

# THE HOLY ROSARY

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## HOW TO SAY THE ROSARY

THE Rosary is a combination of Vocal Prayers and Meditation that is to say, certain simple prayers are recited with the lips while the mind is fixed on particular given incidents in the life and death of Our Lord and of His Mother.

These incidents on which the mind dwells are called Mysteries, and in the complete Rosary there are Fifteen Mysteries divided into three groups, as follows:

### The Joyful Mysteries

1. The Annunciation; 2. The Visitation; 3. The Nativity; 4. The Presentation; 5. The Finding in the Temple.

### The Sorrowful Mysteries

1. The Agony in the Garden; 2. The Scourging; 3. The Crowning with Thorns; 4. The Carrying of the Cross; 5, The Crucifixion.

### The Glorious Mysteries

1. The Resurrection; 2. The Ascension; 3. The Descent of the Holy Ghost; 4. The Assumption; 5. The Coronation of Our Lady.

The Vocal Prayers essential to the Rosary are three:

The Our Father, often called the Pater Noster, or Pater, after the opening words in the Latin. (It is also called The Lord's Prayer.)

Our Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy name; Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.

The Hail Mary, often called the Ave Maria, or the Ave, from its opening words in Latin.

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou amongst women; and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us, sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

The Glory be to the Father, commonly called the Gloria Patri, or Gloria.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Other prayers often included by pious and almost universal custom are the following:

The Hail Holy Queen, or Salve Regina as it is often called.

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 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.

V. Queen of the most holy Rosary, pray for us.

or Pray for us, O holy Mother of God.

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

Let us pray.

O God, whose only begotten Son, by His Life, Death and Resurrection, hath purchased for us the rewards of eternal life, grant, we beseech Thee, that meditating on these Mysteries in the most holy Rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary we may both imitate what they contain and obtain what they promise, through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Apostles' Creed or I believe, also known as the Credo.

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of Heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried. He descended into hell, the third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into Heaven, sitteth at the

right hand of God the Father Almighty, from thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Holy Catholic Church, the communion of Saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body and life everlasting. Amen. The name Rosary is also applied to the string of beads, in the form of a chaplet, used for counting the vocal prayers, principally the Hail Marys. These are grouped by "decades" or tens, though in practice "a decade of the Rosary" means the recital of one Pater, ten Aves, and one Gloria.

The complete Rosary consists of fifteen decades or groups of ten beads, with a larger bead, often called a "Pater," between each decade. But such a chaplet is cumbersome and seldom used, except by members of Religious Orders who wear it as part of their habit. For practical purposes a Rosary is made up of five decades with a Pater bead between each decade. These beads, strung on wire chain (or sometimes on cord) are joined together to form a circle. Added to this is usually to be found a short length of chain bearing one large bead, three smaller beads, and again one large one, and completed by a crucifix or a medal bearing the image of Our Lord.

With regard to the actual recitation of the Rosary, it is perhaps well to distinguish between what is essential for the gaining of Indulgences, and what is added to this by pious custom in many churches throughout the world.

The essential things are as follows: If the Joyful Mysteries are chosen, let the mind turn to the First Joyful Mystery, the Annunciation. Then, keeping the mind continually fixed on the consideration of this incident, say the Our Father, ten Hail Marys (counting these by letting the first decade of the beads pass one by one through the fingers), and end with the Glory be to the Father. Now let the mind turn to the Second Joyful Mystery, the Visitation, and proceed again with the vocal prayers as before, using the second decade of the beads, and so on to the end of the Fifth Mystery.

If it is desired to proceed to the Sorrowful Mysteries, the round of the beads is said a second time with the mind fixed on those Mysteries each in turn, and so too with the Glorious Mysteries.

Over and above the essential prayers necessary for gaining the Indulgences, other prayers are frequently added. Thus it is the almost universal custom of the Church to conclude the Rosary with the Hail Holy Queen followed by versicle and prayer as given above.

Further, in some places (notably in Dominican churches) it is customary to begin in the following way:

V. Incline unto my aid, O God.

R. O Lord, make haste to help me. Glory be to the Father, etc.

More commonly a beginning is made with the I believe followed by the Our Father and three Hail Marys. On the other hand, in some places it is usual to add, after the Hail Holy Queen and prayer, Our Father, three Hail Marys, and Gloria for the intention of our Holy Father the Pope. The beads next the crucifix are found convenient for the counting of these additional prayers.

With regard to the gaining of Indulgences attached to the saying of Five Decades or Mysteries, it may be noted that it is not necessary to say the whole five without a break. It is quite permissible to say one or more decades at a time, though for obvious reasons a single decade may not be divided up.

