

# THE HOLY ROSARY: A DOORWAY TO REDEMPTION

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My Lord, my God, I firmly believe that you are here, that you see me, that you hear me. I adore you with profound reverence. I ask your pardon for my sins, and the grace to make this time of prayer fruitful. My Immaculate Mother, St. Joseph, my father and lord, my guardian angel, intercede for me.

Some years ago, I visited the museum about war, different events in human history, different wars. And there's a section dedicated to war propaganda. And it was very interesting to learn how the enemy has a tactic, which is to send flyers and different means of misinformation in order to convince you to surrender. And, and they were very repetitive. And it made me think, because they were saying, why would you fight in this war when you can go home, be with your wife and your kids in a cozy atmosphere, in a prosperous country? Why would you obey your captain tomorrow, when you can be free? And I put myself in the shoes of the soldiers that fought those wars. It must be tempting, like a little worm that gets into your brain, eating you up, questioning orders, creating this union.

And the same can happen in a positive way. Many times, good memories make me think about being more generous, inspire me to move towards you, my Lord. And one of the best ways to understand this is the Hail Mary. We are in the month of the Rosary, and the Hail Mary has music - it is fresh air, it is a memory that brings us the hope of a better future. So Elizabeth, if we read the Gospel of the Annunciation, trying to get into the scene, as St. Josemaria would recommend, is going to be a protagonist. And it's Luke who tells us that, "In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David." And we can enter into the house as St. Josemaria recommended, and be in the corner watching, contemplating. The virgin's name was Mary. "And the angel came to her and said, 'Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you.' And she was very distressed or perplexed by these words, and pondered what sort of greeting this might be." She was very humble. She thought that she didn't deserve such a compliment.

And then the angel said something that appears several times in the Scripture. Our Lord used the same expression - the angels at night when they appeared to the shepherds in Bethlehem, used the same expression, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus." And again, let's wait to be behind Mary, maybe hidden, and contemplating the dialogue between Gabriel and this girl. A

tradition of the Church says that she was probably sixteen years old. In her virginity, her purity, in her modesty, in her beautiful personality, receiving the invitation from God to cooperate as a protagonist in the work of redemption. And then some seconds of silence while Mary is trying to understand what's going on, trying to digest the information, probably blushing, I imagine her being confused, and as any normal girl, being excited and at the same time afraid. And- and the angel may be trying to fill the gap - says, he will be great, and he will be called the Son of the Most High, and they- and the Lord God will be the throne of David- the house of David. And then he will reign over the house of Jacob forever and of his kingdom there will be no end.

And Mary, again, trying to understand what's going on, being very grateful, and at the same time feeling unworthy to- to make a step. But after some seconds that are so lyrical, so beautiful, marries it to the angel, "How can this be? I- I am a virgin, I don't know how to accomplish such a beautiful dream. I'm not worthy to do this." And the angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore, the child to be born will be holy. He will be called Son of God." And more seconds of silence, and the angel continues, "Nothing will be impossible for God." Then Mary said, "Here I am, I am the Handmaid of the Lord; let it be done to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.

This is the most transcendent moment in human history. There is nothing compared to what happened that morning in the house of Nazareth. It is a turning point of our history, our salvation. And there's a girl there, opening up her soul, her heart to the invitation that came from God. And you and I, every time that we pray a Hail Mary, we go back to that moment. And it's good for us to inspire ourselves, to put a foundation in our lives that is solid. The *yes* of Mary many times is in contrast with our *nose*, with our saying, *I don't want to, I cannot*. But at the same time, it's an invitation that comes from her, it's like a perfume, like a fragrance, that moves us to change. My Lord, thank you very much for the Rosary.

I was reading the other day, that spiritual author made a connection between the Rosary and the Original Sin, saying that the Original Sin, the stain that marked human destiny forever, was completely healed with the resurrection of Our Lord after his crucifixion. But he had the kind of- the beginning of that process in the lips of the Blessed Virgin Mary, in the Annunciation. And it is so powerful to connect Adam and Eve and- and the whole chaos of the consequence of the rebellion, and then to see the lips of Mary pronouncing her *let it be done. I'm here, I want to to change history forever*.

I'm not an expert in Japanese culture, but I learned recently that in Japan, when you have a jar that is broken, one of those beautiful jars that decorate the living room, and it's broken to pieces because it falls or someone drops it to the ground, they have a way to fix it that is pretty powerful. It's very

