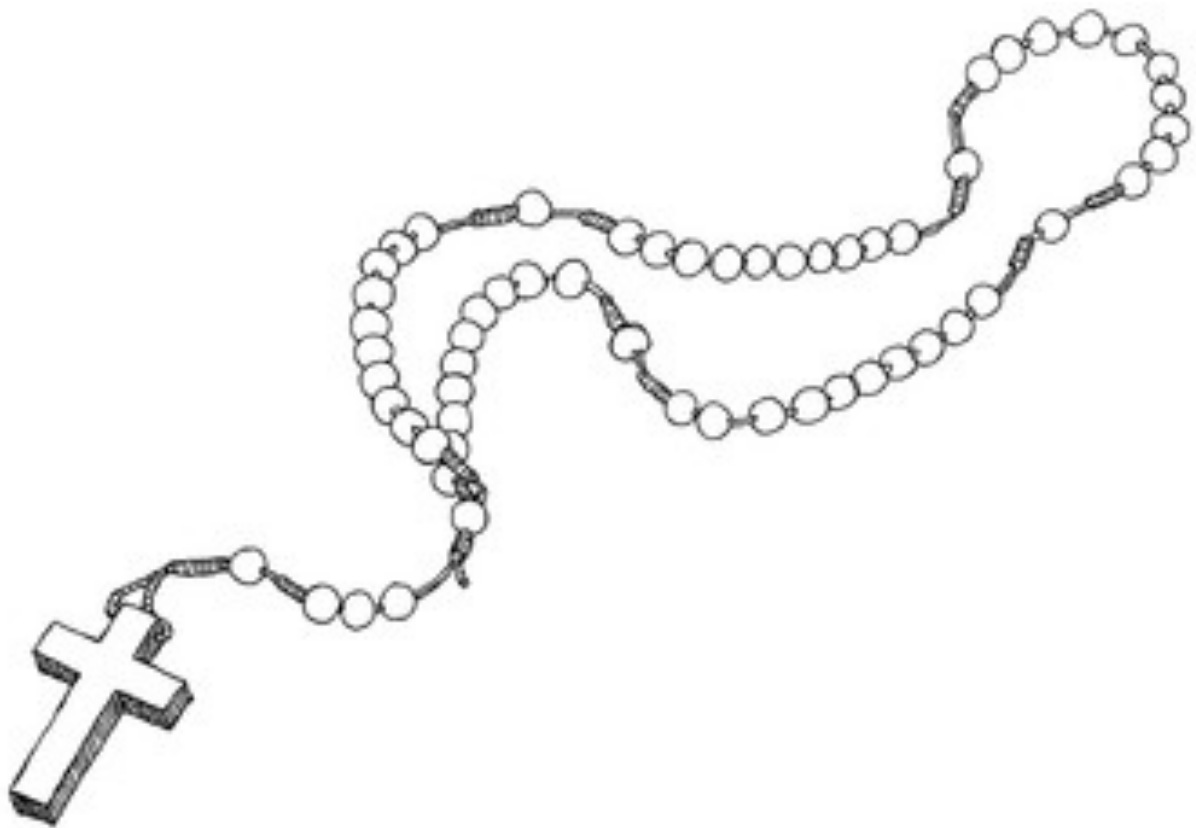


Praying the Rosary

*A resource from the Society of Mary during October,
the month of the Rosary*



The Society of Mary

INTRODUCTION

Chapter Four of the great Rule of St Benedict is entitled 'The Tools for Good Works'. St Benedict, writing for the earliest communities of monks in the Sixth Century lists the characteristics for the brethren. He reminds them of the works of mercy they should engage in, the love towards God and neighbour they ought to display, and the tender-heartedness that should motivate them. He suggests that all these 'good works' are like tools, something that we pick up and handle. Through time and use they become like an extension of our bodies – they 'fit' into the palm of our hands, or are at our fingertips.

This 'tactile' image for growing in holiness is something that we might borrow from St Benedict when we think about the Rosary. We pick up the set of rosary beads and they pass through our fingers, and like a well fitted tool we come to use it in an unselfconscious way. We handle the beads as we contemplate the mysteries of Faith, and in that repetitive action they somehow become a deeper part of our hearts, lives, and imaginations – until they take us 'out of ourselves' into the mind of God for humanity.

So the ordered process of handling the beads of the rosary stills our anxious minds, in order to make us more receptive to God. There has been much to pre-occupy us over the past few months. We've found ourselves anxious and fearful, and for many of us even trying to pray has been difficult. It has seemed perverse that just as we've found we have more time on our hands settling down to pray has been hard. One of the insights of the religious traditions of the far east is to describe this as being like having a head like a 'tree full of monkeys'; each one chatters for attention: "Will I be safe?" "When will this pass?" "When will life go back to 'normal'?" "How will I get through today?"

