

ROSARIUM VIRGINIS MARIAE

Pope John Paul II's Apostolic Letter

On The Most Holy Rosary

Promulgated 16 October 2002

I. Introduction

- A. The Rosary took form in the 2nd millennium under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
- B. Loved by saints
- C. Encouraged by the magisterium
- D. With the rosary we sit at the feet of Christ in the school of Mary. Mary is our teacher.
- E. From the rosary, the faithful receive abundant graces.

II. The Popes and the Rosary

- A. Leo XIII- *Supremi Apostolatus Officio*- Proposed rosary as an effective spiritual weapon against the evils afflicting society.
- B. Blessed John XXIII- Prayed all 15 decades daily once he became pope.
- C. John Paul II says rosary has had an important part in his spiritual life

III. OCTOBER 2002- OCTOBER 2003: THE YEAR OF THE ROSARY

- A. To recite the Rosary is contemplation of the face of Christ in the school of Mary.
- B. The Rosary provides spiritual and educational opportunities for:
 - 1. personal contemplation
 - 2. formation of People of God
 - 3. the New Evangelization

IV. Objections to the Rosary

- A. One objection is that the Rosary detracts from the centrality of the Sacred Liturgy.
 - 1. Pope Paul VI said not only does Rosary not conflict w/ the Liturgy, it sustains it.
 - a. Helps us fully and interiorly participate in the Liturgy.
 - b. Helps us reap the fruit of the Liturgy in our daily lives.
- B. Another objection is that the Rosary is not ecumenical b/c of Marian character of it.
 - 1. Answer to this is that Rosary is Christ-centered.
 - 2. If properly re-vitalized, Rosary is an aid, not a hindrance to ecumenism.

V. A path of contemplation

- A. Most important reason for strongly encouraging the practice of the Rosary is that it represents a most effective means of fostering among the faithful that commitment to contemplation of the Christian mystery that the Holy Father has proposed as a genuine training in holiness.
- B. What is needed is the Christian life distinguished in the "art of prayer."
- C. More urgent than ever that Christian communities become genuine schools of prayer.

VI. Prayer for peace and for the family

- A. Pray Rosary for peace
 - 1. Can't recite it w/out becoming committed to peace.
 - 2. Especially in Holy Land
- B. Pray for families
 - 1. Families being attacked on two levels
 - a. ideological
 - b. practical
 - 2. Family is in crisis
 - 3. Rosary will help to counter this crisis.

VII. "Behold, your Mother!" (Jn 19:27)

- A. Mary desires to show us her maternal concern through the Rosary.
- B. This has been made clear for instance at Lourdes and Fatima, where Mary urges St. Bernadette, and the children Jacinta, Francisco, and Lucia to say the Rosary. She also urges us to do the same.

VIII. Following the Witnesses

- A. Impossible to name all the saints who were devoted to the Rosary
- B. Pope focuses on a few in this document.
 - 1. St. Louis Marie Grignon de Montfort- Author of an excellent work on the Rosary entitled "The secret of the Rosary."
 - 2. St. Pio of Pietrelcina
 - 3. Blessed Bartolo Longo
 - a. "His path to holiness rested on an inspiration heard in the depths of his heart: "Whoever spreads the Rosary is saved!"
 - b. He received great encouragement and support from Pope Leo XIII who has been dubbed the "Pope of the Rosary."

CHAPTER 1 CONTEMPLATING CHRIST WITH MARY

IX. A face as radiant as the sun

- A. It is the task of every Christian to contemplate the face of Christ and when we do this, we become more like Christ.
- B. We become open to receiving the life of the Blessed Trinity.
- C. The Rosary helps us to contemplate His face. Again, we contemplate the face of Jesus in the school of Mary, who has contemplated His face every day since the day of His birth until the present day and will go on contemplating that beautiful, radiant face until the end of time.

X. Mary, model of contemplation

- A. Mary is the incomparable model of contemplation of Christ.
- B. The face of the Son belongs to Mary
- C. Stages
 - 1. Annunciation- Eyes of Mary's heart already turned toward Him.

2. Pregnancy – Sensed his presence and pictured His features.
3. Nativity- Mary gazed at Him with adoration and wonder. From this point on her eyes would never leave Him.
4. Always a penetrating gaze, even to point of perceiving His hidden feelings and anticipating His decisions, e.g. Cana- “Do whatever He tells you.”
5. The Cross- A look of sorrow and of a woman giving birth. “This is your mother.” She receives John as her son.”
6. Resurrection- A gaze radiant with joy.
7. Pentecost- A gaze afire w/ outpouring of Holy Spirit.

