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*Our Lady of the  
Rosary with Child  
by Cantarini, 1650.*



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## BISHOP BARRES' MARIAN REFLECTION ON OUR LADY OF THE ROSARY AND THE POWER OF THE ROSARY IN OUR DAILY LIVES

### **Introduction: Our Lady of the Rosary and October as the Month of the Rosary**

The Blessed Virgin Mary is involved in the life of every believer. When we pray a daily Rosary, we draw near to her, and she always points us to her Son. In the Rosary, we go to Jesus through Mary.

We seek the intercession of Our Lady of the Rosary during October, the Month of the Rosary, to help us to pray the Rosary more deeply, more contemplatively, more biblically and more apostolically.

The daily rhythm of the Rosary is essential to the daily rhythm of our lives. When we are faithful to the daily Rosary, Mary, Our Lady of the Rosary, teaches us the power of silence and expands within us the capacity for



contemplative concentration in all aspects of our prayer lives. As a powerful prayer for peace, the Rosary helps us to cultivate interior peace, peace within our families, peace in the Church we love, peace in our cities<sup>1</sup> and peace in the world.

In his 2002 Apostolic Letter *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, Pope Saint John Paul II described the power of the Rosary in the lives of the saints and in the history of the Church.<sup>2</sup> He emphasized the Rosary as both a biblical and contemplative prayer, and by adding the Luminous Mysteries, he said that the Rosary is a true “compendium of the Gospel” that leads us deeper into the mystery of Christ.

## “WITH MARY BY OUR SIDE, THE MYSTERIES TEACH US AND LEAD US TO HOLINESS AND A DEEPER CATHOLIC MISSIONARY SPIRIT.”

The Joyful, Luminous, Sorrowful and Glorious Mysteries focus us on the Gospels, so praying the Rosary deepens our bond with the Lord. By picking up our Rosary and thumbing the beads, we meet Him in the midst of our day, and we meet Him with Our Lady.

Mary’s presence in the mysteries models for us a Marian approach to *lectio divina* or meditation on the divinely inspired Sacred Scriptures.<sup>3</sup> The contemplative and peaceful rhythm of the Hail Mary, prayed while meditating on a Gospel mystery, helps us enter the mysteries with Mary as our guide. With Mary by our side, the mysteries teach us and lead us to holiness and a deeper Catholic missionary spirit.

### The Joyful Mysteries of the Holy Rosary

Pope Saint John Paul II writes: “The Rosary is a prayer for peace because of the fruits of charity which it produces. When prayed well in a truly meditative way, the Rosary leads to an encounter with Christ in his mysteries and so cannot fail to draw attention to the face of Christ in others, especially in the most afflicted. How could one possibly contemplate the mystery of the Child of Bethlehem, in the Joyful Mysteries, without experiencing the desire to welcome, defend and promote life, and to shoulder the burdens of suffering children all over the world? How could one possibly follow in the footsteps of Christ the Revealer, in the Mysteries of Light, without resolving to bear witness to his ‘Beatitudes’ in daily life? And how could one contemplate Christ carrying the Cross and Christ Crucified, without feeling the need to act as a ‘Simon of Cyrene’ for our brothers and sisters weighed down by grief or crushed

by despair? Finally, how could one possibly gaze upon the glory of the Risen Christ or of Mary Queen of Heaven, without yearning to make this world more beautiful, more just, more closely conformed to God’s plan?” (*Rosarium Virginis Mariae* 40)

Our Lady teaches us a spirit of joy and peace within the rhythm of the Holy Rosary. The Joyful Mysteries of the Holy Rosary help us to deepen the peaceful joy we experience in the presence of Our Lord and Our Lady.

The rhythm of the Joyful Mysteries enriches and directs our lives. In the *Annunciation*, Mary teaches us how a consistent and deep “yes” to God’s will is nourished in silence. In the *Visitation*, she accompanies us in all our Good Samaritan visitations to our extended families, the sick, the elderly, the poor and the suffering. In the *Nativity*, Our Lady teaches us simplicity and poverty and a spirit of wonder and adoration. In the *Presentation*, she cultivates a reverence in us for the elderly and the radiant presence of her Son in those who suffer with Alzheimer’s and dementia. She reminds us that a virtuous and holy life leads us to the Cross and often to being “a sign of contradiction.” In the *Finding of the Child Jesus in the Temple*, Our Lady impresses on us the urgency to find Jesus in all we do and to have a sensitivity to the presence of Jesus at each moment of life.