The Rosary is a means of contemplation in the School of Mary that centres us, that focusses our minds on the mysteries of faith. At its most basic the Rosary can appear like a fairly mechanical exercise, using the prayers and the passing of the beads through the fingers as a kind of Christian mantra. But "the Rosary can help you pray with the simplicity and profundity of Mary" said Pope Benedict XVI, and with Mary as a companion we know that prayer is not a struggle to reach a distant God. Over and over again in the Rosary we repeat the 'Hail Mary', the words of the angel's greeting to Mary. We are taken into a conversation that has begun already. The repetition stills our anxious minds for contemplation, and we place our needs and joys in the context of the larger story of our Redemption in Christ.

That 'stilling of the mind' through praying the Rosary leads us on another step. It slows us down. It takes its own time. Again, so often we are people in a hurry; passing from one thought to the next, one task to the next, one objective to the next. Repeating the 'Hail Mary' fifty times, not particularly getting anywhere but moving around the beads in a circle

so that we end up in the place where we started, is just what the soul needs to slow down and find space.

In the rather strangely titled poem 'The Blessed Virgin Mary compared to the Air we Breathe' by Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844-1889) the poet concludes with a lovely prayer to Our Lady:

Be thou then, O thou dear
Mother, my atmosphere;
My happier world, wherein
To wend and meet no sin;

That image of Mary as the atmosphere for our discipleship is a beautiful one to hold in our minds as we pray the Rosary. As we slow down we open some windows in our souls in order to breathe more easily with the transforming breath of the Holy Spirit, and our lives reflect something of that openness to God that Mary herself is the perfect example of.



HOW TO PRAY THE ROSARY

By the late fifteenth century reciting the Rosary had been organised in Joyful, Sorrowful and Glorious “Mysteries”, with five events being recalled under each heading. A further five, the so-called ‘Mysteries of Light’ were added by Pope John Paul II in 2002. Before you begin, choose which of the Mysteries you will be mediating upon as you pray.

Start on the cross by saying the Apostles’ Creed:

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting.
Amen.

Then, on the first small bead after the cross:

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.

Then, on each of the next three small beads:

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.

Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

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

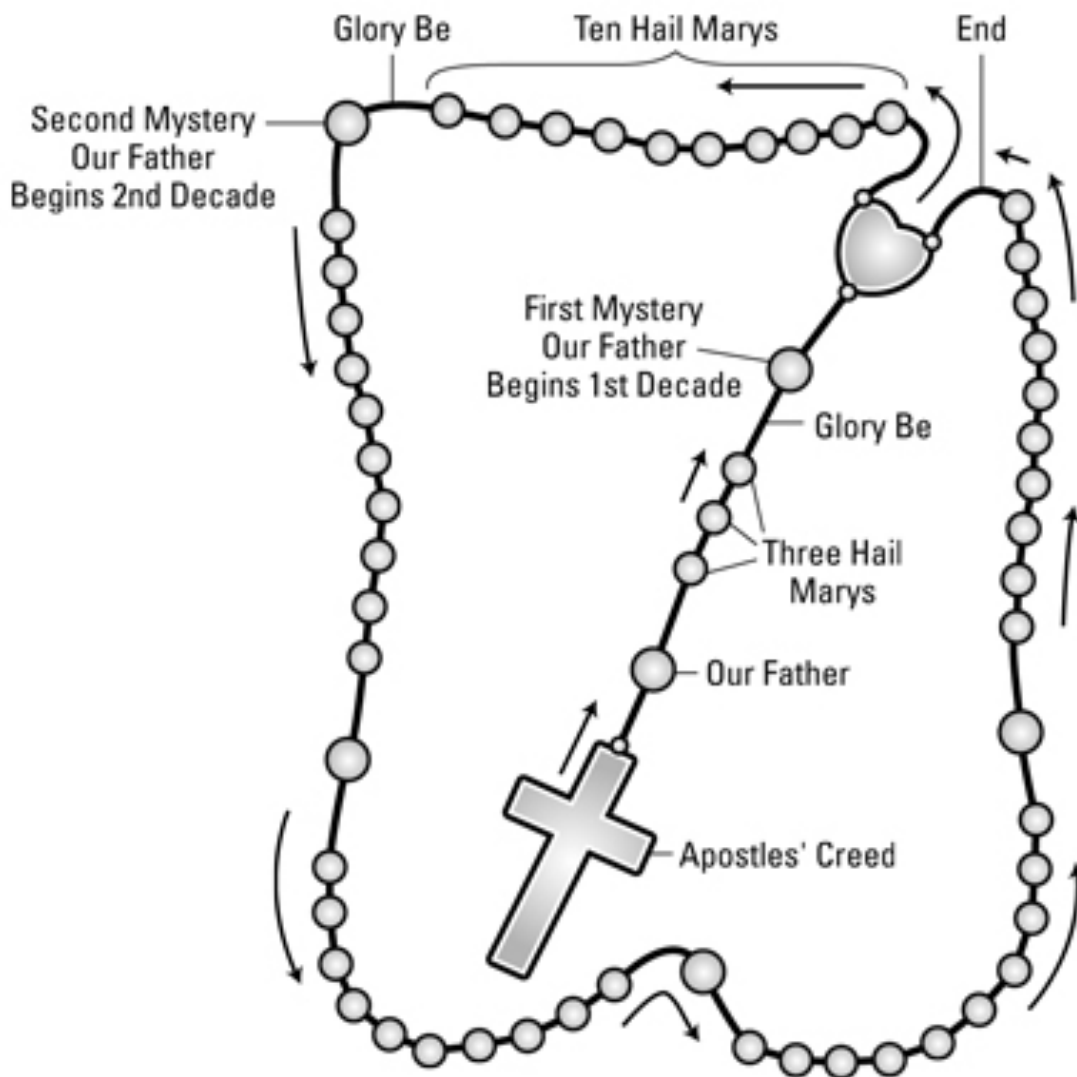
Then, on the next bead, the Glory be:

