

Maronite Monks of Adoration

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Contemplating the Face of Christ with Mary

Have you heard about our Holy Father's Apostolic Letter on the Most Holy Rosary (*Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, October 16, 2002)? We highly recommend that you read it.

In this Apostolic Letter, you will learn anew (or maybe for the first time!) the great riches of our Lady's Rosary. Here is the Vicar of Christ teaching us both the theology underlying the saying of the beads as well as presenting us with some helpful and even new ways of praying the Most Holy Rosary.

This document is clearly written by someone who knows and loves the Rosary from the very depths of his being. Pope John Paul II himself testifies: "From my youthful years this prayer has held an important place in my spiritual life... The Rosary has accompanied me in moments of joy and in moments of difficulty. To it I have entrusted any number of concerns; in it I have always found comfort... [As I have said in the past] 'The Rosary is my favourite prayer'... How many graces I have received in these years from the Blessed Virgin through the Rosary..." [#2]

Could we ask for a better expert on the subject! How could we pass up reading this precious letter of our Holy Father!

There are many things we could say about this Apostolic Letter, but we will restrict ourselves to this one basic point developed therein; namely, the contemplative aspect of the Rosary.

The Most Holy Rosary is an excellent method of Christian contemplative prayer. Pope John Paul II states: "The Rosary belongs among the finest and most praiseworthy traditions of Christian contemplation. Developed in the West, it is a typically meditative prayer, corresponding in some way to the "prayer of the heart" or "Jesus prayer" which took root in the soil of the Christian East." [#5]

Christian contemplation means looking on (contemplating) the face of Christ. From this contemplation flows much grace and nourishment for our spiritual life. How

*The faces of
Jesus and Mary from
Michelangelo's Pietà*

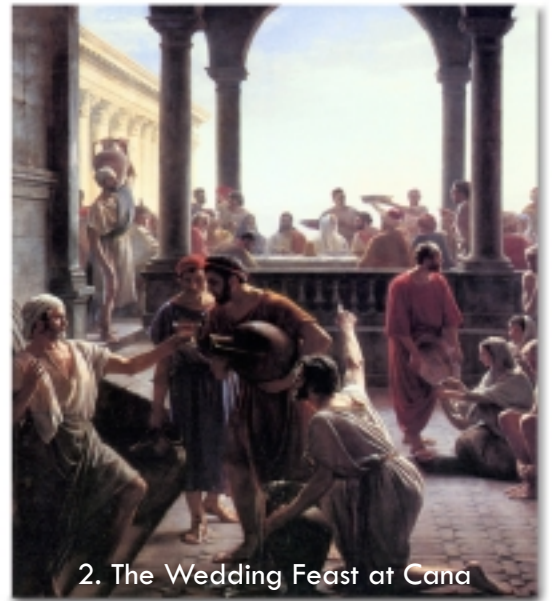
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The Luminous Mysteries of the Most Holy Rosary

Hail Mary, Full of Grace,
 the Lord is with thee,
 Blessed art thou among women
 and blessed is the fruit of thy womb,
 Holy Mary, Mother of God,
 pray for us now and always.



1. The Baptism of the Lord



2. The Wedding Feast at Cana

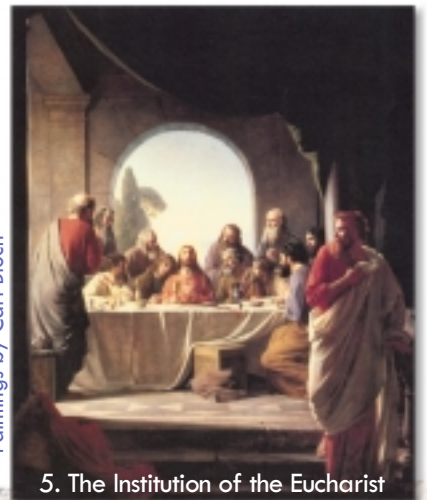
In his Apostolic Letter on the Most Holy Rosary, Pope John Paul II proposes five new mysteries which focus on the public ministry of Jesus Christ [#19 & #21]. These are called mysteries of light (or luminous mysteries) since in a special way they present us with Jesus Christ as the light of the world. They fall in sequence between the joyful mysteries and the sorrowful mysteries.



3. The Proclamation of the Kingdom



4. The Transfiguration



5. The Institution of the Eucharist

Paintings by Carl Bloch

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beautifully our Holy Father speaks of Christian contemplation: “To look on the face of Christ, to recognize its mystery amid the daily events and the sufferings of his human life, and then to grasp the divine splendour definitively revealed in the Risen Lord, seated in glory at the right hand of the Father: this is the task of every follower of Christ and therefore the task of each one of us. In contemplating Christ’s face we become more open to receiving the mystery of Trinitarian life, experiencing ever anew the love of the Father and delighting in the Holy Spirit.” [#9]

The Blessed Virgin Mary is the greatest Christian contemplative. The Pope writes: “No one has ever devoted himself to the contemplation of the face of Christ as faithfully as Mary.” [#10] Again, he notes, “Mary’s gaze, ever filled with adoration and wonder, would never leave him.” [#10]

The contemplation of Mary the Mother of God was perfect prayer. Mary not only looked upon her Son, but even pondered what she saw (and heard) in silent meditation, keeping watch in prayer. Our Holy Father offers this profound thought: “Mary lived with her eyes fixed on Christ, treasuring his every word... The memories of Jesus, impressed upon her heart, were always with her, leading her to reflect on the various

moments of her life at her Son’s side. In a way those memories were to be the “rosary” which she recited uninterruptedly throughout her earthly life.” [#11]

Mary is the model contemplative. Hence, she is the perfect teacher of Christian contemplative prayer especially by means of her Most Holy Rosary. Pope John Paul II states: “With the Rosary, the Christian people sits at the school of Mary and is led to contemplate the beauty of the face of Christ and to experience the depths of his love.” [#1] Again, he writes: “Mary constantly sets before the faithful the “mysteries” of her son, with the desire that the contemplation of those mysteries will release all their saving power. In the recitation of the Rosary, the Christian community enters into contact with the memories and the contemplative gaze of Mary.” [#11]

The Most Holy Rosary is truly “a path of contemplation” [Title heading for #5]. By means of it we contemplate the face of Christ with our Mother Mary. Pope John Paul II has proclaimed October 2002 to October 2003 the *Year of the Rosary*. May it be a time of many graces and blessings for the Church and for the World. ✠