Japanese, with all my respects, because it's full of patience and teaching. And it's- it's as it follows, they take the pieces, they put them together with glue, with a resin that is very sticky. But in the process, they add kind of a particle of dust- of golden dust made out of gold, right? And then when they put the pieces together, the base or the jar, the ceramic has scars, a bunch of them, maybe, you know, hundreds or like veins that- that go through the whole- through the whole thing. But when the sun sheds its light towards the- the object, those scars, because of the gold that the resin has, look like- like a golden crown surrounding the whole thing. And it looks better than when it was perfectly fine. And you get there, when you go, apparently when you go to one of those Japanese houses, they care more about the broken ones because they have gold in it and it looks better, and it looks more beautiful, more gracious. And I was thinking, My Lord, that this is the way you repair human beings. You're, as the angel said, the Almighty, there is nothing impossible for you. You had a plan with Adam and Eve, and it looks like it started in a wrong way, but then you are so creative, you're the creator of the universe, you're the creator of the colors, the moon, stars, the rivers, the planets, the galaxies, the birds, animals, the human voice - the creator of everything that is beautiful. So, in your creativity, you thought, how can I transform scars into something that reflects divinity. And it was this way that you just repair us with our cooperation. We are the glue, through our actions of generosity, and you add to that glue your- your gold. And in human beings, all the scars throughout the centuries have been repaired, especially by you and I think about the Blessed Virgin Mary.

She's a mother, and all women have a special touch, a feminine touch. They do things graciously. They're experts in decoration. They create cozy atmospheres at home. They have a knack for doing that. And if they do it materially speaking, it makes sense that they do it also spiritually speaking. And Mary takes your heart, my heart, and when I pray the Hail Marys, even if I repeat the same thing and it looks like monotonous, it is actually repairing me, it is making me aware of my dignity. And after a Hail Mary, after a Rosary, my scars get close, they're getting healed. And I am more gracious. I am still wounded, I'm not perfect, but the Hail Marys give me peace. Repeating many, many times, maybe thousands of times throughout my life, that I have a mother, that she's the mother of my God, that she prays for me, that she's beautiful, you know, in her soul and her- and her body, that she will never abandon me, makes me a better person. Just repeating that, it is so therapeutic. It is really a healing process that comes in my soul through the gentle touch of your mother.

St. Josemaria, in his prologue to the little book dedicated to the *Holy Rosary*, which I highly recommend that you read and reread, because it will show you- it will teach you how to contemplate the mysteries. He says, "My friend, if you want to be great, become little." Now, St. Josemaria is not saying become childish. He says, become little. And he continues, "To be little it is necessary to believe as children believe." And that's a huge way of believing. Only through this

transformation, Jesus, my Lord, becoming small or being aware that I am small, will allow me to understand my role and your grace and the plan for redemption. This is what Our Lady understood. *Here I am, I'm the handmaid of the Lord.* I believe in you. I have my little contribution which is my life. And I want to think big. Let's sit- let's ask Our Lord Jesus, do I think big? When I pray the Rosary, when I am repeating the history of salvation in this kind of a condensed prayer that says a lot of things, do I understand what I'm saying? Do I believe like children do?

I was reading the other day this book, *The Hidden Power of Kindness* - very interesting book. And the author says, "You're not cheerful- you're not really cheerful if you're cheerful only at times, but the third time is given away to sadness and melancholy. This would indicate that you are ruled entirely by your feelings." And you may think, well, but the feelings are good, it is good- it's a good thing to have good feelings. It is true, partially. And I live in a society, my Lord, that is ruled by feelings. And feelings could be deceitful. I need to be cheerful, like solidly cheerful - solidly cheerful. Why? Because I have a reason to be cheerful. I have a God that entered forever into human history. And when I pray the Rosary, I reenact, in a way, in my memories, at least that moment, it is like the Angelus, it is at the turning point in human history. There's no way back. If Our Lord exists, if he came to his world, there must be always a reason to believe that my situation right now, wherever I am, can be touched by redemption. And then, my Lord, I will not be blaming circumstances, thinking that later will be better, now I need to go through this and later will be better. No. *Now* has a meaning. Every single human situation has been redeemed. And the Hail Mary is kind of a music or is a healing medicine for everything - seeing the world with the eyes of redemption. So, it is what St. Josemaria is saying, you are a little, but then you believe big. You trust like kids do when they- when they see a dog barking, they run towards his father and mother. And that's it, it's the end of the story for them because they believe that they will protect them and they will be safe. So the same applies, spiritually speaking, with any problem, do I believe soundly, like kids do, my Lord?

I remember many years ago, I was- I was about to go to sleep one night, and a person called me up and told me that, unfortunately, his son attempted suicide that day - without success, thank God. And he was hospitalized and scared, really scared. And then he wanted me to talk to him, to his son. And I didn't know him, maybe met him before. So, I was a little confused, as you can understand. And so he said, well, why don't you go to visit him? And I said, listen, now it's late at night, and I don't know if it's possible, maybe I can go tomorrow morning. And dad- being a good dad he said, well, yeah, he's really scared. Can you talk to him at least, through the phone? I said, sure. So, I called him up to his room at the hospital, at the mental facility where he was staying that night. And he opened up. He- he told me that he was really kind of going through darkness, and- and very confused. And I tried to give him some peace with some advice, telling him that his family needed him, that we loved him, that he was worth living, that he was a treasure for us. But it wasn't convincing, maybe as I expected. So I think it was my guardian angel at the end - told me, why don't

you talk to him about the three Hail Marys that you pray at night, because I didn't plan that. So I said, I don't know why, but I said hey, listen, you know, when I'm scared every night or when I'm not, but in any case, every night before I go to sleep I pray three Hail Marys. I didn't pray them today yet. So if you want to, we can pray them together through the phone. So I'm going to kneel down in my room, you can kneel in yours, and let's do it together. Do you know the Hail Mary? And he said yes. And we did it. I'm telling you, those were the best three Hail Marys of my existence. So we knelt down, each one in our rooms and we prayed through a phone. And at the end there was silence. After a few seconds, he said I am at peace, thank you so much. I feel comfort now- comfortable- safe. Thank you so much, I'll see you tomorrow. And then we hung up.

