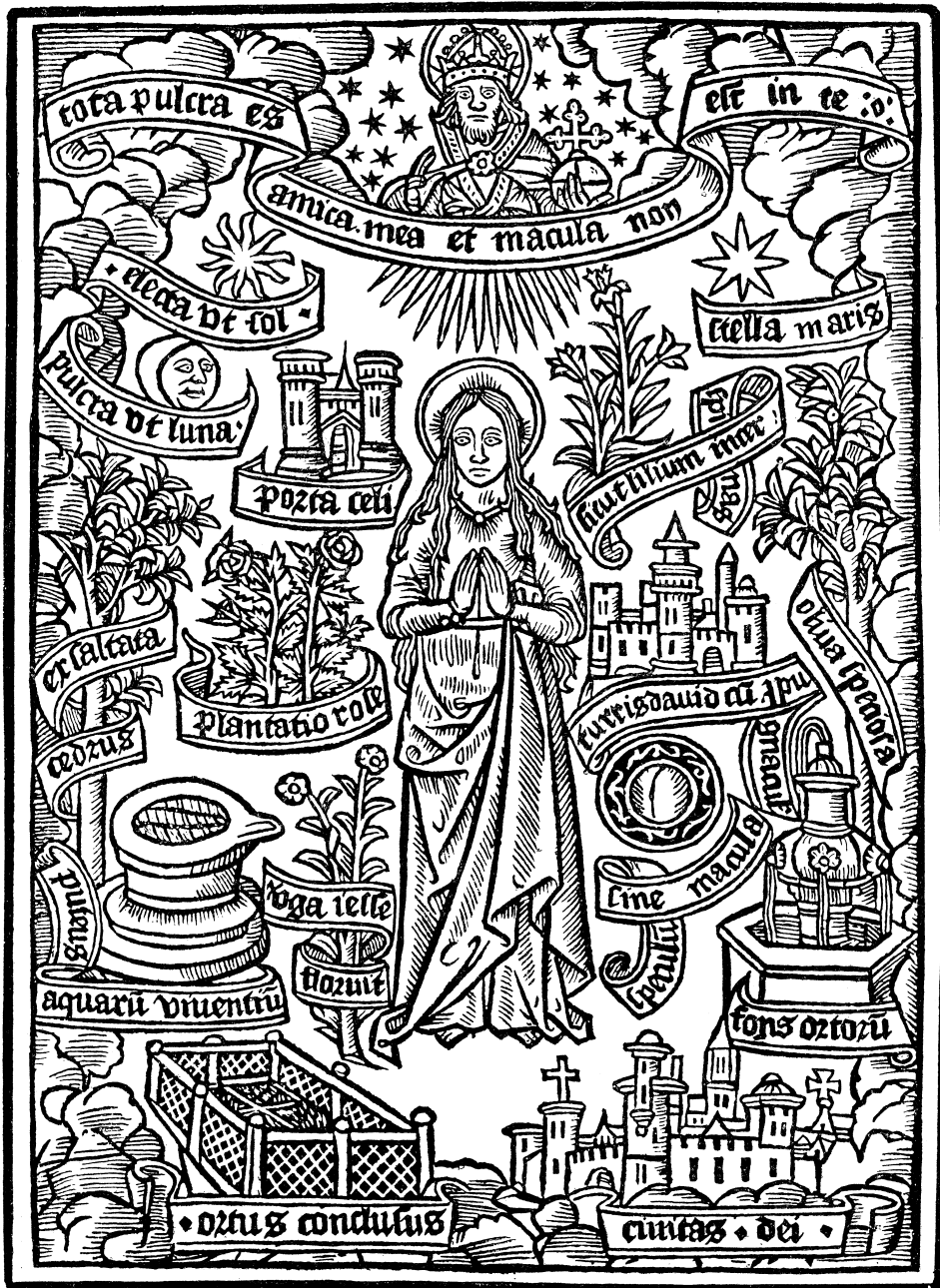


The Holy Rosary | A guide



THE HOLY ROSARY is a devotional sequence of prayers, and a meditation upon mysteries of our Salvation. Its contemplative rhythm, rooted in the repetition of *Ave Maria*, allows the human heart to draw close to those profound glories found only within the Sacred Heart of Jesus. For many centuries the Rosary has been, for faithful Christians, a means of entering into a deeper participation in the life of Mary, whose focus was her Son – and, in those depths, to discern the pattern for our own earthly pilgrimage.

