Mother is there. As he staggers on, he is unbalanced and in his weakness he falls. His Mother surely cried out in agony. The soldiers afraid he would die, grab a man from the crowd, Simon, to help Jesus. The most important element is that Jesus uses the little strength he has to get to his feet to journey on. His Mother looks on to see the battered, beaten face of Our Redemption. Jesus knows he is the Lamb of God on and by his sacrifice he takes away the sins of the world. He understands that his broken body is bearing the weight of our sins.

It is now that Our Lady fully understands the vocation of saying “yes” to God. It is now in this emotional turmoil Our Lady remembers that a sword would pierce her heart. It is now Our Lady’s understanding that she is

following the model, the image of her Son's life. So, we can turn to her for the support and strength we need in our lives. When we are down, weighed by the trials of life and feel we cannot go on, it is to Our Lady we turn to. She is there for us. When the tribulations of life, whether physical suffering or the mental and emotional trials of rejection, anguish, disappointments, we have her Motherly care. We heed but glance upon her loving face to be renewed and restored to continue on our way. Just as her Son will never abandon us, neither will Our Lady. When weighed down by our sins or failures, she is there to build us up again. No matter the situation we may find ourselves in, Our Lady is there as our Mother.

***O my Jesus, forgive us our sins, save us from the evils of hell, lead all souls to Heaven, especially those who have most need of your mercy.***

### **THE CRUCIFIXION**

Some things are so familiar that we barely notice them. For example on entering a Church, we expect to see a Cross/Crucifix that we walk by. The image of Jesus on the Cross has been the subject of so many paintings,

sculptures and images through history that it can be difficult for us to focus on the reality of the Crucifixion.

Think of how you picture Jesus, everyone has a slightly different picture, some from paintings, others from a Crucifix in the home or one given as a gift for Holy Communion or Confirmation.

The reality of the Crucifixion is difficult for us because it is so horrific. First Jesus is nailed to the Cross after the soldiers have stripped him. There is the shame and humiliation. His body is beaten, blooded and covered in wounds. Jesus experiences the frailty of our human condition. He bears our wounds. As the soldiers batter nails into his hands and feet, each blow is like our sins nailing him to the Cross. We have to seek repentance for our sins. As his body is raised up the agony and distress increases. As he hangs upon his Cross, there is no relief, just an intensity of pain in this horrific and slow death.

To meditate upon this Mystery, we can use our imagination. You are present at the dreadful scene. Pray

the Jesus prayer in time to your breathing! “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner”.

We think of our shame and how badly we have treated others by our words and actions. We think of this redemptive act, our healing by Jesus, our reconciliation by Jesus. We think of how much Jesus loves you that he was willing to sacrifice himself for your salutation. His sacrifice is the way of love. Think of how you have failed to love yourself and others.

Now think of the words Jesus spoke from the Cross, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do”. How have you failed to forgive those who have lost you, disappoint you, reject you, sinned against you?

“I promise you, today you shall be with me in Paradise”.

How have we doubted at times the resurrection. When someone we love has died have we only thought of our own loss. Our selfishness and self centred lives. Our desire for possessions, “Woman, behold your Son,”

Have you neglected a devotion to Our Lady, our Mother. Have you neglected the Rosary as part of your prayers life?

“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me”.

Have you failed to trust in God. Have you failed to turn to God.

“I thirst”

Is your thirst for only the things of the world? Possessions, acclaim.

“It is accomplished”

Have you failed to recognise the presence of Jesus in your life? Have you failed to recognise his sacrifice of love?

At the foot of the Cross was Our Lady. Think of her courage. Her acceptance of God’s will for her Son. As she accepted the vocation from the Father now is saying “yes”. Again in this acceptance comes the peace only her Son can guide. In her physical pain, in her emotional pain, her faith and her hope and her acceptance brings peace. Then the dead body of her Son is placed into her arms (the Pieta). So we see her care, concern and her compassion. As she cradles the body of her Son as once she cradled the infant Jesus so now she cradles the whole body of Christ, the Church turns to Our Lady of Sorrows for her support, her intercession, her compassion that she will intercede for us. As Our Lady

suffered the way of the Cross, we may be strengthened to walk our way of the Cross and have that same acceptance as Our Mother to walk with Jesus for Jesus always walks with us.

***O my Jesus, forgive us our sins, save us from the fires of hell, lead all souls to Heaven, especially those who have most need of your mercy.***

## THE JOYFUL MYSTERIES

### *THE ANNUNCIATION OF THE LORD*

In our society we have made a virtue out of being busy. We identify ourselves as “good” because we are busy. To have time on our hands is to be “lazy” and that is bad. There is the home with so much needed, children who need our attention, our work to pay the bills. Then trying to be a good neighbour by being involved in the local community. There is so much to do and not enough time, even for our relationships. So we have to “make time”, to make a schedule and this includes prayer. We can feel frustrated, even powerless so much so we have little or no time to find out what the Lord is saying to us. So many “things” pile upon us that we no longer listen or see properly. We must learn to accept our situation in life and learn to live in faith. This entails knowing our limitations, living in humility. This is time to turn to Our Lady and ask for her help that we can see her humble example of listening to God and what he is asking of us.