Further, where an Indulgence is attached to the use of a specially blessed Rosary (for example in the case of a Rosary blessed by a Dominican priest), it is necessary to make actual use of the beads in counting the Aves. Nevertheless, if a number of persons are saying the Rosary together aloud, such indulgences may be gained by all, provided that at least one person present is using a specially blessed Rosary. In view of this, and of the fact that some indulgences are attached simply to the saying of the Rosary and others to the use of specially blessed beads, it is well to make a general intention of gaining all the indulgences possible each time one says the Rosary.

## INDULGENCES

An Indulgence is the remission of all or part of the temporal punishment still due in respect of sin already forgiven or of venial sin not yet forgiven, which would otherwise have to be paid in full either by notable penances in this life or by the cleansing fires of Purgatory in the life to come. By the Power of the Keys, the Church has control of the treasury of merits gathered by the super-abundant self-sacrifice of the Holy Ones of God which, through the Communion of Saints and membership of the Mystical Body of Christ, the faithful may be permitted to share in. It has been the custom of the Church for many centuries to attach Indulgences to certain acts of piety and under given conditions. These may be "plenary," implying a remission of all the debt of temporal punishment already incurred by

the recipient; or they may be "partial," implying a remission proportionate to the performance of the long canonical penances that were the rule in the early days of the Church; hence these partial Indulgences are measured by years or days. Many Indulgences, both plenary and partial, have been attached throughout the centuries to the due recitation of the Holy Rosary. The principal ones are as follows:

FOR ALL THE FAITHFUL, who are in a state of grace, or at least truly contrite, who have the intention of gaining the Indulgences and fulfil the conditions special to each:

1. A "Toties Quoties" Indulgence Every Day, i.e., a Plenary Indulgence may be gained every time Five Mysteries of "The Rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary instituted by St Dominic" are recited in presence of the Blessed Sacrament whether exposed or hidden in the tabernacle. This Plenary Indulgence may be gained many times the same day. Conditions: Confession, Communion.

Pius XI., 1927.

2. A Plenary Indulgence once a year for Five Mysteries recited every day on rosary with Dominican blessing. Conditions: Confession, Communion. Leo XIII.

3. A Plenary Indulgence on the last Sunday of every month for reciting Five Mysteries on at least three days of every week preceding, with others either at home or in chapel with no Blessed Sacrament. Conditions: Confession, Communion, and visit to some church.

4. 10 years, once a day, for reciting Five Mysteries with others either at home or in chapel with no Blessed Sacrament. Leo XIII.

5. 7 years and 7 forty days for assisting at the Rosary Procession on the first Sunday of each month.

St Pius V. Leo XIII.

6. 100 days on each bead when reciting Five Mysteries and using rosary with Dominican blessing. Leo XIII.

#### DURING OCTOBER

1. The "Toties Quoties" Indulgence on Rosary Sunday (the first Sunday of October), i.e., a Plenary Indulgence may be gained every time, for each visit to the Rosary Altar (in the church of the Rosary Confraternity) from Midday on Saturday till Midnight on Rosary Sunday. Conditions: Confession, Communion, and at each visit Six Our Fathers, Six Hail Marys, Six Glories for the Pope's intentions. St Pius V., Leo XIII., Pius XI.

2. A Plenary Indulgence on Rosary Sunday or any day within the Octave. Conditions: Confession, Communion, visit to a church, and prayers for the Pope's intentions, and Five Mysteries recited on the Feast and every day during the Octave, either publicly or privately. Leo XIII.

3. A Plenary Indulgence on any day after the Octave of the Rosary, for Five Mysteries recited ten times, after the same Octave, either publicly or in private. Leo XIII.

4. 7 years every day in October for Five Mysteries recited in private. Leo XIII.

There are further Indulgences attaching to membership of the Rosary Confraternity, of which Pope Leo XIII said: "Among the (different Catholic) Societies We do not hesitate to assign a pre-eminent place to that known as the Confraternity of the Holy Rosary." All information with regard to this Confraternity can be obtained upon application to any Dominican church or to any of the numerous other churches where it is erected.

#### MEDITATION

A very important point, perhaps the most important of all, is the meditating upon the mysteries. Many simple souls are apt to shrink from the idea of "meditation" but this is largely due to the fact that the idea they have of it is not accurate.

Meditation simply means thinking about God or the things of God, taking some point of Catholic teaching and trying to keep the mind fixed on it without distractions. Of course it is not easy for any human mind to think about God as He is in Himself, although He has revealed great truths about Himself, as for example the mystery of the Blessed Trinity. But one of the reasons that He showed Himself to us in human flesh through the Incarnation was that we might have an easy road to understanding more about Him. It is not difficult to think about a Mother and her Child, nor about human suffering and death, nor about friendship and love, nor even about the supernatural destiny of man as

shown in the glory of Our Lord and His Blessed Mother. We can pick out incidents from the life and death of Our Lord and even make pictures of them in our minds, as many great artists have made pictures of them on canvas. If we stand in front of such a canvas, we often find ourselves becoming absorbed in the subject that is pictured for us, and all sorts of notions about it rise up of themselves in our mind. That is a kind of meditation.

