

SUGGESTIONS ON SAYING THE ROSARY

Without Distractions

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FOREWORD

These pages are addressed above all to persons who suffer from distractions. But if they thought they were meant to be used when actually saying the Rosary, they might well remark that the remedy is much worse than the disease.

No! These thoughts are suggested by way of a preparation for saying the Rosary, to be used at spiritual reading time, or on visits to the Blessed Sacrament, just a page or two at a time.

They are merely suggestions. One's own thoughts are best for each soul, no doubt, but a helpful train of thought may be suggested by another.

Do not let these plans or methods compete with one another in your mind. Select whichever of them you prefer and try it as long as it helps. Then you may abandon it and try another as far as you find it helpful!

May Our Lady bless this small effort in her honour!

I—A STORY

The Blessed Mary of Agreda, a Spanish Franciscan Abbess of the 17th century, once had this vision. She saw that after the death of Jesus, the infernal spirits held a conclave. Lucifer addressed them, saying: "Comrades, you see how we have lost our empire over man. We have been overthrown by the Death of the Man-God on the Cross, and now lie crushed under the heel of His Mother. How shall we ever get back our power over men? Now that they have before them the example of the God Incarnate, they will be drawn to Him, fulfil His commands, make use of His Sacraments, and have their eyes opened as to the true worth of our counsels and allurements. Poverty, shame, and pain will lose their horrors in their eyes. How shall we continue to make them love riches, which have been such a splendid bait for us hitherto? Let us take heart, however; surely all is not lost. Let us devise some plan to outwit the Enemy, God, and that almost more dangerous foe, His Mother."

One of the minions replied: "What you have said is true as far as it goes. But man's nature has not changed. It is just as strongly as ever drawn to pleasures, honours and riches. If men do not reflect on the example of Christ, the cull of their nature will inevitably reassert itself. What we must do is to make them forget. Let us see what we can give them to think about besides the Man-God. Once drive Him out of their minds and they will be in our power just as before."

There was no lack of ideas, plans and projects among the satanic band. Some planned to keep idolatry and superstition ruling the world; others to bring in schisms, heresies, revolts of every kind against the Church. Others would make it their business to tempt parents to send children to godless schools, to do all they could to destroy piety and spirituality. Some planned to keep men away from the Sacraments, by putting the idea out of their mind, and blinding them to the need of grace. Others would blot out from the mind of man the memory of Jesus and Mary, by the attractions of the world, and the flesh, by theatres, shows and novels, politics, new theories and ideologies, and secret societies. Thus they would so fill men's minds with the bewitchment of the trifling that they would forget and disbelieve in hell, cease to believe in a future life at all, and in short be entirely wrapped up in the world. This explains how men are led into the base and senseless superstitions rife among pagans, worshipping beasts and reptiles and all the vile and cruel rites practised in ancient religions. Men alone could not have devised such vile savageries.

We have only to look round to see how successful these wiles of Satan have been and are even at this present day.

By the Rosary, men are continually led back to Jesus and Mary. In the Joyful Mysteries, the Incarnation is kept before them; in the Sorrowful, the Redemption; in the Glorious, Sanctification and the rewards of the life to come. One who says the Rosary regularly and frequently can never have Jesus and Mary far from his thoughts. But to do this, it is not enough merely to name each Mystery, though this in itself is a very great good; the naming of them so frequently undoubtedly impresses the idea on the mind. But dreaming away the decades after the naming of them will not carry us far. What can we do to bring home to ourselves the rich treasures and graces of these Mysteries? A few skeleton thoughts are here suggested.

II—SUGGESTIONS ON SAYING THE ROSARY

As October comes round each year, and we visualise the Rosary Benedictions, some of us have mixed feelings. Some say they would so much rather say the Rosary to themselves. Others confess that they always have a difficulty in saying the Rosary. It is the fact of dividing the attention between two things—the words of the Our Father and Hail Mary and the meditation on the Mysteries—that worries them, they say. Those who have this difficulty are those who find the public recitation distracting, though all are convinced that it is a devotion which must give great glory to God when the whole Catholic world unites in this public act of homage to Jesus and Mary.

