

ROSARY STUDY FOR THE CATHEDRAL

CATHEDRAL OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

HISTORY OF THE ROSARY

- Medieval monks had a practice of daily praying the 150 Psalms. Since the lay brothers of the order were illiterate and thus could not join in reading the psalms, the lay brothers needed an alternative. Therefore, the practice of reciting the “Our Father” 150 times arose. **The rosaries were known as “Paternosters (“Our Fathers”).** (Note: the lay brothers, known as the “conversi” and were distinct from the choir monks; the chief distinction was that they were illiterate)
- This practice of reciting the 150 “Our Fathers” spread among the laity and other easily remembered prayers were added. During the fourteen and fifteen hundreds, gospel passages for meditation were also added.
- Beads were used to keep track of the prayers.
(The word “bede” in Middle English, from which we derive the word “bead” originally meant “prayer”.)
- In England, there arose a craftsman guild of some importance, the members of which made these rosaries. In London you can find a street named “**Paternoster Row**, which preserves the memory of the area where these craftsmen worked.
- The Final, traditional form of the rosary was standardized during the pontificate of Pope Pius V (1566-1572). It now consists of the Apostles Creed, the Our Father, Hail Mary and the Gloria.
(Pope Pius the Fifth was later canonized to Pope Saint Pius V)

PURPOSE OF THE ROSARY

- **The Rosary is a contemplation and meditation on the life of Christ; the “Word made flesh and dwelt among us!”**
 - Because the Son’s life is intertwined with that of his mother, and one cannot reflect on one without the other, Mary’s role in God’s plan of salvation is also touched on in the reflections.
 - **These meditations come from Scripture!**
- Knowledge of Christ is gained by meditation upon his life.
“If we do not know Christ as he lived among us, acted and reacted and suffered among us, we risk not knowing him at all.” (Frank Sheed, Apologist)
- Pope John Paul II encouraged the recitation of the rosary as a “genuine training in holiness” among the faithful.
- It has been a constant plea of Mary, whenever she has appeared and asked for prayer and a return by the world to her Son, Jesus.

MYSTERIES OF THE ROSARY

- Each decade of the Rosary is associated with a **“mystery”**. The word “mystery” in this context does not refer to something which is incomprehensible, but means **a divine revelation or a truth of the faith**.
- There are 20 mysteries of the Rosary divided into four groups of five:
 - **Joyful Mysteries:** focus on the Incarnation (Jesus putting on flesh) and the birth of Christ.
 - Correspond to the Liturgical Season of Advent and Christmas
 - **Luminous Mysteries:** Focus on Christ’s years of Public ministry.
 - The Luminous Mysteries are very recent!
 - They were added on October 16th, 2002 by Pope John Paul II to commemorate the 25th year of his Pontificate
 - While the rosary has had an enormous influence on Christian spirituality, it is NOT part of the Apostolic Tradition. It is a religious prayer custom and therefore may be modified by the pope who is the supreme teacher of the faith.
 - Correspond to the Liturgical Season of “Ordinary Time”.
 - **Sorrowful Mysteries:** Focus on the passion and death of Christ.
 - Correspond to the Liturgical Season of Lent
 - **Glorious Mysteries:** Focus on the resurrection and ascension.
 - Correspond to the Liturgical Season of Easter

In-Depth Study of the Joyful Mysteries

- As stated, the Joyful Mysteries focus on the time in which the longed for Messiah, promised by God, to reopen the gates of heaven and be the salvation of mankind ... would be born! The word “incarnation” means to take on flesh. Jesus, the second person of the Trinity, and thus, God, would take on flesh and become man in order to save us from our sin. This period of Jesus’ life is often referred to as “the hidden years” ... before his Public Ministry was to begin.
- Below is an explanation and Biblical study of each of the five Joyful Mysteries.

First Joyful Mystery: The Annunciation: (Luke: 2:21-39)

*The Angel Gabriel appeared to Mary and **announced** to her that she was to be the Mother of God; the long awaited Messiah. Mary was troubled by this word as she had vowed to remain a virgin. Gabriel explained that she would conceive “by the power of the Holy Spirit”, thus leaving her virginity intact. Thus, despite giving birth to a son, Mary remains the “Blessed Virgin Mary”.*

1. The time for the incarnation was at hand.
2. Of all the women in the whole world, God chose and prepared Mary from the time of her conception ... to be the Mother of Jesus, the incarnate Word.
3. The Angel Gabriel announced to Mary: “Hail, full of grace! The Lord is with thee.”
4. Mary was surprised and confused by this greeting.
5. The Angel assured her, saying, “Fear not, for you shall conceive in your womb, and you will give birth to a son.”
6. Mary was troubled for she had made a vow of virginity and had not been with a man.
7. The Angel explained that Mary was to conceive by the power of the Holy Spirit, and her Son would be called the Son of God.
8. The Incarnation awaited Mary’s consent.
9. Mary answered: “Behold the handmaid of the Lord. Be it done unto me according to your word.”
10. Thus the word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.