Our Lady herself, as tradition tells us, chose those incidents which we call the mysteries of the Rosary, as being specially important and helpful for us to think about continually. In order to make it easier for us to hold our wayward minds constant for even a short space of time, there were added the three greatest vocal prayers to be repeated in a definite form; and in order that we might implore the special help of our Mother, Mary, in understanding the mysteries with which she was so intimately bound up, it is the Hail Mary that we repeat most often.

But it would be useless, and indeed wrong, to go on saying these beautiful prayers just with our lips, while our thoughts were asleep or absent. Prayer is not prayer unless we are raising the mind and heart to God. Therefore, while our hands are occupied with the beads and our lips with the vocal prayers, our imaginations and our minds must be occupied with the great truths of our Redemption put before us in the mysteries of the Rosary; and thus all our faculties of body and soul are employed directly or indirectly, as God intended them to be, in prayer.

In order to provide some food for this meditation we have written a few lines on each of the mysteries. They represent only a minute fraction of the wealth of meaning in these truths, but they may perhaps encourage each one to find further and more fruitful meaning in them for himself. It is taken for granted that the reader will seek out for himself the appropriate passages relating to each mystery in Holy Scripture, for which the reference is given before each meditation.

## I. THE JOYFUL MYSTERIES

### FIRST JOYFUL MYSTERY

#### THE ANNUNCIATION

Luke I., 26-38

Having determined in His eternal Wisdom to redeem men and to re-instate them in their heavenly inheritance by the Incarnation of the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, God allowed Himself, for our instruction in the way of His love, to wait upon the acceptance of her He had chosen to be His Mother. It was by her own free choice and because of the complete generosity in her soul towards God and His Holy Will that she accepted so simply whatever might be implied in the announcement of this mystery, hidden from the foundation of the world, made to her by His messenger, the Archangel Gabriel. She did not question the divine purposes; she was His handmaid and wholly ready to be used by Him as He saw fit. From the moment of her assent, God became man.

By her acceptance Our Lady acted not only in a purely personal capacity, but also represented the whole human race in assenting to all that is implied in the Incarnation and playing her part in the work of Redemption. As Eve, by her assent to the suggestion of the devil, contributed essentially to the sin of Adam, so the Second Eve, by her assent to the message of the angel, contributed essentially to the Redemption to be effected by the Second Adam. In everything, in her absolute freedom from sin and in her whole hearted co-operation in the whole of the Incarnation of God and salvation of mankind, Our Lady represents God's ideal of what sinful mankind should be through the merits of her Son.

We must understand from this mystery, therefore, that it is not enough merely to recognise the Son of God made man as our Saviour. We must realise that God has chosen a way, the way of divine Love, which demands that we each take our share in the working out of our own salvation He will not save us against our will—that is not the way of love; but only if we, like Our Lady, are willing to accept the great gift He offers and to play our own part, generously and unquestioningly as she, in the suffering and self-sacrifice which such a love-token implies. By her sublime words: "Be it done unto me . . ." she accepted in a single act of will all the pain and sorrow that her Motherhood brought her, all the happiness through suffering that man's return to God includes.

## SECOND JOYFUL MYSTERY

### THE VISITATION

Luke I., 36-56

The first fruits of the Annunciation and of her own sublime act of Love of God was an act of generous brotherly love on the part of Our Lady. Learning from the Angel of her cousin's coming motherhood, with no thought of herself, but carrying already within her the Divine Child, she went with haste into the hill country to be with Elizabeth and lend her aid. In her deep humility she, the Mother of God, undertook without delay the fatigue and discomfort of this journey, to serve the mother of him who was to go before the face of her Son and prepare His way.

The generous and unselfish charity of Mary bore its own fruit at once, as such charity always must. It occasioned the first inspired witness to the mystery of the Incarnation and to Our Lady's own exalted office, for the yet unborn babe leapt for joy in her cousin's womb at the coming of the God-man whom she herself bore, and Elizabeth was forthwith inspired to proclaim the tremendous truth of a creature's divine Motherhood. By her self-sacrifice and charity to others, Our Lady occasioned this witness to Christ our Lord within her.

As in every detail of the Incarnation, but especially in all those offered to us in the Mysteries of the Rosary, we must take heed of the significance of the Visitation. Like Mary, we must draw forth from others the witness to Christ in us, and His presence in us will be shown especially by the practical exercise of those virtues that were especially His, and therefore His Mother's, namely love of others and willingness to sacrifice oneself for them. Our Divine Lord gave us only one commandment as His own, namely that we love one another as He has loved us. He must be our standard in this, as in all things, but His Mother shows us how this standard can be attained to even by a mere human being who is willing to obey His command and use His grace.