XI. Mary’s memories

- A. Throughout her life, Mary reflected on the moments she spent at her Son’s side.
- B. These became her “Rosary.”
- C. Even now, Mary sets before us, through the recitation of the Rosary, the mysteries of the Gospel, hoping that our contemplation of them will release all their saving power.

XII. The Rosary, a contemplative prayer

- A. Rosary “an exquisitely contemplative prayer.”
 1. Because it comes from Mary’s own experience.
 2. W/out contemplation, the Pope cautions that Rosary would lose its meaning.
- B. Rosary calls for a “quiet rhythm and a lingering pace.”
 1. Through the eyes of her who was closest to our Lord.
 2. In this way, “unfathomable riches” of the Rosary are disclosed.

XIII. Remembering Christ with Mary

- A. Mary’s contemplation is above all a remembering.
 1. To remember in love and faith is to be open to the grace that Christ won for us by his life, death, and resurrection.
 2. The pope reaffirms that the Sacred Liturgy is the source and summit of the Church’s activity.
 3. However, the pope also says that personal prayer is necessary. Mt. 6:6

XIV. Learning Christ from Mary

- A. Contemplating Christ w/ Mary in the rosary is a means of learning how to “read,” to discover His secrets and understand Him.
- B. She teaches us by obtaining for us in abundance the gifts of the Holy Spirit.
- C. Humbly asking questions to increase in the light of faith
 1. Example of Annunciation

XV. Being conformed to Christ with Mary

- A. Requires humility, poverty in spirit, hiddenness, patience, perfection

- B. Rosary mystically transports us to Mary's side as she is busy watching over Christ at Nazareth.
 - 1. Enables her to train & mold us same way.
- C. Role of Mary radically grounded in Christ & subordinated to Him.
 - 1. In no way diminishes unique mediation of Christ.
 - 2. Rather, shows power of His unique mediation.
- D. *Totus Tuus*
 - 1. Pope's motto
 - 2. From St. Louis de Montfort
 - 3. Read quote from de Montfort
 - a. "Our entire perfection consists in being conformed, united and consecrated to Jesus Christ. Hence the most perfect of all devotions is undoubtedly that which conforms, unites and consecrates us most perfectly to Jesus Christ. Now, since Mary is of all creatures the one most conformed to Jesus Christ, it follows that among all devotions that which most consecrates and conforms a soul to our Lord is devotion to Mary, his Holy Mother, and that the more a soul is consecrated to her the more it will be consecrated to Jesus Christ."
 - b. Mary lives only in and for Christ!
 - c. The life of Jesus and Mary appear most deeply joined in the Rosary.

XVI. Praying to Christ with Mary

- A. Jesus invites us to turn to the Father in prayer with confidence and insistence (Mt. 7:7).
- B. Mary's maternal intercession supports our prayer.
- C. Catechism says that the prayer of Church sustained by prayer of Mary (2679)
- D. Jesus is the Way and Mary shows us the Way.
- E. Insistent prayer to the Mother of God based on confidence that her maternal intercession can obtain all things from Heart of her Son.
 - 1. Quote from the poet Dante- "Lady, thou art so great and so powerful, that whoever desires grace yet does not turn to thee, would have his desire fly without wings."

XVII. Proclaiming Christ with Mary

- A. Rosary is path of contemplation and increasing knowledge
- B. Capable of forming Christians according to Heart of Christ
- C. Can present a "significant catechetical opportunity when it combines elements needed for effective celebration- especially in a communal setting. Holy Father says that pastors should use this to their advantage.
- D. Has been used very effectively in combating heresy.
- E. Rosary remains valuable resource for every good evangelizer.

CHAPTER II MYSTERIES OF CHRIST-

MYSTERIES OF HIS MOTHER

XVIII. The Rosary, “a compendium of the Gospel”

- A. To contemplate Christ, we must listen in the Spirit to the Father.
- B. Silence and prayer essential for this.
- C. Litany of Hail Mary’s becomes unceasing praise of Christ
- D. It is with this backdrop of Hail Mary’s that the mysteries of Christ contemplated
- E. Both Hail Mary and mysteries of Rosary have Christ at center.

XIX. A Proposed addition to traditional pattern

- A. Luminous mysteries proposed
- B. Reasons
 - 1. Bring out Christological depth of Rosary
 - 2. To include Christ’s public ministry.
 - 3. To give the Rosary fresh life.
 - 4. To enkindle renewed interest in the Rosary’s place within Christian spirituality as a doorway to the depths of the Heart of Christ.