The fundamental sequence of prayers within the Rosary is the Lord's Prayer, *Ave Maria* (prayed ten times), and the Doxology. Each of these sequences is known as a Decade, with five Decades prayed within each Rosary. Each Rosary begins with the Apostle's Creed and preparatory prayers, and concludes with *Salve Regina* and a collect. The full sequence of prayers is outlined on pages 6 and 7, and the words of the prayers with accompanying reflections are to be found on pages 4, 5 and 8.

The praying of each Decade is accompanied by meditation on one of the Mysteries of the Rosary. Twenty Mysteries are grouped into four collections: the Joyful Mysteries, the Sorrowful Mysteries, the Glorious Mysteries and the Mysteries of Light. These are outlined, with accompanying reflections, on pages 9-12.



At St Mary's, the Holy Rosary is prayed publicly in church at 11am on Saturdays during May and October, months that have long been dedicated to Our Lady. From the seventeenth century, the month of May has been a time when Christians have offered the Virgin Mary more fervent and loving acts of homage and veneration. During May at St Mary's, as well as praying the Rosary on Saturdays, we hold a Procession of Our Lady on the first Sunday of the month, and keep the feasts of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary on the last day of May. Similarly, the month of October has long been associated with the Holy Rosary. The Feast of Our Lady of Victory (later the Feast of the Holy Rosary) was instituted by Pius V to mark the victory, on 7 October 1571, of the fleet of the Holy League (a coalition of southern European states) over the main fleet of the Ottoman Empire at the Battle of Lepanto in the Gulf of Corinth. The victorious powers credited the victory to the Virgin Mary, whose intercession they had implored through the praying of the Rosary.

Many of the reflections on these pages are drawn directly from Rosarium Virginis Mariae, the Apostolic Epistle of B^l John Paul II.

The Rosary is my favourite prayer. A marvellous prayer! Marvellous in its simplicity and its depth... Against the background of the words Ave Maria the principal events of the life of Jesus Christ pass before the eyes of the soul... At the same time our heart can embrace in the Decades of the Rosary all the events that make up the lives of individuals, families, nations, the Church, and all mankind. Our personal concerns and those of our neighbour, especially those who are closest to us, who are dearest to us. Thus the simple prayer of the Rosary marks the rhythm of human life.

B^L JOHN PAUL II

Just as two friends, frequently in each other's company, tend to develop similar habits, so too, by holding familiar converse with Jesus and the Blessed Virgin, by meditating on the mysteries of the Rosary and by living the same life in Holy Communion, we can become, to the extent of our lowliness, similar to them and can learn from these supreme models a life of humility, poverty, hiddenness, patience and perfection.

B^L BARTOLO LONGO

The method of the Rosary is based on repetition. This applies above all to Ave Maria, repeated ten times in each mystery. If this repetition is considered superficially, there could be a temptation to see the Rosary as a dry and boring exercise. It is quite another thing, however, when the Rosary is thought of as an outpouring of that love which tirelessly returns to the person loved with expressions similar in their content but ever fresh in terms of the feeling pervading them. In Christ, God has truly assumed a 'heart of flesh'. Not only does God have a divine heart, rich in mercy and in forgiveness, but also a human heart, capable of all the stirrings of affection. If we needed evidence for this from the Gospel, we could easily find it in the touching dialogue between Christ and Peter after the Resurrection: 'Simon, son of John, do you love me?' Three times this question is put to Peter, and three times he gives the reply: 'Lord, you know that I love you' (cf. S^t John 21.15-17). Over and above the specific meaning of this passage, so important for Peter's mission, none can fail to recognize the beauty of this triple repetition, in which the insistent request and the corresponding reply are expressed in terms familiar from the universal experience of human love. To understand the Rosary, one has to enter into the psychological dynamic proper to love.