Thinking over this difficulty which I have so often heard of, and indeed experienced personally, an idea came to me which some have found a help.

i—Make Each Hail Mary a Miniature Meditation

When you say the words "The Annunciation," a picture of the scene flashes across the mind's eye; no matter how vague, it is there. You see a little bare room, lighted by a lamp, Our Lady kneeling absorbed in prayer. A flash of light, the Angel is there—you hear his salutation and listen to Our Lady's answer. But we all know that this picturing of a Gospel scene is only the prelude to any contemplation of a mystery. It is only a step on the way to prayer. After looking and listening, we want to pray about our mental picture, or rather, of course, about the Mystery. What better prayer than the Hail Mary said in the very setting where it was first heard, in the presence of Our Lady and the Angel. It lives and breathes then with new meaning, and nothing we could think of saying could be so appropriate. The Incarnation comes home to us at each word.

Then we think of ourselves and our needs and petitions. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us, etc., expresses all we could desire. It is easy enough to say one Hail Mary with this thought, so let us think we only have one Hail Mary to say! It is the thought of having so many to say that really worries and wearies us. Just think of the words as the fitting conclusion to our little mental picture, our short meditation, and the decade is quickly gone through, if we think we have only one Hail Mary to say all the time.

Then the Visitation. Here again, when we instinctively behold the meeting of the cousins, and listen to their words, we are in the very birthplace of the Hail Mary, for Elizabeth says: "Blessed art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb." We may note, too, that when Mary in her Magnificat says "All generations shall call me blessed," she is just taking up Elizabeth's greeting and answering it. And in this very moment, we are fulfilling that prophecy ourselves; we are calling Our Lady Blessed. This could well fill our thoughts for the space of one Hail Mary, and that is all we need to think of at a time.

Then the Birth of Our Lord. We all kneel before the Crib at Christmas, and surely the Hail Mary is the very prayer made for that scene. We have Mary before us, and the Blessed Fruit of her womb; how can we think of anything else than salute the two Objects of our love, to bless and praise and thank them, and to beg Our Lady's prayers. One Hail Mary is soon said thus, and that is all we aim at.

The Presentation picture equally calls for the words of the Hail Mary. We can almost imagine holy Simeon saying it himself, for he must have said its equivalent. He must have saluted Our Lady by some words of respectful greeting and welcome, beyond those recorded. But now we have the element of sorrow added: the Shadow of the Cross, which will be before us in all its stark reality in the coming Sorrowful Mysteries. So now we put another element, that of loving compassion, into our Hail Mary; and "Blessed is the Fruit of thy womb, Jesus." Now when we say "Holy Mary, Mother of God," we also think of her as the Mother of Our Saviour, who is to die for us. The Hail Mary is soon said with such thoughts.

The Finding in the Temple continues the note of sorrow. It foreshadows the desolation of Mary on Calvary, and 'it the Holy Sepulchre; we put sympathy and compassion into our Hail Mary as well as love and joy. But when we picture Mary finding Jesus, our Hail Mary has a new joy added to our salutation, and the thought of Mary's blessedness adds reality to our "Blessed art thou." At "Holy Mary . . . pray for us," we may think of moments of sorrow and loneliness in our own lives, times of aridity and desolation, and above all of the loneliness of death. And we beg of her to let us share in her joy in recovering her Treasure. As we are only thinking of one Hail Mary, there will be no time for distraction.

ii—"One Hail Mary All The Time"

It may be said: "This is all right for the Joyful Mysteries, but how about the Agony in the Garden, for instance ? Our Lady is not there."

Let us see. We enter the Garden. When we say the words "Agony in the Garden" we kneel beside Jesus, we watch Him moving to and fro in His anguish of spirit, for we know in mental distress the one thing one cannot do is to be still. We witness His struggle, His sorrow and sadness, we behold the Sweat of Blood, the comforting Angel, we hear His oft repeated prayer "Father, if it be possible, remove this chalice. Not My Will but Thine be done." Mary is not present to our eyes, it is true, but in a very true sense we may still say: "And the Mother of Jesus was there." For she is kneeling in her room; she has said farewell to Jesus not long since. He has so often told her all that is coming upon Him; she knows it all beforehand. Her sorrow is indeed all the greater for not being there with Him. How well, then, can we say Hail Mary, our hearts being full of compassion for the Mother and Son in this "Passion of His Sacred Heart," which has well been called "The Holy of Holies of the Passion." Her Son is now doing and suffering that for which He became her Son. He is redeeming us, and she is His helpmate; she too wills as He wills it. Now more than ever is she "blessed among women," the Mother of the Saviour of the human race, fighting His lone battle of the spirit. In her mind's eye she sees it all, in her heart she sweats blood. Surely "the Mother of Jesus was there."

