

SIMPLE ROSARY MEDITATIONS - DURING LENT

taken from "Simple Rosary Meditations" by A Dominican Tertiary

FIRST JOYFUL MYSTERY - THE ANNUNCIATION "*Behold the handmaid of the Lord.*" (Luke 1:38)

In this Mystery of the Annunciation, Mary accepted the honor that was offered her, while understanding, if only dimly, the pain and sorrow that would accompany its fulfilment. She knew, for instance, that Joseph would be troubled on her account, but she left it to God to bring about the knowledge and understanding that would be their consolation. From her study of the Scriptures, she knew that the Messiah, the Savior, would be despised and rejected of men, that therefore she, His Mother, would share His pain and anguish. But her voice did not falter as she acknowledged herself to be the "handmaid of the Lord"; her courage founded in humility bravely undertook the work of co-operating in the redemption of mankind.

This Mystery teaches us that the highest honor, the purest joy, can never in this world be wholly untinged with sadness; and that it, as members of the Mystical Body of Christ, we are to do our share in helping forward the salvation of our fellow men, we must accept the sufferings and disappointments that will surely be our lot. It is only by self-sacrifice, self-abnegation that we can be true followers of Christ, and this season of Lent calls us to study more closely the example of Our Blessed Lady in her perfect abandonment to God's will.

SECOND JOYFUL MYSTERY - THE VISITATION "*His Mercy is from generation unto generations.*" (Luke 1:50)

The Mystery of the Visitation is one of great spiritual joy. Mary and her cousin met together in gladness and thanksgiving and both rejoiced in the wonderful things that the Lord had done for them. But sorrow and penance must soon have taken that place of rejoicing, for were they not conscious of the affliction sent by God to Zachary as punishment for his slowness in believing? He was dumb. Now that his heart's desire had been given him and God's word proven, he had lost the power of speech and so could neither communicate his gladness nor draw others to praise and serve God.

In this season of penance let us imitate Our Lady's steadfast faith and filial trust in Divine Providence; and accept the contradictions and troubles, great or small, of our daily life in a spirit of penance and reparation for our many moments of distrust and cowardice in God's service. Those who place all trust in God mortify their own will, their own desires, and in the exercise of the great virtue of charity follow the example of Mary in the Mystery of the Visitation.

THIRD JOYFUL MYSTERY - THE NATIVITY "*...there was no room for them in the inn.*" (Luke 2:7)

In foretelling the birth of Christ the angel announced to Mary: "The Lord God shall give Him the Kingdom of David His Father... and of His Kingdom there shall be no end." The Wise Men proclaimed that they were come to worship the King of the Jews, and sought Him in Jerusalem. Yet when the moment came there was no room in the inn, and supremely as Mary rejoiced at the birth of her Son, her loving heart must have felt intense pain at the thought that there was no welcome for Him among His own people, and that she had no cradle to offer Him but a poor manger.

Truly the joy and the glory of the Nativity are set against the background of sorrow and hardship. These were the portion of Our Lord from His first hour on earth; poverty, not riches, His choice. The Mystery of the Nativity should teach us a great detachment from the things of earth, and make us love to keep Jesus company in His life of sacrifice and abnegation.

FOURTH JOYFUL MYSTERY - THE PRESENTATION "*Thy own soul a sword shall pierce.*" (Luke 2:35)

Again in a Joyful Mystery pain and suffering are foretold as the price of joy and gladness; Simeon recognized the Child as the King and Savior for Whom he waited, and Mary's heart must have filled with delight at this thanksgiving. But then, turning to her and blessing her, he continued: "Behold this Child... is ... a sign which shall be contradicted, and thine own heart a sword shall pierce."

Again the joy so soon to be succeeded by pain. The Mother's heart, so full of love and tenderness, will be pierced by the ingratitude of men and torn by the sight of the sufferings of her Son. This is the first glimpse

of the *Mater Dolorosa*, whose sorrows we must meditate during these weeks as she stands side by side with Jesus offering Him to the Eternal Father for our redemption.

We should have a special thought for her during the time of Lent, when Simeon's prophecy was so terribly fulfilled. We know that her courage never failed, and that she is always ready and able to help those who invoke her aid and her intercession while struggling with suffering and temptation in this valley of tears.

FIFTH JOYFUL MYSTERY - THE FINDING IN THE TEMPLE “*They returned into Jerusalem seeking Him.*” (Luke 2:45)

Twelve years have passed since the scene of the last Joyful Mystery. Twelve years of quiet, happy family life at Nazareth. The Child, St. Luke tells us, “grew and waxed strong, full of wisdom”, and the daily life of the Holy Family flowed on serene and joyful in the love and service of God.

But the present Mystery, though joyful in its name and ultimate meaning, shows us the first direct reference by the Child Himself to His Mission, and to the self-sacrifice that would be demanded of His earthly parents. They “sought Him sorrowing” and He left them unconsoled for three days. At length He permitted Himself to be found, and having warned them that He must thenceforth be about His Father's business, returned to Nazareth and was subject to them.

