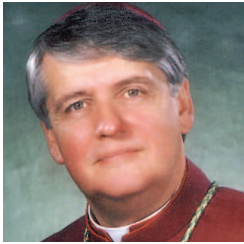


The Rosary of the Virgin Mary - Why not try it?



Last October, on the occasion of the beginning of his 25th year of ministry as Pope, the Holy Father, John Paul II, issued a letter called *The Rosary of the Virgin Mary*. In this letter, he proclaimed October 2002 to October 2003 the Year of the Rosary.

In addition, he announced five new mysteries, which he called the Mysteries of Light (Luminous Mysteries), and suggested changes in the way the rosary is prayed.

Members of The Catholic Women's League of Canada will be particularly interested in these developments and will want to understand the changes. This article outlines the main points of the letter. Some members may be interested to read it in its entirety.

Contemplating the face of Jesus through the eyes of Mary

The pope says that the rosary is one very basic means of fostering prayer. "To recite the Rosary," he said, "is nothing other than to contemplate with Mary the face of Christ. ... Christ is the supreme Teacher, the revealer and the one revealed. It is not just a question of learning what he taught but of *learning him*." "In this regard," asks the Holy Father, "could we have any better teacher than Mary?" For no one knows Christ better than she.

When we pray the rosary, we look at the face of Christ through Mary's eyes, says the pope - that is what each of the mysteries of the rosary leads us to do. Quoting Pope Paul VI, the Holy Father repeated that the rosary is not a matter of multiplying words, but of providing a quiet rhythm and lingering pace to allow us to meditate on the mysteries of the Lord.

New mysteries

The Holy Father calls the rosary a compendium of the gospel, a reflection on Christ's incarnation, his passion, and the triumph of his resurrection. To bring out the whole of the gospel, however, he says that it is necessary to broaden the traditional mysteries to include five new mysteries recounting Christ's public ministry. These are to be known

as the Mysteries of Light - recalling Christ as the light of the world.

The new Luminous Mysteries are:

1. The Baptism of Jesus in the Jordan
2. The Wedding Feast at Cana
3. The Proclamation of the Kingdom of God
4. The Transfiguration
5. The Institution of the Eucharist

How to pray the rosary

The pope suggests that, to be faithful to the spirit of the rosary, we should consider carefully how we pray it, especially in public.

The Joyful Mysteries are now to be said on Mondays and Saturdays, the Sorrowful Mysteries on Tuesdays and Fridays, the Glorious Mysteries on Wednesdays and Sundays, and the Luminous Mysteries on Thursdays.

The pope proposes that after each mystery is announced, the scriptural passage to which it refers be read, followed by a brief time of silence. This is "allowing God to speak" to us.

The Holy Father also suggests that the *Glory to the Father* should be a true praise of the Holy Trinity, the high point of our contemplation, and should be sung. Many simple chants are available for this, including some of the psalm tones found in *Catholic Book of Worship III*.

The pope notes that the rosary should be concluded by a prayer for the intentions of the pope, to take into account the needs of the whole church. The closing of the rosary "is to burst forth in praise" by either the *Litany of Loretto*, or the *Hail, Holy Queen* (which is more common in Canada).

A prayer for peace

The pope emphasizes that the rosary is a great prayer for world peace and a wonderful form of family prayer. He says that no one could look upon the face of Christ as presented in the rosary without it drawing attention to the need to see the face of Christ in others, especially in the world's most

afflicted. He says that by focusing our eyes on Christ, the rosary also makes us peace-makers in the world.

A prayer for families

“The family that prays together stays together,” said the pope. “*The Holy Rosary*, by age-old tradition has shown itself particularly effective as a prayer which brings the family together. Individual family members, in turning their eyes towards Jesus, also regain the ability to look one another in the eye, to communicate, to show solidarity, to forgive one another and to see their covenant of love renewed in the Spirit of God. He urges parents to pray the rosary with and for their children.

Why not try it?

At the end of his letter, the pope calls the rosary a treasure waiting to be re-discovered by the Christian community. As he says, “Why not try it?”

Bishop Douglas Crosby, OMI, Bishop of Labrador City-Schefferville, and National Spiritual Advisor to the League, submits this article, which is an edited version of an article prepared by Bishop Raymond Lahey, Bishop of St. George's, Newfoundland.

Mysteries of Light Reflection The Rosary of the Virgin Mary

Pope John Paul II, in his Apostolic Letter, *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, invites us to “Rediscover the Rosary in the light of Scripture ... and in the context of your daily lives.” He has declared October 2002 to October 2003 as the Year of the Rosary and added five new mysteries - Mysteries of Light. These mysteries focus on the public ministry of Jesus and will complement the mysteries of joy, sorrow and glory. The Holy Father is also requesting that the great cause of peace be entrusted to the prayer of the rosary.

Following is a short passage from scripture for reflection on the new mysteries. Select your own choice of scripture and personal reflections.

The Baptism in the Jordan (Mt 3:13-17)

“Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, to be baptized by him. ... And when Jesus had been baptized, ... the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, And a voice from Heaven said, ‘This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.’ ”

The Wedding at Cana (Jn 2:1-12)

“... His mother [Mary] said to the servants, ‘Do whatever he tells you.’ ” Christ changed the water into wine. This was an introduction to the words and signs of Christ’s public ministry and formed the foundation for all the mysteries of light.

The Proclamation of the Kingdom (Mk 1:14-15)

Jesus went into Galilee where he proclaimed the good news

from God. “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.” This was the beginning of the ministry of mercy and the sacrament of reconciliation.

The Transfiguration (Lk 9:28-36)

The mystery of light and the glory shone from the face of Christ as the Father commanded the apostles to “... listen to him!” This can be seen as a preparation for the agony of the passion to the joy of the resurrection and a life transfigured by the Holy Spirit.

The Institution of the Eucharist (Mk 14:22-25)

Christ offered his body and blood under the signs of bread and wine - a testimony to the end of his love for humanity for whose salvation he offered himself in sacrifice.