



**A LAYMAN'S REFLECTIONS  
ON THE MYSTERIES  
OF THE ROSARY  
OF OUR  
BLESSED VIRGIN MARY**

## FOREWORD

The Knights and Families of  
The Knights of Columbus Maharlika Council 7488

In the final prayer within the rosary, we pray “that by meditating on the mysteries of the rosary, we may obtain what it contains and obtain what it promises through Christ our Lord. Amen.” And that is exactly why we pray the rosary. As Jesus lived a human life, we should be able to relate to the highlights of His life, e.g. the mysteries of the rosary, making it relevant to our times.

These reflections are from the viewpoint of a Catholic layman. It is not meant to be a theological paper on the mysteries of the rosary. We pray the rosary because of what it can do to us. When we put our own experiences on the one hand, and the relevant mystery on the other hand, we get to understand how God works in us even today. As it covers various events in Christ’s life from His early life, public life, passion, death and resurrection, we understand more about how God participates in our lives even today.

Schubert Restituto, August 15, 2019.

*Dedicated to Max and Colby*

# THE JOYFUL MYSTERIES

## THE ANNUNCIATION

In the Bible, we find stories of God speaking to man in many ways. We remember how He spoke to Moses in the burning bush. We know how He spoke to several other characters in the Bible in their dreams or through angels. It was no different for Mary. But the message that was delivered to her – that she was to be the mother of Christ – was not ordinary. Let us ponder on this for a second. God could have chosen other ways and means or persons to send His only Son to us, but He chose to have Him go through conception and the human birth. Isn't this a strong indication that even before life forms, God is already involved?

Inspired by the story of the Annunciation, may we learn to make time for prayer, time to listen to God. For like Mary, He has a plan for each one of us. We need to be able to listen to what He wants from us individually, in part or whole of our lives. This is especially important to those who are lost and confused about their life roles, our youth for instance, as they slowly adjust to adulthood, meanwhile distracted by technology, the glitter of wealth and entertainment. We ask this also for those who are led away from God because of work, illnesses, and materialism. We pray that we may be open to our own annunciations.

## THE VISITATION

In many cultures, when one is invited to a home for some celebration, he has to bring a present – maybe a bottle of wine, a cake or other delicacies to share with the one who invited him. But what could be a better gift than some good news like what Mary brought with her when she visited her cousin Elizabeth. In fact it was the best present for the whole world, much like a lone bright light in the dark. This reminds us of Easter vigil, when at first there was only the light from the Paschal candle, then people lit their candles from it and dispelled the darkness.

May we always remember that we carry Christ's light within us to share with other people. That is Christ's light when life begins in the mother's womb! That is Christ's light that shone in the dark tomb on Resurrection Sunday. We have something to offer others in need, from God, and that is His light. It is not much pain to share this light that represents God's love for everyone. How do we share it? Perhaps with a smile. Perhaps with an ear to listen. Perhaps praying with those we visit. Or a gift of kindness, mercy and compassion. Let us just share it!

## THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD

Did we ever know what was the first Christmas carol? It was right there in the bible narrative about Christ's birth in Bethlehem, sung by no other but by His angels. It goes like this: "Glory to God in the highest, and peace to men of goodwill!" In fact, apart from the lone

bright star that hovered above the stable, it was this that attracted the shepherds to where Jesus was born. There cannot be peace without love. The greatest love is that of God. Love that is so perfect and overflowing that He had to send His son to us. This makes peace really a wonderful thing.

Inspired by the story of the nativity, May we consistently yearn and strive for peace. Peace with our selves. Peace in our families. Peace with the people we deal with every day. And in our own humble ways, peace in our communities and our world. After all, that is what Jesus came for – so we can restore our peace with His Father, after losing it through Adam and Eve.