When Jesus seems to hide Himself from us, leaving us alone with our sorrows or temptations, we must seek Him sorrowing; not with bitterness, nor faintheartedly, but with patience and trust that in His own time He will again allow Himself to be found. We will meditate this Mystery, like Mary, keeping these words in our hearts, and remembering that Jesus is always to be found in the Temple, waiting for us in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar.



FIRST SORROWFUL MYSTERY - THE AGONY IN THE GARDEN “*Stay you here and watch with Me.*” (Matt. 26:38)

After thirty years of hidden life at Nazareth, followed the three years of Our Lord's public ministry, now about to be ended by His Passion and death. Jesus, “knowing all things that were to come upon Him,” allowed His humanity to feel to the utmost the natural dread and horror that comes to any man when faced with ignominy and intense suffering. In His great need of supernatural help and strength, Our Lord began to pray in the Garden of Gethsemane, bidding His three Apostles to stay and watch with Him. But their eyes began to be heavy and they fell asleep, leaving their Master to suffer His spiritual agony alone.

In the season of Lent, Jesus asks us to watch with Him; and not only to watch *with Him*, but to watch *Him*. To watch how He bent His human will to that of His heavenly Father, praying that the Divine Will might be done in all things, even in His bitter pain. In the hour of temptation, in all suffering, whether bodily or spiritually, let us learn from the example of Our Lord in this Mystery to have trust in God and to submit to His Will both in this life and at the hour of our death.

SECOND SORROWFUL MYSTERY - THE SCOURGING AT THE PILLAR

“*Pilate, being willing to satisfy the people...delivered up Jesus to be crucified.*” (Mark 15:15)

In these words of St. Mark we have the reason of so much evil that is allowed in the world. Pilate, *to satisfy the people*, subjected Jesus to a most agonizing and shameful punishment. Rather than make a stand for what in his heart he felt to be right, he gave way to his cowardly desire to stand well with the Jews at any price, so that they should have no cause of complaint against him with the Roman Emperor.

Today how many there are who fearing their neighbors' ridicule, coldness or criticism, or in order to stand well with authority, fail to defend what they know to be right, allowing their religion to be despised and set at naught. This is indeed to deliver Jesus up to satisfy the people.

In meditating this Mystery, let us resolve to practice self-denial and penance and by thus gain strength of soul to acknowledge Jesus as our King and Master before all men, even when by so doing we may earn their contempt or enmity.

THIRD SORROWFUL MYSTERY - THE CROWNING WITH THORNS *"They struck His Head with a reed."* (Mark 15:19)

After sentence of crucifixion had been passed, the soldiers were permitted to take Jesus away and make a mockery of Him. Clothing Him in a scarlet robe, they made a crown of thorns and put it on His Head, and began to jeer and to strike Him with their hands, and to strike His Head with a reed, thus driving the thorns into the flesh and causing the most excruciating pain.

The head, the seat of the mind, is the noblest part of man, and the crowning with thorns and mockery added yet another degradation to all the shame that Jesus had already borne. He suffered this to cure our pride; that most deadly of all sins. The prophet Isaias wrote: "Woe to the crown of pride" - the crown to which Satan tempted Eve, assuring her that they who ate the apple would be as gods, knowing good and evil.

In this Mystery let us learn of Him who is meek and humble of heart to renounce ourselves and our ambitious natures, and to become as little children looking only to a heavenly crown.

FOURTH SORROWFUL MYSTERY - THE CARRYING OF THE CROSS *"Bearing His Cross He went forth."* (John 19:17)

It is only John, the beloved disciple, who speaks of Jesus bearing His Cross. May we not think that he was specially inspired to do so because he was the disciple that Jesus loved? Only love truly understands the Cross. To follow Christ is above all to love Him. "If any man will come after Me let him take up his cross and follow Me."

He was not satisfied with offering His life upon the Cross, He wished to *bear* the Cross on His shoulders, and to leave us this example of patience and meek courage.

"If thou carry the Cross willingly it will carry thee, and bring thee to thy desired end, namely, to that place where there will be an end of suffering, though here there will be no end. If thou fling away one Cross, without doubt thou wilt find another, and perhaps a heavier. Everywhere thou must of necessity hold fast with patience, if thou desirest inward peace, and wouldst merit an eternal crown." *Imitation of Christ, Bk. II Ch. 12*

When tempted to ask for relief from any pain or sorrow, may the thought of the Innocent Victim bearing His Cross and with it the weight of the sins of all mankind, give us strength to suffer humbly and trustfully, and to offer our own pain to God the Father in union with the Passion of His beloved Son.