B^L JOHN PAUL II

The Prayers of the Rosary



DURING THE PREPARATION

The Apostles' Creed

The Rosary begins with the recitation of the Creed, making the profession of faith the basis of the contemplative journey about to be undertaken.

I BELIEVE in God the Father Almighty, Maker 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, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy Catholick Church; the Communion of Saints; the Forgiveness of sins; the Resurrection of the body, and the Life everlasting. Amen.

DURING EACH DECADE OF THE ROSARY

Announcing the mystery

We announce the mystery to open up a scenario on which to focus our attention. The words direct the imagination and the mind towards a particular episode or moment in the life of Christ.

After doing this, we may listen to the word of God concerning the mystery. As we listen, we are certain that this is the word of God, spoken for today and spoken 'for me'. It is not a matter of recalling information but of allowing God to speak.

We may then reflect in silence. Listening and meditation are nourished by silence. A discovery of the importance of silence is one of the secrets of practicing contemplation and meditation.

The Lord's Prayer

After listening to the word and focusing on the mystery, it is natural for the mind to be lifted up towards the Father. In each of his mysteries, Jesus always leads us to the Father, for as he rests in the Father's bosom (cf. S^t John 1.18) he is continually turned towards him.

OUR FATHER, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy Name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, in 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.

Ave Maria

The first part of Ave Maria, drawn from the words spoken to Mary by the Angel Gabriel and by S^t Elizabeth, is a contemplation in adoration of the mystery accomplished in the Virgin of Nazareth. These words express, so to speak, the wonder of heaven and earth; they could be said to give us a glimpse of God's own wonderment as he contemplates his 'masterpiece' – the Incarnation of the Son in the womb of the Virgin Mary.

The centre of gravity in Ave Maria, the hinge as it were which joins its two parts, is the name of Jesus. When we repeat the name of Jesus – the only name given to us by which we may hope for salvation (cf. Acts 4.12) – in close association with the name of his Blessed Mother, almost as if it were done at her suggestion, we set out on a path of assimilation meant to help us enter more deeply into the life of Christ.

From Mary's uniquely privileged relationship with Christ, which makes her the Mother of God, Theotókos, derives the forcefulness of the appeal we make to her in the second half of the prayer, as we entrust to her maternal intercession our lives and the hour of our death.