## THE PRESENTATION AT THE TEMPLE

The closest tradition that we have today to the presentation at the temple is where we “present” our children to God in baptism. Some people ask why Catholics have their children baptized (or presented in the temple) before the age of reason, in their infancy. Why not wait until they have grown up so they can understand what baptism is all about? What they do not understand is that baptism (or presentation at the temple) involves the adults too: the parents, the sponsors and the whole Catholic community. They all make a commitment to raise the children in the Christian or Catholic tradition.

So what is wrong with raising our children according to our faith and tradition? Parents who are professionals

like doctors, engineers, businesspeople, certainly will want to orient their babies to their profession at the earliest possible opportunity. Those who are happy in their professions or social statuses would want to pass on these orientations to their babies. Babies are great imitators and their first targets are their parents and elders, they want to be like them. Or would we rather allow these babies to be trained as soldiers of darkness? As one friend told me years ago, "I'd rather introduce my baby to Jesus early, before the world introduces him to the devil!"

So if parents are true and devout Christians, what is wrong with passing on good values to children at the earliest age possible?

## THE FINDING AT THE TEMPLE

Children surprise us a lot. We wake up one day and we get surprised by a child's "good morning" greeting. And so we get excited every time he shows of a new "trick" or utter for the first time a new word. And then one day, we find him concentrating on one particular activity – maybe reading, drawing or simply fascinated with toy dinosaurs. But it is not just about children. As we grow into adulthood we get attracted to new things. Inevitably, at one point in our lives something triggers us to think about God and our relationship with Him. But do we really pay attention?

When Jesus started to feel that way, perhaps Mary and Joseph were not paying too much attention to the thirst for knowledge that was developing within Jesus.

They were more upset about Him not being with them on the return trip to Jerusalem. He had to remind them – “Don’t you know I have to do my Father’s business!” And even then, they may have to step back and think, then remind themselves of who their Son really was. On reflection, we may be surprised to find moments where a child’s behavior remind us of God’s participation in their growing up. When that happens, we could be like Simeon watching a preview of “God’s plan”.

May the story of the finding of the temple remind us to be always aware of other people’s need to know our Father better, or their inclination to do something for their faith, so that we in turn can help them in their search or mission. May we be able to give them the help they need, prayer, example or simply to be there for them for support.

## **THE LUMINOUS MYSTERIES**

### THE BAPTISM OF JESUS

“You are supposed to baptize me, but then you come to me to be baptized?” John said to Jesus. Maybe, in the back of his mind, he was wondering, “how do you baptize one “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, when you know the Son is the One being baptized?” God in Jesus became man, and therefore must show by example to men that forgiveness of sins and life in God is the only way to salvation.

But something happened on this occasion. After emerging from the water, the Holy Spirit in the form a dove came and rested on His shoulder, then a voice from the heavens thundered, "This is my Beloved Son, in Whom I am pleased." Let there be no doubt that in baptism, God in all persons welcome us into His kingdom.

Inspired by this, let us always remember to take baptism, our renewal of baptismal vows on Easter and Christmas vigils, our recitation of the apostles creed, seriously. For like the baptism of Jesus, we invite our Triune God to affirm our relationship with Him.

## THE WEDDING AT CANA

Jesus said it was not His time, but He did anyway because He honored His mother. He just performed his first miracle! There are two important details to reflect on this event: Firstly, the significance of the miracle happening at the wedding. And secondly, the role of Mary in encouraging Jesus to do something to "save" the party.

Papa Francis has this to say: "It's no accident that placed at the beginning of Jesus' public life, is a nuptial ceremony, because in Him God has married humanity. This is the Good News, even if those who invited Him didn't know yet that the Son of God was seated at their table and that He is the true Groom." Marriage is a covenant of love. Jesus reveals Himself to the One that Unites Him to the people in Love.



Our Pope calls these “a precious heritage that our Mother has left us ... I would like to stress an experience that many of us have surely had in life. When we are in difficult situations when problems come that we don't know how to resolve when we often feel anxiety and anguish, when we lack joy, we should go to Our Lady and say: ‘We don't have wine.... We must say it to our mother and she will go to Jesus, and then she will turn to us and say: ‘Do whatever He tells you.’”