## THIRD JOYFUL MYSTERY

### THE NATIVITY

Luke II., 1-20

Choosing from all the wealth of material contained in this mystery, we may well think of the unexpectedness of the manner of Our Lord's coming, typifying, as it does, the vast difference between the wisdom of God and that of men. We see a small and helpless babe born of a human mother in most pitiful surroundings, dependent for every need upon her and His foster-father, the manger His only cradle, the breath of the poor animals His only warmth. Yet this is the God who created the world, eternal and omnipotent, the Word who was from the beginning, who was with God, who was God. He might have come in the glory of heavenly power, in the majesty of His Godhead. Or He might have come amidst all the ceremony and pomp of earthly kings. But He came as a newborn babe to the humble, unknown Jewish maiden who was His mother.

Thus from the first God showed the way He had chosen, the way of love. He came to redeem and conquer, but not as human liberators and conquerors come. His weapons were meekness and humility, and always appealing love. God, Creator and Judge, He hid all this awe and majesty under the tender form of babyhood, for thus could He best gain from men what He desired of them, their hearts. He came therefore not only as a beggar craving our charity, but as a sweet and helpless mite compelling our love. Moved by this very human appeal, men would perchance realise the love-longing of God who could thus empty Himself of His Godhead, as it were in order to take upon Himself in human flesh the burden of their sins.

It behoves us to understand how our God has thus put Himself so absolutely into our hands. Everything in His after-life and in His death will emphasise this strange note of sacrifice, and will underline more and more clearly the divine paradoxes that only He that shall lose his life shall find it that only those who mourn shall be blessed, that the weak things of this world shall confound the strong, that there must be an entirely new and even opposite point of view about human life and its significance. For God has humbled Himself to the earth that He might lift all men, if they will to heaven. In the words of St Bernard: "The Lord is great and greatly to be feared; but the Lord is little and greatly to be loved."

## FOURTH JOYFUL MYSTERY

### THE PRESENTATION

Luke II., 22-35

Actuated by that obedience to the will and law of God which characterises the whole of the Incarnation, Our Lady presents herself in the Temple for her Purification, she who was the most spotlessly pure of all God's creation, and she presents her Son as an offering to God, He who was God Himself. The acceptance of this obedience and this offering was manifested to her and to the world through the mouth of Simeon, whose words first crystallized that as yet unformed sense of the sacrifice that was to be asked of her and the suffering it must inevitably cause her. Yet she did not flinch from that sacrifice nor withdraw her offering to God of Him whose only purpose on earth was to do the will of Him that sent Him.

In this mystery, as in all the Incarnation, we must see ourselves one with Our Lord in the union of His Mystical Body. In presenting her Son to His Father, Our Lady presented with Him and in Him all mankind, to be consecrated in a new and significant way to the doing of His will whatsoever it might entail. As He, who was the only Way, the only Truth, and the only Life, was to be a stumbling block to many, so those who follow this Way, and accept this Truth, and live this Life must be prepared to encounter the misunderstanding, the resentment, the persecution of others, but above all be prepared to sacrifice their own views, their own wayward and misguided inclinations, home, family, and friends, if need be, being obedient, like Him, even to the death of the Cross.

We must leave ourselves in the hands of this loving Mother, as the Divine Child did, and let her offer us to God as a willing sacrifice to be used as He sees fit. There must be suffering for all of us, but she can best show us how this suffering is a precious opportunity of love and how it can unite us to the Cross of her Son. She will teach us how to fulfil in our own individual lives the offering she made of us all in the Temple, even as her Son completed in His Life and Death the offering that she made of Him. This is the price of our purification.

## FIFTH JOYFUL MYSTERY

### THE FINDING IN THE TEMPLE

Luke II., 40-52

This is the mystery of the sorrow that Our Lord brought upon His mother and St Joseph, as it were deliberately. Their apparent loss of Him occasioned them intense suffering and anxiety. When He was at last found and lovingly reproved, the Child Jesus replied almost sternly that they should know He must be about His Father's business. No one could doubt for a moment the great love that He had for His mother and St Joseph, yet He left them to anxiety and sorrow without a word of explanation. It was a test of their love and of their trust and emphasised in no uncertain way that truth that His Father's business must take precedence of all else, even if it caused a temporary pain to those He loved. And, in any case, the joy of finding Him again more than compensated for the sorrow of His loss.

Like Our Blessed Lady, we must keep these words in our hearts and ponder on their divine significance. Having come for no other purpose than to do the will of His Father, Our Lord took this early occasion to reiterate the lesson of the Presentation, not just for the instruction of His Mother and foster-father but for the instruction of us all. This is all the more necessary because what the will of God asks of us is often so unexpected, a fact that is typified by the Child amongst the teachers of Israel. Once we realise that it is the Will of God that is in question, we must be ready to accept it with the simplicity and trust shown by Our Lady. If she afterwards kept these things in her heart, it was only that she might learn more fully the lesson of Divine Wisdom, which seems like foolishness to the world.

