

Meditations



on the Mysteries of the Rosary

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By

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COVER ART: *“Madonna of the Rosary” oil on canvas by Lorenzo Lotto (1480 – 1556). Painted in 1539. The painting is currently located in San Niccolo **



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Meditations on The Mysteries of the Rosary

Introduction

The Rosary is the favorite prayer of heaven and earth. The Rosary is the only prayer personally recommended by Our Lady in her visitations from heaven to earth like the Rosary. The Rosary is the only prayer that has been so frequently praised, commended, and even commanded by the Popes. Of all the prayers indulged by the Popes, the Rosary is the most enriched.

We live in the age of the Rosary. The family rosary, the block rosary, and the living rosary at solemn public functions are important parts of modern Catholic life. It has been estimated that there are at least twenty five million rosaries recited in the world every day.

Our Lady at Fatima urged the recitation of the Rosary for the conversion of sinners and for world peace.

One way of reciting the rosary is to meditate on its mysteries. However, it is sometimes difficult to know just how to go about this meditating. The following sketches have been prepared in an effort to fill this need. May Our Lord and His Immaculate Mother bless the effort, and help it to increase the effectiveness of the rosary, as it rises daily in a mighty stream from earth to heaven (it has been called a "*a Niagara in reverse*") for the salvation of souls and lasting world peace.

The Annunciation

First Joyful Mystery

Picture Our Lady at prayer at the little house in Nazareth. She is only twelve or thirteen years old, a child in innocence and simplicity; but in grace, she is incomprehensibly sublime. In those things everyone can see, she is a poor maiden, the spouse of the village carpenter; dressed in rough plain garments, alone in the homely surroundings of a very ordinary village dwelling. Yet, in grace, she is wealthy beyond the splendor of the highest angels.

Her housework is done, and she is now engaged in prayer. For what is she praying? On this occasion, surely she has been inspired by God to pray for the great event, the coming of the Messiah, for which prophets and kings of the Jewish people had been beseeching God during many centuries. In the depth, richness, and power of her fullness of grace, her prayer is the mightiest prayer that has ever gone up to God for the coming of the Redeemer.

As she prays, there comes, from the mercy of God and in answer to her own longing and ardent supplication, a message from heaven. The Angel Gabriel enters the poor house of Nazareth to announce that her prayer and the prayer of all the generations of Jewish believers, is heard at last.

By God's design however, Saint Gabriel will do more than simply announce the fact. He will also request her cooperation in its accomplishment. God has decreed to unite human nature to His divine nature in the sublime wedding of the Incarnation; and Saint Gabriel, as God's ambassador, comes to request the consent of the maiden Mary to this wedding of the divine and the human in the Person of the Word of God. Saint Gabriel represents God, the divine; and, at this moment, Our Lady represents the entire human race.

It is unthinkable that she should refuse; but it is true that God still condescended to make the Incarnation and our redemption dependent on her consent. In the moment before she gave her consent, all heaven was silent, breathlessly awaiting the word she would speak, "*How shall this be done?*"

Saint Gabriel, whose name means, "*the power of God,*" replied, "*The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee.*"

Mary replied, "*Behold the handmaid of the Lord. Be it done unto me according to thy word.*"

At that moment, the Son of God became incarnate in her chaste womb.

The Visitation

Second Joyful Mystery

We can consider the mystery of the Visitation in three stages.

The first stage is the revelation of the angel to Our Lady at Nazareth, which prompted her visit to her cousin Saint Elizabeth. As a sign of the truth of what he told Our Lady, *“Thou shalt conceive in thy womb and bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call His name Jesus,”* the Archangel Gabriel gave her a sign. He said, *“Behold Elizabeth thy Cousin hath also conceived a son in her old age, and she who was called barren is now in her sixth month; for nothing shall be impossible with God.”* Over and above the joy and amazement she felt at her own sublime privilege, Our Lady’s generous heart was moved with joy at this unexpected good news about her cousin and she determined to set out at once to visit her cousin Saint Elizabeth.