The Annunciation is a scene that can teach us to move from the distractions of our life to “resting” in the Lord and so more from meditation to contemplation.

It is in the “school” of Our Lady that we can learn the example of how by her humble example to know our vocation as a child of God and to consent to the path God has called us to like Our Lady saying “yes”.

Create the scene in your head. Our Lady, a young girl, reacts throughout as we would react. She was afraid just as there are times when we are afraid or apprehensive to respond to God. Our Lady needed to be strengthened by the Angel as we need the Holy Spirit to support us that we may have the courage, a gift given at Confirmation, to listen to God. Then, like us, Our Lady questions the Angel. In this silence of hesitation Our Lady wonders what is being asked of her. We hesitate, we give excuses when we are asked to change something in our life. We give reason why we should not change. We question whether we will be able to come closer to Jesus. Our Lady is reassured and given a sign by God. There are occasions when we need the consolation of knowing God is with us, to be aware of his presence. We need to know that what God asks of us, our vocation, will not overwhelm us, It is now that Our Lady gives her consent, her “yes” to God. It is now that she knows that the grace of God is enough to sustain her on the road, the plan, that God has marked out for her. When we follow the “example” of Our Lady by saying

“yes” to our vocation. His grace is enough to sustain us. No matter our “call of God”, our vocation; married, parent, single person, a carer, God will never abandon us, he is always with us.

As we pray the Annunciation, we give thanks that God has called us to be his Son, his daughter. We, like our Lady, give thanks that we have received the grace to fulfil the taste asked of us. We give thanks that, like Our Lady, we can respond to the will of God.

A very pertinent prayer to remind us of the Annunciation is the Angelus which we can say daily.

***V) The Angel of the Lord declared unto Mary.***

***R) And she conceived by the Holy Spirit***

***Hail Mary, full of grace.....***

***V) Behold the handmaid of the Lord***

***R) Be it done unto me according to thy word***

***Hail Mary, full of grace.....***

***V) And the word was made flesh***

***R) And dwelt among us***

***Hail Mary, full of grace.....***

***V) Pray for us, most holy Mother of God***

***R) That we may be made of the promises of  
Christ***

Let us pray,

Pour forth, we beseech thee, O Lord, Thy Grace into our hearts, that we to whom the incarnation of Christ Thy Son was made known by the message of an Angel; my by his passion and Cross be brought to the glory of his Resurrection. Through the same Christ our Lord, Amen.

### ***THE VISITATION OF OUR LADY TO ELIZABETH***

We wear many masks. We have masks for different people. Our masks are different for; our boss at work, our friends, our family, our co-workers, for strangers and may more. We wear these “masks” because we judge others, those we love, those we tolerate, those we dislike and those we say “I’m glad I’m not like them”. Our Lady, full of grace, is different in the way she acts towards everyone. Our Lady is there to help, care and comfort all.

Our Lady is available to all her children, she is ready to pray for all of us, sinners and saints. Our Lady sees all of us as her children and it’s her vocation to bring us all closer to her Son.

In the visitation, Our Lady travels a hazardous journey to care for Elizabeth, to help her, to care for her, to be of service. In this way, Our Lady fulfils her vocation of bringing her Son to another. It is in the Visitation that Our Lady speaks her great prayer, the Magnificat. This is a prayer of praise and thanksgiving where the grace of God fulfils his promises. So Our Lady becomes more aware of the call of God, she grows in her vocation. This gives us the example for us of giving thanks for the blessings in our life. For each one, this is different, so we should spend time thanking God for our blessings. Asking if I focus on the trials, or problems of life or with the same humility as our Lady asking for her help.

We ask ourselves; am I selfish? Am I only focused on my problems? Or, like Our Lady do I see the need of others. As Our Lady is called to bring her Son to others, do I look only at my own situation? We ask the Holy Spirit, through the intercession of Our Lady to open our eyes that we may praise God for all the favours, every gift we receive every day. Nothing is too small; our sight, our hearing, our health, our family, our work, our home. We should not be so busy that we do not notice the graciousness and presence of God in our lives. In this Mystery we see the humility of Our Lady. We follow her

example by acknowledging that we are made in the likeness of God, that through our Baptism God lives in each one of us. That God loves us, that God calls us to be his Son or daughter. Life for Our Lady was difficult; caring for her spouse, her child, looking after the home, cooking, washing and all the work of a domestic life. So Our Lady would have occasions when she was not “happy” as the world sees it but she was joyous because she was God by God. Her vocation brought JOY. As she grows in her understanding of the privilege vocation, so her joy deepens as she lives in the presence of her Son. Her joy becomes the language of her heart as, through grace, she reaches out to others.

We may never reach the holiness of Our Lady yet through the Intercession we can grow in our vocation that others may see Jesus through our words and example. We say this wondrous prayer with Our Lady that we may rejoice with her.