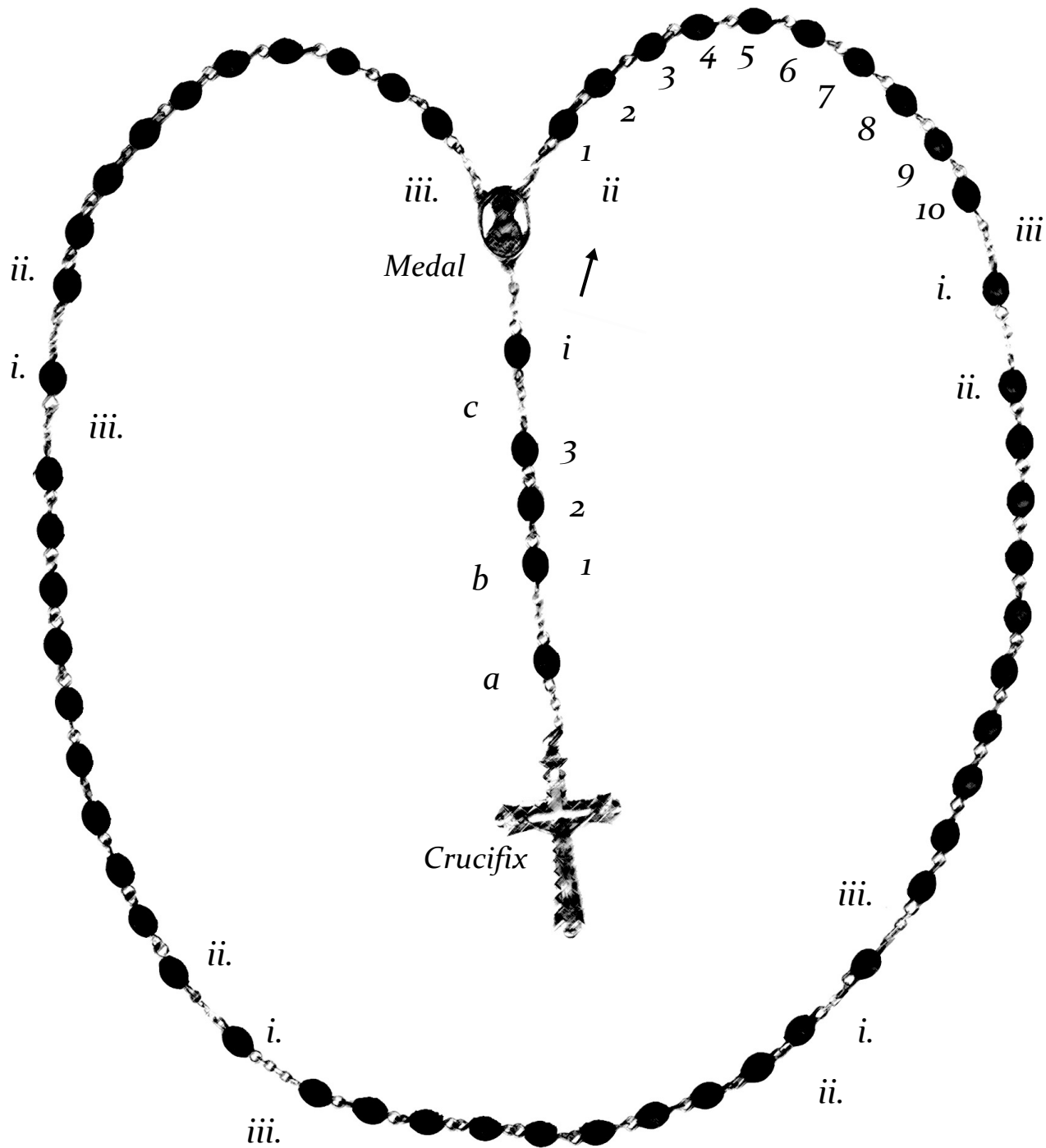
HAIL MARY, full of grace. The Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

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

The Doxology

Trinitarian doxology is the goal of all Christian contemplation. For Christ is the way that leads us to the Father in the Spirit. If we travel this way to the end, we repeatedly encounter the mystery of the three divine Persons, to whom all praise, worship and thanksgiving are due.

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.



'As a counting mechanism, marking the progress of the prayer, the beads evoke the unending path of contemplation and of Christian perfection. B^l Bartolo Longo saw them also as a 'chain' which links us to God. A chain, yes, but a sweet chain; for sweet indeed is the bond to God who is also our Father. A 'filial' chain which puts us in tune with Mary, the 'handmaid of the Lord' (S^t Luke 1.38) and, most of all, with Christ himself, who, though he was in the form of God, made himself a 'servant' out of love for us (Philippians 2:7). A fine way to expand the symbolism of the beads is to let them remind us of our many relationships, of the bond of communion and fraternity which unites us all in Christ.

