

Rosary  
October 12, 2008

Perhaps you have noticed that many Catholics are buried with the rosary in their hands. I think it is a significant way for an individual to express his or her filial devotion to Mary.

Each time I visited Father Dick Ameling in the hospital, he had a very well-worn rosary in his hands. He explained to me that it was his mother's rosary, the rosary which she recited so very often in her life and which he himself cherished praying.

On May 13, 1981, Pope John Paul II barely survived an assassin's bullet. He credited his survival to the protection of Mary and expressed his gratitude to God by way of praying the rosary.

Pope John Paul II resumed his public appearances for the first time after the assassination attempt on October 7, 1981, the Feast of the Holy Rosary. In that appearance, he proclaimed that he was "indebted to the Blessed Virgin" for his survival and he added: "In everything that happened to me on that very day, I felt that extraordinary motherly protection and care, which turned out to be stronger than the deadly bullet."

The pope continued: "I want these first words...to be words of gratitude, love, and deep trust, just as the holy rosary is and always remains a prayer of gratitude and love...I invite you all to this prayer." The pope added that the rosary was his favorite devotional prayer.

Our challenge as disciples of Jesus is to keep our eyes focused on Him. The rosary is a prayer, simple and profound, which helps us keep our gaze on Jesus. As we recite the Hail Mary, itself a very biblical prayer, we reflect on the

essential events of the mission of the Son of God on earth as revealed in the Sacred Scriptures. In the Joyful Mysteries, we reflect upon the Incarnation and the hidden life of Christ. As we pray the Sorrowful Mysteries, we focus on the sufferings of Jesus in His Passion. While we pray the Glorious Mysteries, we contemplate the triumph of Jesus in His Resurrection and our call to share in His victory.

On October 16, 2002, during his weekly general audience in St. Peter's Square, Pope John Paul II signed an Apostolic Letter dedicated to the rosary. In that Letter, the pope enhanced the rosary with five more mysteries which he called the "Mysteries of Light." They draw our attention to key self-manifestations of Jesus during His public life:

1. Jesus' Baptism in the Jordan;
2. Jesus' self-manifestation at the wedding in Cana;
3. Jesus' proclamation of the Kingdom of God with His call to conversion;
4. Jesus' transfiguration;
5. Jesus' institution of the Eucharist as the sacramental expression of the Paschal Mystery.

It is recommended that we reflect upon these "Mysteries of Light" as we pray the rosary on Thursdays. It is further suggested that we reflect upon the Joyful Mysteries on Monday and Saturday, the Sorrowful Mysteries on Tuesday, and the Glorious Mysteries on Wednesday and Sunday.

I was taught the rosary at a very early age and continue to experience it as an important part of my daily devotional prayer. I recommend it to you as a way to honor Mary and to invite her to help you focus yourself more deeply on the face of her Son. The rosary is intended to be a prayer that leads us to Christ and into

**deeper union with God. As Mother Teresa of Calcutta said: “In praying the rosary with devotion, we are re-living the life of Christ.”**