Take the scourging. Mary knows well that this is to come upon Jesus. This terrible incident of the Passion was so much before Our Lord's mind that He had always mentioned it when speaking beforehand of His Passion. "The Son of Man shall be mocked and scourged." "I am prepared for scourges . . . My Sorrow is always before me," said the Prophet in His name, centuries before. What He knew about His Passion, Mary knew. Many a time had she shuddered and grown faint in spirit at the forethought of this appalling scene. Besides, it is possible, and even probable, that from some distant part of the palace of Pilate she could actually behold the scourging. Well can we now say our Hail Mary, then, though it rends our hearts to picture a Mother beholding such a sight as this shameful torture of her Beloved, the Immaculate All-Holy One! No one could see a human being cruelly scourged without being turned sick at heart and horrified. We can hardly bear to think of Mary in connection with this Mystery, but we must. "And the Mother of Jesus was there." It was her Jesus. Oh, how earnestly we beg of her to pray for us now, that we may not suffer the like in hell, for this Mystery teaches us the malice of sin, perhaps more than any other part of Our Lord's Passion.

The Crowning with Thorns, too: Mary knew that this was to be. It was another item of the Passion which Our Lord had always singled out for special mention. "The Son of Man shall be mocked." How often, in His childhood, must Mary not have thought, when she gazed on the beauty of her Child's features, and His pure, noble brow, of those cruel thorns one day to disfigure it. By our Hail Mary now let us console our Mother. More than ever at this dread moment is she full of grace, and blessed among women, when she in spirit bore with Jesus this inhuman, unspeakable torture. She knows the share that I had in it, how much of it was for me. "And the Mother of Jesus was there." Hail Mary!

At the Fourth Sorrowful Mystery there is no difficulty in connecting Mary with the Carrying of the Cross, for we recall the Fourth Station of the Cross when Jesus was met by His Blessed Mother on His way to Calvary, and from this we know she will never be far off till the very end. We can think of her as present at each Station of the Cross.

In the Crucifixion, too, she has her official place by the Cross, and surely if ever our petition for our intercession in the "Holy Mary" would be heard, it would be at the Foot of the Cross, where she brought us forth in anguish and heard the words "Behold thy Mother," and where she, with her Son, is paying the price for our precious souls.

In all the Glorious Mysteries, Mary is prominent in our thought. We believe that Our Lord in the glory of His Resurrection was first made manifest to her. When we assist in spirit at that glorious meeting, what more suitable greeting of our Mother than the Hail Mary ? "The Lord is with thee, blessed art thou among women," has now a new and final meaning that it never had before. All the words of the Angelical Salutation are, as it were, confirmed and glorified in this Mystery of the Resurrection.

At the Ascension we can all picture what Mary's part must have been in the triumph of her Son; what, too, her loneliness and desolation as the cloud hid Him from her view. All this is easy to weave into one Hail Mary.

At the Descent of the Holy Ghost, we know from the Gospel how the chief part of the preparation of the disciples for receiving the Holy Ghost was the presence and inspiration of Mary. For it was "With Mary the Mother of Jesus" that they spent the time in prayer for the Great Promise, and soon the mighty Wind rushed in on them, and they received the Pentecostal Spirit in all His fullness. "Hail Mary, full of grace and of the Holy Ghost."

In the last two Glorious Mysteries, the Hail Mary belongs entirely to Our Lady, for these are her Mysteries. More than ever in them is she seen to be full of grace, and super-eminently "Blessed" and happy beyond thought, in her glorious triumph and rewards of glory. "The Lord is with her" indeed in all plenitude for ever and ever. As the Mediatrix of all graces to mankind, she sits at the King's Right Hand, for ever more to receive all the Hail Marys of all Rosaries ever to be said over all the world, and as the VIRGO POTENS to reward and answer them. One Hail Mary said in each of these scenes is surely most easy, watching Our Lady, the meekest, humblest and most modest of creatures, now in her heavenly triumphs. And after all our decade is "one Hail Mary all the time."

Very soon in this way we should get the habit of fitting the words to the Mystery, though just at first it may seem laboured. If, when we are pressed for time, we were to say a little Rosary of just fifteen Hail Marys, giving each one to each Mystery, it is a help to attaining to recollection and to the habit of fitting the Hail Mary to the Mysteries, for those who have this attraction. But it is not in any way necessary to think of the words; it is enough to think of the same Mystery in some way, however vague.

iii—One Thought for Each Decade

Some I have known who are satisfied with one great, comprehensive thought connected with each Mystery, and these find that letting their minds dwell just on that one thought for each Mystery is enough to enable them to say the Rosary with devotion, for a lifetime. For there are moments when the Holy Ghost makes some one thought strike the mind, and so full of light and depth, that it seems a lifetime is not too much to devote to it. "Mary kept all these words, pondering them in her heart." Evidently that was Our Lady's way.

