

Meditations On The Mysteries Of The Rosary

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Catholic Truth Society of Oregon No.pr057 (1961)

INTRODUCTION.

The Rosary is the favorite prayer of heaven and earth. No other prayer has been recommended by Our Lady in her visitations from heaven to earth like the Rosary. No other prayer has been so frequently praised, commended, and even commanded by the Popes, or enriched by them with such great indulgences, as the Rosary.

We live in the age of the Rosary. The family rosary, the block rosary, the living rosary at solemn public functions are part and parcel 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. But 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 ("a Niagara in reverse", it has been called,) 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 externals, 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. But 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? Surely, on this occasion 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. But her prayer, in the depth and richness and power of her fullness of grace, is the mightiest prayer that has ever gone up to God for the coming of the Redeemer.

And as she prays, there does come, from the mercy of God and in answer to her own longing, and her 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.

But by God's design, Saint Gabriel will do more than 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 is His ambassador, come 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 still is true that God condescended to make the Incarnation and our redemption dependent on her consent. And at the moment before she gave her consent all heaven was silent, breathlessly awaiting the word she would speak.

How shall this be done?

And Saint Gabriel, whose name means ‘the power of God’, replied:

The Holy Ghost shall come upon You, and the power of the most High shall overshadow You.

And Mary said:

Behold the handmaid of the Lord: be it done unto me according to your word.

And 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 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: “You shall conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus,” the Archangel Gabriel gave her this sign: “Behold Elizabeth your Cousin has 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.” Our Lady’s generous heart was moved with joy at this unexpected good news about her cousin, over and above the joy and amazement she felt at her own sublime privilege; 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 (and we can ponder fondly on the details of that conversation, and the sacrifice it must have caused good Saint Joseph). Then she set out on the long journey. From Nazareth to the home of Zachary and Elizabeth was a four-day trip by caravan. We can picture Our Lady either as joining some caravan which happened to be passing through Nazareth and heading towards “the hill country of Judea.” and how she spent the four days of the journey in the rough company of camel drivers and merchants; or else we can picture her as traveling alone — with all the hardships such a journey would entail.

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 are you that have believed,” says Saint Elizabeth, knowing by divine inspiration what had happened to her cousin; and in the 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, was given to recognize the approach of His Lord and Master, and announced His coming even then by leaping in his mother’s womb. And Our Lady replied with the sublime act of gratitude and joy, which is her Magnificat:

My soul does magnify the Lord; and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior... For lo, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed; because He that is mighty has 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; no doubt, 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 may ponder the objections raised by friends and neighbors, and the simple unassuming insistence of Joseph and Mary on doing what they know to be their duty. We may 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.

And in Bethlehem, we may follow them as they try to find lodging and are put off at every door until finally Saint Joseph finds refuge in the stable under the hill behind the town.

And then as the moment of the actual birth of Our Lord approaches, we may 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 on guard near the opening, and Our Lady kneeling in prayer.

And then as she kneels and prays, the Virgin Birth! One writer has drawn the picture in the following manner. 'At one moment, she kneels with hands joined, alone; the next moment, she has her Child in her arms. As after His Resurrection He was to come to His Apostles on Easter Sunday night, the doors being shut, 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; only unmixed joyful tenderness that a man, the Man-God, her baby, was born into the world.'

THE PRESENTATION.

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. But He still claimed them for His own, precisely because He had spared them. When the Hebrews left Egypt, He decreed that 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 instead of the

first-born of each family of all the twelve tribes. 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. And 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 had been born and conceived a priest, and He would be a priest forever.

Our Lord, however, in His earthly life wished “to fulfill all justice.” So He said 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 consider this mystery also 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 then he went on to tell her: “Your 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, the Mother of Sorrows. But she knew that 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. And even with her heart pierced by the sword of sorrow, she knew she was “blessed” to be called to be the Mother of such a Son.

FINDING 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 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, in which the men were separated from the women. Hence, Our Lady and Saint Joseph were not together for the first part of the journey. And 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: how they went through the entire caravan, then retraced their steps to Jerusalem, stopping at every likely place along the way, at toll-houses, publicans stalls, wayside inns, village wells, public squares, asking over and over the same eager, anxious question: “Have you seen a little Boy pass by this way?”

Picture Our Lord too during those three days in Jerusalem. The daytime He probably spent in the temple. But where did He spend the nights? And 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?

But finally, the glad reunion came. Our Lady's exclamation as she clasped her Son to her heart might seem at first sight a reproach, but it finally 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.