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,

as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Then follow the five decades – one Our Father, followed by ten Hail Mary's, followed by one Glory be.

At the larger of the beads before each decade meditate on one of the Mysteries, reading the reflection to help you turn the Gospel event you are thinking about into prayer.



A note on how to use these Meditations

For each of the meditations we have given a short verse or two from Scripture, followed by ten points to guide us through the event, followed by three considerations. You may simply prefer to use the scripture or to look up the longer passage in the Bible before you begin that decade. You may choose to use the ten points and spread them out over the ten Hail Mary's which will help you to picture the event or theme as it unfolds. You may prefer to use the considerations and let these lead you into prayer. Or you may just prefer to 'do your own thing'! Each meditation is followed by a brief prayer, which may or may not be of use to you.



THE JOYFUL MYSTERIES

The Annunciation

The Angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a Son and you will call his name Jesus.'
(*Luke 1:30-31*)

Points to picture:

1. Watch Mary at prayer.
2. Gabriel appears to her.
3. Hear his greeting 'Hail, full of grace'.
4. Mary is troubled by his words of praise for her.
5. Gabriel delivers his message.
6. Mary's perplexity 'How can this be?'
7. Gabriel tells her what the Holy Spirit will perform through her.
8. Heaven and earth await Mary's answer.
9. Mary's consent, 'I am the handmaid of the Lord'.
10. God the Son begins his life in Mary's womb.

Consider:

How God planned the Incarnation and prepared the way through Mary in her Immaculate Conception.

With what humility Mary accepts her vocation and becomes the tabernacle of God.

How God sees us also from the beginning and gives us the Holy Spirit to change the world around us.

Prayer:

O God, you prepared the glorious Virgin Mary to be a fit dwelling place for your Son: may we, who contemplate her humility, by her intercession, find favour in your sight. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Visitation

When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child in her womb leapt for joy and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. (*Luke 1:41*)

Points to picture:

1. Mary rejoices at the news that her cousin is to have a child.
2. Mary sets out across the hills.
3. She arrives and greets Elizabeth
4. At Mary's voice, the unborn John greets his Lord.
5. Elizabeth praises Mary and her unborn child
6. Mary glorifies God: 'My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord'
7. John the Baptist is born
8. He is named on the eighth day according to the angel's command.
9. Zachariah recovers his speech.
10. Mary returns to Nazareth.

Consider:

How Mary rejoices at the happiness of Elizabeth and ascribes all her own greatness to God.

The Mother of God helping in the house of Zachariah.

That our fellowship in Christ should make us the servant of all and sanctify our every action.

Prayer:

Lord Jesus Christ, you filled the soul of Mary your Mother with such loving kindness that she went with haste to join her cousin Elizabeth; come to our hearts and transform them with your love that we may find joy in serving you in the poor and needy. Amen.

The Birth of Our Lord

And she gave birth to a son, her first born. And wrapping him in swaddling clothes, she laid him in a manger, for there was no room for them at the inn. (*Luke 2:7*)

Points to picture:

1. Mary arrives at Bethlehem with Joseph and looks for somewhere to stay.
2. They find no room.
3. They settle in the stable of the inn.
4. Mary gives birth to the Son of God.
5. She wraps him in swaddling clothes and lays him in the manger.
6. She takes him to her breast.
7. Shepherds arrive from the fields to worship.
8. They return, praising God, and tell others the good news.
9. Mary ponders these things in her heart.
10. The Magi set out on their journey following a star.