Often Our Lord may seem to hide Himself, even from those of us who try to love Him. But we must understand that it is all part of His Father's business, and that that "business" is our own sanctification, our own happiness. Moreover we must learn that our own concern with our Father's business may sometimes cause perplexity and pain to those we love most on this earth. But human affection, even of the highest and dearest kind, must not come between us and the execution of God's will.

## II. THE SORROWFUL MYSTERIES

### FIRST SORROWFUL MYSTERY

#### THE AGONY IN THE GARDEN

Matthew XXVI., 36-47; Luke XXII., 43-44

In this mystery we see Our Saviour entering upon that intense Agony which was to last until the moment of His death. Even in His human mind He had known always the details of the Passion He was to undergo, but for our instruction and help He shows Himself now facing the full realisation of this bitter chalice, as though for the first time. He allowed His human nature to feel to the very utmost that natural dread and horror which such a prospect must rouse, and gave expression in tense, earnest prayer to the shrinking fear and sorrow that overwhelmed Him. But this apparent and wholly human weakness only emphasised all the more sublimely the firmness of His unswerving human will in its complete obedience to the will of God. The Agony of body and soul might bring forth a sweat of blood and a cry to His Father, but there was no question of resistance—"Not my will but Thine be done."

Here again we must realise how Our Lord stood in the place of all men, and the true nature of His humanity is stressed in no uncertain way. The terrible debt which mankind had incurred and would incur by its sins is revealed in its stark reality, and He who had so lovingly taken this burden upon Himself was borne down to the earth in Agony by it. Men must be made to realise the terrible nature of this debt and to understand that only by a supreme act of will fortified by union with God through the merits of the Incarnation can it be paid. But once that act of will has been made, then the angels of God will come and comfort, that is strengthen them to complete the sacrifice of their redemption in union with the Saviour.

Sooner or later each of us must face our Gethsemane, experience the weakness of the flesh in the presence of God's loving demand for sacrifice. Our lower nature will tend to rise in rebellion, and at best our agony of soul or body may wring from us a cry to our heavenly Father to take away this chalice of suffering. But we must have the strength to complete that prayer in the only way that will guarantee its being heard: "Not my will but Thine be done." This strength is ours if we will use it, for it has been earned for us by the Agony and Sweat of Blood of Our Saviour.

### SECOND SORROWFUL MYSTERY

#### THE SCOURGING AT THE PILLAR

Matthew XXVII., 20-25; Mark XV ., 15

The mystery of the Scourging brings home to us in its horrifying reality the brutality of that callous torture which was devised for this gentle and loving Saviour by the men He had come to save. Not content with the crucifixion to which He was already condemned, these demons incarnate must tear His tender flesh to pieces with metal-loaded thongs, a torture at once agonising and degrading, one of the most appalling moments of cruelty in this drama of diabolical hatred and divine love. But the very casualness with which this terrible flagellation was decreed, as well as its unimaginable agony, reveals most clearly the divine generosity and superabundance of the sacrifice to which Charity urged the Son of God made man.

This mystery not only helps us to build up gradually our understanding of the price of sin and of the wealth of divine love; it emphasises in particular, with dreadful warning, the need of mortification of the flesh in all human nature. In every act of Our Lord there was something sacramental—that which it signified it also brought about. Thus by these terrible stripes the weakness, inherent in human nature as the relic of Original Sin, was healed. This was the particular price paid for that tendency towards the slavery of the passions which all men feel; the power to escape from that slavery is won for those who will unite themselves to Our Lord in this scourging and scourge themselves by mortification and penance.

After His act of sublime obedience in the Garden of Olives, Our Lord submitted without a word to the Scourging, so that we might know that those who are willing to submit themselves to God must drive out the "old Adam" of self-indulgence and self-love. This is the first and necessary step to the following of Christ, the removing of the obstacles that our own nature provides because of sin. If we are tempted to imagine that we can escape from mortification of the senses, the picture of the Scourging at the Pillar should rise up in our minds to give the devil the lie.

### THIRD SORROWFUL MYSTERY THE CROWNING WITH THORNS

Matthew XXVII., 27-31

This is the mystery of mockery. Keen though the sufferings of His sacred Body were, we may well believe that the sufferings of His inner self were even keener. Our Divine Lord, God in beggar's guise, came to save all men, to offer them His friendship and love, to bring them to eternal happiness. To accomplish this the better He hid His divine Kingship to win a new Kingship for the human nature He had taken in the name of all. For this had He come, to establish and rule in a Kingdom of Love; and this men made a matter of mockery and derision. The soldiery, with brutal and heart-searing humour, gave Him a diadem of thorns and crushed it down upon His sacred Head in a terrible caricature of coronation.