XX. The Joyful Mysteries

- A. Typically said on Mondays and now Saturdays
- B. Marked by joy of the Incarnation
- C. Words of joy used to describe each mystery
 - 1. Annunciation- Rejoice- Archangel Gabriel to Mary
 - a. Whole universe is touched by divine favor
 - b. Whole of humanity is embraced by Mary’s fiat.
 - 2. Visitation- “Exultation”
 - 3. Nativity- Gladness
 - 4. Presentation and Finding in Temple
 - a. Preserve climate of joy
 - b. Point to coming drama
 - 5. Finding of Jesus in the Temple
- D. Joyful mysteries help us enter into the ultimate causes and deepest meaning of Christian joy, that is, that God has come into the flesh to save us.

XXI. The Mysteries of Light (Luminous Mysteries)

- A. Typically said on Thursday- B/C Institution the Eucharist on Holy Thursday
- B. Mysteries
 - 1. Jesus’ Baptism in the Jordan
 - 2. Jesus’ self-manifestation at the wedding at Cana
 - a. Intervention of Mary

- b. Apart from this mystery, Mary is very much in background in luminous mysteries (Gospels give no indication that she was even present at Last Supper).
- c. “Do whatever He tells you.” (Jn. 2:5)
 - Words echo those of God the Father when he said essentially this at Jesus’ Baptism.
 - These words great are Mary’s great maternal counsel which she addresses to the Church of every age.
- 3. Jesus’ Proclamation of the Kingdom, with His call to conversion.
 - a. Forgives sins of those who approach Him with humble trust
 - b. Inaugurates His mission of mercy.
 - c. He continues this mission of Divine Mercy until end of world, especially through Sacrament of Penance.
- 4. The Transfiguration
 - a. Luminous mystery par excellence
 - b. Glory of Godhead shines through face of Christ
 - c. Father commands apostles to listen to Him.
 - d. To prepare to experience suffering of His Passion with Him so they can also experience His Resurrection.
- 5. The Institution of the Eucharist
 - a. The sacramental expression of the Paschal Mystery.

XXII. The Sorrowful Mysteries

A. Gospels give these mysteries great prominence

B. 5 mysteries

- 1. The Agony in the Garden
 - a. Anguish before the will of the Father
 - b. Weakness of the flesh would be tempted to rebel
 - c. Jesus encounters all temptations and confronts all sins of humanity
 - d. Says to the Father, “Not my will but yours be done.”
 - e. The yes in this garden reverses the “no” of our first parents in the Garden of Eden.
- 2. Scourging at the Pillar – “By His stripes, we are healed.”
- 3. The Crowning with Thorns – The King of Kings is crowned with thorns.
- 4. The Carrying of the Cross – Can meditate on the Stations while praying this mystery
- 5. The Crucifixion – His complete and perfect self-offering to the Father for our sins. Can meditate on His Last Words or His Saving Wounds

C. In Sorrowful Mysteries we stand at the foot of the Cross beside Mary

- 1. Enter depths of God’s love for man
- 2. Experience life-giving power of His love.

XXIII. The Glorious Mysteries

A. Can’t stop at image of Crucified, Jesus is the Risen One

- B. Glorious Mysteries help us re-discover reasons for our faith
- C. Mysteries
 1. Resurrection- Mary must have had an intense experience of new life of her Son.
 2. Ascension- Prefigures Mary's Assumption, which prefigures the Resurrection of the just at the end of the world- which last two mysteries hi-light.
 3. Pentecost- Pope writes most on this mystery and hi-lights that it stands at center of Glorious mysteries.
 - a. Reveals face of Church as a family gathered with Mary, enlivened by the Spirit, and ready to evangelize the world.
 4. The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary – At the end of her earthly life Mary is taken body & soul into heaven. Sin and its effects have no hold on her.
 5. The Coronation – Mary is our Mother and Queen!

XXIV. From “mysteries” to the “Mystery”: Mary’s way

- A. This devotion fosters an inseparable bond between us and Christ and His Blessed Mother
- B. Rosary helps us seek the fruit of her womb in her arms and in her heart.

XXV. Mystery of Christ, mystery of man

- A. Rosary marks rhythm of human life
- B. Helps us know the truth about self by contemplating Christ who reveals us to ourselves
- C. Christ’s birth→ sanctity of life
- D. Household of Nazareth→ truth of family according to God’s plan
- E. Listening to the Master in His public ministry→ light which leads to Kingdom of God
- F. Following Him to Calvary→ we learn meaning of salvific suffering
- G. Contemplating Christ & Blessed Mother in glory→ we see goal we are called to
- H. To pray Rosary is to hand our burdens, anxieties, labours, and endeavors to the merciful hearts of Christ & His Mother.
- I. Rosary brings rhythm of human life into harmony with the rhythm of God’s own life, the joyful communion of the Holy Trinity, which is our destiny and deepest longing.