Consider:

How God is born in rough and humble surroundings.

How God has sanctified the whole of human nature, and that our bodies and souls must be a worthy dwelling-place for him.

How his incarnation continues day by day through his Church as he is born anew in his people.

Prayer:

O God, who ordained that your Word should become man of the substance of a pure Virgin, grant that, by imitating her purity we may see you now by faith and come at last to full vision of your glory in heaven. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Presentation in the Temple

Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his Mother, 'You see this child: he is destined for the fall and the rising of many in Israel, destined to be a sign that is rejected – and a sword will pierce your own soul too – so that the secret thoughts of many may be laid bare. (Luke 2: 34-35)

Points to picture:

1. Simeon is led by the Holy Spirit to the Temple.
2. Mary and Joseph bring the Child into the crowded temple courtyard.
3. They wait their turn to go up the steps and present their offering.
4. Simeon looks for them, takes the child in his arms and says, 'Lord, now you let your servant go in peace'.
5. He blesses Mary and her Child.
6. He foretells the sorrows of the Child and Mary's share in them.
7. Jesus is presented to the priest and redeemed with two young pigeons.
8. Anna the prophetess joins them and speaks to the people around about the deliverance of Jerusalem.
9. The Holy Family travels back home.
10. Mary ponders all these things in her heart.

Consider:

That Mary thought that she and her Son were bound by the law of Israel.

That Mary and Joseph make the offering to God prescribed for the poor.

That God is coming home to his Temple.

Prayer:

Jesus, through the humble obedience of your Mother you fulfilled the ancient law: may our hearts be so confirmed to your Sacred Heart that our sacrifice may always be acceptable to you. Amen.

The Finding in the Temple

Three days later, they found him in the Temple, sitting among the doctors, listening to them and asking them questions. (*Luke 2:46*)

Points to picture:

1. Jesus stays behind in the Temple.
2. His parents look for him during the journey home.
3. Mary asks people, becoming more and more anxious.
4. They travel back to Jerusalem and ask in all the places where they have been.
5. They find him in the Temple, sitting with the teachers of the Law.
6. They watch him as he listens to the doctors and asks them questions.
7. Mary asks her question, 'My child, why have you done this to us?'
8. Jesus answers, 'Did you not know that I must be busy with my Father's affairs?'
9. Mary rejoices to see her Son but wonders what will happen next.
10. Jesus returns with Mary and Joseph to Nazareth and lives under their authority.

Consider:

That the child Jesus acquires human knowledge from his parents but already knows more.

That Mary is perplexed by the ways of God.

That Jesus for the first time proclaims that God is his Father.

Prayer:

Lord Jesus Christ, you willed that even your blessed Mother should seek you in sorrow so that all who love you might be strengthened; we ask that in our own sorrows we may put our whole trust in you and continue to seek you until you have been found. Amen.

THE MYSTERIES OF LIGHT

The Baptism of Jesus

Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptised by John. As soon as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens opened and he saw the Spirit of God coming down on him like a dove. And a voice spoke from heaven, 'This is my Son, the Beloved; my favour rests on him'. (*Matthew 3:13,16-17*)

Points to picture:

1. John is baptising in the river surrounded by the crowds.
2. Jesus arrives and interrupts him, asking for baptism.
3. John refuses to do it: 'I should be seeking baptism from you.'
4. 'I am not fit to kneel down and undo the strap of your sandals'
5. But Jesus insists: 'It is fitting that in this way we should do all that righteousness demands'
6. John baptises him.
7. As he comes up from the water, the heavens open and the Spirit is seen in the form of a dove.
8. The Father's voice is heard: 'This is my Son, the Beloved'.
9. The crowds wonder what these things could mean.
10. Jesus walks off into the desert where he will be tempted.

Consider:

That John already recognises the salvation which has come in Jesus.

That this is the first public proclamation that he is the Son of God.

That Jesus is baptised to make the water of baptism holy for us to receive his life.

Prayer:

Lord, through your baptism you call us to become your children: keep us faithful to the promises we made then and help us to bear witness to what we have received. Amen.

The Marriage at Cana

His Mother said to the servants, 'Do whatever he tells you'....He let his glory be seen and his disciples believed in him. (*John 2: 5,11*)

Points to picture:

1. Jesus and Mary mingle with the crowds at the wedding feast.
2. Mary sees the servants looking worried.
3. She discovers what is the problem and goes to Jesus.
4. He replies, 'Why turn to me? My hour has not come yet.'
5. She believes that he will sort it out, so she says to the servants, 'Do whatever he tells you.'
6. Jesus points them to the jars for ritual washing: the Old Covenant is being transformed by the New.
7. At his command, they fill the jars with water.
8. They take the wine to the head steward of the Feast.
9. He wonders why they have kept something so good until now.
10. This is the first miracle, which then produces faith and commitment.