The second stage in the mystery is the journey itself. Saint Luke says, *“she went with haste.”* No doubt she told Saint Joseph where she was going without, however, telling him exactly why. (We can ponder fondly on the details of that conversation and the sacrifice it must have caused good Saint Joseph). Then, Our Lady set out on the long journey from Nazareth to the home of Zachary and Elizabeth. It was a four-day trip by caravan. We can picture Our Lady possibly joining a caravan that may have been passing through Nazareth heading towards *“the hill country of Judea.”* This requires us to imagine her spending the four-day journey in the rough company of camel drivers and merchants. We can also picture her traveling alone—with all the hardships such a journey would entail. Whatever we visualize, we can be certain it was a difficult trip for Our Lady.

The third stage in the mystery is the meeting of Our Lady and Saint Elizabeth. *“Their hopes were the hopes of the world,”* says a gifted writer, speaking of that meeting. *“Blessed art thou that hast believed,”* says Saint Elizabeth, knowing by divine inspiration what had happened to her cousin. In Saint Elizabeth’s words, we can find a reference to the sad condition of Saint Zachary, her husband, who was *“dumb and could not speak,”* because he had refused to believe the angel. Even Saint John the Baptist, though still an infant in his mother’s womb, recognized the approach of His Lord and Master and announced His coming by leaping in his mother’s womb. Of course, Our Lady replied with the sublime act of gratitude and joy that is her Magnificat saying, *“My soul doth magnify the Lord; and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior. . . . For lo, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed; because He that is mighty hath done great things to me.”*

The Birth of Our Lord

Third Joyful Mystery

The birth of Our Lord in Bethlehem contains countless wonders for our admiring contemplation. Let us consider only the circumstances of the journey to Bethlehem, and some of the circumstances of His actual birth.

Our Lady's time was near in Nazareth. We can visualize that she and the neighbor women had been making fond preparations for the coming of her First-born. Then one day, Saint Joseph came home from the market place with disquieting news. A messenger of the Roman Emperor had ridden into town and made a proclamation in the public square commanding that every man must go at once to his native city to be entered in the census.

Under the circumstances, it was a harsh command for Mary and Joseph, and worldly wisdom might have counseled delay, excuse, exemption. To their simple hearts, however, it was the command of lawful authority and there was only one thing to do—obey.

We might ponder objections raised by friends and neighbors and the simple unassuming insistence of Joseph and Mary to do what they know is their duty. We might follow them in our hearts as they make their preparations, as they set out, and as they travel the long road in slow stages, by day and by night, to Bethlehem.

We can follow them as they try to find lodging in Bethlehem. They are put off at every door until Saint Joseph finally finds refuge in the stable under the hill behind the town.

Then, as the moment of the actual birth of Our Lord approaches, we picture the scene in the cavern—the only light is from Saint Joseph's poor lantern on the floor. The ox and the ass are in the corner, Saint Joseph is on guard near the opening, and Our Lady is kneeling in prayer.

As she kneels and prays—the Virgin Birth!—at one moment, she kneels with hands joined, alone. The next moment, she has her Child in her arms. As after His Resurrection, He passed through the closed doors coming to His Apostles on Easter Sunday night, so He came to His mother on Christmas night, passing from her chaste womb to her loving arms, the sacred door of her virginity unviolated still. No travail, no sorrow was hers when her time had come. She experienced only pure joyful tenderness that her baby, the Man-God, was born into the world.

Presentation of Our Lord in the Temple

Fourth Joyful Mystery

In meditating on the fourth joyful mystery, the Presentation of Our Lord in the Temple at Jerusalem, we can consider first the reasons for this Jewish rite.