### ***THE MAGNIFICAT***

My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God by Saviour, because he has regarded the lowliness of his handmaids, for behold, henceforth all generations shall

call me blessed, because he who is mighty has done great things for me, and Holy is his name, and his mercy is from generation to generation on those who fear him. He has shown might with his arm, he has scattered the proud in the conceit of their heart. He has put down the mighty from their thrones, and as exalted the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty. He has given help to Israel, his servant, mindful of his mercy. Even as he spoke to our Fathers, tom Abraham and to his posterity forever.

## ***THE BIRTH OF OUR LORD***

### ***(THE NATIVITY)***

The reality of Christmas day for most people is a day of noise, a busy day, a day of work. Yet it is the hope that Christmas day will be a “happy day”, a special day for children. All of us are “children at heart”. Just as children are excited by the thought of presents, so adults too are enthusiastic and hopeful for the gifts we may receive. The reason for both children and adults is the same; our Christmas presents say to us “you are loved”. This is the message of the greatest Christmas gift; the child Jesus. The birth of Jesus is the Father saying tom

each one of us : “I love you”. He shows the depth of his love by allowing his Son to be born in our world, to take on our flesh, to be placed into a dangerous world. It is the Babe of Bethlehem who truly shows how much God loves us.

This is utterly revolutionary. A revolution that changes everything. When Our Lady accepted her vocation to be the Mother of God, her “yes” brings joy to the world. In the midst of all the noise surrounding the birth of Jesus, Our Lady is a centre of silence, silence is the presence of God, a moment of contemplation surely in the midst of the joy of this birth Our Lady had thoughts and worries for her new born. Surely most Mothers in the middle of their pain there are fearful thoughts about having the ability, the skills, the knowledge of how to protect their child always, to love their child always. Our Lady was growing in her understanding of her vocation, just as every Mother since most grow in their vocation as Mother. But this birth is of a different degree for at the birth in Bethlehem our very humanity has been elevated to a new order. History has been changed. This is the cause of our joy, our happiness, the reason for our celebration.

As Mary, Mother of God cradles her new born Son so she cradles the Body of Christ, the Church. So now she is our Mother who is read, willing and able to care, protect and intercede for us. So with St. Joseph that he accepts his vocation to protect and care for the infant Jesus and so the Church, the Body of Christ.

It is in the fragile, weak child of Bethlehem we place our hope, our salvation. It is in this new born, like Our Lady, we recognise this infinite love Jesus has for us. In the midst of this dark stable a light shines for us. In her silence, Our Lady shows her inevitable love for us just as she protects her Son, supports her Son, feeds her Son, cares for her Son, so she does the same for us. Jesus, the light has become one of us, sharing our nature. Just as his light shines in the stable of Bethlehem, we allow the light of his love shine on us. When we accept that he loves us, then we can progress to love others. Through the birth of Jesus, and our Baptism, he is our Brother. Our Lady is our Mother. Through the birth we have been set free from fear. By this birth, we have been enlightened by Jesus. Through his birth, the love of Jesus dispels towards darkness. Through Our Lady, we

can grow in our own vocation to show Jesus the world. Our Lady, our Mother is there to help, support and affirm that we are souls and daughters of God. So we must be filled with joy.

***Silent Night, Holy Night,  
All is calm, all is bright,  
Round yon virgin, Mother and child  
Holy infant so tender and mild  
Sleep in heavenly peace  
Sleep in heavenly peace***

### **THE PRESENTATION OF OUR LORD**

St. Philip Neri tells a story about a man who goes to mass but leaves every time after receiving Holy Communion. St Philip speaks to him but he continues to leave the Church immediately after Holy Communion. So, St Philip tells two altar servers to watch for the man and when he goes out they should take two lighted candles and follow the man. The man is annoyed, so he returns to the Church, but St Philip says to him that having received Jesus; body, blood, soul and diversity, the man carries Jesus with him into the world.

The mystery of the presentation of the child Jesus in the Temple is Our Lady, the new Ark of the covenant taking God to the Temple. At this time in Israel, the original Ark was lost. Our Lady and St. Joseph being faithful, Jews had to obey the law of Moses, Mary had to be purified and they offered to God what the law laid down in offering the first born Son to God. Yet in this we see the poverty the Holy family lived in. They could only afford two small pigeons. But this mystery shows that Our Lady and St. Joseph are obedient. Also to the action of the Holy Spirit. Our Lady brings Jesus the light into the Temple.

The encounter with Simeon with Anna again shows the idea of obedience to the action of the Holy Spirit. Simeon recognises that Jesus is the light to enlighten all nations. Simeon recognises that Jesus is the Messiah, the Christ that God has promised.