People who use this method recall the truth which strikes them at the beginning of each decade and just quietly keep it before them all the time, without paying particular attention to the words of the Hail Mary.

In the JOYFUL MYSTERIES, one may, for instance, concentrate on the Incarnation; in the Sorrowful, on the Redemption; in the Glorious, on Sanctification and Glorification.

In the Annunciation, we could take the idea of Thanksgiving and keep the scene in our minds with this one thought while saying all the ten Hail Marys. Certainly such an act could never be full, deep, or intense enough, for it will last us throughout eternity. It is through Our Lord made Man that we shall have entered the enjoyment of God, and this will form the ground of our joyful praise throughout Eternity. Again, it is through the Incarnation that we enjoy God here below, that we possess Him in Holy Communion and in the Blessed Sacrament, and all this comes to us through Mary, through her FIAT in the Annunciation. New every morning is this mercy of God. new every time we call to mind the Annunciation, should be our thanks for it.

In the Visitation', we have the thought of Our Lady as the Mother of Divine Grace—that gift which comes to us through the God-Man, and brings His very life into the depths of our soul. It was to win grace for us that He died on the Cross. In this Mystery we see the grace given through Mary, by her means. She receives Jesus, and straightaway carries Him to others and the Baptist is sanctified in his Mother's womb, at the very sound of her voice. The thought, then, of Mary as the first distributrix of grace, the Mother of Divine Grace, is enough for the Decade of the Visitation.

In the Birth of Our Lord, we have the great Gift actually given to us by Mary. We see, hear, handle Jesus for ourselves. Up to now, only Mary had Him, as the God-Man. In this Mystery He first becomes our own, to do as we like with, to look upon, to love, to caress, to handle, to petition for graces, to enjoy as our Beloved, our own Brother-Man. All this can be thought of too with reference to Communion.

In the Presentation we have the great thought that now for the first time God is offered to God, and God receives an offering worthy of Himself. And it is Mary who offers this great gift. "We give thee thanks for thy great glory."

In the Finding in the Temple, there is the idea of the loss of Jesus by sin, an evil which must be avoided beyond all others. But when lost, Jesus lets Himself be found, and lest we should despair when we do lose Him, He has let His Mother suffer this terrible pain of loss of Himself. She teaches us, too, where to find Him, in the Temple; that is for us, in the Blessed Sacrament, in His Liturgy and Ceremonies. Seek Jesus in Mass and Communion; there we know we have Him, no matter what we may feel.

Another thought we may dwell upon in the Finding in the Temple is the supreme claim of God upon us for our service. Our Lord shows us here that He would let nothing stand in the way of His complete dedication to His Father's glory. And also that He willed to show to all men that He was recognised by Him publicly.

In the SORROWFUL MYSTERIES we behold Jesus doing that for which He became Man, redeeming us. In each of these Mysteries we find a help for all our own difficulties, "In all these things we overcome for the sake of Him who hath loved us" and who has shown us here how to overcome.

In the Agony we see Him overcome by prayer. What a lesson! In all our agonies, our combats, we too can always gain the victory by prayer, even if were only, as He did, to repeat the same prayer.

In the Scourging, He overcomes our sensuality and temptation to inordinate pleasure by the most intense suffering. If such sins have cost Jesus this, can we continue to be easy-going and self-indulgent ?

In the Crowning with Thorns, we have the lesson of endurance to insults, injuries, mockeries, of fighting against false shame and the fear of losing the good opinion of others. All have to suffer, one way or another at some time, in their reputation. We all know how hard it is, even in a small thing, that people should have a wrong opinion of us, or how hard it is to meet opposition and mockery in our efforts to do good. Jesus bore the Crowning with Thorns to help us in such trials. Or we may think how in this Mystery Our Lord expiated the sins committed by the head, the brain, or by those in authority over others.

Or we may contemplate the. Mystery of Christ's Kingship, for here alone He was crowned and acknowledged King on earth, and we own His Kingship when we embrace hardship and humiliation in His service. These were the marks of His Kingship here below.

In the Carrying of the Cross, we are taught not to fear suffering but to look on it as the true mark of the follower of Christ. A daily reminder of this truth is more than necessary, for as the Imitation says: "All praise patience, but how few there are who desire to suffer." "It is not after the way of man . . . to love the cross." Only the example of Jesus can make the Cross lovable. So it is not much to think of the love of the Cross for the space of ten Hail Marys.

