

Scripture and Readings to use in Announcing and Pondering the Mysteries of the Rosary

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Joyful Mysteries

Annunciation: Luke 1:31-32

Behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and shalt bring forth a son; and thou shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the most High; and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of David his father; and he shall reign in the house of Jacob for ever.

Picture the scene of the Annunciation. God proposes the mystery of the Incarnation which He will accomplish in the Virgin Mary--but not until she has given her consent. The accomplishment of the mystery is held in suspense awaiting the free acceptance of Mary. At this moment Mary represents all of us in her own person; it is as if God is waiting for the response of the humanity to which He longs to unite Himself. What a solemn moment this is! For upon this moment depends the decision of the most vital mystery of Christianity.

But see how Mary gives her answer. Full of faith and confidence in the heavenly message and entirely submissive to the Divine Will, the Virgin Mary replies in a spirit of complete and absolute abandonment: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to Thy word." This "Fiat" is Mary's consent to the Divine Plan of Redemption. It is like an echo of the "Fiat" of the creation of the world. But this is a new world, a world infinitely superior, a world of grace, which God will cause to arise in consequence of Mary's consent, for at that moment the Divine Word, the second Person of the Blessed Trinity, becomes Man in Mary: "And the Word was made Flesh and dwelt among us."

Visitation : Luke 1:42-45

And she cried out with a loud voice, and said: Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For behold as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed art thou that hast believed, because those things shall be accomplished that were spoken to thee by the Lord.

See how the Holy Spirit greets the Virgin Mary through the mouth of Elizabeth: "Blessed art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb! And blessed art thou that hast believed, because those things shall be accomplished that were spoken to thee by the Lord."

Blessed indeed, for by this faith in the word of God the Virgin Mary became the Mother of Christ.

What finite creature has ever received honor such as this from the Infinite Being?

Mary gives all the glory to the Lord for the marvelous things which are accomplished in her. From the

moment of the Incarnation the Virgin Mother sings in her heart a canticle full of love and gratitude.

In the presence of her cousin Elizabeth she allows the most profound sentiments of her heart to break forth in song; she intones the "Magnificat" which, in the course of centuries, her children will repeat with her to praise God for having chosen her among all women:

"My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, Because He has regarded the lowliness of His handmaid... Because He Who is mighty has done great things for me And holy is His name."

Nativity: Luke 2:6-7

And it came to pass, that when they were there, her days were accomplished, that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him up in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

The Virgin Mary sees in the Infant that she has given to the world, a child in appearance like all other children, the very Son of God. Mary's soul was filled with an immense faith which welled up in her and surpassed the faith of all the just men of the Old Testament; this is why she recognized her God in her own Son.

This faith manifests itself externally by an act of adoration. From her very first glance at Jesus, the Virgin prostrated herself interiorly in a spirit of adoration so profound that we can never fathom its depth.

In the heart of Mary are joined in perfect harmony a creature's adoration of her God and a Mother's love for her only Son.

How inconceivably great the joy in the soul of Jesus must have been as He experienced this boundless love of His Mother! Between these two souls took place ceaseless exchanges of love which brought them into ever closer unity. O wonderful exchange: to Mary Jesus gives the greatest gifts and graces, and to Jesus Mary gives her fullest cooperation: after the union of the Divine Persons in the Blessed Trinity and the hypostatic union of the divine and human natures in the Incarnation, no more glorious or more profound union can be conceived than the union between Jesus and Mary.

Presentation: Luke 2:22-24

And after the days of her purification, according to the law of Moses, were accomplished, they carried him to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord: As it is written in the law of the Lord: Every male opening the womb shall be called holy to the Lord: And to offer a sacrifice, according as it is written in the law of the Lord, a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons...

On the day of the Presentation God received infinitely more glory than He had hitherto received in the temple from all the sacrifices and all the holocausts of the Old Testament. On this day it is His own Son Jesus Who is offered to Him, and Who offers to the Father the infinite homage of adoration, thanksgiving, expiation and supplication.

This is indeed a gift worthy of God.

And it is from the hands of the Virgin, full of grace, that this offering, so pleasing to God, is received. Mary's faith is perfect. Filled with the wisdom of the Holy Spirit, she has a clear understanding of the value of the offering which she is making to God at this moment; by His inspirations the Holy Spirit brings her soul into harmony with the interior dispositions of the heart of her Divine Son.