**CHAPTER III
“FOR ME, TO LIVE IS CHRIST”**

XXVI. The Rosary, a way of assimilating the mystery

- A. Rosary is a method helping us to assimilate mysteries of Christ
- B. It is repetition, but not intended to be superficial, not vain repetition
- C. Rosary is prayer of love
- D. We are called to return love for love
- E. Act of love is ultimately directed to Jesus

1. With and through Mary
- F. Rosary helps us become more and more conformed to Christ until we attain true holiness

XXVII. A valid method...

- A. Should not be surprised that Christ makes use of a method- respects human nature
- B. We are not pure spirit, not angels, but body-soul composite
- C. Christian spirituality normally engages whole person- psychological, physical, and relational

XXVIII. ...which can nevertheless be improved

- A. Rosary is method of contemplation
- B. Not an end in itself. The of prayer is always union with the God
- C. Method can be improved
- D. The following suggestions are intended by the Holy Father to help the faithful understand Rosary and richness of symbolism better
- E. So as not to look at Rosary superstitiously

XXIX. Announcing each mystery

- A. To help focus attention
 1. Good to have visual image- icon/picture to portray mystery.
 2. Images and spoken words help us use our imagination which is so important for contemplation

XXX. Listening to the word of God

- A. Good to follow announcement of mystery with an appropriate reading from the Word of God
- B. Inspired word has a unique efficacy that other words cannot match
- C. Can be certain that Word of God is spoken for today and spoken for me.

XXXI. Silence

- A. Listening and meditation nourished by silence.
- B. Recommends brief pause after proclamation of Word so as to focus attention. Then begin vocal prayer.

XXXII. The "Our Father"

- A. Begins vocal prayer of each mystery
- B. Natural for mind to be lifted to the Father
- C. Jesus wants us to share in His intimacy with the Father.

XXXIII. The ten "Hail Marys"

- A. Major part of the vocal prayer of the Rosary.
- B. Makes it a Marian prayer par excellence
- C. First part of prayer
 1. Words of greeting from Archangel Gabriel at Annunciation and from St. Elizabeth at Visitation.

2. Words of awe and adoration regarding God's masterpiece, the Incarnation.
 - D. The hinge in the prayer is the name of Jesus.
 1. Emphasis on His name is sign of meaningful and fruitful recitation of this prayer.
 2. Custom in some places to add a clause after His name which hi-lights the mystery, ex. For 1st Joyful Mystery, ...”and blessed is the fruit of the womb Jesus Incarnate.
 3. This can help us concentrate on the mystery.
 - E. In 2nd half of prayer we ask Mary's intercession for us now and at the hour of our death.

XXXIV. The “Gloria”

- A. Christian life is about union with the Trinity
- B. Gloria needs to be given due emphasis
- C. Time for us to raise our minds to heights of heaven

XXXV. The concluding short prayer

- A. Pope suggests concluding each mystery with a prayer for the fruits of that particular mystery
- B. Fatima Prayer – “O my Jesus, forgive us our sins...”

XXXVI. The Rosary beads

- A. A counting mechanism, yes, but deeper meaning
- B. Beads converge upon crucifix, upon Christ
- C. Symbolize unending path of contemplation and of Christian perfection
- D. Blessed Bartolo Longo
 1. Saw beads as chain which links us to God
 2. A sweet chain
 3. A chain which bonds us to God the Father
 4. A chain which puts us in tune w/ Mary our Mother, and most of all with Christ Himself.
 5. Symbolism of the beads can be expanded to include our link to others in our many relationships.

XXXVII. The opening and closing

- A. Many ways to introduce the Rosary, customary way varies according to place.
 1. Apostles Creed
 2. Psalm 70 – “O God, come to my assistance; O Lord, make haste to help me”
- B. These and other forms are equally legitimate as long as they prepare us for contemplation.
- C. Rosary ends with prayer for intentions of the Pope.
 1. Expands our vision to embrace needs of the Church.
 2. To encourage ecclesial dimension of the Rosary, that Church has seen fit to grant indulgences to those who recite it w/ required dispositions.

- D. If Rosary is well-prayed, the soul, experiencing the motherhood of Mary, feels the need to burst forth in praise
 1. Salve Regina (Hail, Holy Queen)
 2. Litany of Loreto
 3. This is crowning moment of an inner journey when we are brought into living contact w/ mystery of Christ and His Blessed Mother.