FIFTH SORROWFUL MYSTERY - THE CRUCIFIXION *"It is consummated."* (John 19:30)

We have been meditating on the Passion and suffering of Our Lord and now we have come to the last moment when He bore witness to the fulfilment of all that His Father had sent Him on earth to do: "It is consummated". With those words Jesus ended His sacrifice for the redemption of mankind, and opened the gates of Heaven to all those who would acknowledge Him as King and Savior. But before the moment of His death, Jesus cried: "I thirst." He suffered not merely with the physical thirst that tormented Him, but with a spiritual thirst for souls. He thirsted for the salvation of all mankind. The executioners offered only vinegar and hyssop to Him Who had promised such great rewards for a cup of cold water given in His Name.

Jesus still thirsts for souls, suffering in His Mystical Body to the end of time. None can help in the redemption, in the work of the salvation of souls for whom Christ died, but those who are willing to share in His sufferings. He thirsts, and the world offers Him scorn, neglect, hate or mockery. But what shall we give Him each of us - you and I?



FIRST GLORIOUS MYSTERY - THE RESURRECTION *"Peace be with you."* (John 20:19)

In the Joyful Mysteries we saw how in this world joy and suffering are interwoven. In the Sorrowful Mysteries we meditated on the pain and agony and death that were indeed to redeem us, and of our own need of penance in the following of Christ in charity. Now in the Glorious Mysteries we catch a glimpse of the glory and happiness that will be the reward of the following of Christ and of obedience to the will of our Heavenly Father.

The first word of Jesus to His disciples assembled together was "Peace". It was a spiritual peace that was promised to them on that first Easter Day, not a merely peaceful life on earth; rather, they were to have lives full of trials and disappointments. But the "peace that the world cannot give" was to be theirs.

And that peace, which comes from sorrows bravely borne, from temptations vanquished for the love of God, that supernatural peace may be ours here on earth.

Meditating on this Glorious Mystery let us resolve to die to ourselves and the things of this world, so that we may the more perfectly share the life of the Risen Christ.

SECOND GLORIOUS MYSTERY - THE ASCENSION *"He was raised up." (Acts 1:9)*

Jesus crowned His life on earth by His triumphal Ascension into Heaven. As He came down from Heaven by His will and by His own power, so He ascended again by the same power and will. "No man hath ascended into Heaven, but He that descended from Heaven, the Son of Man Who is in Heaven." *John 3:13*

The disciples gazing on high as the cloud received Him out of their sight must have been strengthened and consoled by the remembrance of His promise to prepare a place for them, "that where I am there ye may be also". The memory of the Ascension was their strength and comfort during many bitter hours of desolation. "Did you not know that Christ must suffer and die, and so enter into His glory?"

Let us, too, fix our eyes on our heavenly home, while following in the footsteps of Christ here below, so that at the hour of death He may call us to share in His glory in the Beatific Vision of God.

THIRD GLORIOUS MYSTERY - THE DESCENT OF THE HOLY GHOST *"I will pour My Spirit upon all flesh."*

The Holy Spirit can only come in all His fullness into hearts where the will of God reigns supreme, hearts which have been tried and purified by pain. It is His mission to teach us all Truth, to bring to our remembrance the words of Christ, to strengthen and confirm us in virtue. The conditions necessary for receiving the Holy Spirit are the same today as those laid down by Peter on the day of Pentecost: "Do penance and be baptized every one of you in the Name of Jesus Christ for the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."

"Do penance" - accept all as from God; bear the contradictions and burdens of daily life in a spirit of mortification, and in meditation on this Mystery beg for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Love, Who will be our Guide here, and lead us to union with God in the eternal friendship of Divine Charity.

FOURTH GLORIOUS MYSTERY - THE ASSUMPTION *"Tota pulchra es, Maria."*

In this Mystery we contemplate the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin into that Heaven whither her Son ascended after His Resurrection. In her case too God "would not suffer His holy one to see corruption", and therefore God took her, body as well as soul, into the glory of Heaven. The words of her hymn to God, that wonderful Magnificat with which she praised and extolled His power and greatness, were brought to pass on that day: "He that is mighty hath done great things to me and holy is His Name." But again we see the lesson of humility and courage in the service of God: "He hath scattered the proud in the conceit of their heart."

The joy of Heaven is promised only to those who, like Mary, spend their lives in the service of God, and who can say from their hearts, both in joy or in the hour of trial: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord."

FIFTH GLORIOUS MYSTERY - THE CORONATION *"I will give thee the crown of life." (Apoc. 2:10)*

Coronation - what scenes of splendor, of rejoicing that word calls up! A whole nation gathering in joy to celebrate the crowning of their sovereign. But a coronation in Heaven! The crowning of the Virgin Mother of God as Queen of men and angels! What words can describe the radiance, the glory of the hour? "The end crowns all" and for Mary her crown was the final reward of her perseverance in doing the will of God.

Our own entry into Heaven will also follow on our perseverance in the service of God. Sometimes we feel that we can no longer persevere; temptations are too strong, sorrows too great to be borne. When we are tempted to give up what seems an unequal struggle, let us lift up our hearts to where our Queen, crowned in all her splendor, intercedes for us with her Son, our Savior, and pleads that we too may persevere throughout life, "until the day dawn and the shadows flee away". *2 Peter 1:19*