Second Joyful Mystery: The Visitation (Luke 1:40-56)

*The Angel Gabriel also told Mary that her long barren cousin, Elizabeth was pregnant as well. Overjoyed, Mary set out to **visit** Elizabeth. The baby that Elizabeth and her husband, Zechariah were now expecting was none other than John, the Baptist, who was to be the one whom the prophets had foretold would “prepare the way of the Lord”.*

1. Mary was told by the Angel Gabriel that her cousin, Elizabeth, who had been barren for many years, had conceived a son in her old age...for nothing is impossible with God.
2. Love prompted Mary to hurry to visit Elizabeth in the hour of her need.
3. The trip to Elizabeth’s home was about 80 miles requiring a four to five day journey.
4. Though long and arduous, the journey was joyous, for Mary knew she bore in her womb, the incarnate Word!
5. At Mary’s greeting, John the Baptist was sanctified in his mother, Elizabeth’s womb.
6. Elizabeth exclaimed to Mary: “Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb!”
7. Elizabeth continued speaking: “How is it that I have deserved to have the mother of my Lord come to me?”
8. Elizabeth then blessed Mary saying, “Blessed is she who believed that the Lord’s words to her would be fulfilled.”
9. At this Mary replied: “My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, and my spirit exalts in God my Savior.”
10. Mary stayed and served her cousin in all humility for three months until the birth of John the Baptist.

Third Joyful Mystery: The Nativity (Luke 2:6-20)

*The Nativity is the story of **Jesus' birth** often referred to as the "**Christmas Story**". It includes the journey to Bethlehem to comply with the census, Mary and Joseph unable to find a room due to the hordes of other travelers and Mary being thus forced to give birth in a stable. Jesus' birth is a cause of great joy and his worshipping parents are joined by the angels, shepherds and magi.*

1. Joseph and Mary went to Bethlehem to comply with the decree of Caesar Augustus.
2. The hour for Mary to give birth was near, but there was no room in any of the inns.
3. In the stillness of the night, the Savior was born in a cave; with Mary remaining a Virgin.
4. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger.
5. In unspeakable joy, Mary gathered to her bosom, the Flower of her virginity.
6. Jesus entered the world in poverty to teach the lesson of detachment from earthly things.
7. The angel announced to the shepherds: "Today there is born to you in the town of David: a Savior, who is Christ the Lord."
8. The angelic chorus sang: "Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth."
9. The shepherds came to the stable to pay homage to the Infant Jesus.
10. The Magi came to adore the Holy Child and offer him gifts.

Fourth Joyful Mystery: The Presentation (Luke 2:21-39)

Jewish Law required that a first-born male child be consecrated to the Lord. Thus, Mary and Joseph complied with this duty and took their new baby to be "presented" at the Temple. There Simeon, who had been promised by God that he would not die before seeing the Messiah, recognized the baby for who he truly was. Simeon held and blessed Jesus; then spoke prophetic words to Mary concerning the future she would endure because of Jesus' future passion and death: "A sword shall pierce your heart".

1. Observing the law of Moses, Mary and Joseph took Jesus to the temple to present him to the Lord.
2. According to the Law, the firstborn male child of every family should be consecrated to the Lord.
3. Mary offered her Son to the Father then ransomed Him back at the price paid by the poor.
4. Jesus was not subject to the law of Moses, yet to teach obedience, he submitted to it.
5. Mary was not subject to the law of purification, yet in humility, she submitted to it.
6. God had revealed to Simeon that he would not see death until he had seen the Messiah.
7. Recognizing that the baby Jesus was the longed for Messiah, he prayed to God, the Father, "Now you can dismiss your servant in peace. You have fulfilled your word."
8. Simeon prophesied over the child: "This Child is destined to be the downfall and the rise of many in Israel; a sign that will be opposed.
9. And to Mary Simeon revealed: "And a sword shall pierce your heart".
10. After Mary and Joseph had fulfilled all that the Law required of them, they returned to Nazareth. Mary pondered these things in her heart.

Fifth Joyful Mystery: The Finding of Jesus in the Temple (Luke 2: 41-51)

While the first four Joyful mysteries focus on the time of Jesus' infancy, the fifth joyful mystery occurs when Jesus is around twelve years old. Jesus and Mary had gone to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of the Passover. On the way home, each thought that Jesus was walking in a group with the other parent. When they discovered that neither had him, they flew back to Jerusalem, searching frantically for their missing son. There, they found him in the Temple among the learned scholars conversing with great wisdom! When Mary asked, "Why have you worried us so", Jesus replied, "Don't you know I must be about my Father's business? (Meaning God, not Joseph!) However, Scripture tells us that Jesus went home with his parents and remained a dutiful and obedient son for many more years.....until his Baptism in the Jordan at age thirty when his Public Ministry would begin in earnest!