In the Crucifixion, we have Love's Gift of itself to the last limit. There is no more that Jesus can give. The lesson of Love even to laying down one's life for the Beloved is a thought great enough to occupy us for the space of ten Hail Marys. Or we may take one of the Seven Last Words and dwell upon it. "It is consummated," for instance. He has done all, given all; are we doing all that God asks in our daily life ?

In the GLORIOUS MYSTERIES we may choose thoughts of hope, joy and love—our glorification, our eternal rewards are what are now in view. We have seen Jesus and His Mother nearing their glory by their sufferings for us, and now we contemplate them entering into the joy of their Lord, which shall surely be ours one day, if we faithfully follow the lessons of the Joyful and Sorrowful Mysteries.

In the Resurrection we have the confirmation of our faith. Jesus has risen again, therefore He is true God, and true Man. Our faith rests on solid bedrock, a plain tangible fact of history, recorded by authentic and incontestable witnesses: we rejoice in His triumph, we walk in newness of life. Ours is the Church of the Resurrection. By this Mystery we receive the Christian, supernatural life. The Resurrection is the Foundation of our Faith.

In the Ascension, we ourselves actually share in the triumph He has won for us. At last, at last, He comes into His own, and He tells us: "I go to prepare a place for you, that where I am, you also may be." Hearts on high! then Sursum corda! Seek the things that are above, not the things that are on the earth.

In the Descent of the Holy Ghost, we have the Gift which is to bring us where Jesus has gone before us. In this Promise of the Father, we have all things; we have grace and consolation and light, and power to fulfil the commands of Jesus, of the Holy Ghost, who is to bring to our minds all that Jesus has taught us. If He did not teach within, in vain should we hear the words of Jesus. Jesus gives Him to us for our Comforter, our Teacher, our Sweetness, our Refreshment, the Living Water to quench our soul's thirst, the Fire to warm our cold, tepid souls.

In the Assumption and Crowning of Mary our Mother, we see the First Fruits of the Redemption, for here, one of ourselves, a true and real sister, our own Mother, has entered body and soul into the joy of Our Lord. Now is she the All-Powerful Virgin, the Sovereign Lady of Heaven and earth, the Mediatrix of all graces to men. She is there in her own home before us, with the power to do all things, all power is given to her in heaven and on earth, as the King's Mother, seated in glory at His Right Hand. Her greatness is to be our Mother of Mercy. She is Queen, indeed, but before all else she is our Mother. Jesus points to her as He leaves the earth: "Behold your Mother." We have beheld her, we have contemplated her in her lowliness, in her sufferings, and now for evermore we are to behold her in her glory, where she never ceases to be our loving Mother, the Refuge of sinners, the Consoler of the afflicted, the

Mediatrice of all graces to mankind, the Queen of peace. Thus does Jesus reward His faithful. Our turn will come to share her glory.

iv.—"And the Mother of Jesus was There "

We may say the whole fifteen decades with but this one thought in view in each of them: "The Mother of Jesus was there." Why was she there? What was her special share in each Mystery? That one thought will be more than enough to claim our attention during the ten Hail Marys.

JOYFUL MYSTERIES

1. The Annunciation: "The Mother of Jesus was there." She was not yet His Mother, it is true, but she is the chief actor in this scene, humanly speaking. In the great drama of our Redemption, this is the first great act. What she did here was to give her consent to God's Plan to say "FIAT." "Be it done unto me according to thy word." Yes, the Mother of Jesus was there, and there it was that she agreed to do her share in our salvation. Well was it indeed for us that the Mother of Jesus was there!

2. The Visitation: "The Mother of Jesus was there." She was there to carry grace to man. She had within her the Source of all grace, and through her now, was grace to be visibly poured out on man, in the sanctification of St. John the Baptist. She was there, too, to sing her song of praise which echoes down the centuries and which all the children of Mary for ever make their own, and read therein the picture of their Mother's soul: "The Mother of Jesus was there."

3. The Birth of Our Lord: "The Mother of Jesus was there." Again is she the chief actor in the drama; she is there to give us Jesus, and now we see her actually giving to us Jesus, our Lord and Saviour. The word was made Flesh and dwelt amongst us. The Child is with Mary His Mother. One cannot be thought of without the other, at least in this Mystery. Where Jesus is, Mary is, where Mary is, Jesus is. "The Mother of Jesus was there."