Consider:

That Mary always leads us to Jesus and helps us trust that he will transform us.

That she says to us, 'Do whatever he tells you.'

That if we offer ourselves to Jesus he will transform us into something better.

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, through the wonder of your miracles you reveal your power. You transform us into vessels of your grace. Deepen our faith in your abiding presence among us until we rejoice to behold you face to face in heaven. Amen.

The Preaching of the Mysteries of the Kingdom of God

As you go, proclaim the message saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.'. Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons. You received without pay, give without pay. (*Matthew 10:7-8*)

Points to picture:

1. Jesus calls his first disciples by the Sea of Galilee.
2. Jesus preaches in the Synagogue at Nazareth 'Today this text is being fulfilled, even as you listen'.
3. Jesus heals the leper by laying his hand on him.
4. They let the paralysed man down through a hole in the roof. Jesus first says, 'Your sins are forgiven'.
5. Jesus tells the Parable of the Sower.
6. Jesus calms the storm on the Lake.
7. Jesus raises Jairus' daughter from death.
8. Jesus welcomes the little children.
9. Jesus feeds the five thousand.
10. Jesus speaks about his suffering and death.

Consider:

That Jesus always leaves it to people to make up their own minds whether he is the Son of God.

That in the Parables he encourages us to think about our own response to the Kingdom.

That his actions always lead to more followers but more jealousy and opposition.

Prayer:

Jesus our Lord, by your ministry you offered the Father's love to everyone without condition. You gave new life to spirits that were crushed and bodies that were broken. Help me to continue to the work of your Kingdom. Amen.

The Transfiguration of Jesus

As he prayed the aspect of his face was changed and his clothing became brilliant as lightning. Suddenly there were two men there talking to him; they were Moses and Elijah appearing in glory and they were speaking of his passing which he was to accomplish in Jerusalem. Peter said to Jesus, 'Master, it is wonderful for us to be here'. (Luke 9: 29-30,33)

Points to picture:

1. Jesus takes Peter, James and John with him up the mountain. They wonder why.
2. As he prays, his face begins to shine with light and his clothing becomes brilliantly white.
3. Moses and Elijah, representing the Law and the Prophets, appear and talk with him.
4. The Apostles are struck with awe, wonder and fear.
5. They close their eyes and are almost overcome by sleep.
6. Peter speaks, 'It is wonderful for us to be here: let us make three tents, one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah'.
7. A cloud comes and covers them with shadow.
8. They hear the Father's voice, 'This is my Son, the Beloved: he enjoys my favour. Listen to him.'
9. The light fades: Jesus comes over to touch them and encourage them to stand up.
10. As they come down the mountain, he asks them to tell no one 'Until the Son of Man has risen from the dead'.

Consider:

That in this event they see Jesus in his true glory, which is there all the time but hidden.

That all that has gone before, in the Law and the Prophets, leads to this revelation.

That this vision is to prepare them and us for the scandal of suffering and death.

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, as your Transfiguration prepared the Apostles for your suffering and death and enabled them to bear witness to your Resurrection, give us a vision of your glory to lead us forward on our journey through life. Amen.

The Institution of the Eucharist

Now as they were eating, Jesus took some bread, and when he had said the blessing he broke it and gave it to the disciples, 'Take it and eat' he said, 'this is my Body'. Then he took a cup and, when he had returned thanks, he gave it to them, 'Drink all of you from this,' he said 'for this is my Blood, the Blood of the New and Everlasting Covenant, which is to be poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.' (*Matthew 26:26-28*)

Points to picture:

1. Jesus washes the feet of his Apostles.
2. Peter objects: 'Lord, you shall never wash my feet.' 'If I do not wash you, you can have to part with me.'
3. He predicts his betrayal.
4. He takes and blesses the bread saying, 'This is my Body'.
5. They eat of it, trying to absorb what the words can mean.
6. He takes and blesses the chalice saying, 'This is my Blood, the Blood of the New and Everlasting Covenant'.
7. They drink of it, trying to absorb what the words can mean.
8. Jesus says that he will not drink with them again until he drinks the new wine in the Kingdom of God.
9. They sing a hymn of praise to God.
10. He takes Peter, James and John with him to the Garden of Gethsemane

Consider:

How in the Last Supper he gives himself, his very life, to them and to us.

How they are to approach this banquet, by first serving and caring for one another.

How carefully or not we approach the Mass in which Jesus offers himself to us and for us.

Prayer:

Lord, in the Mass you give us the supreme expression of your love and unite us with your Sacrifice, offered on the Cross. Help us to receive the benefits of this Sacrifice by offering ourselves each day to you. Amen.