And Our Lord's answer, while deep and mysterious, was no less full of joy and relief as He returned His Mother's fond embrace. He was as much as saying: Didn't you know I'd be all right, and only some 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?

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, malicious hatred; the reviling and spitting in His face; the spectacle of a wild mob thirsting for His own Blood, yelling fiercely: "Crucify Him, crucify Him!" He feared the scourging, the crowning with thorns, the terrible strain of the carrying of the cross. He shrank most of all from the prospect of death.

It was the shrinking of human nature from things hard for human nature. And as Our Lord had the perfect human nature, His shrinking was all the keener; in fact, it was the keenest that could possibly be felt in the face of things hard for human nature.

He feared also the contact with sin. Entering upon His Passion, He was taking upon Himself as the Lamb of God all the sins of the world. But 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. It was to him as if He had been plunged in some vile cesspool of corruption. From this contact, His human nature shrank in mortal fear.

So intense was His fear that it forced a bloody sweat from His pores, which soaked His garments and ran down upon the ground. Only supreme mortal terror could produce so shocking an effect. Lord, grant to us the grace of avoiding sin — by the fear that You did feel for sin in the garden!

But 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. But 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 Your sadness in the garden, grant me the grace to be ungrateful to You no longer.

SCOURGING AT THE PILLAR.

SECOND SORROWFUL MYSTERY.

Twice Pilate had said: "I do not find Him guilty of anything." But 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!"

"Therefore..." 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 of ennobling their suffering by sharing it in turn with Him.

Then the scourging itself was a terrible shame and agony. Even the pagan Roman considered it so brutal that their law forbade it to be imposed on any Roman citizen. Saint Paul was a Roman citizen, and once when he was condemned to be scourged, protested that it was illegal, and so, on this occasion (Acts 22), escaped punishment.

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

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

Lord, by the injustice, the shame, the torture of Your scourging, teach me patience, humility, and holy purity!

CROWNING 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." His own clothes had been put on again after Our Lord's scourging at the pillar. Now they were torn off once more, just when they were beginning 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 their 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 campfire nearby 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 in 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; but 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 Yours!

CARRYING OF THE CROSS.

FOURTH SORROWFUL MYSTERY.

It was Roman law that condemned criminals had 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 Isaiah (see Isaiah 53:2):

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 it was not His crimes but ours that He was carrying with the cross. And in doing so, He was giving us the inspiration to carry our own cross with patience and resignation.

“Jesus, carrying my cross for me, help me to carry mine with You!”

His meeting with His holy Mother must have been heart-rending for them both. The sight of a loved one suffering is harder than to suffer oneself. What was the consolation they could 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 You; let me pity myself less, and learn to pity You, and grow to love You ever more and more!

THE CRUCIFIXION.

FIFTH SORROWFUL MYSTERY.

The physical agony of the cross consisted not so much in the fact that nails pierced the hands and feet, as that the nails pierced living nerves in the hands, and the criminal was suspended by the nails through these nerves. Any one who has had the experience in an accident or in 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, some physicians who have tried to determine the exact cause of Our Lord's Death trace it to this fact of 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; literally died of pain!

Jesus, dying of pain for me, teach me to suffer patiently for You!

The mental sufferings of Our Lord on the cross were even more terrible. "My God, my God, why have You forsaken Me?" was the expression of this mental suffering. (See Psalm 22, the first line of which Our Lord was quoting.) On Mount Tabor His Father had said from heaven: "This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased!" And 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 (or so it seemed to the prophetic visionary, and so it must have seemed to Our Lord Himself); and if He heard a voice, it was the stern relentless voice of divine justice; "For the sins of My people I have struck Him!" (Isaiah 53:8.) Christ was fulfilling the prophecies of Psalm 22 and at the same time was experiencing the agonies of spirit, which the prophet-king, David had penned nearly one thousand years earlier. Such inexpressible mental agony! 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, seemingly abandoned even by Your Father for my sins, help me to abandon all sin for You!

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."

But Our Lord's resurrection must have been a glorious moment for Himself and 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. Of a sudden the dark silent chamber is filled with light; there is a quiver and a thrill beneath the winding sheet; and the next moment Our Lord is standing in the middle of the little room, a-flush, brilliant, divinely alive with beauty and vitality everlasting. Then by His own power, He begins to rise and passes without an effort straight through the stone roof of the tomb, victorious and free forever.

He rose by His own power; but this glorious victory over death was also 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." And He prayed for it

during His earthly life; among other occasions, when 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 You will." It was not His Father's will, however, that He be freed from drinking the chalice of obedience even to the death of the cross; but rather that having drunk it, He be raised up to the glory which His humility and obedience deserved. And His prayer: "Not as I will, but as You will," 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." And when on Easter Sunday His Father's Will was actually accomplished in His glorious resurrection from the dead, it was only the answer to His generous pleading: "Not as I will, but as You will."