XXXVIII. Distribution over time

- A. While some may have time to recite entire Rosary each day, e.g. contemplatives, possibly the sick, many will be able to recite only part of it.
- B. Because of addition of the Luminous Mysteries, the Pope has proposed some new days.
 1. Joyful – Monday and Saturday (which always has a special Marian character).
 2. Luminous – Thursday (Institution of the Eucharist).
 3. Sorrowful – Tuesday and Friday (day of our Lord’s Passion and Death).
 4. Glorious – Wednesday and Sunday (day of Resurrection and of Pentecost).
 5. Helps give a certain spiritual “color” to the days of the week. Just as liturgical colors different seasons of liturgical year.

CONCLUSION

XXXIX. “Blessed Rosary of Mary, sweet chain linking us to God”

- A. Church has always attached particular efficacy to this prayer.
- B. Church entrusts to Rosary its most difficult problems.
- C. Historically, when Christianity itself seemed under threat, its deliverance was attributed to power of this prayer and to intercession of Our Lady of the Rosary.
- D. Pope entrusting to power of this prayer:
 1. Peace in the world.
 2. Cause of the family.

XXXX. Peace

- A. Rosary is by its nature prayer of peace
- B. By assimilating mystery of Christ, which is goal of Rosary, we learn secret of peace.
- C. Meditative character, shown in tranquil succession of Hail Mary’s.
- D. Peaceful effect on those who pray it.
- E. Disposes us to peace and to spread peace.
- F. Rosary prayed well draws us to face of Christ in others, especially most afflicted.
- G. Examples of how mysteries make peacemakers.
 1. Nativity→ Welcome, defend, promote life
 2. Christ’s Proclamation of the Kingdom of God→ Live out Beatitudes
 3. Carrying of the Cross→ To act as Simon of Cyrene, helping the grieving and despairing.
 4. Risen Christ or Mary, Queen of Heaven→ Inspires us to make this world more beautiful place

5. Rosary allows us to hope that the difficult battle for peace can be won.

XXXXI. The family: parents...

- A. A prayer of and for the family
- B. Brings family together
 1. Helps look each other in the eye
 2. Helps forgive each other
 3. See covenant of love renewed
- C. Many obstacles to family life today that family Rosary can help to overcome
 1. Not enough time together
 2. Too much TV, not to mention what is on it.
- D. Rosary:
 1. Fills life with very different ages than TV.
 2. Reproduces in families something of the Family of Nazareth.
 3. Puts Christ in center of family life.
 4. Helps families share w/ Christ their joys and sorrows.
 5. Helps families place their needs in Christ's hands.
 6. Helps families to draw strength from Christ.

XXXXII. ...and children

- A. Advises parents to entrust the growth & development of their children to this prayer.
- B. Difficulties children today face
 1. Hurried pace of life
 - a. ex. Of Jen (time for quiet before Blessed Sacrament)
 2. Cultural distance between generations growing ever wider.
 3. Dangers
 - a. drugs
 - b. hedonism
 - c. culture of violence
 - d. despair
- C. Praying Rosary with Children
 1. Gives chance for daily "pause" of prayer.
 - a. Calming
 - b. Reassuring
 2. Objection to Rosary with Children
 - a. This prayer not suited to young people of today.
 - Evidence seems to indicate the contrary.
 - Rosary does need to be prayed well.
 - b. Pray it well and they will come
 - Practical helps- Those stated in this letter.
 - Visual images particularly helpful for little kids
 - More you engage the sense the better, especially at younger ages.
 - c. Not solution to every problem, but is spiritual aid that should not be underestimated.

XXXXIII. The Rosary, a treasure to be rediscovered

- A. In the last section of this Apostolic Letter, Pope John Paul II calls us to rediscover this beautiful prayer.
- B. Call on the various members of the Mystical Body to rediscover it in:
 - 1. Light of Scripture
 - 2. Harmony with the Liturgy
 - 3. Context of our daily lives.
- C. The Pope ends with a quote from the Blessed Bartolo Longo, the apostle of the Rosary.

“O Blessed Rosary of Mary, sweet chain which unites us to God, bond of love which unites us to the angels, tower of salvation against the assaults of Hell, safe port in our universal shipwreck, we will never abandon you. You will be our comfort in the hour of death: yours our final kiss as life ebbs away. And the last word from our lips will be yours sweet name, O Queen of the Rosary of Pompei, O dearest Mother, O Refuge of Sinners, O Sovereign Consoler of the Afflicted. May you be everywhere blessed, today and always, on earth and in heaven.”

Outline Composed by Jim Gontis