Yet even the poignant grief of love derided was part of the divine plan of our salvation, and there is a symbol of a great truth in the Crown of Thorns. Our Lord's kingdom is not of this world, and its crown is not fashioned of gold and precious jewels. All that worldly kingship holds most dear is rejected as worthless; all that worldly kingship disdains, poverty, meekness, shame, gentleness, unselfishness, all this is cherished as the gift of God. This is the mystery of the Kingdom of God, where poverty is blessedness, where the meek shall rule, where suffering is joy, where to sacrifice all is to possess all.

This is the crown which Our Saviour invites us to share with Him in this life if we would share with Him the crown of glory that is laid up for us hereafter. Having tried to follow Him in His love for others, in His unwearying efforts for their welfare, in His consuming desire for their eternal happiness, we may well find ourselves made an object of sport and derision for our very goodness by those we have tried to help. Our understanding of the mystery of the Crowning with Thorns must help us to realise that such suffering is efficacious above all other in bringing us surely into the Kingdom of Christ and the happiness of heaven.

### FOURTH SORROWFUL MYSTERY THE CARRYING OF THE CROSS

John XIX., 13-17; Luke XXIII., 26-31

Crowned with the diadem He had Himself chosen, the King of Glory slowly makes His Royal Progress through the city of Jerusalem and up the hill of Calvary, where His throne would be set up. Notwithstanding the agony of that journey, the unbearable weight of the Cross that brought Him three times to the ground, the continual encounter with the surging, blood-lusting mob and the even more heartrending meeting with His beloved Mother, it was the divinely planned triumphal march of the Son of Man, already crowned in Kingship, to the final victorious encounter with the powers of evil. Let this be the dominating thought as we review the familiar scenes depicted for us so vividly in the Stations of the Cross.

Here we find the God-given type of man's way through life. "If any man will come after Me, let him take up his cross daily and follow Me." All men must bear their cross, willingly or unwillingly, with understanding that will lead to joy, or with lack of understanding that may well lead to eternal sorrow. From the cradle to the grave, human life is paved with suffering of one kind or another. As with the Cross Our Saviour bore, it is the burden of sin that we thus carry on our weary shoulders; and if at times we sink under the weight and for the time even give up the struggle, we must remember how He fell under the material Cross but gained for us by each fall a more perfect power of contrition for our repeated failures and of determination to persevere to the end.

Moreover, once we realise the privilege that is ours, the fact that in this we are not just bearing our own cross, but helping Our Saviour to carry His we shall not merely be ready to bear the Cross but will "take it up" and place it upon our own shoulders. Tradition tells us that Simon the Cyrenean accepted the Cross unwillingly, but that having received it on his shoulders he was filled with the sweetness of the burden of Christ. How much the more shall we experience this sweetness if we offer ourselves to be the yoke-mate of Our Saviour.



## FIFTH SORROWFUL MYSTERY

### THE CRUCIFIXION

Matthew xxvii., 33-54

Now is our King set upon the throne He had chosen and by the supreme sacrifice of His human life He conquers that death which is infinitely more terrible than the death of the body, namely the deprivation of grace and super-Natural life which sin has caused in the souls of men.

But before His tortured frame yields up the spirit, His burning love urges Him to take upon Himself every conceivable agony of soul and body that He had not yet undergone. His was a very torrent of giving, which did not exclude His cherished Mother and His beloved disciple, till He allowed Himself to feel as though He were even abandoned by God Himself. Indeed He had no thought for Himself; but all His thought was for the fellow men He so loved, craving pardon for His torturers, granting eternal happiness to the thief, who asked only a remembrance. Thus did God in human nature satisfy at once the justice and love of God in His divine nature, paying the price that man owed, yet only God made man could pay.

In the Crucifixion above all we see how, in the divine economy of the Incarnation and man's redemption, the weakness and apparent failure of man is the strength and triumph of God. The failure of Calvary is the victory of Divine Love. Being thus lifted up in agony and in scorn He draws all things to Himself; the arms that were nailed along the beam of the cross were in reality stretched out wide in loving appeal to all humanity. "I thirst," He cried; but the raging thirst of the almost bloodless body was but an outward sign of the burning thirst of His love-longing. Is it possible that even a heart of stone could refrain from pity? But it is not just pity that He asks for. It is love, a love of the same generosity, fulfilling itself in the same way.

The Cross is for us the standard of the King we are pledged to follow. There can be no half-measures: "He who is not with me is against me." If we do not take our stand at the foot of the Cross with His Mother, then we must number ourselves amongst the jeering crowd or the brutal soldiery. Only if we are ready to die with Christ and sacrifice ourselves with Christ can we live with Him and reign with Him; and only if we love Him as His Mother loved Him can we thus die with Him. May this Mother, whom He gave us with His dying breath, teach us to love this Son whose Cross was her own supreme sacrifice.