Just as Mary had given her consent in the name of all humanity when the angel announced to her the mystery of the Incarnation, so also on this day Mary offers Jesus to the Father in the name of the whole human race. For she knows that her Son is "the King of Glory, the new light enkindled before the dawn, the Master of life and death."

Finding in the Temple: Luke 2:46-47

And it came to pass, that, after three days, they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, hearing them, and asking them questions. And all that heard him were astonished at his wisdom and his answers.

"How is it that you sought Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" This is the answer that Jesus gave to His Mother when, after three days' search she had the joy of finding Him in the Temple.

These are the first words coming from the lips of the Word Incarnate to be recorded in the Gospel.

In these words Jesus sums up His whole person, His whole life, His whole mission. They reveal His Divine Sonship; they testify to His supernatural mission. Christ's whole life will only be a clarifying and magnificent exposition of the meaning of these words.

St. Luke goes on to tell us that Mary "did not understand the word that He spoke." But even if Mary did not grasp the full significance of these words, she did not doubt that Jesus was the Son of God. This is why she submitted in silence to that Divine Will which had demanded such a sacrifice of her love.

"Mary kept these words of Jesus carefully in her heart." She kept them in her heart, for there was the tabernacle in which she adored the mystery concealed in the words of her Son, waiting until the full light of understanding would be granted her.

Sorrowful Mysteries

Agony in the Garden: Matthew 26:36-39

Then Jesus came with them into a country place which is called Gethsemani; and he said to his disciples: Sit you here, till I go yonder and pray. And taking with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, he began to grow sorrowful and to be sad. Then he saith to them: My soul is sorrowful even unto death: stay you here, and watch with me. And going a little further, he fell upon his face, praying, and saying: My Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me. Nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.

It is for the love of His Father above all else that Jesus willed to undergo His Passion.

Behold Jesus Christ in His agony. For three long hours weariness, grief, fear and anguish sweep in upon His soul like a torrent; the pressure of this interior agony is so immense that blood bursts forth from His sacred veins. What an abyss of suffering is reached in this agony! And what does Jesus say to His Father? "Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from Me." Can it be that Jesus no longer accepts the Will of His Father? Oh! certainly He does. But this prayer is the cry of the sensitive emotions of poor human nature, crushed by ignominy and suffering. Now is Jesus truly a "Man of Sorrows." Our Savior feels the terrible weight of His agony bearing down upon His shoulders. He wants us to realize this; that is why He utters such a prayer.

But listen to what He immediately adds: "Nevertheless, Father, not My will but Thine be done." Here is the triumph of love. Because He loves His Father, He places the Will of His Father above everything else and accepts every possible suffering in order to redeem us.

Scourging at the Pillar: Matthew 27:25-26

And the whole people answering, said: His blood be upon us and our children. Then he released to them Barabbas, and having scourged Jesus, delivered him unto them to be crucified.

Christ substituted Himself voluntarily for us as a sacrificial victim without blemish in order to pay our debt, and, by the expiation and the satisfaction which He made for us, to restore the Divine life to us. This was the mission which Christ came to fulfill, the course which He had to run. "God has placed upon Him"--a man like unto ourselves, of the race of Adam, but entirely just and innocent and without sin--"the iniquity of us all."

Since Christ has become, so to speak, a sharer in our nature and taken upon Himself the debt of our sin, He has merited for us a share in His justice and holiness. In the forceful words of St. Paul, God, "by sending His Son in the likeness of sinful flesh as a sin-offering, has condemned sin in the flesh." And with an impact still more stunning, the Apostle writes: "For our sakes He (God) made Him (Christ) to be sin

who knew nothing of sin." How startling this expression is: "made Him to be sin"! The Apostle does not say "sinner," but--what is still more striking--"sin"!

Let us never forget that "we have been redeemed at great price by the precious blood of Christ as of a lamb without blemish and without spot."

Crowning with Thorns: Matthew 27:28-29

And stripping him, they put a scarlet cloak about him. And plating a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand. And bowing the knee before him, they mocked him, saying: Hail, king of the Jews.

Christ Jesus becomes an object of derision and insults at the hands of the temple servants. Behold Him, the all-powerful God, struck by sharp blows; His adorable face, the joy of the saints, is covered with spittle; a crown of thorns is forced down upon His head; a purple robe is placed upon His shoulders as a mock of derision; a reed is thrust into His hand; the servants genuflect insolently before Him in mockery. What an abyss of ignominy! What humiliation and disgrace for One before Whom the angels tremble!