B^l JOHN PAUL II

The Sequence of the Rosary

PREPARATION | see page 4

At the Crucifix: ✠ In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen. followed by **The Apostles' Creed**

The first bead (a): The Lord's Prayer

The next three beads (b:1-3): Ave Maria
(for the gifts of Faith, Hope and Love)

Followed by (c): The Doxology

EACH DECADE OF THE ROSARY | see pages 4-5

At the outset: Announcing, listening to, and reflecting in silence upon the mystery

The first bead (i): The Lord's Prayer

The next ten beads (ii:1-10): Ave Maria

Followed by (iii): The Doxology

CONCLUSION | see page 8

At the Medal: Salve Regina, followed by **The Collect:** O God, whose only-begotten Son, by his life, death and resurrection, has purchased for us the rewards of eternal life; grant, we beseech thee, that by meditating upon these mysteries of the Most Holy Rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary, we may imitate what they contain and obtain what they promise, through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

DURING THE CONCLUSION

Salve Regina

The Rosary is a spiritual itinerary in which Mary acts as Mother, Teacher and Guide, sustaining the faithful by her powerful intercession. Is it any wonder, then, that the soul feels the need, after saying this prayer and experiencing so profoundly the motherhood of Mary, to burst forth in praise of the Blessed Virgin? This is the crowning moment of an inner journey which has brought us into living contact with the mystery of Christ and his Blessed Mother.

HAIL HOLY QUEEN, mother of
 mercy; 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
 toward us. And after this, our
 exile, show unto us the blessed
 fruit of thy womb, Jesus. O
 clement, O loving, O sweet
 Virgin Mary. Pray for us, O holy
 Mother of God, that we may be
 made worthy of the promises of
 Christ. Amen.



The Mysteries of the Rosary

The Joyful Mysteries | Traditionally prayed on Monday and Saturday



The first five Decades, the 'joyful mysteries', are marked by the joy radiating from the event of the Incarnation. This is clear from the very first mystery, the Annunciation, where Gabriel's greeting to the Virgin of Nazareth is linked to an invitation to messianic joy: 'Rejoice, Mary'. The whole of salvation history, in some sense the entire history of the world, has led up to this greeting. If it is the Father's plan to unite all things in Christ (cf. Ephesians 1.10), then the whole of the universe is in some way touched by the divine favour with which the Father looks upon Mary and makes her the Mother of his Son. The whole of humanity, in turn, is embraced by the fiat with which she readily agrees to the will of God.

Exultation is the keynote of the encounter with Elizabeth, where the sound of Mary's voice and the presence of Christ in her womb cause John to 'leap for joy' (cf. S^t Luke 1.44). Gladness also fills the scene in Bethlehem, when the birth of the divine Child, the Saviour of the world, is announced by the song of the angels and proclaimed to the shepherds as 'news of great joy' (S^t Luke 2.10).

The final two mysteries, while preserving this climate of joy, already point to the drama yet to come. The Presentation in the Temple not only expresses the joy of the Child's consecration and the ecstasy of the aged Simeon; it also records the prophecy that Christ will be a 'sign of contradiction' for Israel and that a sword will pierce his mother's heart (cf. S^t Luke 2.34-35). Joy mixed with drama marks the fifth mystery, the finding of the twelve-year-old Jesus in the Temple. Here he appears in his divine wisdom as he listens and raises questions, already in effect one who 'teaches'. The revelation of his mystery as the Son wholly dedicated to his Father's affairs proclaims the radical nature of the Gospel, in which even the closest of human relationships are challenged by the absolute demands of the Kingdom. Mary and Joseph, fearful and anxious, 'did not understand' his words (S^t Luke 2.50).

To meditate upon the 'joyful' mysteries, then, is to enter into the ultimate causes and the deepest meaning of Christian joy. It is to focus on the realism of the mystery of the Incarnation and on the obscure foreshadowing of the mystery of the saving Passion. Mary leads us to discover the secret of Christian joy, reminding us that Christianity is, first and foremost, euangelion, 'good news', which has as its heart and its whole content the person of Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh, the one Saviour of the world.