4. The Presentation in the Temple: "The Mother of Jesus was there" to offer her Child to God. Then was God first offered to God. She was there to hear the prophecy of woe which was to engulf her and her Child, but all was for the salvation of Israel, and she welcomed all of it, though her heart was pierced by the sword. "The Mother of Jesus was there."

5. The Finding in the Temple: "The Mother of Jesus was there." She was there to seek her lost Child, she was there to find Him. She was there to suffer this desolation and darkness that she might have some faint notion of the plight of sinners who lose their God, of their darkness, loneliness, feebleness, terror, disgust, despair. If she had not suffered this, as far as a sinless soul could, she might not have been able to realise as she now does what the loss of God is to a sinner. The Mother of God was there.'

SORROWFUL MYSTERIES

1. The Agony in the Garden : "The Mother of Jesus was there." She was certainly there in mind and spirit, if not in body. She had no share in causing any part of this Agony, but she knew well what I shall probably never know, she knew what share I had in it. She sees and feels each separate pang that my particular ingratitude, indifference, negligence, sin, gave Jesus. We all need something of the vision of Mary if we would penetrate in any degree into this Holy of Holies of the Passion. The Passion especially of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the God-Man, none but His Mother could fathom it. "And the Mother of Jesus was there."

2. The Scourging at the Pillar : "And the Mother of Jesus was there." It is considered probable that Mary really did witness this dreadful scene from some distant corner of the Praetorium. To our eyes it is appalling, unbearable, sickening, horrible beyond words, what must it have been to hers? . . .

But again here she alone knows all the inwardness of it, she knows my share in it, which is something I can never know, and yet she bears no grudge against me; she only longs unspeakably that I should not let it be in vain. It is well indeed for me that "The Mother of Jesus was there," for it only makes my soul more precious in her sight.

3. The Crowning with thorns : " And the Mother of Jesus was there." If not bodily present, she certainly knew all that was going on, for she had known it long years before, she understood it all, she knew every hidden reason and cause for it. Let me ask her to teach me all the lessons contained in it. How can I ever make: up to Jesus and to her for all this pain and shame? She will teach me, for "The Mother of Jesus was there."

4. The Carrying of the Cross: "And the Mother of Jesus was there." Every time we make the Stations of the Cross we see her there; she meets her Son on the Way of Sorrows, she follows Him as closely as she can, and at the very last scene, she openly stands by Him till the end. "The Mother of Jesus was there."

5. The Crucifixion : " And the Mother of Jesus was there." The cruel Jews have not denied her this last act of service to her Beloved; no doubt there is no compassion in their allowing it, for they would gladly add to the Saviour's pain and hers by her presence there. But she is there by the express will of God, as it were, officially; she has a duty to perform, she is assisting in the work of Redemption by her free offering of her Son. It was for this oblation that she bore Him.

On Calvary, too, she becomes the Mother of all Christians, they are there brought forth in pain and travail. "Behold Thy Mother." There we must truly become her children, the children of her pain. Never let us doubt or mistrust her mercy, for never can she forget that it was by Jesus Crucified that she became our Mother. "The Mother of Jesus was there." She was there when Jesus was taken down from the Cross, she was there when they laid Him in the tomb.

GLORIOUS MYSTERIES

1. The Resurrection: "The Mother of Jesus was there." We know not how soon after the Resurrection Jesus showed Himself to His Mother, but we may be sure that it was at once. Was it not her right to share first of all in the triumph of her Son, when she had so faithfully stood by Him in His Death Agony? This meeting is the secret of the Mother and the Son. But we may well believe that in all this time after the Resurrection Jesus was actually present with her. We are not told of any meetings with her though the other Apparitions are given in detail. For Mary needed not an Apparition, her faith in the Resurrection was absolute, it had never been shaken. All the other Apparitions were to doubting, very human creatures, just like ourselves. Mary is immeasurably above all this. She knew He had risen, she had known He would rise, her faith needed no vision, but no doubt He gave her this grace of His Presence in some super. human way, beyond our powers to understand. We are certain that there was a definite contact between Mother and Son, but how or when we know not.

2. The Ascension : "And the Mother of Jesus was there." She was there to share her Son's final triumph. She was there to bid Him farewell, to be a Mother and a Guide to those He left behind, she was there with a heart full of joy, with a heart full of sorrow. She was there for our sake as much as for His. If she has gone away with her Son, how could the Apostles have borne this crowning desolation?

