

The Rosary and Contemplation



Lecture II — Rosarium Virginis Mariae



John Paul II's Letter on the Rosary

Set out into the deep in order once more to cry out before the world that Jesus Christ is Lord

Lecture Plan

- ✦ *Review*
- ✦ *Introduction to John Paul II Letter on the Rosary*
 - ✦ *Historical Context*
 - ✦ *The Rosary and Contemplation*
 - ✦ *Reasons to Propose the Rosary Now*
- ✦ *What we will cover next week*

Review of Marian Piety after Vatican II
(Ratzinger, *Mary the Church at the Source*, p34)

- ✿ **Centered In Christ:** Practices in Marian devotion need to be strictly and constantly bound to Christology — **what does our devotion to her help us contemplate in Christ?**
- ✿ **Open to the fullness of the mystery:** Marian devotion must not withdraw into partial aspects of the Christian mystery or reduce that mystery to partial aspects of itself. **How does our devotion to Mary move us to awe and thanksgiving for the great things that God has done?**
- ✿ **The Freedom of Mystical Wisdom:** Marian piety will always stand in the tension of theological rationality and believing affectivity - a certain sobriety of faith sets the heart free. **How does the truth that Mary magnifies free the heart to worship God?**

What is Contemplation

- ◆ What is contemplation or mystical wisdom as described by Dionysius, St. Teresa of Avila and St. John of the Cross? Contemplation for these writers is a personal awareness of God's presence in the soul.



Contemplation and Theology

- ✦ *Contemplation involves a judgment that sees the beauty of the truth - and concerning Divinely revealed truth contemplation can be arrived at*
 - ✦ *(1) by reason aided by faith (spiritual contemplation in a broad sense) or*
 - ✦ *(2) by the Holy Spirit operating through the gift of wisdom (mystical contemplation as such).*
- ✦ *For St. Thomas, contemplation or mystical wisdom is bound together in holiness of life along with theological wisdom - the fruit of theological study. Both theological wisdom and contemplation involve making judgements (beholding) what is holy.*
- ✦ *Theological study ought to be related to mystical wisdom in a manner analogous to the way the study of virtue is related to the virtuous life - just as one ought to study virtue to become virtuous, so one ought to study theology to grow in mystical wisdom. (See Summa Theo. I, 1, art 6)*

A mutual relationship between different kinds of wisdom

- ✦ *Mystical theology ignorant of sacred doctrine is at risk for grave misunderstanding.*
- ✦ *Theology devoid of mystical contemplation is lifeless.*



Review of the Holy Mother of God in Relation to the Mystery of Prayer



- ✿ *In prayer the Holy Spirit unites us to the person of the only Son, in his glorified humanity, through which and in which our filial prayer unites us in the Church with the Mother of God. Catechism of the Catholic Church #2673*

The Rosary and a Harvest of Holiness

The Rosary of the Virgin Mary, which gradually took form in the second millennium under the guidance of the Spirit of God, is a prayer loved by countless Saints and encouraged by the Magisterium. Simple yet profound, it still remains, at the dawn of this third millennium, a prayer of great significance, destined to bring forth a harvest of holiness. RVM #1



The Mystical Tradition and St. John Paul II's Program for Renewing the Church

- ✿ Is it not one of the "signs of the times" that in today's world, despite widespread secularization, there is a widespread demand for spirituality, a demand which expresses itself in large part as a renewed need for prayer? Other religions, which are now widely present in ancient Christian lands, offer their own responses to this need, and sometimes they do so in appealing ways. But we who have received the grace of believing in Christ, the revealer of the Father and the Saviour of the world, have a duty to show to what depths the relationship with Christ can lead.
- ✿ The great mystical tradition of the Church of both East and West has much to say in this regard. It shows how prayer can progress, as a genuine dialogue of love, to the point of rendering the person wholly possessed by the divine Beloved, vibrating at the Spirit's touch, resting filially within the Father's hear (*Novo Millennia Inuente* #33)

The Rosary and the Spiritual Life



- ✦ [The Rosary] blends easily into the spiritual journey of the Christian life, which, after two thousand years, has lost none of the freshness of its beginnings and feels drawn by the Spirit of God to “set out into the deep” (*duc in altum!*) in order once more to proclaim, and even cry out, before the world that Jesus Christ is Lord and Saviour, “the way, and the truth and the life” (Jn 14:6), “the goal of human history and the point on which the desires of history and civilization turn.” *RVM*
#1

The Rosary of the Virgin Mary - as a Christ Centered Prayer

- ✿ *The Rosary, though clearly Marian in character, is at heart a **Christocentric** prayer.*
- ✿ ***In the sobriety of its elements**, it has all the depth of the Gospel message in its entirety, of which it can be said to be **a compendium**.*
- ✿ *It is **an echo of the prayer of Mary**, her perennial Magnificat for the work of the redemptive Incarnation which began in her virginal womb.*
- ✿ *With the Rosary, the Christian people sits at **the school of Mary** and is led to **contemplate the beauty on the face of Christ** and to experience the depths of his love.*
- ✿ *Through the Rosary the faithful receive abundant grace, as though from the very hands of the Mother of the Redeemer. RVM I*

2002-2003 - the Year of the Rosary

- ✿ *I invited the people of God to “start afresh from Christ”, I have felt drawn to offer a reflection on the Rosary, as a kind of Marian complement to that Letter and an exhortation to contemplate the face of Christ in union with, and at the school of, his Most Holy Mother. RVM #3*