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.

ASCENSION OF OUR LORD.

SECOND GLORIOUS MYSTERY.

Our Lord did not go to heaven alone on Ascension Thursday. According to many theologians, He carried with Him a vast throng of Saints who had been waiting in Limbo for many long years, some of them for 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 opened heaven also for all men. At the Last Supper He had 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; and 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!

But it is also a mystery of love. At the Last Supper Our Lord had a gentle reproof for the Apostles: "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 that His days of suffering, humiliation, opposition were over at last. The time had come when He was to go, to ascend from earth, to heaven, and enjoy glory and delight everlasting with His Father.

To those who truly love Him, this divinely happy ending of the story of His days on earth, and all the sufferings and heartaches they had brought Him should have meant that they too were glad for His sake, even though they grieved to see Him go. But the Apostles at the Last Supper had not seemed to be thinking of what Our Lord's going away would mean for Him, but only what it meant for them. And that is the reason why He addressed to them His gentle reproof.

Lord, we trust in Your glorious Ascension as the mystery that opens heaven to us too. 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. And 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 any more; 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 had told the Apostles not to leave Jerusalem, but 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, and there “with Mary the Mother of Jesus and His brethren” they “were persevering with one mind in prayer.” And 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 down through the ages of the history of the Church; for without attempting to put any special value on the number nine itself, it is very natural for Catholics to feel that - if they must put a term to their prayers, and stop at some number, - surely they have a blessed precedent in that first great novena in the Upper Room of Jerusalem.

And in another way, we often find ourselves at our own prayers to be in a very similar attitude 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 as yet, just what those promises meant. Indeed, just shortly before His Ascension some of them 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 that the answer to their prayers would be the taking over of earthly, worldly power by Our Lord.

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

All this they had been praying for in their perfect trust of Our Lord, during their “novena,” even though they did not realize it. So we too, in our own novenas, offer the most fervent prayers to God, without at times realizing the great things Our Lord or Our Lady really want to grant us through our prayer, that we really are praying for.

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.

FOURTH GLORIOUS MYSTERY.

The mystery of the Assumption really contains two: the mystery of Our Lady’s holy death, and that 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. She died rather of love and longing than of any disease, so say the Saints. And indeed, she had reason to be "longing." For twenty years or more after Our Lord's Ascension, she had remained on earth; and it is a mystery how Our Lord could have left her there so long. Without Him, all the world was a barren, bitter desert to her; and even to Him in heaven with His great love for His Mother, we might almost say, heaven must have seemed empty until she was there.

Yet, He left her on earth for those twenty I 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 years 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 did deign to make it dependent of her cooperation. She gave her consent and cooperation most generously even though she knew it would involve untold suffering and heartbreak for herself. And in grateful return, He disposed with the ordinary law of "Dust you are, and into dust you shall return" in her case, and raised her up very soon after her death, body and soul to heaven.

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 to 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 in her great part in God's work of human redemption.

It is the "happy ending" of the story of her life on earth. That story might have seemed externally very much like the lives of many other housewives and mothers, occupied with the humdrum routine tasks of cooking, sweeping, sewing, day after day; seeing her husband die and her Son leave home for His life work; and marked out as extraordinary only by the tragic heartbreaking execution of that Son on a malefactor's gibbet. But inwardly, 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. That love story meant for Mary longing, striving, suffering; great hopes and terrible trials; death, dreary separation, long years of waiting. But with her coronation in heaven the sad period of trial and separation was over, and "they lived happily ever after."

And her coronation was also the beginning of her work of bringing happiness to heaven and earth and purgatory. Heaven with all its angels and saints was to find in her a constant source of admiration and heavenly joy; her beauty, her perfection in every feature and line, every action, every characteristic, was to ravish the angels and saints forever. Earth with its sinners and its suffering mortals was to rejoice in her as its "life, its sweetness, its hope." Even purgatory was to

receive the benefit of happiness from her, for as the Saints say, she was to descend to purgatory especially on her great feast days and release and relieve countless poor souls.

Dear Lady, crowned Queen of angels and saints in heaven, we rejoice in the happy ending of your own love story, in seeing that you and your dear Son “live happily ever after,” and we pray that some day through your power as our Queen and your tenderness as our Mother, we too may share that joy of living happily with you and Jesus forever!

Thanks to Liguorian Pamphlets.