1. When Jesus was twelve years old, he went with his parents to Jerusalem for the feast of the Passover.
2. After the feast of the Passover, Joseph and Mary unknowingly set out for Nazareth without Jesus.
3. At the end of the first day's journey they discovered Jesus was missing.
4. Mary and Joseph returned immediately looking for him.
5. This loss caused grief and anxiety beyond our understanding to the hearts of Mary and Joseph.
6. On the third day, they found Jesus in the Temple among the Doctors (teachers) who were astonished at his wisdom.
7. Mary said to Jesus: "Son, why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been searching for you in sorrow.
8. Jesus replied: "Why did you search for me? Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?"
9. Jesus went back down with them to Nazareth and was subject to them.
10. Mary kept all these things in her heart.

Fruits of the Mysteries

- **As we meditate on each of the five mysteries, we can think about these virtues they exemplify!**

Annunciation: humility

Visitation: Love of Neighbor

Nativity: poverty

Presentation: obedience

Finding of Jesus: joy of finding Jesus

In-Depth Study of the Glorious Mysteries

- The Glorious Mysteries focus on the events occurring after Jesus death. They begin with the Glorious Resurrection of Jesus and end with Mary's Assumption into heaven
- **Below is an explanation and Biblical study of each of the five Glorious Mysteries.**

- Note that all of the twenty mysteries are explicitly taught in the Bible except for the Assumption and Crowning of Mary. However they are Catholic Teaching and are not contradicted by the Bible and are present by implication. Further explanation is given as each is listed.

First Glorious Mystery: The Resurrection: (Luke 24:1-12)

After spending three days in the tomb, Jesus rose gloriously from the Dead! Jesus then showed himself and visited with some disciples and apostles repeatedly over the next forty days.

1. The body of Jesus was placed in the tomb on the evening of Good Friday. *Hail Mary...*
2. His soul descended into the realm of the dead to announce to the Just the tidings of their redemption. *Hail Mary.....*
3. Fearing the body of Jesus would be taken, the chief priests placed guards at the tomb.
4. On the third day, Jesus rose from the dead, glorious and immortal.
5. The earth shook as the angel rolled back the stone. The guards fled in terror.
6. The holy women came to anointing the body of Jesus and were amazed and frightened to find the tomb open.
7. An angel calmed their fears saying, "He is not here. He has risen as he said."
8. Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene and Peter and two disciples on the way to Emmaus.
9. That evening, Jesus appeared to the apostles behind locked doors, saying: "Peace be with you.....do not be afraid."
10. Jesus breathed on them and gave them the power to forgive sins.

Second Glorious Mystery: The Ascension (Luke 24: 50-51)

After spending forty days with his apostles, Jesus took his leave of the earth, ascending into heaven to sit at the right hand of the Father! He told his grieved apostles not to worry as he would send them his Holy Spirit to be with them until his return. His mission here on earth, to save us from sin and reopen the gates of heaven had been magnificently accomplished through Jesus' passion and death. He reigns now in Glory! We are called to share in his passion so that we too, will one day share in his glory. (Beautifully illustrated in the Chapel of the Martyrs!)

1. Jesus remained on earth for forty days after his resurrection to prove that he had truly risen from the dead.
2. He commissioned the apostles to preach the gospel to every creature, and promised to be with them forever.
3. He would not leave them orphans, but said he would send the Holy Spirit to enlighten and strengthen them.
4. Jesus proceeded to Mount Olivet accompanied by his mother and the apostles and disciples.
5. Extending his pierced hands over all in a last blessing, Jesus ascended into heaven.
6. As Jesus ascended, a cloud took him from their sight.
7. Jesus ascended to take his place at the right hand of the Father in heaven.
8. What jubilation there must have been amid the angels of heaven at the triumphant entry of Jesus!
9. The wounds in his glorified body are an endless plea before the Father on our behalf.
10. The disciples left Mount Olivet and returned to Jerusalem with great joy.

Third Glorious Mystery: Pentecost: The Descent of the Holy Spirit: (Acts 2: 1-4)

“Pentecost” is the story of the first confirmation: when the Apostles received the Holy Spirit! They were “transformed” by the power of the Holy Spirit from extremely frightened men (afraid that Jesus’ fate would soon befall them as well) to exceedingly courageous men...ready to burst forth from the upper room to not only show their faces in public but to loudly proclaim that the Jesus that had been crucified truly was the Son of God! Note that the danger had not been taken away; just their fear of the danger! They called all to repentance of sin and many were baptized that day. It was the beginning of the Church!