## THE PROCLAMATION OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Whenever we hear the word “kingdom”, the first things that come to mind are royalty, kings and queens, prince and princesses and everything immediately around them. Thanks to fairy tales we heard as children, kingdoms are perhaps only for people who can live happily ever after. Waking up to reality, what we find is that not everyone has royal blood! At the other end of the social scale, there are slaves, the poor, the sick and the unwanted. They are the ones who live outside the walls of the kingdom. We do not read or hear much about them in fairy tales.

When Jesus the storyteller speaks of God's kingdom, where does He start? Not from queens and kings. Not even about castles and palaces. Certainly not of waltzing princesses and princes. “Blessed be the poor”, he starts! Then He goes on, “Blessed are those who mourn, blessed are the meek, blessed are those who hunger and thirst, the pure in heart, the

peacemakers...” Why? “Because theirs is the kingdom of heaven, they will inherit the earth, they shall see God, they shall be called the children of God”. What kind of Kingdom is this? Ah ... we are not speaking of the common queens and kings we have been taught as children! We are speaking of the King, Our Lord ... Who is most merciful and compassionate. We are speaking about the King of hearts!

Inspired by the mystery of the Proclamation of the Kingdom of God, we pray that we become willing agents of God's love, mercy, and compassion. Let us not be shy and hesitant in dispensing God's love to our neighbors most especially those in need of love, the children of the Beatitudes – for us all is the kingdom of God.

## THE TRANSFIGURATION

When we go on a long journey, we must at least have an idea where we are going. Otherwise, we could end up wasting time or become disinterested on the way. We should be able to anticipate what it would be like when we reach our destination.

Who is this Jesus that the disciples followed when they were called to be “fishers of men?” He was saying the right words to get people to follow Him. He stirred hope in people; there was a promise of some sort of happiness in the future. He spoke of good news, of good things to come. For His listeners, they had nothing to lose anyway, so they trusted and followed Him.

But Peter, James and John were blessed. They had a glimpse of the glory and splendor of God. Seeing before their eyes that Jesus changed in a glorious way. "Ah," they thought, "So this is what lies for the road ahead for us. So this is where He is leading us! It is not just a dream – it is unfolding before our very eyes!" Jesus was speaking with Moses the Law-giver and Elijah the Prophet! And from a cloud came a voice: "This is my beloved Son, listen to Him." And right then, the veil over His divinity was lifted slightly with Peter, James and John bearing witness. It must have been the mother of all experiences, but so huge that it cannot be contained in three tents.

Our spiritual journey is not without challenges and hardships. In remembering the transfiguration of Christ, may we always be consoled by His glory and splendor. With God in the lead, may we learn to trust his Holy words.

## THE INSTITUTION OF THE HOLY EUCHARIST

No one really understood what He meant when He said early in His public life, "I am the Living Bread ... and the bread that I shall give is my flesh for the life of the world ...." Nor did anyone know what He meant when he said, "Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood lives in me and I live in that person (John 6:51,55-56)", not until Jesus shared a farewell meal with his disciples. Tradition calls it the Last Supper. At this Supper, Jesus changed the ordinary bread and

wine into His body and blood. This is the greatest mystery of our faith.

That meal may as well be called the first supper for the Christian Church. Since then and for more than 2000 years, our souls have been fed and changed by the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist. The Holy Eucharist is not merely a reenactment of what happened, it is not solely a remembrance – the host and the wine that are consecrated at Mass transform into His body and blood. In short it is God Himself present, not just His memory! When we receive communion we become one with Jesus and He with us.

The Holy Eucharist is what separates us from other Christians. It is the greatest treasure of the church. In fact, without the Holy Eucharist, there would be no Catholic Church. Then of course there is the tabernacle where these are kept and which reminds us of God's real presence in our time and space.