After the nativity with all its noise, celebrations, visitors and praise, even now in the Temple, Our Lady is still growing into her vocation. Growing in her understanding of saying “yes” to God would mean for her and her Son. It is then that Simeon prophesises that

a sword would pierce her soul. This is an image for us of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. She would grow to understand that she would follow the example, the footsteps of her Son for the salvation of the world. This is an image that all of us will follow in the example of the life of Jesus. Our pains are united with his : broken relationships, illness, suffering both physically and emotionally are united to his passion for the salvation of others in the world. So we ask Our Lady, the Immaculate Heart, to have the strength and courage to come closer to her Son. It is in this image of the Immaculate Heart of Mary that we see tenderness to her children.

## **A SHORT NOVENA TO OUR LADY OF THE FAMILY**

Mary, Mother of the Holy Family of Nazareth, I ask your prayer for my family. I ask you to watch over them, to keep them safe in mind and body, to protect them at all times that they may grow in the grace of your Son and never be separated from him. I ask this in the name of Jesus who is Lord forever and ever.

## LITANY

|                              |             |
|------------------------------|-------------|
| Mary, Mother of God          | Pray for us |
| Mary, Mother of the Church   | Pray for us |
| Mary, Mother of our Saviour  | Pray for us |
| Mary, Mother of Good Counsel | Pray for us |
| Mary, Mother of the Family   | Pray for us |
| Mary, Mother of my home      | Pray for us |
| Mary, Mother most lovable    | Pray for us |
| Mary, My Mother              | Pray for us |

Mary, Mother of the family with your prayers to help us, make my home a place of love, understanding and peace. May it be a place of happiness and harmony that those who visit us will be renewed by the grace and blessing of your Son who is Lord forever and ever. Amen.

Mary, Mother of my family, I give thanks for all the graces and blessings my family has already received through your powerful intercession as I say “Hail Mary.....”.

Mary, Mother of the family, as you cared and loved the child Jesus, I ask you now to show that same love and care for the members of my own family, especially M.M. Watch over them, keep them safe at all times, watch over there going and coming and may they always be under your protection.

Mary, my Mother, I ask for your help for those of my family who are in special need as I say : remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary that never was it known that anyone who fled to your younger protection, implored your help or sought your intercession was left unaided. Inspired by this confidence, I fly unto you.

O virgin of virgins, my Mother, to you do I come, before you I stand, sinful and sorrowful, O Mother of the world Incarnate, despise not my petitions, but in your clemency hear and answer me. Amen.

V) Pray for us most Holy Mother of God

R) That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Mary, Mother of the family, as a Mother, you know how difficult it is to be a parent, I ask you to intercede with your Son on my behalf that I may have the grace,

wisdom and courage to be a loving, caring and understanding parent (or member of his family). I implore your help for my family that we may grow in love for one another, that we may care for each other and always have the peace and blessing of your Son in our hearts and in our home. May we so follow Jesus that we will all be united in the glory of the resurrection he came to bring. I make all these prayers through Our Lord, Jesus Christ who is Lord forever and ever. Amen.

### ***THE FINDING OF JESUS IN THE TEMPLE***

I am sure you have often heard that school days are the best days of your life. For some, this is true, for others, school days can be a torture. However, the school Jesus attended was the “School of Our Lady” at Nazareth. Although she was growing in her understanding of her own vocation so she was growing in her understanding of her Son and his mission. As a good Jewish family prayer and the Old Testament would have been important in the School of Our Lady and St. Joseph. In the culture, Jesus would have been considered “a man” at the age of 12. Giving good example would have been natural in the Holy family. This would have meant on

occasion going to the Temple in Jerusalem but not as a family alone, rather in a caravan consisting of many people; extended family members and others from the Town. It would be every parent's nightmare to lose their child but for Our Lady and St. Joseph, they would automatically presume that Jesus was with other family members in parts of the caravan.

This mystery is a sign of what is to come. As Our Lady treasured these things in her heart she is an example to all Mothers. Mothers do remember the incidents in their children's lives. Mothers (and Fathers) bear the scars of the pain their children experience. For Our Lady amid the joy there in the future. The future mission of her Son. Like all Mothers, there is the hope, the expectation of her Son's life, but this is tempered by her knowledge, her growing understanding that as the Son of God his mission, his life is to be the sacrifice that leads to salvation. So, Our Lady understands and stands in solidarity with all Mothers in the hope and expectation for their children. Also, she bears the pain and hurt of all Mothers, for all Mothers have a special advocate to hear their prayers for their children. As Our Lady, our Mother, journeys with us all through life to comfort, to console, to intercede on our behalf. Our Lady comforts us with

that love she has for her Son and so we can turn to her in prayer that she will be our advocate with her Son.

This mystery shows us that Our Lady is constantly in the presence of her Son but she does not cling to him. She knows that he must be about his Father's work. As she walks with Jesus, she unites her suffering with his and though her heart is broken at the foot of the Cross where the sword pierced her heart, her pain is the pain of the Mother of our Saviour. So she is in solidarity with all parents who suffer for their children. In our lives, when pain is part of our lives; illness, broken relationships, death of someone we love, betrayal, rejection, it is to Our Lady we turn that we may overcome by the grace of Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit.