1. The apostles were gathered in the upper room where Jesus had held the Last Supper.
2. They were persevering in prayer with Mary, the Mother of Jesus.
3. A sound came from heaven like the rush of a mighty wind, and it filled the whole house.
4. The Holy Spirit descended on each of them in the form of tongues of fire!
5. Filled with the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, they were enlightened and strengthened to spread the gospel. The gifts of Wisdom, Understanding, Right Judgment, Knowledge, Courage, Reverence, Wonder and awe.
6. Having lost all fear of the Jewish leaders, the apostles boldly left the room, went out into the streets among the crowds and began to preach that Jesus, who had been crucified, was truly the Son of God!
7. The multitudes were confused and astonished because each person heard them speaking in his own language yet the people gathered spoke many different languages.
8. The Holy Spirit came upon the Infant Church... and would never leave it!
9. That first day, Peter went forth to preach and baptize three thousand. It was the beginning of the Christian Church!
10. This day that the apostles received the Holy Spirit is called “The feast of Pentecost”. It was the first time people were filled with the Holy Spirit. It was the first Confirmation! The feast of Pentecost is the “birth” day of the Church for on that day it began to grow!

Fourth Glorious Mystery: The Assumption (Rev 12)

The Assumption refers to Mary’s ascent into heaven. It is the teaching of the Catholic Church that at the end of Mary’s life, she was assumed, body and soul into heaven. There is no indication that Mary’s remains were venerated as relics (a customary practice in the early Church) and the belief in her Assumption is held both in the Eastern Orthodox as well as the Western Catholic Church. Mary is perceived as the symbol of the Church as a whole. Hence her Assumption is seen as a sign of the ultimate destiny of all the faithful: Christ will come at the end to take his Bride (the Church) into the kingdom and to glorify her. (2 Thess 4:16-17) This belief goes back to the early days of the Church.

In 2 Thessalonians 2:15 we are told to “stand firm and hold fast to the traditions that you were taught, either by an oral statement or by a letter of ours.

1. After the apostles dispersed, the Blessed Mother went to live with John, the beloved apostle.
2. Mary lived many years on earth after the death of Jesus.
3. Mary was a source of comfort, consolation and strength to the apostles.
4. As Mary nourished the infant Jesus, so too she spiritually nourished the infant Church.
5. Mary died, not of bodily infirmity, but was wholly ravished in a rapture of divine love.
6. After her burial, the apostles went to the tomb and found only fragrant lilies.
7. Her body as well as her soul had been taken up into heaven.

8. Jesus did not permit the sinless body of his Mother to decay in the grave.
9. Corruption of the body is an effect of original sin from which Mary was totally exempted because she was born without original sin.
10. The bodies of all mankind will be brought back and united again to the soul at the last judgment.

Fifth Glorious Mystery: Crowning of Mary, Queen of Heaven and Earth (Rev 12:1)

After Mary was received into heaven by her Son and the Angels, she was crowned “Queen of Heaven and Earth”.

We learn from 1st and 2nd Kings in the Old Testament of the history of the Jewish Kings and the place of high honor and title given to the King’s mother. The King’s mother was called “Gebirah”. The Gebirah was a monarchical institution and had a throne and a crown. (Jeremiah 13-18) As Jesus is the “Son of David: the King” and, surpassing David, Jesus is the King of Kings, it is Catholic teaching that Jesus, too, gave to his mother a place of honor and title, crowning her as Queen of Heaven and Earth where she intercedes on our behalf as the queen mother of the Church.

“For he has regarded the lowly state of his maidservant; for behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed. For he who is mighty has done great things for me...He has put down the mighty from their thrones and exalted the lowly” (Luke 1: 48-49, 52).

1. As Mary entered heaven, the entire court of heaven greeted her with joy; this masterpiece of God’s creation!
2. Mary was crowned by her divine Son as Queen of heaven and earth.
3. More than we can ever know, the hearts of Jesus and Mary overflowed with joy at this reunion.
4. Only in heaven will we know the great majesty of that coronation and the joy it gave to the angels and saints.
5. Even the angels, who by nature are greater than humans, hail Mary as their Queen.
6. Mary shares so fully in the glory of Christ because she shared so fully in his suffering.
7. Only in heaven will we see how central is the role of Mary in the divine plan of redemption
8. The angels and saints longed for the coming of her whose heel will crush the head of the serpent.
9. Mary pleads our cause as a most powerful Queen and a most merciful and loving Mother.
10. A great sign appeared in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. (Revelation)