

My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Today (October 7) is the Feast of the Holy Rosary (though we don't celebrate it because of the Sunday Liturgy). The whole month of October is dedicated to Mary and the Rosary. As such, my bulletin articles throughout October will be reflections on the Rosary. Just a reminder before we begin that the Rosary is not about repeating words over and over, but rather coming into relationship with Jesus as *Mary takes us by the hand* and walks us through the deep mysteries of how God became one of us. In St. John Paul II's document *Novo Millennio Ineunte* ("At the Beginning of the New Millennium"), he spends a whole chapter encouraging the Faithful to contemplate the face of Christ. This struck me deeply, and I have spent much of my prayer time of late doing this, especially in the Holy Rosary. The Rosary is broken up into 4 sets of 5 mysteries. This week, we'll look at the Joyful Mysteries.

The first Joyful Mystery is the Annunciation of Archangel Gabriel to Mary. God, through Gabriel, asks Mary to give God a human nature – to become the Mother of God. I ponder how Mary is docile to the God's Will. She trusts Him, that He loves her and has a *great* plan for her life (even if it goes very much against the plan that she has). She responds to the Archangel, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done unto me according to Thy word" (Luke 1:38). She gives all because from a young age she has been seeking the face of God. She longs to see His face, and while she cannot see the zygotic face of Christ, she trusts. Instead of looking outward for God's face, she now looks inward, to God living in a new and unique way in her. Our "yeses" to God are never as perfect as Mary's, but she can help us to see how God has chosen to make His dwelling within us. Every time we go to Communion, we become tabernacles of our Lord – He lives physically and spiritually within us. **Mary:** help me to say a more complete "yes" to God, and may I recognize how I bear the face of God to the world.

The second Joyful Mystery is when Mary proceeds in haste to the hill country of Judea to visit her cousin Elizabeth. There, at Mary's greeting, the Holy Spirit fills Elizabeth, and John the Baptist, in her womb, leaps for joy. Elizabeth blessed Mary, and Mary sings her song of praise to God (the *Magnificat*). Mary cannot see the face of Christ within her, but she goes out to share the Good News that He is Emmanuel: God with us! John cannot see the face of Christ, but, by the grace of God, he can sense His presence. There is such joy at being in the presence of God that John leaps, even before he is able cognitively to know what is happening. Sometimes when we pray, when we come into the presence of God, we do so in a morose manner, not coming with the joy of the Lord. **Mary:** help me to be open to the Spirit of Joy pouring upon me when I come close to God.

The third Joyful Mystery is the birth of Jesus. Angels sing hymns of praise, and shepherds and magi come to worship the newborn King. But for Mary, this moment of joy is greater than that shared by anyone else. Not only is this her son, but she knows He is God. She finally has the fulfillment of her desires – she can gaze upon the face of God. This tiny face is the face that the Angels worship! Instead of looking up, Mary now looks down, down into her arms, to contemplate the face of God. The magi and shepherds were open to finding Him here, even when others (like Herod) were not. How many times do I miss seeing the face of Christ because of my preconceived notions of where I will find Him? **Mary:** help me to be open to seeing Christ in each face.

The fourth Joyful Mystery is the presentation of the child Jesus in the Temple forty days after His birth. Families were constantly bringing their babies to the Temple to offer the required sacrifice at 40 days. Mary and Joseph were not rich (they brought the poor person's offering). There's nothing that would make them stand out, but both Simeon and Anna recognize Him. They have spent their lives in prayer, docile to the Holy Spirit, and somehow, in the midst of the chaos, the selling of sacrificial animals and changing of money, both Simeon and Anna see and recognize God's face in this child. Do I spend time looking for God's face? Time spent in Adoration helps to train my eyes and my heart. **Mary:** help me to spend time every day seeking the face of Christ.

The fifth Joyful Mystery is the finding of the child Jesus in the Temple. Jesus made His *bar Mitzvah* and now is a man in the Jewish culture. He stays behind in His Father's House. Mary and Joseph, after realizing He is not with the group are out of their minds, and go back to Jerusalem to find Him. The teachers are there being taught by God Himself. They don't know He's God, though. Their whole lives they have sought to know more and more about the God who is "I AM," and His *Torah*. While they do not recognize His face, they are drawn to it. They know there's something special about the wisdom of this boy, and their hearts draw them in, even if their minds can't accept that this is God. We don't fully grasp how God is present in our midst, but if we spend time with Him, He will draw us even beyond understanding. **Mary:** help me to be obedient to walking in darkness toward the face of Christ.