THE SORROWFUL MYSTERIES

The Agony in the Garden

Then he said to them, 'Wait here and keep awake with me.' And going on a little further he fell on his face and prayed, 'My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me.'

(Matthew 26: 36,39)

Points to picture:

1. Jesus enters the garden with Peter, James and John.
2. He goes further on and a great sadness overtakes him.
3. He leaves them, saying, 'Wait here and keep awake with me.'
4. He falls to the ground, saying, 'If this cup cannot pass without my drinking it, your will be done.'
5. He returns and finds them sleeping and says to Peter, 'You should be awake, praying not to be put to the test.'
6. He goes away again to pray, 'Your will be done,' and an angel appears to give him strength.
7. The sweat falls as blood on the ground.
8. He gets up to find his disciples sleeping again, and departs to pray the third time.
9. He goes to meet Judas, who betrays him with a kiss.
10. His disciples forsake him and run away.

Consider:

How Jesus, when everyone around was failing him, sought strength in prayer.

How he invites his closest friends to pray with him and they fail him

Whether his prayer was answered.

Prayer:

Jesus, in the Garden of Gethsemane you trod the winepress alone, and experienced a foretaste of your passion: teach us to persevere every day in the way of prayer, that in our hours of loneliness and desolation we may seek and find strength to do your will. Amen.

The Scouring at the Pillar

Pilate ordered Jesus first to be scourged and then handed him over to be crucified. (*Mark 5:15*)

Points to picture:

1. Pilate washes his hands in front of the crowd and gives the order for the scourging.
2. The soldiers lead Jesus to the pillar.
3. They strip off his garments.
4. They tie him to pillar so that he is bowed around it.
5. They prepare the whips.
6. They carry out the sentence – forty strokes minus one.
7. His blood falls to the ground.
8. He is cut down from the pillar.
9. He slumps on the ground.
10. He is made to stand and is led away.

Consider:

The patience of Jesus as the atonement for our sins of anger, malice, or indifference to wrong.

The sorrow of Jesus as he experienced the hatred of the priests, the weakness of Pilate, and the brutality of the soldiers.

That if we follow Christ we shall experience the slights and hatred of the world.

Prayer:

Jesus, you gave your body to be scourged and torn at the pillar: we ask that we, who receive the due reward of our wickedness, may bear with patience whatever ill we may suffer at the hands of men. Amen.

The Crowning with Thorns

Then the soldiers twisted some thorns into a crown and put it on his head, and dressed him in a purple robe. They kept coming up to him and saying, 'Hail, King of the Jews!'; and they slapped him in the face. (*Matthew 27:29*)

Points to picture:

1. Jesus is led by the soldiers into the great hall
2. They call together the rest of those on duty
3. They strip him and dress him in purple.
4. They plait a crown of thorns
5. They press it down on his head.
6. They put a reed in his hand and pretend to worship him.
7. They blindfold him, strike him on the face and say, 'Tell us who struck you.'
8. They spit on him and call him names
9. At the order, they take him back to Pilate.
10. Pilate shows him to the people, saying, 'Behold the man.'

Consider:

The mental suffering of Jesus as he endures their mockery.

The physical suffering of Jesus at the blows and the Crown of Thorns.

That Jesus endures ridicule to help us to overcome our personal pride.

Prayer:

Jesus our Lord, you refused all earthly rule and were forced to wear a crown of thorns; through your innocent suffering you make atonement for the guilty. Give us true compassion for those who suffer and help us to bear the burdens of one another. Amen.

Jesus carries his Cross

Carrying his own cross, he went out of the city to the place of the skull or, as it was called in the Hebrew, Golgotha. (*John 19:17*)

Points to picture:

1. Jesus takes the cross and sets out on the way of sorrows.
2. He is urged on by the soldiers and gazed at by the crowd.
3. He falls the first time.
4. His Mother meets him.
5. The procession meets Simon of Cyrene, who is forced to help with the cross.
6. A woman wipes his face with her veil.
7. He falls again.
8. Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem, and says, 'Weep rather for yourselves and for your children.'
9. He falls a third time.
10. He is forced to stumble up to the top of the hill of Calvary.

Consider:

That all our suffering is united to the suffering of Christ.

That there is no suffering that we can experience which Jesus has not already known.

That our cross is never any heavier than his, and he always there to help us to carry it.

Prayer:

Jesus, you trod the road to Calvary weighed down by our sins: grant that we may persevere through our falls and failures and rejoice when we are called to suffer for your Name. Amen.