## The Luminous Mysteries of the Holy Rosary

Each of us is called to be an Apostle of the Rosary. The prayerful power of the Rosary helps to bring peace, harmony and unity within marriages and families.

In the Epiclesis at the Catholic Mass, the priest calls down the power of the Holy Spirit upon the gifts of bread and wine and upon all the families he serves in his parish and mystically on all families throughout the world.

How life-changing the Rosary can be for a home! Husbands and wives experience hurts, conflict, differences of temperament or personality, disagreements about duties and tasks, hurtful words that wound, misunderstandings, pride and self-will, and temptations to infidelity. The Rosary brings light and grace into these areas of darkness.

The contemplative rhythm of the Rosary (or just a decade prayed together daily) can gradually help couples and family members begin to change negative and abrasive relational patterns into a new rhythm of intimacy, gentleness, humility, forgiveness and a refined fidelity. These movements of grace between Our Lord, Our Lady and a married couple have a profound impact on their children and extended family and their daily parenting.

The spirit of prayer behind the Rosary reveals that marriages are deepened and strengthened in unity, fidelity and indissolubility when a couple focuses on the love and will of God together. The Rosary is a powerful prayer for harmonious relationships and healing between parents, their sons and daughters and all family members.

The rhythm of the Luminous Mysteries enriches and directs our lives. In the *Baptism of the Lord*, Our Lady teaches her sons and daughters to die to sin and rise in grace. She teaches us to be faithful to our own baptismal call to holiness and mission and the baptismal rhythm of our experience of the Paschal Mystery. In the *Wedding Feast of Cana*, Mary teaches us to support and serve marriages and families and to be courageous in proclaiming the informed and prayerful assent due the Church's objectively true moral teaching in regard to marriage and family life. In the *Call to Conversion and the Proclamation of the Kingdom of God*, Our Lady teaches us to be completely open to conversion in our own lives and to advance the Kingdom of God in the evangelizing mission of the Catholic Church. In the *Transfiguration*, she teaches us to allow our minds, hearts and souls to be transfigured in every dimension of the liberating Splendor of Catholic Truth. In the *Institution of the Eucharist*, Our Lady asks us to "rekindle Eucharistic amazement" understanding with Pope Benedict XVI that every effective moment of Church reform and evangelization in history involves a rediscovery of the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist.

## The Sorrowful Mysteries of the Holy Rosary

In his book *The World's First Love*, Venerable Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen draws on the insights and intuitions of Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804-1864), a pivotal figure in the history of American literature. Hawthorne was not Catholic, but looking in from the outside, he appreciated the Church's Marian devotion and doctrine. He wrote: "I have always envied the Catholics that sweet, sacred, Virgin Mother who stands between them and the Deity, intercepting somewhat his awful splendor, but permitting his love to stream on the worshiper more intelligibly to human comprehension through the medium of a woman's tenderness."<sup>4</sup>

Little did Nathaniel Hawthorne know his profound appreciation of Marian devotion from outside the Catholic Church would one day be experienced by his daughter, Servant of God Sr. Rose Hawthorne (1851-1926), from inside the Catholic Church. Sr. Rose was the foundress of the Dominican Sisters of Hawthorne and devoted to Good Samaritan-service of those suffering with cancer.

What a truth this story relates! God's providential designs are so often expressed and accomplished through the intercession and love of Our Lady. Our Lady at the Foot of the Cross teaches us to embrace the power and mystery of the Cross. She teaches us about the Triumph of the Holy Cross in our lives and in the mission of the Church to the world.

The rhythm of the Sorrowful Mysteries, complimented by the Stations of the Cross, enriches and directs our lives. In the *Agony in the Garden*, Our Lady comes to us in our existential moments of loneliness and times when we are misunderstood or treated poorly or ignored. In the *Scourging at the Pillar*, she helps us to accept the different stripes of humiliation that inevitably come to us, and she teaches us how to deepen humility, expel pettiness and return blessings for insults with peaceful magnanimity and humility. In the *Crowning of Thorns*, Mary teaches us how to handle and process all forms of mental suffering from temptations to the tendency to brood and obsess over problems, vexations and humiliations. She helps us to practice the presence of God and to adore, praise and thank Our Lord precisely when we are tempted to waste valuable time on negative ruminations. In the *Carrying of the Cross*, Our Lady teaches us to carry our daily Crosses with courage and conviction. She teaches us to be Simon of Cyrenes always ready to assist those around us to carry the Crosses of life. She also helps us to be open to the Simon of Cyrenes that help us to carry the Crosses of our lives. In the *Crucifixion*, Our Lady teaches us to live Christ crucified and, with the intercession of Saint John the Evangelist, to Behold our Mother. She teaches us the contemplative concentration and understanding of the Sacrifice of Calvary renewed at each Mass that she models at the Foot of the Cross.