## **PRAYER TO ST. JOSEPH**

To you, O Blessed Joseph do we come in our tribulations, and having implored the help of your most Holy spouse, we competently invoke your patronage also.

Through that charity which bound you to the Immaculate Virgin Mother of God and through the paternal love with which you embraced the Child Jesus,

we humbly beg you graciously to regard the inheritance which Jesus Christ has purchased by his blood, and with your power and strength to aid us in our necessities.

O most watchful guardian of the Holy family defend the chosen children of Jesus Christ,

O most loving Father, ward off from us every contagion of error and corrupting influence

O most mighty protector,. Be kind to us and from heaven assist us in our struggle with the power of darkness.

As once you rescued the Child Jesus from deadly perils, so now protect God's Holy Church from the snares of the enemy and from all adversity; shield, too, each one of us by your constant protection; so that, supported by your example and your aid, we may be able to live piously, to die in holiness and to obtain eternal happiness in Heaven. Amen

## **THE LUMINOUS MYSTERY (MYSTERY OF LIGHT)**

### ***THE BAPTISM OF JESUS***

The Luminous Mysteries was created in 2002 by Pope St. John Paul II in his encyclical “Rosarium Virginis Mariae”. The Luminous Mysteries or Mysteries of Light are a source of meditation on the public life and mission of Jesus. John the Baptist was baptising in the River Jordan. This was a baptism of repentance. A baptism of preparation for the coming of the Messiah. Just as John recognised Jesus in the womb of Our Lady, so now he recognises Jesus is the Lamb of God. Thus he is referring back to the book of Exodus and the deliverance and liberation of the people of Israel. Also, it is a sign of the sacrifice of the lamb at the Passover. After his baptism, Jesus emerges from the river and the voice of the Father is heard : “this is my beloved son, and whom I am well pleased”. So the baptism sheds light on who Jesus is, namely the Son of God, while at the same time shedding light on his humanity, he is one like us.

The baptism enlightens us to the mystery of the Trinity, for in this one scene we see the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Light is shed on the humility of Jesus, the word made flesh, is obedient to the will of the Father as

he begins his public ministry. At once we see his baptism united by the Holy Spirit with the crucifixion and our redemption. We see the humanity of Jesus united to his divinity.

Through his baptism, Jesus invites each one of us through our own baptism, to recognise Father, Son and Holy Spirit living in us. Through our baptism, we are the body of Christ, we are the family of God. Through our baptism, we are called the children of God and we must pray to have the grace and power of the Holy Spirit to fulfil our vocation as Disciples of Jesus. As we have the most Holy Trinity living in us, we can live in the presence of God and make God present to our world; in our family, our community, our work and in our world.

Our Lady is the inspiration for us, one who fulfilled her vocation as the humble and obedient servant of the Father. She was constantly aware in the presence of the Trinity; Father and Holy Spirit. So we ask for her compassionate assistance and prayers that we too may be faithful in fulfilling our own vocation; married, single, widow, widower, teacher, caring profession.

## ***THE WEDDING FEAST OF CANA***

In our society today, we are taught to be suspicious of people and their motives. So, when someone is kind or generous, we wonder about an ulterior motive. In this very ordinary scene, a very human scene, we see Our Lady leading us to Jesus for no one is closer to him than his mother. She intercedes with Jesus on behalf of the couple of have just been married. Our Lady shows her confidence in her son and his power over created things. She has hope and belief. Our Lady has the certainty that her son will help the young couple that their embarrassment, difficulty and distress will be removed with ease by Jesus. Jesus works a miracle which shows the enormous generosity of God to us. Jesus shows his love for the couple and his willingness to help us. But importantly, he does not force himself, it is only after the request from his mother that he works the miracle. We have to offer Jesus our trials, our difficulties, our [problems and invite him to help. But it is through his mother that we have a route to invite the involvement of Jesus. His involvement is in the ordinary aspects of our lives, then he will be generous to us. Our Lady shows her empathy towards others and her warmth towards all her children. This this scene, Our Lady shows her love for others, her compassion towards others and her

willingness to intercede for us. Yet it also highlights the humility of Our Lady for she produced nothing but her prayer for the couple and her prayer for us, all we have to do is ask. There is no selfishness on her part, just compassion and a willingness to help. She feels the “pain” of others and by her intercession shows the power and glory of her son. The Immaculate Heart of Our Lady is gentle, understanding and sympathetic. When we turn to Our Lady for her eager and active assistance, it will lead to the generous love of her son.

Immaculate Heart of Mary, my Mother, I come to you in child like prayer. I earnestly desire that all the people of the world may be brought back to the humble knowledge and love of the Sacred Heart of your clear son.

I give my heart to you, my mother and in confidence I entreat your help for my needs and the needs of those I love. Hear my prayer and give me your help as you helped the young couple at Cana. My Immaculate Mother, be with me always with your compassion, mercy and understanding and lead me closer to Jesus, your son and my Saviour. Amen.