Inspired by these, may we always be in the state of grace to receive communion. May we always remember that when we pray before the tabernacle, God Himself is present to hear our prayers.

## **THE SORROWFUL MYSTERIES**

### **THE AGONY IN THE GARDEN**

What do we do when we are not in control of a situation? When the doctor confirms that one has

terminal cancer, what does his patient do? He falls into a state of agony and anguish and many negative things run through his mind. Then he sweats cold. Then there are sleepless nights. Stress and anguish take over. Then he goes maybe to his Facebook page and asks his friends to pray for him. Sure enough, his friends and loved ones send in their prayers and wishes for recovery – but no one really know what happens next.

Jesus was not spared from experiencing agony and anguish. He knew what was going to happen to Him but there is nothing He could do about it. If He had a choice to escape, He would have done it. But the agony is not as simple as Him experiencing terminal illness for Himself! He finds His humanity battling with His divinity. He did not have to suffer. Yet He had to do the will of the Father not for Himself but for all of mankind. He allows His divinity to stoop down so He could He could inject the divine purpose to humanity. His agony is about His needs versus Man's need. He asked Peter, James and John to pray with Him. They just slept; unaware of what He was going through. He was then also battling a sense of abandonment, perhaps even failure. But even as He prays for deliverance, he submits to His Father's will: "If it be Your will, take this cup away from me."

When we are no longer in control of what goes through our lives, may we remember the agony of our Lord in the garden of Gethsemane, and like Him entrust everything else to the Father.

## SCOURGING AT THE PILLAR

In some cultures, big families are common. It is not a surprise to see families with 9 to 10 children. Because of the size of the family, one (usually the eldest one) is put in charge of the others. It could be honorable, except that he is to accept punishment for any misbehavior of the younger siblings. That was the norm where I came from and at the time we were growing up.

The Father put His only Son to take the punishment for everyone else! But 39 lashes at the pillar? That's what He got ... for what and for whom? Pilate could not find anything wrong with Him yet He was sent for scourging to satisfy the angry crowd. He had to take the hit for everyone else. For the times we disobeyed God. For the times we failed to see life as a gift from God. For all the times we failed to love as God has commanded us. Yet the crowd was not appreciative. The crowd did not understand that He was taking the hit for them so that they can be reconciled with the Father.

May this mystery remind us not only of how Jesus suffered for us, but also how we can in our own little ways take the hit for our brothers and sisters just like Jesus.

## CROWNING WITH THORNS

When he spoke about His Kingdom why did they not believe him? Where are those he had healed for the Kingdom? Where are those who heard His every word about goodness, truth, and righteousness? The night before, His disciples abandoned him in Gethsemane. No one wanted to stay up and pray with Him. Even Peter denied Him three times! And if those were not enough, the soldiers put a crown of thorns on His head!

Today, there are believers who have to wear the crown of thorns. There are those who confess to their faith in Christ even as they are subjected to persecution by others. How many Christians are killed because of their faith by extremists from other faiths and even governments? And yet, even as their churches are burned, their communities destroyed, and their lives threatened by death, they would not deny Christ. Today, governments and institutions pay only lip service to justice, human rights and spiritual values taught to us through our church. We are still putting the crown of thorns on Christ, on His church and those who follow Him.

Now there is the challenge for us! Are we willing to wear our own crown of thorns for what we believe? Are we willing to declare without fear that we are followers of Christ and we belong to His kingdom no

matter what? Let us pray that we receive the grace and courage to stand up for God's Kingdom.

## CARRYING OF THE CROSS

We have heard Him say to His disciples before, "Whomever wishes to come after Me, must deny himself, take up his cross and follow me." We all have individual crosses to carry. We tend to associate carrying the cross with carrying a burden, perhaps failing health, failing relationships, any other circumstances that cause personal distress, mental anguish. These are events where we have no control, but must be endured anyway.