## III. THE GLORIOUS MYSTERIES

### FIRST GLORIOUS MYSTERY

#### THE RESURRECTION

Matthew XXVIII., 1-8

As the Death of Our Lord was the ultimate proof of His humanity, so the Resurrection was the most perfect evidence of His Divinity, the guarantee of His whole mission on earth and harbinger of that life of glory which awaits those who die with Him. It is the prototype and the cause of man's entry into the supernatural life which begins on earth and is perfected in heaven. His Death paid the debt of sin and removed the otherwise insuperable obstacle between man and his true destiny: His Resurrection gave man the power to live and grow and advance in the new supernatural life now open to him. The body that had been the only too perfect instrument of suffering, but yet had been thereby the, perfect instrument of His Sacrifice and our salvation, is now crowned with immortality and perfection unimaginable; because of its degradation at the hands of man it has merited to be made glorious by God.

Like His Death, the Resurrection of Our Lord has its vitally important spiritual meaning. He it is true, "entered once into the Holy of Holies"; He died but once and rose to eternal life. But we must "die daily," as St Paul says, and we must rise again and again. In other words, it is a lifelong task to "put off the old Adam" completely, to die completely, with Christ, to all that is sin or the effects of sin, and our resurrection into the supernatural life, which was begun with our baptism, perhaps often of necessity begun again in the Sacrament of Penance, also takes a lifetime to perfect. If we die daily by mortification and self-sacrifice, we shall rise daily from the tomb of fleshly desires to the glory of the adoption of the sons of God.

Our true life, even on this earth, is the spiritual life, our participation in the life of the Mystical Body of the risen Christ. To an important extent our real and perfect participation in this true life depends upon our own generosity and

willingness. It is certain, of course, that the primary essential is the divine power given by grace; but we can be confident that God will not refuse to us what He won for us at so great a price, provided we are ready to make the return that His love asks, a love on our side that is equally generous.

## SECOND GLORIOUS MYSTERY

### THE ASCENSION

Luke XXIV., 50-51; Acts I., 10-12

The Ascension was the outward sign of Our Lord's final exaltation in His human nature. By His life and death He merited for His own human nature that it should receive kingship in heaven over all creation. As God He is equal to the Father and the Holy Ghost; but even as man He shares in the power of God, "sitteth at the right hand of the Father," is King and Judge of all mankind. The crown of thorns is now the symbol of His right to rule; the reed in His hand is now the sceptre that is the symbol of His power to judge. The wounds in His hands and feet for ever proclaim His victory over the devil, the world, and the flesh the wound in His side for ever witnesses to the love that conquered all and knows no limit. By His Ascension He made it possible for all men to ascend with Him to the throne of God and to share in the Kingship that He earned for them.

This ascent to heaven is, again, the sign of our own gradual ascent along the mountain paths of the spiritual life. To live the supernatural life symbolised by the Resurrection, it is not sufficient to live in a mediocre way, to be content just to remain in a state of grace. To avoid sin is indeed already something; but there remains open to us the unexplored beauty and joy of the spiritual life. We must not be content with an easy, uneventful life on the plains; we must lift our eyes to the mountains and set ourselves to scale the lofty peaks, so that from them we may be caught up by the power of God even into the courts of heaven and discover "secret things that it is not given to man to utter."

Certain it is, in any case, that we have here no lasting city, but are making our way along the path of life to our true home, that city set upon a hill, and the ascent thereto is arduous and continuous. To persevere we need the virtue of Hope, and the Ascension is the mystery of Hope; by its presence we can have confidence that God will give us that divine power to overcome the drag of things earthly and lift ourselves into that realm of things spiritual where Christ our King reigns in glory.

## THIRD GLORIOUS MYSTERY

### THE DESCENT OF THE HOLY GHOST

Acts I., 13-14; II., 1-8

The importance of the coming of the Holy Ghost and of His Mission upon earth is very clearly marked by those words of Our Lord: "It is expedient to you that I go, for if I go not the Paraclete will not come to you." The work of the Incarnation was wholly a work of love, and it must be completed in the soul of each individual man by his own share in that love and a return of it. Therefore the Father, whose divine generosity knows no bounds, sent the Spirit of Divine Love, the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity, to dwell in the souls of all in a state of grace, as their guest, their guide, their inspiration, and their strength. He is the greatest of all the gifts of God's love to us, for He is the Person of Divine Love, and He comes to perfect in each one the redemption and salvation that the Second Person, in His coming, had won for all.