## The Glorious Mysteries of the Holy Rosary

In *The Everlasting Man*, G.K. Chesterton captured the power of our Lord's Resurrection in history. He wrote: "Christendom has had a series of revolutions and in each one of them Christianity has died. Christianity has died many times and risen again; for it had a God who knew the way out of the grave."

We celebrate this Risen Everlasting Man who knew his way out of the grave and who constantly invites us and the Universal Church to a great Resurrection.

The Glorious Mysteries of the Holy Rosary help us to realize even more deeply that the Resurrection of Jesus Christ is the very foundation of our lives.

It is the foundation of our daily reality and existence.

Saint Paul writes: "If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile." (1 Cor 15:17)

The Resurrection of Christ is the foundation of our faith and the "fulcrum" of Salvation history and of our lives on earth.

The rhythm of the Glorious Mysteries enriches and directs our lives. In the *Resurrection*, Our Lady teaches us to embrace the power of the Risen Christ and to let the light that streams through His glorified wounds heal our wounds and in so doing help us to touch and heal the wounds of humanity. In the *Ascension*, she teaches us to have a burning desire for Eternal Life and Heaven and to be instruments of cultivating in the people we serve this same burning desire which casts heavenly light on every decision, problem and practical question we face in life. In the *Mystery of Pentecost*, Mary shows us how to live the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit and how to trust the presence of the Holy Spirit in the Word of God, the Sacraments and the global worldwide mission of the Church. She teaches at the heart of the Church to be open to the tongues of flame of the Holy Spirit purifying us and driving us on mission. In the *Assumption*, Our Lady teaches us to cultivate a love for her, to appreciate her presence in the Scriptures, the lives of the saints and the miraculous Marian apparitions that are part of world and salvation history. In the *Coronation of Our Lady, Queen of Heaven and Earth*, she teaches us that she is the Queen of Evangelization assisting us to be creative and to meet the actual needs of the people we serve and evangelize. She urges us to always keep the glorious Face of Jesus Christ and a burning desire for Eternal Life and Happiness with God at the center of our lives.



**Conclusion:**  
**Our Lady of the Rosary is the  
Apocalyptic "Woman clothed with  
the Sun" in the Book of Revelation  
and the Practical Intercessor for  
Marriages and Families in the  
Wedding Feast of Cana**

Our Lady has a cosmic and apocalyptic significance in Salvation history as expressed in the 12<sup>th</sup> Chapter of the Book of Revelation. Mary is the "woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars." She is the one who, in and through her Son, is powerful against the great dragon and crushes the head of the serpent.

The Luminous Mystery of the Wedding Feast of Cana in John 2 reminds us that Our Lady's help is available to us in the problems of family and daily life. Reading the Cana





story, we know that what the Blessed Virgin did for that newly married couple and their families she does continually for us: She aids us by interceding with her Son and reminding us to do whatever her Son tells us to do.

Pope Saint John Paul II tells us: “Christ is the supreme Teacher, the revealer and the one revealed. It is not just a question of learning what he taught but of ‘learning him.’ In this regard could we have any better teacher than Mary? From the divine standpoint, the Spirit is the interior teacher who leads us to the full truth of Christ (cf. John 14:26; 15:26; 16:13). But among creatures no one knows Christ better than Mary; no one can introduce us to a profound knowledge of his mystery better than his Mother.” (*Rosarium Virginis Mariae* 14)

Our Lady, Queen of the Rosary, pray for us!

Saint Louis Grignon de Montfort, pray for us!

Pope Saint John Paul II, pray for us! †

Most Reverend John O. Barres  
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<sup>1</sup> See Pope Francis’ 2013 Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelium Gaudium*, 71-75. This section is entitled, “Challenges from Urban Cultures.”

<sup>2</sup> See the Vatican website.

<sup>3</sup> See Pope Benedict XVI’s 2010 Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum Domini*, 27-28.

<sup>4</sup> Venerable Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen, *The World’s First Love: Mary, Mother of God* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1996) 230. I discovered this quote in the July 2019 edition of the *Magnificat*.



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