When Almighty God slew all the first-born in the land of Egypt, He spared the first-born of the Hebrews. Then, He still claimed them for His own, precisely because He had spared them. When the Hebrews left Egypt, He decreed that, instead of the first-born of each family of all twelve tribes being dedicated to His service, henceforth all the men of the tribe of Levi, first-born or otherwise, were to be dedicated to His service in the tabernacle or temple as priests. The parents in each of the eleven other tribes, however, were to acknowledge in a special religious ceremony the fact that by rights their first-born belonged to God and the Temple. This rite consisted in the “presentation” of the Child to God in the Temple, signifying the offering of certain gifts to God, and the payment of certain sums of money, signifying that they were redeeming or buying back their first-born son from God for themselves.

Our Lord, of course, was not subject to this law. He was above all law; but He was particularly exempt from the law of presentation. There was no question of buying Him back from God in the deeper sense of the term, for He was inalienably God’s own Son. While He was not to serve as a priest in the Temple of Jerusalem, He was, by His very nature of God-man, a priest—a bridge between God and man. He was conceived and born a priest and He would be a priest forever.

Our Lord, however, in His earthly life wished “to fulfill all justice.” He said this when He deigned to have Saint John the Baptist baptize Him in the Jordan. In the same spirit, He allowed Saint Joseph and Our Lady to present Him in the Temple.

We can also consider this mystery from the viewpoint of Our Lady, especially as she stood in the Temple listening to holy Simeon prophesying about Our Lord as he held Him in his arm. Simeon had “blessed” Saint Joseph and Our Lady, but he went on to tell her, “*Thine own soul a sword shall pierce.*” It seems a strange, harsh thing for him to tell her after he had “blessed” her. It was harsh. None knew it better than she, Our Mother of Sorrows. She knew her Baby was to grow up to be the Man of Sorrows and suffer the harsh death of the cross for the sins of the world. Even with her heart pierced by the sword of sorrow, she knew she was “blessed” to be called the Mother of such a Son.

Finding Jesus in the Temple

Fifth Joyful Mystery

This is a “joyful” mystery, but it involves sorrow too. The sorrow was that of Our Lady and Saint Joseph when they realized they had lost Our Lord. It was also (and we should not fail to ponder this part of the mystery) the sorrow of Our Lord in being separated from His Mother and Saint Joseph, even though it was His Father’s holy will. The joy followed upon the sorrow and was, in a way, dependent upon it. It was the great joy that greets the end of a painful and heart-rending separation.

Our Lady and Saint Joseph had set out from Jerusalem on the return journey to Nazareth after the Paschal celebration. They traveled in a large caravan, where the men were separated from the women. Hence, Our Lady and Saint Joseph were not together for the first part of the journey. Since the children sometimes traveled with the men and sometimes with the women, each of them thought Jesus was with the other. When they finally came together, they discovered to their dismay and grief that He was with neither. In fact, He was nowhere to be found. He had not been seen by any of their friends or kinsfolk since they left Jerusalem.

Picture the suspense and fear in the anxious inquiries they must have made of everyone they met in those three days. Picture how they went through the entire caravan, then retraced their steps all the way back to Jerusalem, stopping at every likely place along the way—toll-houses, publican stalls, wayside inns, village wells, and public squares—asking over and over the same, anxious question, “Have you seen a little Boy pass this way?”

Picture Our Lord during those three days in Jerusalem. He probably spent days in the temple. Where did He spend the nights? Must not His human Heart, which was after all the Heart of a little Boy away from home and loved ones for the first time, have felt some of the pangs of loneliness and homesickness for the two persons He loved most on earth?

Finally, the glad reunion came. Our Lady’s exclamation as she clasped her Son to her heart might seem at first a reproach, but it was nothing of the kind.

“Son, why have You done so to us? Your father and I were so worried looking for You!”

It was only a mother’s heart speaking out her relief in a mother’s way.

Our Lord’s answer, while deep and mysterious, was full of joy and relief as He returned His Mother’s embrace. He was as much as saying, “Didn’t you know I’d be all right, and only a most important concern of My Father in heaven could have detained Me?”