The Crucifixion

When they had reached the place called the Skull, they crucified him there and the two criminals also, one on the right the other on the left. Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them, they do not know what they are doing.' (*Luke 23:33-34*)

Points to picture:

1. Jesus refuses the wine and myrrh.
2. Jesus is stretched on the cross, and as his hands and feet are pierced, he prays 'Father, forgive them.'
3. The cross is raised between two thieves.
4. The chief priests come and mock: 'He saved others, let him save himself.'
5. Jesus pardons the penitent thief.
6. He gives his Mother into the care of S. John.
7. Darkness comes on, and Jesus cries, 'My God, my God, why have you deserted me?'
8. 'I thirst.' He is given vinegar, and says 'It is accomplished.'
9. He cries, 'Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.'
10. Jesus bows his head, and dies. The earth shakes, and the veil of the temple is torn in two.

Consider:

That only Jesus' death gives value to our contrition, and that when we are absolved we receive the price of his life.

That on the Cross he is deserted by all except Mary, John and Mary Magdalene.

This is the source and the beginning of our life in Christ.

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, you died on the Cross so that we might have life and have it in all its fulness. Help us to find our hope and our salvation in your Cross. Amen.

THE GLORIOUS MYSTERIES

The Resurrection

Simon Peter who was following now came up, went right into the tomb saw the linen cloths on the ground and also the cloth that had been over his head; this was not with the linen cloths but rolled up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple who had reached the tomb first also went in; he saw and he believed. (*John 20: 6-8*)

Points to picture:

1. The body of Jesus lies in the darkness of the tomb wrapped in the linen cloths, whilst soldiers keep guard outside.
2. The soldiers are terrified by a movement, the shadow of an angel, the sound of the rock moving and they flee.
3. Mary Magdalene returns to the tomb just as the sun is rising.
4. She sees the stone has been moved, gazes into the dark and runs in panic to fetch the others.
5. Peter and John run to the tomb; John arrives first but does not go in.
6. Peter arrives, pushes past him into the tomb and sees the grave clothes; the sudarium is rolled up in a place by itself.
7. John enters the tomb: 'he saw and he believed'.
8. Mary Magdalene stays there weeping and is greeted by the Risen Christ.
9. Two men on the road to Emmaus walk with Jesus: they do not recognise him until he breaks bread at the Supper.
10. Jesus shows himself to the Apostles, locked into a room: he shows them his wounds.

Consider:

That we have the evidence of these events but only our faith can make them real, to us and to the world.

That the Risen Jesus walks constantly by our side.

That every day the Risen Christ feeds us with his life.

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, renew and deepen our faith in the truth of your resurrection and help us to realise that you are with us always. Amen.

The Ascension

Jesus said, 'You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and then you will be my witnesses, not only in Jerusalem but throughout Judaea and Samaria, and indeed to the ends of the earth. As he said this he was lifted up while they looked on, and a cloud took him from their sight. (*Acts 1: 8-9*)

Points to picture:

1. Jesus gives his disciples his last command 'Go and make disciples of all the nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.'
2. He tells them, 'I am with you always, yes, to the end of time.'
3. He gathers his disciples and leads them further up the Mount of Olives.
4. He tells them to return to Jerusalem and to wait 'for the power from on high.'
5. He raises his hands in blessing.
6. He begins to rise from the earth.
7. His disciples watch him till a cloud takes him out of their sight
8. As they are looking upwards, two angels appear.
9. The angels remind them of his return 'in the same way as you have seen him go.'
10. They return to Jerusalem with great joy but wondering what will happen.

Consider:

That Jesus has taken our human nature to the throne of God, and his victory is the victory of all who live in him.

That he commands us to go and make disciples of all the nations, baptising them.

That through his Ascension we can carry with us always a vision of his glory.

Prayer:

Jesus, you ascended to heaven to prepare a place for us: we ask that we may always long for that heavenly home, and faithfully use the grace by which we shall go there. Amen.

The Descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost

When Pentecost day come round, they had all met in one room, when suddenly they heard what sounded like a powerful wind from heaven, the noise of which filled the entire house in which they were sitting: and something appeared to them that seemed like tongues of fire: these separated and came to rest on the head of each of them. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit. (*Acts 2:1-4*)

Points to picture:

1. The disciples prepare by prayer and fasting for the gift which is to come: they are still locked away in fear.
2. They elect Matthias to take the place of Judas Iscariot.
3. The twelve, together with Mary, are gathered together on the feast of Pentecost and it is about 9.00am.
4. The room is filled with the sound of a powerful wind.
5. They see tongues of fire, which separate and rest on the head of each of them.
6. They are filled with power, as the signs fade but the presence within them goes on.
7. They begin to speak the praises of God and to witness to what Jesus has done.
8. The crowds in Jerusalem run together: some shout out that these men are drunk.
9. The crowds begin to realise that they can hear and understand them in their own language.
10. St. Peter as their leader preaches that Jesus is the Christ, and three thousand are baptised.

Consider:

That the Holy Spirit is at work in every sacramental action of the Church.

