

Guided reflection in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament

At the start of this Day with the Lord, we have the joy and privilege of spending time with Jesus truly present here with us in the Blessed Sacrament.

Jesus, Our Lord, here in our midst, happy that we are here with Him and wanting to bless us and all those we carry in our hearts and place before Him now.

In this month of October, dedicated in a special way to Mary and the rosary, we recall Mary's role of leading us ever closer to her Son. We entrust ourselves to her motherly care and guidance.

Over a number of centuries, several Popes have called the faithful to pray the Rosary for peace; particularly for those parts of our world torn apart by war and conflict, and for Christians facing persecution for their faith.

The Rosary is by its nature a prayer for peace, since it consists in the contemplation of Christ, the Prince of Peace, the one who is "our peace" (Eph 2:14).

We bring before the Lord those people and areas of our world most in need of peace and safety, and pray too for peace in our hearts, in our families and in our relations with others.

Our time of mediation this morning will be guided by St Pope John Paul II's letter on the Rosary from 2002, in which he stressed that the Rosary was "directed to the contemplation of Christ's face."

"Contemplating the face of Christ" together with the Apostles Peter, James and John on the mountain of the Transfiguration, we begin by listening to St Pope John Paul II's invitation to gaze upon the Lord, whose face shone like the sun, and who invites to share in the life of the Trinity:

"And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun" (Mt 17:2). The Gospel scene of Christ's transfiguration, in which the three Apostles, Peter, James and John appear entranced by the beauty of the Redeemer, can be seen as an icon of Christian contemplation. To look upon the face of Christ, to recognize its mystery amid the daily events and the sufferings of his human life, and then to grasp the divine splendour definitively revealed in the Risen Lord, seated in glory at the right hand of the Father: this is the task of every follower of Christ and therefore the task of each one of us.

In contemplating Christ's face we become open to receiving the mystery of Trinitarian life, experiencing ever anew the love of the Father and delighting in the joy of the Holy Spirit. Saint Paul's words (from the Second letter to the Corinthians) can then be applied to us: "Beholding the glory of the Lord, we are being changed into his likeness, from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit" (2 Cor. 3:18).

We gaze upon the Lord, contemplating the transfigured Christ with Mary... And open our hearts and minds to the Spirit who, changes us, like Mary, into the likeness of Christ... PAUSE

Mary is our model of contemplation... we look to her, and learn from her...

Once more we listen to St John Paul II:

The contemplation of Christ has an incomparable model in Mary. In a unique way the face of the Son belongs to Mary. It was in her womb that Christ was formed, receiving from her a human resemblance which points to an even greater spiritual closeness. No one has ever devoted himself to

the contemplation of the face of Christ as faithfully as Mary. The eyes of her heart already turned to him at the Annunciation, when she conceived him by the power of the Holy Spirit. In the months that followed she began to sense his presence and to picture his features. When at last she gave birth to him in Bethlehem, her eyes were able to gaze tenderly on the face of her Son, as she “wrapped him in swaddling cloths, and laid him in a manger” (Lk2:7).

Thereafter Mary's gaze, ever filled with adoration and wonder, would never leave him. At times it would be a questioning look, as in the episode of the finding in the Temple: “Son, why have you treated us so?” (Lk 2:48); it would always be a penetrating gaze, one capable of deeply understanding Jesus, even to the point of perceiving his hidden feelings and anticipating his decisions, as at (the wedding feast of) Cana (cf. Jn 2:5). At other times it would be a look of sorrow, especially beneath the Cross, where her vision would still be that of a mother giving birth, for Mary not only shared the passion and death of her Son, she also received the new son given to her in the beloved disciple (cf. Jn 19:26-27). On the morning of Easter hers would be a gaze radiant with the joy of the Resurrection, and finally, on the day of Pentecost, a gaze afire with the outpouring of the Spirit (cf. Acts 1:14).

Mary lived with her eyes fixed on Christ, treasuring his every word: “She kept all these things, pondering them in her heart” (Lk2:19; cf. 2:51). The memories of Jesus, impressed upon her heart, were always with her, leading her to reflect on the various moments of her life at her Son's side. In a way those memories were to be the “rosary” which she recited uninterruptedly throughout her earthly life.

Together with Mary, we remember Christ... we recall his life, death and resurrection... we ponder his teachings, his healings... his love and forgiveness... and in doing so, we too are changed, purified and strengthened.

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?

Being conformed to Christ with Mary...

We become like those we spend time with... On our pilgrimage through life, who better to spend time with than Jesus and Mary... what better preparation for our meeting with the Lord at the end of our earthly lives...

Together with Mary we learn Christ...

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. Jn 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.

The first of the “signs” worked by Jesus – the changing of water into wine at the marriage in Cana – clearly presents Mary in the guise of a teacher, as she urges the servants to do what Jesus commands (cf. Jn 2:5). We can imagine that she would have done likewise for the disciples after Jesus’ Ascension, when she joined them in awaiting the Holy Spirit and supported them in their first mission. Contemplating the scenes of the Rosary in union with Mary is a means of learning from her to “read” Christ, to discover his secrets and to understand his message.

Praying to Christ with Mary

Jesus invited us to turn to God with insistence and the confidence that we will be heard: “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you” (Mt 7:7). The basis for this power of prayer is the goodness of the Father, but also the mediation of Christ himself (cf. 1Jn 2:1) and the working of the Holy Spirit who “intercedes for us” according to the will of God (cf. Rom 8:26-27). For “we do not know how to pray as we ought” (Rom 8:26), and at times we are not heard “because we ask wrongly” (cf. Jas 4:2-3).

If Jesus, the one Mediator, is the Way of our prayer, then Mary, his purest and most transparent reflection, shows us the Way. ... At the wedding of Cana the Gospel clearly shows the power of Mary's intercession as she makes known to Jesus the needs of others: “They have no wine” (Jn 2:3).

Proclaiming Christ with Mary

The Rosary is also a path of proclamation and increasing knowledge, in which the mystery of Christ is presented again and again. ... It is a prayerful and contemplative presentation, capable of forming us according to the heart of Christ.

Having reflected, with St John Paul II on the rosary as a path of contemplation of the face of Christ, and a consequent living out of our Christian calling, we end with a beautiful reflection from Romano Guardini, a German theologian from the last century, who greatly inspired both Pope Benedict and Pope Francis and whose holiness is reflected in the fact he is on the path towards canonisation. This quote is from his book ‘The rosary of Our Lady’:

Who is Mary? Let us say it as simply as it can possibly be said: she is the woman for whom Jesus Christ, the Son of God and our Redeemer, became the main purpose of life. This fact is simple and at the same time far beyond all human understanding...

It is Mary on whom the rosary is centred in an ever new focus. This prayer means a lingering in the world of Mary, whose essence was Christ.

To linger in the presence of Mary is a divinely great thing. People do not ask about the utility of truly noble things, because they have their meaning within themselves. So it is of infinite meaning to rest in Mary’s presences, and draw a deep breath of her purity, and to be secure in the peace of her union with God.

... the Rosary does not require any special preparation, and the petitioners do not need to generate thoughts of which they are not capable at the moment or at any other time. Rather, they step into a well-ordered world, meet familiar images, and find roads that lead them to the essential.

The worshipper follows the Master from one station to another and feels at the end that he has reached his goal. The Rosary is not a road, but a place, and it has no goal but a depth. To linger in it has great compensations.

Let us give thanks for the beautiful, simple gift of the Rosary, and pray for hearts and minds to be able to pray it well, and to learn ever more deeply how to contemplate the face of Christ in and through it.

Our Lady of the Rosary, pray for us to your Son. Amen.