“Did you not know I would have to be at My Father’s?”

The Agony in the Garden

First Sorrowful Mystery

He began to fear and to be heavy . . . My soul is sorrowful even unto death.

Let us consider what it was Our Lord feared in the agony in the garden. He feared the awful ordeal about to come upon Him—the contempt, abuse, and malicious hatred; the reviling and spitting in His face; the spectacle of a wild mob thirsting for His Blood and yelling fiercely, “*Crucify Him, crucify Him!*” He feared the scourging, the crowning with thorns, and the terrible strain of carrying the cross. Most of all, He shrank from the prospect of death.

His shrinking away from death was his human nature, as our own human nature, to be fearful of things that are frightening. Our Lord had the perfect human nature; therefore, His shrinking was all the keener. In fact, it was the keenest that could possibly be felt in the face of things frightening for human nature.

He also feared contact with sin. Entering into His Passion, He was taking upon Himself, as the Lamb of God, all the sins of the world. However, as the all-Holy God, the thing He detested and recoiled from more than anything else was sin. Yet, in the garden, He was permitting sin, as it were, to clothe Him with its foul stain from head to foot. To him, it was as if He had been plunged in some vile cesspool of corruption. His human nature shrank in mortal fear from this contact with sin.

So intense was His fear that it forced a bloody sweat from His pores, sweat that soaked His garments and ran down upon the ground. Only supreme and mortal terror could produce so shocking an effect.

***Lord, grant to us the grace to avoid sin—
by the fear that Thou didst feel for sin in the garden!***

Yet, Our Lord also was “*sorrowful even unto death.*” The prospect of a horrible death and the contact with vile sin caused Him to fear. The thought of the ingratitude of men caused Him to be “*heavy and sad*” to be “*sorrowful even unto death.*” Any generous heart is saddened by ingratitude in proportion to the realization of the kindness that is being scorned. Christ had the noblest nature of all and His benefits to mankind were supreme. Hence, the weight of sadness that pressed upon His Heart was the darkest sadness that ever weighed upon a human heart.

***“Lord, by Thy sadness in the garden,
grant me the grace to be ungrateful to Thee no longer.”***

Our Lord is Scourged at the Pillar

Second Sorrowful Mystery

Twice Pilate said, *“I do not find Him guilty of anything.”* Nevertheless, the mob continued clamoring for the death of Jesus, *“Crucify Him! Crucify Him!”* Then Pilate declared the third time, *“I do not find Him guilty of anything! I will chastise Him, therefore, and let Him go!”*

The judge finds the Prisoner, *“not guilty,”* and therefore he condemns Him to the brutal punishment of scourging! What a terrible miscarriage of justice!

That is the first reflection on this mystery of the scourging at the pillar. Our Lord allowed Himself to become the victim of mob rule, of calumny, of cowardly weakness on the part of a superior who should have defended Him. He wished to share here the sufferings of human beings who find themselves victims of similar injustice, and to give them the opportunity to ennoble their suffering by sharing it with Him.

Next, the scourging itself was a terrible shame and agony. Even the pagan Romans considered it so brutal that their law forbade it to be imposed on any Roman citizen. Saint Paul was a Roman citizen. Once, when he was condemned to be scourged, he protested that it was illegal, and so escaped punishment.

However, Our Lord, the King of Kings, allowed His subjects to impose this shame upon Him!

The agony of it! The Roman soldiers stripped Him and tied His hands around a pillar. Then they beat Him with leather thongs tipped with leaden balls until His sacred Body was covered from neck to knees with ugly, bleeding welts. He suffered this agony to atone for sins against the holy virtue of purity.

***“Lord, by the injustice, the shame,
and the torture of Thy scourging,
teach me patience, humility, and holy purity!”***

Our Lord is Crowned with Thorns

Third Sorrowful Mystery

There was far more than the crown of thorns to this sorrowful mystery.