The cowardly Roman governor imagines that the hatred of the Jews will be satisfied by the sight of Christ in this pitiful state. He shows Him to the crowd: "Ecce Homo--Behold the Man!"

Let us contemplate our Divine Master at this moment, plunged into the abyss of suffering and ignominy, and let us realize that the Father also presents Him to us and says to us: "Behold My Son, the splendor of My glory--but bruised for the sins of My people."

Carrying the Cross: John 19:12-18

And from henceforth Pilate sought to release him. But the Jews cried out, saying: If thou release this man, thou art not Caesar's friend. For whosoever maketh himself a king, speaketh against Caesar. Now when Pilate had heard these words, he brought Jesus forth, and sat down in the judgment seat, in the place that is called Lithostrotos, and in Hebrew Gabbatha. And it was the parasceve of the pasch, about the sixth hour, and he saith to the Jews: Behold your king. But they cried out: Away with him; away with him; crucify him. Pilate saith to them: Shall I crucify your king? The chief priests answered: We have no king but Caesar. Then therefore he delivered him to them to be crucified. And they took Jesus, and led him forth. And bearing his own cross, he went forth to that place which is called Calvary, but in Hebrew Golgotha. Where they crucified him, and with him two others, one on each side, and Jesus in the midst.

Let us meditate upon Jesus Christ on the way to Calvary laden with His cross. He falls under the weight of this burden. To expiate sin, He wills to experience in His own flesh the oppression of sin. Fearing that Jesus will not reach the place of crucifixion alive, the Jews force Simon of Cyrene to help Christ to carry

His cross, and Jesus accepts this assistance.

In this Simon represents all of us. As members of the Mystical Body of Christ, we should all help Jesus to carry His Cross. This is the one sure sign that we belong to Christ--if we carry our cross with Him.

But while Jesus carried His cross, He merited for us the strength to bear our trials with generosity. He has placed in His cross a sweetness which makes ours bearable, for when we carry our cross it is really His that we receive. For Christ unites with His own the sufferings, sorrows, pains and burdens which we accept with love from His hand, and by this union He gives them an inestimable value, and they become a source of great merit for us.

It is above all His love for His Father which impels Christ to accept the sufferings of His Passion, but it is also the love which He bears us.

Crucifixion & Death: Luke 23:45-46

And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst. And Jesus crying out with a loud voice, said: Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit. And saying this, he gave up the ghost.

At the Last Supper, when the hour had come to complete His oblation of self, what did Christ say to His Apostles who were gathered around Him? "Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends." And this is the love, surpassing all loves, which Jesus shows us; for, as St. Paul says, "It is for us all that He is delivered up." What greater proof of love could He have given us? None.

Hence the Apostle declares without ceasing that "because He loved us, Christ delivered Himself up for us," and "because of the love He bears for me, He gave Himself up for me."

"Delivered," "given"--to what extent? Even to the death on the cross!

What enhances this love immeasurably is the sovereign liberty with which Christ delivered Himself up: "He offered Himself because He willed it." These words tell us how spontaneously Jesus accepted His Passion. This freedom with which Jesus delivered Himself up to death for us is one of the aspects of His sacrifice which touch our human hearts most profoundly.

Glorious Mysteries

Resurrection of Our Lord: Matthew 28:5-6

And the angel answering, said to the women: Fear not you; for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for he is risen, as he said. Come, and see the place where the Lord was laid.

On the day of His Resurrection Jesus Christ left in the tomb the shroud which is the symbol of our infirmities, our weaknesses, our imperfections. Christ comes from the tomb triumphant--completely free of earthly limitation; He is animated with a life that is intense and perfect, and which vibrates in every fibre of His being. In Him everything that is mortal has been absorbed by His glorified life.

Here is the first element of the sanctity represented in the risen Christ: the elimination of everything that is corruptible, everything that is earthly and created; freedom from all defects, all infirmities, all capacity for suffering.

But there is also another element of sanctity: union with God, self- oblation and consecration to God. Only in heaven shall we be able to understand how completely Jesus lived for His Father during these blessed days. The life of the risen Christ became an infinite source of glory for His Father. Not a single effect of His sufferings was left in Him, for now everything in Him shone with brilliance and beauty and possessed strength and life; every atom of His being sang an unceasing canticle of praise. His holy humanity offered itself in a new manner to the glory of the Father.