First Decade: The Annunciation of Gabriel to Mary (S^t Luke 1.26-38)

Second Decade: The Visitation of Mary to Elizabeth (S^t Luke 1.39-56)

Third Decade: The Nativity of Our Lord (S^t Luke 2.1-21)

Fourth Decade: The Presentation of Our Lord (S^t Luke 2.22-38)

Fifth Decade: The Finding of Our Lord in the Temple (S^t Luke 2.41-52)

The Mysteries of Light | Traditionally prayed on Thursday

Moving on from the infancy and the hidden life in Nazareth to the public life of Jesus, our contemplation brings us to those mysteries which may be called in a special way 'mysteries of light'. Certainly the whole mystery of Christ is a mystery of light. He is the 'light of the world' (S^t John 8.12). Yet this truth emerges in a special way during the years of his public life, when he proclaims the Gospel of the Kingdom. The following five significant moments – 'luminous' mysteries – during this phase of Christ's life can be fittingly singled out: (1) his Baptism in the Jordan, (2) his self-manifestation at the wedding of Cana, (3) his proclamation of the Kingdom of God, with his call to conversion, (4) his Transfiguration, and finally, (5) his institution of the Eucharist, as the sacramental expression of the Paschal Mystery.

Each of these mysteries is a revelation of the Kingdom now present in the very person of Jesus. The Baptism in the Jordan is first of all a mystery of light. Here, as Christ descends into the waters, the innocent one who became 'sin' for our sake (cf. 2 Corinthians 5.21), the heavens open wide and the voice of the Father declares him the beloved Son (cf. S^t Matthew 3.17 and parallels), while the Spirit descends on him to invest him with the mission which he is to carry out. Another mystery of light is the first of the signs, given at Cana (cf. S^t John 2.1- 12), when Christ changes water into wine and opens the hearts of the disciples to faith, thanks to the intervention of Mary, the first among believers. Another mystery of light is the preaching by which Jesus proclaims the coming of the Kingdom of God, calls to conversion (cf. S^t Mark 1.15) and forgives the sins of all who draw near to him in humble trust (cf. S^t Mark 2.3-13; S^t Luke 7.47-48): the inauguration of that ministry of mercy which he continues to exercise until the end of the world, particularly through the Sacrament of Reconciliation which he has entrusted to his Church (cf. S^t John 20.22-23). The mystery of light par excellence is the Transfiguration, traditionally believed to have taken place on Mount Tabor. The glory of the Godhead shines forth from the face of Christ as the Father commands the astonished Apostles to 'listen to him' (cf. S^t Luke 9.35 and parallels) and to prepare to experience with him the agony of the Passion, so as to come with him to the joy of the Resurrection and a life transfigured by the Holy Spirit. A final mystery of light is the institution of the Eucharist, in which Christ offers his body and blood as food under the signs of bread and wine, and testifies 'to the end' his love for humanity (S^t John 13.1), for whose salvation he will offer himself in sacrifice.

In these mysteries, apart from the miracle at Cana, the presence of Mary remains in the background. The Gospels make only the briefest reference to her occasional presence at one moment or other during the preaching of Jesus (cf. S^t Mark 3.31-5; S^t John 2.12), and they give no indication that she was present at the Last Supper and the institution of the Eucharist. Yet the role she assumed at Cana in some way accompanies Christ throughout his ministry. The revelation made directly by the

Father at the Baptism in the Jordan and echoed by John Baptist is placed upon Mary's lips at Cana, and it becomes the great maternal counsel which Mary addresses to the Church of every age: 'Do whatever he tells you' (S^t John 2.5). This counsel is a fitting introduction to the words and signs of Christ's public ministry and it forms the Marian foundation of all the 'mysteries of light'.

First Decade: The Baptism of Our Lord in the River Jordan (S^t Matthew 3.13-16)

Second Decade: The Wedding at Cana, when Christ manifested himself (S^t John 2.1-11)

Third Decade: The Proclamation of the Kingdom of God (S^t Mark 1.14-15)

Fourth Decade: The Transfiguration of Our Lord (S^t Matthew 17.1-8)

Fifth Decade: The Last Supper, when Our Lord gave us the Holy Eucharist (S^t Matthew 26)