“Stripping Him, they put a scarlet robe about Him.” After Our Lord’s scourging at the pillar, His own clothes had been put on Him again. Now they were torn off once more, just when they began to cling to His bloody flesh. What agony and what shame before the mob of brutal soldiers!

Then some cast-off scarlet robe, some torn dirty doormat of a rag from a corner of the barracks yard, was roughly yanked down over His head and pulled about Him. Great sport for the soldiers, but unspeakable agony for Our Lord’s Body, which was one quivering, wound.

“And plating a crown of thorns, they put it on His Head.” Wearing heavy gloves, the soldiers beat a bunch of thorny branches into some kind of helmet and clamped it down violently on His Head. The thorns pierced the skin, and the Blood began to flow.

“And a reed in His right hand.” A stout stick or branch of wood from the nearby campfire was stripped of foliage and thrust into His hand. Jesus did not let it fall, but held it obediently, even when the soldiers let out a guffaw of derision at the sight.

“And bowing the knee before Him, they mocked Him, saying, ‘Hail, King of the Jews!’” This was great sport for the soldiers. Each sought to outdo the others in mocking buffoonery, *“Hail, King of the Jews!”* Bowing, genuflecting with mock solemnity, then falling back to roar with laughter at the meek Fool before them.

“And spitting upon Him.” This was the outrage Our Lord had often mentioned when predicting His Passion, as though He shrank from it with particular horror. *“The Son of Man shall be spit upon . . .”* His sacred Countenance became the object of a very deluge of foulness, which our minds almost refuse to contemplate.

“They took the reed and struck His Head.” It was not enough that the thorns were drawing blood already. Down rained the heavy blows to drive them deeper still. Our Lord must have been fairly blinded with pain as each rocking blow fell upon Him; yet He made no protest. When one soldier finished His brutal work and handed the reed back to Him, He held it again while the crowd roared with mocking laughter, until another seized it to strike Him again.

***“Jesus, meek and humble of Heart,
make our hearts like unto Thine!”***

Our Lord Carries the Cross

Fourth Sorrowful Mystery

By Roman law, condemned criminals were required to carry their own cross to the place of crucifixion. In Our Lord's case, this was a special cruelty because of His extremely weak condition.

As He staggered along on the way of the cross, He verified the prediction of the prophet:

"We have seen Him and there was no beauty in Him. He was contemptible and the least of men." He chose in His incomprehensible love and humility actually to look the part of a bedraggled, beaten, dying criminal suffering the penalty of his crimes. Only they were not His crimes but ours that He was carrying with the cross. In doing so, He was giving us inspiration to carry our own cross with patience and resignation.

***"Jesus, carrying my cross for me,
help me to carry mine with Thee!"***

His meeting with His holy Mother must have been heart-rending for them both. Seeing a loved one suffer is so much harder than to suffer oneself. What consolation could they give each other? No human consolation, surely. Only the conviction they shared that this was God's holy Will for them both and the hope that in losing each other they would find us poor sinners converted and returned to their love.

***"Jesus and Mary, separated for love of us,
grant that we may never be separated from you!"***

In His meeting with "the daughters of Jerusalem," Our Lord revealed His divine supremacy over suffering. These good women were giving vent to their compassion for His sad state and it would have been easy for anyone else to let his thoughts be filled more than ever with his own sufferings. Instead, Our Lord's generous Heart was moved to think not of His own fate, but of the trouble to come upon the women themselves.

"Weep not for Me, but for yourselves!"