How do we deal with our crosses? There are two ways of carrying the cross. The first one is without grace. That's when we find ourselves frustrated, and just wish that all that burden will just go away. The second one is with Christ's grace. Much like when He allowed Simeon to help. When we embrace our cross with God's grace, we find a higher purpose for our suffering. We find reserves of spiritual strength and resolve. We appreciate our own carrying of the cross and see others do the same. With grace we see their difficulties and rather than simply dwelling on our own sufferings, we find compassion for them.

We are invited to be like Simeon of Cyrene, that despite our own personal crosses, we are to help those who cannot carry their crosses. Jesus did not



just carry a personal cross – He was sinless, right? The cross He carried was for all mankind, for all the crosses that no one wanted to carry - The cross of Injustice, of prejudice. The crosses created by a Godless society.

Will we be ready to help carry the cross of Christ for the sake of the redemption of all?

## THE CRUCIFIXION

Now comes the biggest question of all – Why? Why does Jesus have to die on the Cross? Crucifixion was the capital punishment imposed by the Romans for serious crimes. It was held in public to serve as an example of the “appropriate” punishment to particular crimes. But what was it that Jesus committed that made Him worthy of crucifixion? Even Pilate “washed his hands” from the situation.

How does this make sense? The wages of sin is death, and God wanted to redeem us from sin out of His love for us. Thus He sent His Son to take our place on this cross to pay for our sins. As both Divine and Human, Jesus was the only Person Who could do this. Jesus said it Himself, “... I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.” (John 14:6). First He had to be human to take all his burdens on Himself. Then He had to die on the cross to bring the same burdens with Him in opening up heaven for us, through the cross.

So the cross that was once the symbol of punishment for serious crimes became the symbol of redemption for us. The cross became in fact a symbol of victory over sin and death. It became the reminder of God's love for mankind. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." John 3:16.

## **THE GLORIOUS MYSTERIES**

### **THE RESURRECTION**

The story of salvation did not end with the burial of our Lord after He was crucified. If He had not resurrected, then all that Jesus worked for did not have any value at all. As St. Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain. Moreover we are even found to be false witnesses against God that He raised Christ, whom He did not raise, if in fact the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied" (1 Corinthians 15:14-19).

The resurrection story has been told clearly by the Gospel writers in the bible. Yet it is difficult to comprehend how one can return back to life bodily and spiritually. The disciples had to see Christ in His

resurrected body to believe. Thomas had to feel His wounds to exclaim finally, "My Lord and My God." This is the core of our faith. This is the ultimate purpose of life. Before Jesus, we had no concrete proof that we do have a home in heaven. That there is resurrection simply means that death is just a phase in life, that in fact we have a home in heaven and Jesus opened the gate for us. How do we respond? Do we respond like Thomas who had to see and feel to believe or be like those who Jesus called "blessed are those who have not seen, yet believe."

## THE ASCENSION

Jesus had done the Father's will! He lived with us, suffered and died on the cross! He had paid for our sins with His blood. Now it was time for Him to bring all these back to the Father. He blessed His disciples then slowly ascended into heaven as His disciples watched in awe and adoration.

From humbling Himself in order to save us from sin, He ascended to make the path to heaven open for us. He then took His seat to His Father's right hand. Now fully divine and fully human, He is no longer subject to the limitations of space and time. By divine right, He is Lord of everything, including space and time. By His humanity, He brought our need to be saved with Him; He then became our Advocate, "And I when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself" (John 20:17).

The ascension is the culmination of the earthly life of Jesus. Yet, as Pope Francis explains: “the ascension does not point to Jesus’ absence, but tells us that he is alive in our midst in a new way. He is no longer in a specific place in the world as he was before the Ascension. He is now in the lordship of God, present in every space and time, close to each one of us. In our life we are never alone: we have this Advocate who awaits us, who defends us. We are never alone: the Crucified and Risen Lord guides us.”

So when we pray to our Father, we end our prayers with “... we ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son”.

