



*Meditations on the
Mysteries of the Rosary*

Nihil Obstat: Father Alfred Wilder, O.P., Ph.D.
Censor Librorum
November 20, 2015

Imprimatur: David R. Choby, D.D., J.C.L.
Bishop of Nashville
December 3, 2015

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Nashville, Tennessee 37228-1909

Meditations

on

the



*Mysteries
of the
Rosary*

composed by
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January 1, 2016

“Hail Mary, full of Grace!”

It is fitting that we celebrate this 800th Jubilee of the Order of Preachers with a renewal of our devotion to the Holy Rosary of Our Lady. This long-familiar prayer, which engages our minds, our hearts, and our bodies, is a means of deepening our relationship with her who is both our mother and protector. As Dominicans we wear this rosary at our side; we pray it in community and in private, and we cling to it before sleep at the end of the day. The rosary is placed in our hands at “the hour of our death,” and it accompanies us at burial, in the “Amen” of earthly life. Always, Our Lady takes us to Jesus. Pondering with her the mysteries and wonders of her Son is foundational to growth in our relationship with Him. The rosary is our weapon in the battle against evil, a visible sign of the protection of the Mother of God and a constant call to fidelity as we navigate a new and widespread secularism and materialism.

During this 800th Jubilee of the Dominican Order may we find new ways to bring the rosary, this gift of Our Lady, to the people of our time.

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

In Mary Help of the Weak,

Mother Ann Marie Karlovic, O.P.

Prioress General of the Dominican Sisters
of St. Cecilia Congregation

The images in this booklet are photographs of stained glass windows in the exonarthex of the Chapel of St. Cecilia at the motherhouse of the Dominican Sisters of St. Cecilia, Nashville, Tennessee. Based on engravings by Albrecht Dürer and Hans (Leonhard) Schäufelin (Schäufelein), these rosary windows were crafted by the Franz Mayer Studios in Munich, Germany, using the grisaille technique.



INTRODUCTION

As the Order of Preachers celebrates the 800th anniversary of its approval by Pope Honorius III on December 22, 1216, we thank God for the graces He has bestowed on and through the Dominican family. Among these is the call to promote the rosary as a means of contemplating the mystery of Christ as the revelation of the Father's love.

While the rosary, in the form in which we pray it today, has developed over centuries, it is fitting that it was entrusted to the family of Saint Dominic to promote in a special way. Saint Dominic tirelessly meditated on the Word of God, and he had deep devotion to Mary as Mother of Christ and Mother of the Church and of his Order.

Pope Saint John Paul II summarized well the Christocentric and Mariological character of the rosary, in his apostolic letter, *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, "With the rosary," he writes, "the Christian people sits at the school of Mary and is led to contemplate the beauty on the face of Christ and to experience the depths of his love."¹ Later in the letter, he notes that the Dominican Order has highlighted the proclamation of the truth of Christ especially at times when error has abounded, and he affirms the perennial value of the rosary for evangelization.

On January 1, 2008, Father Carlos Azpiroz Costa, Master General of the Order of Preachers, called for a renewal of the prayer and preaching of the rosary, especially in light of the Jubilee of the Order. He writes, "I am proposing that we begin to renew our preaching way of life through re-discovering the rosary as a means of contemplation and an instrument of prophetic preaching." In the course of the letter, he develops his proposal, focusing on the aspects of memory, theological reflection, and popular religious practice. He highlights the ways in which the graces we ponder in the lives of Jesus and Mary are not mere

historical reflections, but rather portraits of the presence of God in every moment and every person – alive and acting in and through us. He writes, “The mystery of the Incarnation is not only about the birth of the Lord in millennia past, but about the incarnation of grace, or the birth of God, in our own daily lives. Jesus lives and His Spirit continues to heal, teach, forgive, comfort and challenge us. This is not an empty abstraction, but rather is made visible in and through the images associated with the mysteries of the rosary.”

Many tools have been developed to aid the faithful in praying the rosary. This booklet offers meditations based first on the Word of God, drawn especially from the Gospels and the Letters of Saint Paul, the wellsprings from which Saint Dominic constantly drew the waters of his own contemplation. In addition to the Scriptures, these meditations include thoughts from the writings of the saints of the Order of Preachers, namely Saint Thomas Aquinas and Saint Catherine of Siena. Like our holy father Dominic, they found in meditating on the Word Made Flesh a constant source of grace and inspiration. Finally, these reflections likewise offer an invitation to pray for the divine gifts central in the teaching of Saint Thomas Aquinas – the theological and cardinal virtues, and the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit – the gifts freely bestowed on us by God in Baptism, by which we become ever more conformed to Christ.



*Mary was a
young woman of faith,
who trusted in
God's word
because she believed
in God
with all of her being.*





JOYFUL MYSTERIES





First Joyful Mystery – The Annunciation

(Luke 1:26-38)

The Theological Virtue of Faith

We know the story so well that we can forget how astonishing it would have been for a simple girl from a humble village to be asked to become the mother of the Son of God. The angel Gabriel announces to Mary, “Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a Son, and you shall name him Jesus... The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God.”² Amidst the surprise and wonder that such news would awaken in her heart, Mary was a young woman of faith, who trusted in God’s word because she believed in God with all of her being.

Faith, according to the Letter to the Hebrews, is “the realization of what is hoped for and evidence of things not seen.”³ Mary believed that God could fulfill his promise, not because she could see clearly every step of the journey, but because she freely surrendered herself to the One whose identity and plan were beyond her understanding, yet worthy of her trust. Saint Thomas Aquinas writes, “Just as the Blessed Virgin conceived Christ in her body, so every pious soul conceives Him spiritually.”⁴

By the virtue of faith, we believe in God as First Truth, and we believe all that He reveals because of our faith in Him. Saint Thomas distinguishes lifeless faith from living faith by its union with charity.⁵ Saint Catherine notes of the soul surrendered to the Holy Spirit, “Because she has put no trust in herself she is crowned with living faith and fulfilled hope.”⁶ May we be open to living faith like that of Mary, ready to welcome God’s word with belief and love, echoing her response, “May it be done to me according to your word.”⁷



Second Joyful Mystery – The Visitation

(Luke 1:39-56)

The Spirit's Fruit of Kindness

One who has the grace of God within does not remain closed in self-concern. Mary, full of grace and bearing Christ within her, could not fail to go out of herself in response to the needs of her elderly relative, Elizabeth. Knowing that Elizabeth had, by God's great kindness, been granted the gift of a child, "Mary set out and traveled to the hill country in haste to a town of Judah, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth."⁸ She remained there for three months, generously serving, so that Elizabeth could welcome her child in peace and security.

God is the source and pattern of all kindness. Saint Paul writes to Titus: "But when the kindness and generous love of God our Savior appeared, not because of any righteous deeds we had done but because of his mercy, He saved us through the bath of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom He richly poured out on us through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that we might be justified by his grace and become heirs in hope of eternal life."⁹

Kindness is among the fruits of the Holy Spirit that Saint Paul lists in the Letter to the Galatians.¹⁰ Saint Thomas Aquinas explains that when the Spirit moves in persons, the fruits of this action are evident in the delight they find in good acts. Those who show spiritual kindness, he writes, are those in whom the fire of love "has kindled the desire to be kind to their neighbor."¹¹ God the Father says to Saint Catherine of Siena, "The service you cannot render me you must do for your neighbors. Thus it will be evident that you have me within your soul by grace."¹² May we witness to God in us by reaching out with kindness to those before us.