***"Jesus, ever thinking of me,
let me think less of myself and more of Thee;
let me pity myself less, and learn to pity Thee,
and grow to love Thee ever more and more!"***

The Crucifixion of Our Lord

Fifth Sorrowful Mystery

The physical agony of the cross consisted not so much that nails pierced the hands and feet, but that the nails pierced living nerves in the hands and feet and the criminal was then suspended by the nails through these nerves. Anyone who has experienced an accident or a medical or dental treatment of having a living nerve touched ever so lightly can faintly imagine what this torture must have been for Our Lord. Indeed, physicians who have tried to determine the exact cause of Our Lord's Death trace it to being suspended by nails or spikes through living nerves. The result, they say, was a series of agonizing muscular spasms, first in the lower arms, then in the upper arms, then the shoulders, the chest; and finally around the heart until He died in a convulsion of agony around His Heart and literally died of pain!

***“Jesus, dying of pain for me,
teach me to suffer patiently for Thee!”***

The mental sufferings of Our Lord on the cross were even more terrible. *“My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me,”* expressed His mental suffering. On Mount Tabor, His Father had said from heaven, *“This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased!”* The love that breathed in those words was greater than ever beat in the heart of a mother bending over the crib of her little child—greater, infinitely greater than the love of all mothers of all time for their little children.

Yet, on Calvary, when Our Lord was laden with the sins of the world, with our sins, and looked up to heaven to that same Father, heaven was blank. If He heard a voice, it was the stern relentless voice of divine justice, *“For the sins of My people I have struck Him!”* Incomprehensible is this mystery of what sin could do even to the relation of love between God the Father and God the Son; but for us it can surely mean:

***“Jesus, abandoned even by Thy Father for my sins,
help me to abandon all sin for Thee!”***

The Resurrection of Our Lord

First Glorious Mystery

The Holy Gospels do not describe the actual resurrection of Our Lord. Instead, they relate how, after He had arisen and left the tomb empty, an angel with a *face "like lightning"* came down from heaven to roll away the stone from the empty tomb; and, when he touched the earth, there was "a great earthquake."

Our Lord's resurrection must have been a glorious moment for Him and for all heaven, even if this world saw nothing of it. Picture His mangled corpse motionless and lifeless beneath its winding sheet on a ledge inside the tomb that early Easter morning. Suddenly, the dark silent chamber is filled with light and there is a quiver and a thrill beneath the winding sheet. The next morning Our Lord is standing in the middle of the little room, full of life, brilliant, divinely alive with beauty and vitality everlasting. Then by His own power, He begins to rise and, without effort, passes straight through the stone roof of the tomb—victorious and free forever!

He rose by His own power, but His glorious victory over death was something He deserved, something He had prayed to obtain. He deserved it by His humble submission to His Father's Will.

"He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross; and for this reason God raised Him up and gave Him a name that is above every name." He prayed for it during His earthly life. In the Garden of Olives, He said, *"Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as Thou wilt."* It was not His Father's will, however, that He be freed from drinking the chalice of obedience even to death on the cross; but rather that having drunk it, He be raised up to the glory that His humility and obedience deserved.

His prayer, *"Not as I will, but as Thou wilt,"* though coming after His other petition, was no mere pious formality. He meant it, positively and wholeheartedly, as much as He meant His petition to be delivered from *"the chalice."* On Easter Sunday, when His Father's Will was actually accomplished in His glorious resurrection from the dead, it was the Father's answer to His generous pleading, *"Not as I will, but as Thou wilt."*

***"Lord, enable us to pray as You did,
with confidence that Your Father's Will is full of love for us and
has designs of glory to fulfill in us;
and grant that praying in this way,
we may learn in our sufferings to share Your passion and cross,
that we may thus come to share the glory of Your resurrection."***

The Ascension of Our Lord

Second Glorious Mystery

Our Lord did not go to heaven alone on Ascension Thursday. He carried with Him a vast throng of Saints who had been waiting in Limbo for many long years, some of them for many long centuries, until this happy day. It was Our Lord's own privilege and pleasure to throw open to them this day the blessed gates of heaven.