3. The Descent of the Holy Ghost. We know that the Apostles continued in prayer and retreat "with Mary, the Mother of Jesus." She was their Light, their Teacher, their Guide in this great novena of the Church, a novena ordered by Christ Himself in preparation for the coming of the Holy Ghost, she was there to superintend and organise the first retreat ever made in the Church. She is still always there to teach us how to pray and prepare for the Holy Ghost. And as before her Divine Motherhood in the Incarnation, she was overshadowed by the Holy Ghost, so now, before she becomes the Mother of the Infant Church, which was born on Pentecost Day, a new overshadowing of the Holy Ghost comes upon her. "The Mother of Jesus was there" in order to be enabled to do her work for the Church, as its Mother, for years yet to come.

4. The Assumption: Now is "the Mother of Jesus there," in order to receive from her Son the reward for all her faithful service. He takes her body and soul into heaven, so that her reward shall include every part of her being. He cannot wait to glorify her completely.

5. The Crowning of Our Lady in heaven. She receives her reward of glory, she is seated for ever more at the King's Right Hand, and is made the Sovereign Lady of heaven and earth. All glory, all power is given to her, she is solemnly installed as the Mediatrix of all graces to the subjects of her Son, all His treasures are hers to distribute as she wills. If it were not so, how explain that, while ever since Jesus became Man in her womb, in everything that concerned Him, as we have seen, "The Mother of Jesus was there," taking an active share in it all, she now should cease suddenly to have any executive power in the Church and just reign passively in Heaven, receiving homage ? It would be inconsistent, her work at each stage of the work of Jesus was quite definite, and so it is now; it is now the time to distribute the fruits of the Redemption and that is her task in Heaven, given to her, as is believed, at her Coronation. Each time, each season of life, has its appointed task, that is the task of Mary's life as Queen of Heaven.

Only now has she come into her own. When Jesus her Son has received from His Father His power and glory and kingdom, now does His Mother receive her queendom.

Now is the time of her glory and honour and power. Now she can do all she wills, all He wills; that is her peculiar reward. She is our Advocate, our Mediatrix, our Hope, our Mother, the Queen of Angels and of all the Saints, Queen of the Church Triumphant, Militant and Suffering, she is the Help of Christians. "The Mother of Jesus is there," in heaven, to use her power for all of us. Queen of Peace, give us peace.

v.—The "Hail Mary" in Aspirations

Some are helped by fixing the attention on one of the phrases of the Hail Mary, which they keep before them, during the whole decade applying that one phrase to the Mystery they are contemplating. In the next Mystery they take another phrase and so on, through all the fifteen Mysteries.

For the Annunciation, for instance, we might concentrate on the words "Hail Mary," which are such an integral party to this mystery. No can say these words without some vague mental picture of the Angel saluting Mary.

"Hail" is a salutation or greeting, a formula of well-wishing. Some have interpreted the Latin "AVE" as "a vae" or "absque vae," "without woe," "far from thee be woe," the particle "a" being separate in meaning. A good wish, expressed, as it were, negatively, a kind of "deliver us from evil" or rather "be thou delivered from evil." We shall find a long and prayerful reflection on the "Ave" thus envisaged, in "THE MIRROR OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN," attributed to St. Bonaventure, but in reality the work of Conrad of Saxony. The writer enumerates all the kinds of woe or misfortune, from which Mary is free, but which fall to the lot of other human beings.

"Hail" also means "grace be to thee." We may think of "Hail," as meaning all the greetings of love and well-wishing we ourselves would wish to offer to our Blessed Mother. In any case it means a desire that God may favour the one saluted. It is a word of deep respect and veneration.

Then the holy name of Mary can be thought of, with its various supposed meanings of Lady, Light-Giver, bitter Sea. In the same book "Mirror of the Blessed Virgin Mary," there are beautiful pages on the meaning of the name Mary.

During the Visitation Mystery decade, the phrase to concentrate on is "full of grace." This is in every way appropriate to the Visitation, which is called by many authors "The Feast of Graces." For in it Our Lady first exercised her prerogative of "Mother of Divine Grace," bringing by her presence and that of Jesus within her, the gift of sanctifying grace to St. John the Baptist; and also she was the bringer of grace to St. Elizabeth. Her Visitation was a source of grace to all who shared in it.

For the Nativity decade "The Lord is with thee" obviously expresses the heart of the Mystery—"EMMANUEL," God with us. "The Word was made Flesh and dwelt amongst us." All fits in with "the Lord is with thee."

For the Presentation decade, "Blessed art thou among women" is a very suitable thought, for here Mary is shown as the Mother of the Redeemer, who is to redeem us by sufferings in which she is to share, she is blessed in being the one woman chosen to bring about the Redemption. Bringing us "Redemption" makes her Blessed among women.