That's the power of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The rosary is a shelter. And it makes me so happy, my Lord, to think that throughout centuries, millions of Christians, millions of Catholics have been repeating the same things, "Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you," and you are one of us. So, pray for us when you get to Heaven, and especially when I die, so it's a- it's a very simple and powerful way to ask Our Lady to protect us and- and to accompany us when we are in darkness. So maybe, let's ask St. Josemaria to teach us how to pray the Rosary, to see that it is a healing process. And I'm not talking just about that psychological thing. It has a grace, it puts us in contact with the Blessed Virgin Mary directly, it's the most powerful thing, the most powerful prayer after the Mass, right? Because it marries the door that opens up to redemption, to Jesus Christ. It's a door that even God respected. She was asked, can I enter? And she said, yes. So, even God, in a way- even God entered into this world through that door. So Mary has this potential of helping us, and Our Lord loves her to the moon and back, as they say. So let's pray them, let's pray those rosaries contemplating not just in a superstitious way, or just repeating things, but maybe contemplating the mystery, even some seconds before each mystery, to get into the scene. And, as St. Josemaria says, become little, come with me, he says, "And this is the secret of what I want to tell you. We shall live the life of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph." I like it so much, because he says, "Come with me and we will live the life of Mary, Jesus, and Joseph." We will live that life, the Hail Mary will permeate, you know, get into your bones, into your soul, and you will live the same life, you will be connected with that moment of redemption because we are part of the same family.

Just imagine, now we are in this culture of images. Imagine that you had a video, a short video, a few seconds, where you could see again and again, the phase or the the image of Mary, right after the Annunciation. Imagine that we had a clip, a camera that was hidden, that's right. And then you could see the face of Mary, her joy, the first minute, after that moment of the Annunciation, the Incarnation - Mary proudly dropping a couple of tears, but smiling, and maybe combing her hair, confused and her heart beating fast, and trying to put her thoughts together. And then, you know, standing up or kneeling down and then just going to tell her cousin that, look at what happened to me. So, let's say that you had those few seconds, few minutes in a video. I bet you it will be in your

phone, at least in mine for sure. And at any time that I would feel in darkness, or upset or depressed because of the world, I will play that video. I would press play again and again contemplating my Mother when she was sixteen years old receiving the message that changed history forever. And I would play that video every day at least once. This is what we do when we pray the Hail Mary. This is exactly what we do when we pray the Rosary. We go back to memories. Like Maroon Five says in the song, *memories bring back memories bring back you*. So true. Memories bring back another memory, and at the end, brings back you and I to Jesus Christ, to Our Lady, to St. Joseph, like St. Josemaria is saying in his introduction to the *Holy Rosary*.

If you go to Rome, someday in your life, and you visit the Sistine Chapel, this magnificent painting by Michelangelo Buonarroti, *The Final Judgement*, you will see that there is- one of the characters- there is a guy after dying, trying to get to Heaven. And he has like four demons hanging on his legs, pulling him down, like tackling him down to hell, trying to. And then guy is very scared, obviously, and his right arm is stretched out towards Heaven, and at the end of his- his hand, with his fingers- with the tip of his fingers, he's holding a Rosary. And on the other side of the Rosary, pulling up the guy, Michelangelo represented his guardian angel. And the demons cannot beat this guardian angel which is smaller and weaker, he's alone, pulling the guy up because he is using the Rosary as a, you know, as a rope, or as a tool to bring him up. And Michelangelo wanted to, to show the power of the devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary. There's nothing that can break our friendship with God if we put Mary into the picture, if we protect ourselves under her cloak.

So, let's go to Our Lady, maybe asking St. Joseph to to help us out. Joseph was a witness in everything that happened in Nazareth. What a privilege for St. Joseph, what a unique vocation, to be in the same house with Mary and with Jesus. So, he knows a lot about how to pray, and he will teach us how to get to know Mary, how to get to know Jesus better, and to allow them to take possession of our souls, of our lives, of our personalities, and to be transformed by their presence inside us.

I thank you, my God, for the good resolutions, affections, and inspirations that you have communicated to me in this meditation. I ask your help to put them into effect. My Immaculate Mother, St. Joseph, my father and lord, my guardian angel, intercede for me.



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