At the same time, He also opened heaven for all men. At the Last Supper, He said to His Apostles, *"In My Father's house there are many mansions. . . I go to prepare a place for you."*

Thus, the mystery of the Ascension is a mystery of hope. It assures us that, if we are generous with our dear Lord, repent of our sins, and die in His grace, heaven is open to us after this life. If we are completely generous and strive to avoid all sin, we shall go straight from this earth to heaven without any delay. What a sublime prospect He has put before us in the mystery of the Ascension!

However, the Ascension is also a mystery of love. At the Last Supper Our Lord gently reprimanded the Apostles saying, *"You heard that I told you: I am going away, and then coming back to you again. If you love me, you would be glad that I am going to The Father."* Our Lord's "going away" in the Ascension meant the final end of His time as Redeemer on earth. It meant His days of suffering, humiliation, and opposition were over at last. The time had come when He was to go, to ascend from earth to heaven, and enjoy glory and everlasting delight with His Father.

To those who truly loved Him, this divinely happy conclusion to the story of His days on earth, including all the suffering and heartache they brought Him, should have meant they were glad for His sake, even though they grieved to see Him go. Yet, at the Last Supper, the Apostles did not seem to be thinking of what Our Lord's going away would mean for Him, only what it meant for them. That is why He made His gentle reproach to them.

***Lord, we trust in Your glorious Ascension as the mystery that opens heaven to us.
We confidently place our hope in this mystery and have certain expectation that
one day we too shall pass happily through the blessed gates of Paradise and
enter upon joy everlasting.***

***In our love of You,
even now while we linger and still struggle along the way of the cross ourselves,
we are glad indeed that Your way of the cross is over,
and that nothing can hurt You anymore;
we rejoice with You and for You in Your glorious Ascension.***

Descent of the Holy Ghost

Third Glorious Mystery

The descent of the Holy Ghost on Pentecost Sunday marked the end of the first “*novena*” in the Catholic Church. Before Our Lord ascended into heaven on Ascension Thursday, He told the Apostles not to leave Jerusalem. He also told them to wait there for the fulfillment of the promises He had made them about the coming of the Holy Ghost.

With joyful confidence in this promise, the Apostles gathered in the same upper room where they had celebrated the Last Supper with Our Lord. There, “*with Mary the Mother of Jesus and His brethren*” they “*were persevering with one mind in prayer.*” They prayed for nine days from Ascension Thursday to Pentecost Sunday—in other words, they made the first “*novena*” in the Catholic Church.

In this regard, they have had countless imitators throughout the ages of Church history. Without attempting to put any special value on the number nine, it is natural for Catholics to feel, if they must put a term to their prayers, and stop at some number, they have a blessed precedent in that first great novena in the Upper Room of Jerusalem.

In another way, while at our own prayers, we often find ourselves to be in an attitude similar to that of the Apostles before Pentecost.

What they were really praying for during *those nine days* was “*to be made worthy of the promises of Christ.*” They hardly knew yet just what those promises meant. Indeed, shortly before His Ascension, some asked Him if His promises meant that He was on the point of “*restoring the kingdom of Israel.*” In other words, they seemed to think the answer to their prayers would be the taking over of earthly, worldly power by Our Lord.

When the answer to their novena of praying actually came on Pentecost Sunday, it turned out to be something very different, yet something far more wonderful, than what the Apostles expected. Instead of mere earthly favors that would have passed away in time, Pentecost brought them everlasting gifts and graces—confirmation in grace, the gift of tongues, understanding of the true meaning of the kingdom of God, and all the extraordinary distinctions that went with being Apostles of Jesus Christ.

During their “*novena,*” they prayed for all this in their perfect trust of Our Lord, even though they did not realize it. In our own novenas, we offer our most fervent prayers to God, without realizing the great things Our Lord or Our Lady want to grant us through our prayer and without realizing for what we really pray.