Ascension into Heaven: Luke 24:50-51

And he led them out as far as Bethania: and lifting up his hands, he blessed them. And it came to pass, whilst he blessed them, he departed from them, and was carried up to heaven.

Our Lord said to His Apostles before He departed from them: "If you loved Me, you would indeed rejoice that I am going to the Father." To us also Christ repeats these words. If we love Him, we shall rejoice in His glorification; we shall rejoice with Him that, after completing His course on earth, He ascends to the right hand of His Father, there to be exalted above all the heavens in infinite glory.

But Jesus goes only to precede us; He does not separate Himself from us, nor does He separate us from Himself. If He enters into His glorious kingdom, it is to prepare a place for us there. He promises to return one day to take us with Him so that, as He says, where He is we also may be. True, we are already there in the glory and happiness of Christ, by our title as His heirs; but we shall one day be there in reality. Has not Christ asked this of His Father? "Father, I will that where I am, they also whom Thou hast given Me may be with Me."

Let us then say to Christ Jesus: "Draw us into Your triumphal march, O glorious and all-powerful Conqueror! Make us live in heaven by faith and hope and love. Help us to detach ourselves from the fleeting things of earth in order that we may seek the true and lasting goods of heaven!"

The Pentecost: Acts 2:3-4

And there appeared to them parted tongues as it were of fire, and it sat upon every one of them: And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they began to speak with divers tongues, according as the Holy Ghost gave them to speak.

The Holy Spirit appeared under the form of tongues of fire in order to fill the Apostles with truth and to prepare them to bear witness to Jesus. He also came to fill their hearts with love.

He is the Person of Love in the life of God. He is also like a breath, an aspiration of infinite Love, from which we draw the breath of life.

On the day of Pentecost the Divine Spirit communicated such an abundance of life to the whole Church that to symbolize it "there came a sound from heaven, as of a violent wind coming, and it filled the whole house where they (the Apostles) were sitting."

But it is also for us that the Holy Spirit has come, for the group in the Cenacle represented the whole Church. The Holy Spirit came to remain with the Church forever. This is the promise of Jesus Himself. He dwells in the Church permanently and unfailingly, performing in it without ceasing, His action of life-giving and sanctification. He establishes the Church infallibly in the truth. It is He Who makes the Church blossom forth with a marvelous supernatural fruitfulness, for He brings to life and full fruition in Virgins, Martyrs, Confessors, those heroic virtues which are one of the marks of true sanctity.

Assumption of Mary: Hebrews 11:5

By faith Enoch was translated, that he should not see death; and he was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had testimony that he pleased God.

If Christ Jesus wishes us to love all the members of His Mystical Body, should we not love above all others her who gave Him the very nature by which He became our Head, the same nature which He uses to communicate His grace to us? We cannot doubt but that the love which we show to his Mother is extremely pleasing to Christ.

We shall manifest our love by extolling the sublime privileges which Jesus has bestowed on His Mother, among which the Assumption is one of the most glorious. If we wish to please our Lord very much, we shall admire the wonderful gifts with which He has lovingly adorned the soul of His Mother. He wishes

that we should sing the praises of the Virgin, who was chosen among all women to give the Savior to the world.

"Yes, we shall sing your praises, for you alone have delighted the heart of your God. May you be blessed, for you have believed the word of God, and in you the eternal promises have been fulfilled."

Coronation of Mary: Apocalypse 11:19-12:1

And the temple of God was opened in heaven: and the ark of his testament was seen in his temple, and there were lightnings, and voices, and an earthquake, and great hail. And a great sign appeared in heaven: A woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars...

What is the purpose of all the mysteries of Christ? To be the pattern of our supernatural life, the means of our sanctification, the source of all our holiness. To create an eternal and glorious society of brethren who will be like unto Him. For this reason Christ, the new Adam, has associated with Himself Mary, as the new Eve. But she is, much more than Eve, "the Mother of all the living," the Mother of those who live in the grace of her Son.

And since here below Mary was associated so intimately with all the mysteries of our salvation, at her Assumption into heaven Jesus crowned her not only with glory but also with power; He has placed His Mother on His right hand and has given her the power, in virtue of her unique title of Mother of God, to distribute the treasures of eternal life.

Let us then, full of confidence, pray with the Church: "Show yourself a Mother: Mother of Jesus, by your complete faith in Him, our Mother, by your mercy towards us; ask Christ, Who was born of you, to give us life; and Who willed to be your Son, to receive our prayers through you."