By the external and visible coming of the Holy Spirit upon Our Lady and the Apostles, God has given us an unmistakable sign, not only of the internal and invisible coming of the same Holy Spirit to each one in Confirmation, but also of the supreme place and importance of Charity in the Christian life. God has revealed Himself to us, above all in the Incarnation, in order that we may love Him; we serve Him in order to express our love for Him; we shall be eternally happy with Him only as the result and in the measure of our love for Him.

This love of God must enter into and transform every part of our lives, making of everything we do, even commonplace things like eating and drinking, work and play, of supernatural worth and the actual expression of our love. To do this perfectly we need special qualities, like Counsel and Fortitude, Wisdom and Understanding, and those other precious gifts which the Holy Ghost brings with Him. But if these qualities are to come into operation we must hold ourselves ready to be instructed and guided by this divine Guest of the soul. As He overshadowed Our Blessed Lady

with His divine power and thus caused Christ our Lord to be incarnated within her, so must He overshadow us and cause Christ our Lord to be incarnated, in a spiritual and mystical way, in us, so that we live now no longer ourselves but Christ liveth in us. It only remains for us to strive more and more to remove from our souls the obstacles to the movement of the Holy Spirit and to be docile under His guidance, begging Our Blessed Lady to help us to a willingness like her own.

#### FOURTH GLORIOUS MYSTERY

##### THE ASSUMPTION

Cant. of Canticles II., 1-6; 10-13

The Assumption of Our Blessed Lady is the first fruit of the Resurrection and Ascension of her Son. The corruption of the grave is the common consequence of Original Sin and, though it was fitting that she should die the death of nature as her Son had died, to mark her need of redemption through His death, it was not fitting that her pure body, that had given of itself to form the flesh of God made man, should experience this corruption or that it should remain separated from her sinless soul. He who had preserved her integrity of body at His birth, preserved it also at her death, leaving it to rest but a short time in the tomb, as did His own, before waking it in a glorified state to be joined again to her pure soul in His Kingdom.

In this mystery, as in all her share in the Incarnation, we must recognise Our Lady as the symbol and representative of the whole of mankind redeemed. In her we see effected what is God's desire in respect of each of us, namely, in the words of Blessed Julian of Norwich, "to have us altogether whole in Him to His bliss." The whole nature He has given us, body as well as soul, He desires should be perfected and welcomed into the glory of heaven. The Assumption of Our Lady is at once the assurance and the pledge of this divine purpose.

This glory of Our Lady was not, therefore, only a personal reward for her spotless purity and wholehearted adherence to the will of God and His love. It was also an integral part of that superabundant generosity of God to all of us. For in her we see a creature like ourselves, yet one who, through grace, was perfect. Her He translated body and soul from this world, as we read in the Mass for the Vigil of the Assumption, so that in His presence she might make intercession confidently for our sins. Moreover, spotless though she herself was, we know that in this Mother we have one who understands our weakness of the flesh and can be relied on to help us to attain to purity of body as well as of soul. Let us look to her in the glory of her risen body and beg her to obtain from her Son the help we need to attain in God's good time to the resurrection of a glorified body.

#### FIFTH GLORIOUS MYSTERY

##### THE CORONATION OF OUR LADY

Apoc. XI., 15-19; XII., I

Not only because of her Motherhood, but also because of her co-operation with her Son in the work of redemption, Our Lady is the summit of the hierarchy of the Mystical Body of Christ; therefore, for the same two reasons, she shares the royalty of her Son. Truly has God regarded the humility of His handmaid and has rewarded her for the sword of sorrow that pierced her heart. She who bowed herself to the earth before the will of God is now set above all the choirs of angels; she who shared in the degradation of the Cross is now crowned as Queen of Heaven; she who endured a living death in the dying of her Son is joined to Him in the Kingship which He earned by His death.

The mystery of her Coronation signifies for us not only the greatness of the destiny that is ours if we will but be faithful to God, but also the power that Our Blessed Mother wields in our regard with her Son. She has been appointed by God to be our Advocate, to plead our miserable cause before the justice seat of God. We hail her as Queen of Heaven because she is the Mother of our King and because of the superlative holiness which the fulness of grace and her own obedience brought about in her. But we appeal to her as Mother because her Son did not disdain to share our nature, becoming our brother according to the flesh, and because He gave her to us through St John at the very moment of His death. How evident it is that the abundant generosity of God and His understanding pity has omitted nothing that could draw all men to Himself!

However conscious we may be of our own lamentable weakness and of our continuous failure, however ashamed

we might be to approach even to our sweet and loving Saviour because of the thoughtless ingratitude we have hitherto shown, we can have no hesitation, at least, in throwing ourselves at the feet of our Mother and craving her intercession. She has the power to help, for she is our Queen; she has the desire to help, for she is our Mother of Mercy; she has our cause at heart, for she is our Gracious Advocate; and we need have no fear of her, for she is clement and loving and most sweet.

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