## ***THE PROCLAMATION OF THE KINGDOM***

Near the end of the Second World War allied soldiers were carefully making their way through bomb ravaged towns and villages heading towards Germany. They witnessed great destruction and devastation. Going through a small village, they passed by a destroyed Church. In the middle of the rubble, there was a statue of the Sacred Heart of Jesus which did not escape the damage of artillery shelling. The outstretched hands had been blown off. Someone had written on a piece of card placed at the base of the statue, it read : “You are now my hands”.

Though our Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist we are called by God, we have a mission, a vocation to be The Disciple of Jesus for our own age, our own place and in our own circumstances. Our vocation is to proclaim the Good News of Jesus. We are called and sent into our world to show the face of Jesus to our family, to our neighbours, to our community. When we truly look upon the face of Jesus, we recognise that the love he has for us alone can save us and set us free. It is through the grace and power of the Holy Spirit that we can be the disciples of Jesus and proclaim His Good News of

Salutation and Redemption. It must be our prayer that the gifts of the Holy Spirit will be active within us that we may fulfil our vocation is showing to others the living God, the Risen Christ. Then those we encounter may come to know our Saviour. However, before we can proclaim the Good News, we have to know the love Jesus has for ourselves by opening our hearts and minds to him, to open ourselves by the grace and power of the Holy Spirit and by our commitment to Jesus that we become “workers” for the Kingdom. It is by our words and by our deeds we show the face of Jesus to others. By allowing the Holy Spirit to work through us that we become the “hands” of Jesus to build his Kingdom. When we know the love Jesus has for us to live in us then we become his “work” through the ordinary things of life.

Our Lady is the inspiration for us. In her ordinary life in Nazareth, she was continually in the presence of her son. When she fetched water for the house, when she cleaned and cooked for her son, when she interacted with the extended family and neighbours, Our Lady showed the face of her son. When she was affectionate to Jesus, cuddling him in her arms, when she supported him, when she taught him in prayers and comforted him,

she was fulfilling her vocation. It was in the ordinary life of Nazareth and allowing the Holy Spirit to work through her that gave her the courage and strength to walk with him on the way to Calvary. So by our ordinary life we make Jesus present in our world. So like Our Lady, we allow the love of Jesus work through us by our compassion for others, by our care for others, by our forgiveness to others, by our seeing the need of others. Our Lady lived her life in faith, hope and love. Like Our Lady, we have to “see” through the eyes of faith, hope and love. Then we see others as made in the image and likeness of God.

O my God, I love you above all things with my whole heart and soul because you are all good and worthy of all my love. I love my neighbour as myself for the love of you. I forgive all who have injured me and ask pardon of all whom I have injured. Amen.

## ***THE TRANSFIGURATION OF JESUS***

It is easy for us to think that the 12 Apostles must have been extraordinary men. They must have been special as Jesus chose them to be the foundation of his Church. Yet about twenty seven times in the Gospels, Jesus comments to them that they do not understand either him or what is really taking place. From the Gospels, the Apostles enjoyed the reflected glory from Jesus after all they had been present when they saw Jesus having power and control over creation, his miracles curing the sick, the blind, the deaf, the lepers, the lame and even raising the dead. They heard the gracious and inspiring Word of God. They had been taught by Jesus so they were more fortunate than us.

Yet the Apostles were very ordinary, nothing special, not great scholars or intellectuals, not with great positions in society, just ordinary. Most were just fishermen. Simon, whom Jesus named Peter. Peter, as a fisherman would have no more than a basic education and coming from Galilee he would have had a very strong, easily identifiable accent. Probably a big man, (Petros meaning a large rock) and quite emotional. He got things right but also got things wrong. His brother Andrew was also

a fisherman and similar to Peter. James and John were fishermen also, but somewhat of mummy's boys. Matthew, a public sinner being a tax collector. Simon the Zealot, a bit of a revolutionary against the Romans. Bartholomew James the Lesser, Jude (Thaddeus), Philip, Thomas (the doubter), Judas, not exactly the ideal group to begin or be the foundation of the Church. Just very ordinary people.

However, Jesus knew they needed to be consoled, to be strengthened in their faith and hope. So at the transfiguration, he showed Peter, James and John who he is, the Son of God, and a consoling picture of the future, his glory. The transfiguration is the example of light and glory per excellence. The Apostles experience great joy at the transformed Jesus and become more aware that they are in the presence of the Son of God.

Through this mystery we become aware that God is not alone, God is 3 persons, one God; Father, Son and Holy Spirit. That each person of the Holy Trinity is total giving, a total relationship and total love. Through the transfiguration, total light and total glory, we see the face of Jesus, our Saviour and Redeemer. It means that

we can know the presence of Jesus in our own lives and he is not just present to Saints. Every event, every situation, every relationship in our lives is connected to the greatest event in history, namely the word made flesh in Jesus. When we recognise and acknowledge the love Jesus has for us, then we begin to live the word made flesh, the incarnation. When we recognise and acknowledge that Jesus has redeemed us by his passion, death and resurrection, then we can recognise that our hope and future is caught up in the resurrection.