The Sorrowful Mysteries | Traditionally prayed on Tuesday and Friday



The Gospels give great prominence to the sorrowful mysteries of Christ. From the beginning Christian piety, especially during the Lenten devotion of the Way of the Cross, has focused on the individual moments of the Passion, realizing that here is found the culmination of the revelation of God's love and the source of our salvation. The Rosary selects certain moments from the Passion, inviting the faithful to contemplate them in their hearts and to relive them. The sequence of meditations begins with Gethsemane, where Christ experiences a moment of great anguish before the will of the Father, against which the weakness of the flesh would be tempted to rebel. There Jesus encounters all the temptations and confronts all the sins of humanity, in order to say to the Father: 'Not my will but yours be done' (S^t Luke 22.42 and parallels). This 'Yes' of Christ reverses the 'No' of our first parents in the Garden of Eden. And the cost of this faithfulness to the Father's will is made clear in the following mysteries; by his scourging, his crowning with thorns, his carrying the Cross and his death on the Cross, the Lord is cast into the most abject suffering: Ecce homo!

This abject suffering reveals not only the love of God but also the meaning of man himself.

Ecce homo: the meaning, origin and fulfilment of man is to be found in Christ, the God who humbles himself out of love 'even unto death, death on a cross' (Philippians 2.8). The sorrowful mysteries help the believer to relive the death of Jesus, to stand at the foot of the Cross beside Mary, to enter with her into the depths of God's love for man and to experience all its life-giving power.

First Decade: The Agony of Our Lord in the Garden (*S^t Matthew 26.36-56*)

Second Decade: Our Lord is Scourged at the Pillar (*S^t Matthew 27.26*)

Third Decade: Our Lord is Crowned with Thorns (*S^t Matthew 27.27-31*)

Fourth Decade: Our Lord Carries the Cross to Calvary (*S^t Matthew 27.32*)

Fifth Decade: The Crucifixion of Our Lord (*S^t Matthew 27.33-56*)

The Glorious Mysteries | Traditionally prayed on Wednesday and Sunday



The contemplation of Christ's face cannot stop at the image of the Crucified One. He is the Risen One!

The Rosary has always expressed this knowledge born of faith and invited the believer to pass beyond the darkness of the Passion in order to gaze upon Christ's glory in the Resurrection and Ascension. Contemplating the Risen One, Christians rediscover the reasons for their own faith (cf. 1 Corinthians 15.14) and relive the joy not only of those to whom Christ appeared – the Apostles, Mary Magdalene and the disciples on the road to Emmaus – but also the joy of Mary, who must have had an equally intense experience of the new life of her glorified Son. In the Ascension, Christ was raised in glory to the right hand of the Father, while Mary herself would be raised to that same glory in the Assumption, enjoying beforehand, by a unique privilege, the destiny reserved for all the just at the resurrection of the dead. Crowned in glory – as she appears in the last glorious mystery – Mary shines forth as Queen of the Angels and Saints, the anticipation and the supreme realization of the eschatological state of the Church.

At the centre of this unfolding sequence of the glory of the Son and the Mother, the Rosary sets before us the third glorious mystery, Pentecost, which reveals the face of the Church as a family gathered together with Mary, enlivened by the powerful outpouring of the Spirit and ready for the mission of evangelization. The contemplation of this scene, like that of the other glorious mysteries, ought to lead the faithful to an ever greater appreciation of their new life in Christ, lived in the heart of the Church, a life of which the scene of Pentecost itself is the great 'icon'. The glorious mysteries thus lead the faithful to greater hope for the eschatological goal towards which they journey as members of the pilgrim People of God in history. This can only impel them to bear courageous witness to that 'good news' which gives meaning to their entire existence.

First Decade: The Glorious Resurrection of Our Lord (*S^t John 20.1-29*)

Second Decade: The Ascension of Our Lord (*S^t Luke 24.36-53*)

Third Decade: The Descent of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost (*Acts 2.1-41*)

Fourth Decade: The Assumption of Mary into Heaven

Fifth Decade: The Coronation of Mary as Queen of Heaven and Earth