That through the Holy Spirit, the life of Christ comes to all his members to unite us with one another.

That the Holy Spirit gives us the words with which to pray and expresses our pleas in a way that can never be put into words.

Prayer: Lord Jesus Christ, by the Holy Spirit you restored our fallen nature, and united us as children of the one Father in heaven: grant that we may always perceive the greatness of your mercy, and love one another as you have loved us. Amen.

The Assumption of Our Lady into heaven

Now a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman, adorned with the sun, standing on the moon and with the twelve stars on her head for a crown. She was pregnant, and in labour, crying aloud in the pangs of childbirth. (*Revelation 12:1-3*)

Points to picture:

1. Mary feels that she is dying and looks forward to being reunited with her Son.
2. Her Son prepares her place for her in heaven.
3. Mary dies with S. John at her side.
4. They bury her body, but then she is taken from the grave into heaven.
5. She enters the court of heaven.
6. The Father receives her as his daughter.
7. The Son receives his Mother.
8. The Holy Spirit receives her as his spouse.
9. Mary sees the beatific vision of God.
10. Mary prays for the Church on earth, as we too are her children.

Consider:

That in Mary, the final reward has been achieved which God promises to us all, of being united with him, body and soul, in glory.

That she, who had committed no sin did not have to experience that effect of sin, the corruption of our bodies in the grave.

That she is our Mother, who hears and answers our prayers.

Prayer:

Mary, Mother of the Word Incarnate, in your life on earth you showed yourself to be a faithful servant of the word of God. Pray for us from your place in heaven and teach us how to follow in the footsteps of your Son. Amen.

The Coronation of Our Lady and the glory of the Saints in Heaven

After that I saw a huge number, impossible to count, of people from every nation, race, tribe and language; they were standing in front of the throne and in front of the Lamb, and shouted aloud, 'Victory to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.'
(*Revelation 7:9-10*)

Points to picture:

1. Mary is honoured by the holy angels as the purest of creatures.
2. The prophets rejoice with her who bore the Truth.
3. The confessors receive her who endured more than all.
4. The doctors receive her as 'The seat of Wisdom.'
5. The virgins receive her, the 'Virgin most pure.'
6. The martyrs receive her who suffered by the cross.
7. Mary is crowned Queen of all the Saints.
8. Mary and the saints intercede for the Church on earth.
9. They pray for the souls in purgatory.
10. They worship God without ceasing.

Consider:

That the greatest glory of Mary and the Saints is to be secure in the Love of God.

That their glory comes to them because of what Jesus did in his suffering, death and resurrection.

That eternal life begins here on earth as it is nourished in us through the Sacraments.

Prayer:

O God, you bestow on blessed Mary, ever-virgin, and on your Saints, the crown of everlasting life and make them sharers of your heavenly glory: may we, who daily pray 'thy kingdom come,' continually show forth your praise in our lives. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

PRAYERS AFTER THE ROSARY

Hail holy Queen, Mother of mercy; hail, our life, our sweetness, and our hope. To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve; to thee do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this vale of tears. Turn then, most gracious Advocate, thine eyes of mercy towards us; and after this our exile, show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus. O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary.

Pray for us, O holy Mother of God: That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Let us pray:

O God, whose only-begotten Son, By his life, death and resurrection has purchased for us the rewards of eternal life; grant that we, who meditate on these mysteries in the Most Holy Rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary, may both imitate what they contain and obtain what they promise. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.





The Society of Mary

The text of this resource was written by members of the Executive of The Society of Mary.

The Society of Mary, whilst being one of the Catholic Societies of the Church of England, has members in churches and countries all over the world.

The objects of the Society are:

- to love and honour Mary.
- to spread devotion to her in reparation for past neglect and misunderstanding and in the cause of Christian Unity
- to take Mary as a model in purity, personal relationships, and family life.

Membership is open to all who are willing to keep the Rule, which includes:

- Members shall keep a Rule of Life, which will include such special devotions as the Angelus, the Rosary, the Litany and Anthems of Our Lady.
- They will pray for departed members of the Society and offer Mass for them.
- They will take part in the Mass on the principal Feasts of Our Lady.
- They will engage in apostolic and pastoral work, according to opportunity, under the guidance of the local Ward Officers and the General Council.

Where there are enough members of the Society, they can form a Ward, with a priest as Superior and a Secretary. Where there are fewer members, a Cell can be formed. Isolated members can be attached to the Headquarters Ward. Wards and Cells may gather for prayer and worship, for fellowship and fun.

The Society of Mary is not affiliated to any individual Marian shrine or institution and is keen to promote equally all the different aspects of devotion to Mary.

For more information on the work of the Society of Mary or to join, please visit:
www.societyofmary.weebly.com