As Our Lady lived her whole life in the presence of God; Father, Son and Holy Spirit, no matter what was happening around her, Our Lady, filled with grace, was able to see the future as the resurrection.

***O Lord God, I hope by your grace the pardon of all my sins and afterlife here to gain eternal happiness because you have promised it who are infinitely powerful, faithful, kind and merciful. In this hope, I intend to live and die. Amen.***

## ***THE INSTITUTION OF THE EUCHARIST***

There is a story from the life of St. Philip Neri (born 1515) that can help us know the importance of the Eucharist. A man who came to Church each day would walk out of the Church immediately after receiving Holy Communion. St Philip spoke to the man but he persisted on leaving the Church immediately after receiving Holy Communion. So one day, St Philip instructed two altar servers to take two large lighted candles and follow the man. In the street, the man was aware of the servers with the lighted candles. He returned to the Church to confront St Philip, St Philip said to the man that he was carrying within himself the body, the blood, soul and divinity of Jesus and so before leaving the Church must give thanks to God for the great gift he had received. Two servers to watch for the man, when he leaves the Church. They were to follow him with lighted candles. When the man received Holy Communion, he made his way out of the Church. The two altar servers followed him. In the street, the man saw the servers, upon asking what they were doing they replied, Father Philip told them to do this. He returned, in anger, to the Church to confront Father Philip who stopped the man. Father Philip calmly and gently reminded the man that having received Holy Communion, he carried within him the

body, blood, soul and divinity of Jesus. That where the man went, Jesus was with him. The man never left mass early again.

The Eucharist is the centre of our lives as the followers of Christ. To have a better understanding of the mass, we need to read the Last Supper and the Gospel of John, Chapter 6.

The mass is the memorial of the passion, death and resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ. He left us this wondrous gift, the gift of himself so that his real presence is with us always. Through the sacrifice of the mass he gives himself to us. In Holy Communion, we are united to Jesus that we may be strengthened to journey on our way with his presence within us. It is through Holy Communion that we are fed by Jesus to journey in this life and sustain us for the perfect union in eternal life. Through Holy Communion, we are strengthened and sustained to fulfil the commandment of Jesus to love one another. He was a sacrifice of love on the Cross that assists us to know his presence and to take his presence into our ordinary daily lives and to love him by our love for one another. Through the mass, the Holy Spirit guides in prayer to long to be joined with Jesus that through our adoration give praise and thanksgiving for salvation and redemption in Christ. It is through our

union with Jesus in Holy Communion that our soul, our spirit, is in a daily renewed relationship with our saviour. It is through his continuously restored relationship that we discover within us the capacity to love selflessly as Jesus loves us. It is in Holy Communion we discover we can give ourselves for the good of others. It is through Holy Communion we discover that united to Jesus we can open our hearts and souls to the presence of God's unconditional love. It is through Holy Communion that we discover that through this love, Jesus has for us that we are healed of our woundedness and weakness. It is through Holy Communion we discover the healing power of the masses that we can be an example for others that they may know the healing and redemptive power of Jesus in the mass and Holy Communion. It is through Holy Communion we discover how our lives are connected to Jesus and so we can be a source to allow others to know the same connectedness with Jesus. As we are fed with his body, blood, soul and divinity, the body of Christ so we discover we are connected with the whole Church, here and in the perfection of Heaven.

Soul of Christ, be my sanctification, body of Christ. Be my salvation, body of Christ. Fill all my veins, water for Christ's side, wash my stains, passion of Christ, my

comfort be O good Jesus, listen to me in thy wounds I  
would hide never to be parted from thy side. Guard me,  
should thy foe assail me. Call me when my life shall fail  
me. Bid me come to thee above with thy Saints to sing  
thy love world without end. Amen.

# A SIMPLE ROSARY

**B**efore you begin to try to prepare yourself. Sit quietly, say a short prayer to the Holy Spirit; something short and simple, e.g. “come Holy Spirit and give me the gift of prayer”.

1. Make the sign of the Cross.

2. Say the “Apostles’ Creed” I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of Heaven and Earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord who was conceived by the Holy Spirit born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried, he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into Heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father and he will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Catholic Church, the Communion of Saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting. Amen.

1. Say one Our Father, three Hail Mary’s, one Glory Be.

2. Announce the “Mystery”, e.g. the joyful mystery first mystery “the Annunciation”.

3. Say Our Father, ten Hail Mary’s, one Glory Be.

4. After the decade say : “O my Jesus, forgive us our sins, save us from the fires of hell, lead all souls to Heaven, especially those in most need of thy mercy”.

5. Announce the next decade and continue until all five decades are complete.

6. At the end of the five decades, say “Hail Holy Queen”.

Hail, Holy Queen, Mother of Mercy, hail our life, our sweetness and our hope. To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve : to thee do we ascend up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this vale of tears. Turn then, most gracious advocate, thine eyes of mercy towards us, and after this our exile, show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus, O clement, O loving, O sweet virgin Mary. Amen.