## DESCENT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The last fifty days after the resurrection went too fast. There were just too many things that happened from the garden of Gethsemane to Calvary, then to Bethany. The disciples were riding a spiritual roller coaster, ascending to over joy highs, then descending deeply into moments of doubts and fear. They had seen the crucified, the resurrected Jesus ... listened to His words, and then watched in awe as He ascended into heaven. Now they gathered behind closed doors, overjoyed, yet confused and afraid, uncertain about the future.

The disciples knew they had to share their story to the world. Before His ascension, Jesus commanded them to go and announce the good news, but they did not know where to start. They needed some guidance.

They needed someone to tend to the light within them. So as promised by Jesus, the Holy Spirit descended unto them! Then they found a new sense of purpose! They found courage and spiritual strength! They found deep inner peace and order. They became like a team raring to go after hearing a stirring pep talk. But this was more than just a pep talk by a coach! The Holy Spirit came and harmonized with their own spirits. They then started to tell the story of salvation to the entire world “in different tongues”. The church came to life!

Another promise fulfilled. Jesus promised the Holy Spirit to the early church! The story of salvation has been shared over the centuries, over generations, over different cultures and languages. With the Holy Spirit, the story became alive.

In times of doubt, fear and uncertainty, let us pray to the Holy Spirit and allow it to harmonize with our inner selves. “Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of Thy faithful, and enkindle in them the fire of your love ...”

## THE ASSUMPTION OF THE BLESSED MOTHER

Although there is no direct reference in the New Testament regarding death and assumption of our Lady, the tradition of celebrating her assumption goes way back to the 1st century. On November 1, 1950 Pope Pius XII declared the Assumption of Mary as dogma in his statement, “By the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, of the Blessed Apostles Peter and Paul, and by our own authority, we pronounce, declare, and

define to be a divinely revealed dogma that the Immaculate Mother of God, the ever Virgin Mary, having completed the course of her earthly life, was assumed body and soul into heavenly glory”.

When we come to think of it, if Mary was immaculately conceived, that is free of sin, to be the Mother of the Incarnate Word, she deserved a special place in heaven. She had a special calling. She was closest to Jesus during His earthly life, from conception to ascension. It is not impossible for ascended Jesus to call His mother to join Him at home in Heaven. Many old traditions supported this up to now, both in the Latin and Eastern churches.

By her immaculate conception, she was an exception, the "blessed among women". She was the one chosen to be Christ's mother; this appointment survived throughout and after Jesus' ascension. And so, she became and continue to be our intercessor and we pray, "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and forever..."

## THE CORONATION OF THE BLESSED MOTHER

Much like the assumption of our Lady, there is no direct reference in the New Testament regarding the coronation of our blessed mother. In the Old Testament, the mothers of the Judean kings were their mothers. Most of the kings of Israel had many wives as their mid-east neighbors so the queen was the mother of the King, of whom there was only one. Following the logic, Mary was also queen as Jesus

was King. There is however in the Book of Revelation 12: 1-5 a reference to “a woman clothed with the sun ... and she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with an iron rod ....”

Still, many ancient Eastern and Western churches celebrated Mary's queenship. Since 1683, she has been celebrated as the Queen of France “ partly in thanksgiving for a victory over the Huguenots”. Siena, Tuscany, hails the Virgin as Queen of Siena, and annually observes the race and pageant called the "palio" in her honor. Mary was declared "Queen of Poland" by King John II Casimir in the 17th century. Since then she is believed to save the country miraculously during the Deluge, Partitions of Poland, Polish-Soviet war, World War II and the Polish People's Republic. Pope Pius XII gave Mary the title Queen of heaven in October 1954 asserting “Mary deserves the title because she is Mother of God, because she is closely associated as the New Eve with Jesus' redemptive work, because of her preeminent perfection and because of her intercessory power.”

For us, the Queenship of Mary is a picture of the destiny or reward for all of Christians who believe and share her Son's passion, death, and resurrection.

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