***“Lord, grant that in our prayers we may trust You perfectly,
as the Apostles and Our Lady did in the first novena before Pentecost,
that we may be made truly “worthy of the promises of Christ.”*”**

Assumption of Our Lady into Heaven

Fourth Glorious Mystery

The mystery of the Assumption actually contains two mysteries: the mystery of Our Lady's holy death and the mystery of the resurrection of her body by its being reunited with her soul, and taken up, or "assumed," into heaven.

The mystery of Our Lady's death is a mystery of love. The Saints say she died of love and longing rather than of any disease. Indeed, she had great reason to be "longing." After Our Lord's Ascension, Our Lady remained on earth for twenty or more years. How Our Lord could have left her on earth for so long is a mystery. Without Him, the world was a barren, bitter desert for her. Knowing His great love for His Mother, we might almost say that heaven must have seemed empty for Him until she was there.

Yet, He left her on earth for those twenty long years. He must have had a very good reason for doing so, but to us it a mystery. Still, mystery or not, it is a great source of consolation to us, in our lonely hours or days or year, to remember the loneliness of Our Lady during her twenty lonely years and to think that she understands perfectly just how we feel.

The mystery of her Assumption is also a mystery of extraordinary and miraculous gratitude on the part of her Divine Son in return for what she did for Him and the human race in giving her consent to His Incarnation. Out of her chaste flesh, by the Power of the Holy Ghost, she supplied the Body He wished to assume and the Blood He wished to shed for human redemption. He might have become her Son without asking her consent but He deigned to make it dependent upon her cooperation. She gave her consent and cooperation most generously even though she knew it would involve untold suffering and heartbreak for herself. In grateful return, in her case, He disposed with the ordinary law of, "*Dust thou art, and into dust thou shalt return,*" and raised her up to heaven soon after her death—body and soul.

***"Dear Lady, in our lonely hours,
help us to be patient and conformed to God's holy Will as you were; and
in the suffering or even heartbreak that God may ask of us,
help us remember that He is infinitely grateful."***

Coronation of Our Lady

Fifth Glorious Mystery

Our Lady's coronation in heaven marks an end and a beginning for her great part in God's work of human redemption.

It is the ending of the story of Our Lady's life on earth.

Externally, her story might seem very much like the lives of many other housewives and mothers occupied with the humdrum daily routine of cooking, sweeping, and sewing. Even seeing her husband die and her Son leave home to accomplish His life work may seem ordinary. Externally, her life is marked extraordinary by the tragic heartbreaking execution of that Son on a malefactor's gibbet.

Inwardly, however, there was the suspense and grandeur of an absorbing drama or, rather, of a great "love story," the story of the love of Mary for Jesus and of Jesus and Mary for the souls of men. For Mary, that love story meant longing, striving, and suffering; great hopes and terrible trials; and, finally, death, dreary separation, and long years of waiting. Thankfully, with her coronation in heaven, their sad time of trial and separation was over and "they lived happily ever after."

Her coronation was also the beginning of her work to bring happiness to heaven, earth, and purgatory. Heaven, with all its angels and saints, would find in her a constant source of admiration and heavenly joy. Her beauty and perfection in every feature and line, every action, every characteristic, would delight the angels and saints forever. Earth, with its sinners and its suffering mortals, would rejoice in her as its "life, its sweetness, its hope." Even purgatory would receive the benefit of happiness from her for, as the Saints say, especially on her great feast days she was to descend to purgatory and release and relieve countless poor souls.

***"Dear Lady, crowned Queen of Angels and Saints in Heaven,
we rejoice in the happy end to your own love story.
We rejoice in seeing you and your dear Son "live happily ever after."
We pray that someday,
through your power as our Queen and your tenderness as our Mother,
we too may share the joy of living happily with you and Jesus forever!"***

Imprimi Potest:

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Provincial, Saint Louis Province
Redemptorist Fathers, February 27, 1957

Imprimatur:

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Archbishop of Saint Louis



This e-book was produced by:

The Seraphim Company, Inc.

8528 Kenosha Drive
Colorado Springs, CO 80908-5000

www.servi.org