V. Pray for us, O Holy Mother of God that we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

R. Pray for us.

9. Final prayer. O God, whose only begotten Son, by his life, death and resurrection, has purchased for us the

rewards of eternal life; grant, we beseech thee, that, meditating upon these mysteries of the most Holy Rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary, we may inherit what they contain and obtain what they promise through Christ our Lord. Amen.

10. Make the sign of the Cross

## CONCLUSION

It is said that Michelangelo could look at a block of marble and could see the statue trapped inside, his skill was to release the image. As the followers of Jesus, we know that praying is an important part of our lives, something we have to release within us. Praying is simple. Praying is difficult. For many praying the Rosary is simple yet praying the Rosary is difficult. For some people they wonder about praying, saying prayers. Our life of prayer is about our relationship to God but it is a relationship in God but it is a relationship in which we allow and welcome God into the very centre of our soul, our heart and our mind. It is here we allow God to speak to us, to touch us. Yet it is prayer that we try to resist God seeing us as we truly are, our true self. This can cause us to be afraid of God that he will take us over and ask too much of us and that somehow we may be lost, it is this resistance, God can come so far and no further, that we can at times say, "I prayed but God did not

listen". It can best be summed up as; "Our Father who are in heaven, 'my will' be done. This shows that as we close ourselves to God, we want a God who is at my beck and call, a God who is my miracle worker, a God who is there to do what I want. We want a God who will intervene when I am in trouble. Yet we know prayer is about our relationship to God, about growing in our awareness of his presence in our Life. Our prayer has to be about the opening of our minds, our hearts and our souls to his will, his loving presence. To open ourselves to God means we must be like Our Lady where we hear, like her, the words of the Angel Gabriel; "Do not be afraid". When we allow the peace of Christ; and the power of the Holy Spirit to come upon us, then we allow God; Father, Son and Holy Spirit to enter into our soul, we allow God to touch us with his loving presence. Our Lady is the most precious example of how to model our lives on the life of Jesus, our Lord and God. It is in the quiet reflection of prayer that we hear his voice, we hear him calling us to our vocation and so come to know and understand that we are loved unconditionally. Loved with a greater love than any parent can love their child. It is in the prayer that we understand that we follow the pattern of the life of Jesus : times of joy, times of praise, times of thanksgiving, times of rejection, times of suffering but ultimately times of glory, It is in prayer that

we are guided by the Holy Spirit to appreciate and experience that we are a child of the Father and that Jesus is our brother. It is in the Rosary we follow the great events in the life of Jesus and so develop an awareness of our relationship to him. It is through the intercession of Our Lady, our Mother, that we grow in this relationship. It is in prayer that we are made in the image and likeness of God who is love and so know we are created in love and by our Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist we are called to live in love. It is now that we may understand our vocation to fulfil the new commandment of loving God and our neighbour as ourselves. Like Our Lady, it is through the grace of the Holy Spirit we discover the Father's will to love in love. However, this love is not a romantic illusion it is that we love God and fulfil his will by seeking the best for others. Yet we know that in following the model of Christ's life we too must follow his sacrificial love forth solution of others. However, we also know that we become distracted in prayer by our thoughts, by our fears, by our disappointments, by our wishes. So much can distract us when praying, our jealousy, our weaknesses, our sense of hurt and being wounded. Do not be afraid to allow God to "see" your distractions, allow him to "see" you as you think you are for remember he made you as you are and he will always say to you "I love you". We

must try to be like Our Lady who said “yes” to God. Then through the power of the Holy Spirit you will know his mercy, his compassion and his forgiveness. The Holy Spirit will shine a light into those dark places you keep secret for fear that if God sees them he will withdraw his love. God never abandons us, God never leaves us. God only loves us. It is the Holy Spirit who guides us, directing us to appreciate that it is in our weakness and our hurt and pain that we are healed by the love of Our Father and that he only wishes that we will share eternal life with him. Yet it is only human that we seek Our Father and our Brother Jesus to intervene in our life, to work a miracle for our self or another. But we have to realise that God may intervene for us but this is only a consolation to strengthen us, to support us and to affirm us in our faith and hope. We have to understand that in our prayer relationship it is here that God comes to us to support, to strengthen and to sustain us. It is in the silence of prayer that we are embraced by the love of God.

Through praying the Rosary, we see how Our Lady, our Mother is the great example for us and an advocate for us to her son. Just as Our Lady grew in her vocation as the Mother of God and as she walked with her son

throughout his life to suffer the passion and crucifixion so she also had the grace, the faith and hope to share the glory of the resurrection. She was indeed “full of grace” and filled by love of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. So it is appropriate for us, her children in faith, to ask for her intercession that we may realise and fulfil our own vocation to come closer to her son, our Lord and God. As we come closer to Jesus we grow in our appreciation of his unconditional and sacrificial love for us and so come to the glory of eternal life.