For the Finding in the Temple, "Blessed is the Fruit of thy womb Jesus." Here we see at first by contrast what it was to Mary to lose Him who was all her blessedness, all her joy. We can measure her Blessedness by the woe it was to lose Him. And what her joy was when Jesus the Blessed Fruit of her womb, her glory, her joy, her blessedness was restored to her.

For the Agony in the Garden, then, we have "Holy Mary." She is the one of all mankind for whom Our Lord did not have to suffer His Agony; though she shared in the Fruits of the Redemption as do all of us, there was no sin of hers to add to Our Lord's dread foresight of all men's sins.

In that terrible hour she was still "all fair," all holy, Holy Mary, the one stainless, sinless one, and we may think that this was part of the consoling angel's message to Our Lord in His Agony.

"Mother of God" will be our aspiration to think of during the Scourging. For it was truly GOD who suffered this unspeakable Agony and shame, and what then must it have been to have been Mother of God? Only she was able to measure as far as the human mind may the dignity of the Divine Victim, and the unutterable insult thus offered to Him.

For the Crowning with Thorns, we have, "Pray for us sinners." We who caused Our Lord this unimaginable

torment are ourselves sinners, the thorns are our sins, and in the presence of the Divine Mother and her Son, the Victim suffering for our sins, we can only beg her mercy and her intercession and resolve to follow Him by patience.

For the Carrying of the Cross, we may very appropriately think of the words "Pray for us sinners now," when it is actually our own turn to walk the Way of the Cross after Jesus, taking up our daily Cross and following Him. For thus only shall we be worthy of Him as He Himself tells us. May the Faithful Virgin make us faithful Cross-bearers now. It is indeed "now" that we need Mary's prayers that we may be true followers of her Son on the royal road of the Cross.

For the Crucifixion, "and at the hour of our death," What better thought for us when gazing on our Crucified Lord than to pray for grace for our own death? Listen to His Words from the Cross: "Behold thy Mother," and beg her to stand by our deathbed as she stood by the dread deathbed of Jesus. Listen to His last word, and make it our own: "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit." We are told by the holy contemplative Mary of Agreda that these words were also indeed Our Lord's last words.

For the Glorious Mysteries said according to this method, we once more begin the Hail Mary, and at the Resurrection we concentrate on the words "Hail Mary." At this transcendent, supreme moment of our Mother's life, we would salute her with all the love and humility of our hearts, rejoicing with her that the course has been run, the victory won by that Way of Sorrows, of that battle with hell, which was inaugurated at the "Hail Mary" of the Incarnation. The great deed of Redemption was thus enclosed between two Hail Marys. And what must have been Our Lord's own Hail Mary to His Mother at the first meeting with her, the glorious first-fruits of His Redemption, on the Resurrection Morning?

For the Ascension "full of grace" is a fitting salutation to Mary, the Mother of Divine Grace, when she beholds her Son, the Source of all grace to us, leaving her and going to enjoy His triumph as Man in our name in the heaven of heavens. He came to bring us grace, and He leaves her with us, the channel through whom He means ever more to distribute His grace to us men, through Mary, the Mediatrix of all graces.

For the Descent of the Holy Ghost, "the Lord is with thee" is a most suitable phrase to think upon. For the Lord and Life-Giver, the Holy Ghost, has come at her prayer. They were all united in prayer "with Mary the Mother of Jesus." This shows that her prayer was the centre, the fire, the hearth at which the other expectant souls kindled their ardent desires and petitions. She will receive a fuller measure of graces and gifts than ever before, full of grace though she is, "full and overfull." Full for herself, and overfull for our sakes, as a Father of the Church has said, that she may pour out on us of her overfullness.

For the Assumption well may we repeat over and over again "Blessed art thou among women and blessed is the Fruit of thy womb, Jesus." For now is the hour of her supreme blessedness, when she is for ever, in body and soul, united to her Divine Son, and sharing in that supreme Blessedness of His in the fullest measure possible to any human being.

And for her glorious Coronation in Heaven, when formally and solemnly she is enthroned Queen of all Creation and of the Church, with full power to distribute the grace and mercy of Christ to every soul of man, what better prayer can we think of or say than the familiar: "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death. Amen." For this is now her official task till the day of doom, to pray for us sinners. Amen. Alleluia.

Nihil Obstat:
Joseph P. Newth,
Censor Theol. Deputatus

Imprimi Potest:
✠ Ioannes Carolus,
Archiep. Dublinen,
Hiberniae Primas
16/3/1955
