



Journey to Our Lady

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My Dear Friends,

We are enduring difficult and challenging times tethered with confusion and doubts. How do we move forward when we feel let down? Where do we turn for guidance when our trust has been damaged? Let us turn to Mary, our Blessed Mother, and the Rosary.

The Mother of God gives us the Rosary and calls on us to pray with sincerity so that faith, hope, and love will always be in our hearts and guide us every day of our lives. Truly, the Rosary, according St. John Paul II, takes us into the depth of the Gospel message—and teaches us how to live!

With every Our Father and Hail Mary, we ask Our Lord to protect us and Our Lady to pray for us so we can give glory to God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit by the way we live and treat one another. Through the mysteries—through the lives of Jesus and Mary—we see what it means to give our body and soul to God so that we can be instruments of His merciful love.

Love and mercy are certainly what we need in today's world. Living in unity with the Holy Trinity and our Blessed Mother fills that need. The mysteries of the Rosary help us enter into that divine relationship which gives us the graces and blessings that lead to a better life on earth and eternal life in Heaven.

With Mary as our guide and companion, praying the Rosary will cause our good works to thrive, our resolve to strengthen to sin no more, and our earthly desires to decrease so that Our Lord can increase in our lives. With this armor against evil and temptation, the light of God will shine in and through our souls.

Let us continue our journey.

Harvest of Holiness

Let us begin with a story: A man and woman, very distraught and discouraged about today's problems, walk into a store and see Jesus Christ standing behind the sales counter. As they look for something to lift their spirits, Jesus suggests they make a list of what they want to buy.

They list peace, hope, and love for the world. In return, Jesus gives them a packet of seeds, as well as the equipment and instructions to make them grow. He explains to the man and woman that to have peace, hope, and love grow in the world, they have to work the seeds and dedicate their time and energy to tend to them daily so that nothing will impede their growth. The man and woman leave the store, buying nothing.

Yes, we have work to do—work that will reap a great harvest if we follow our Lord's instructions. The mysteries of the Rosary show us that God gives us everything we need to fulfill our mission of spreading peace, hope, and love through our daily living for the sake of our salvation and the salvation of the world. As St. Augustine wrote: God made us without ourselves, but He will not save us without ourselves.

Praying the Rosary helps us to live a life of holiness; a life that brings Heaven to earth and earth to Heaven. In other words, when we pray in earnest with an open mind, heart, and soul, we receive God's graces from Heaven which in turn draw us into God's heavenly embrace. With His embrace, we have the peace of mind to carry us through each day and when our peace of mind is shaken to the core, we have a (See story, pg. 2)>

(Harvest of Holiness, cont'd from pg. 1)

choice—to break away or to hold on even tighter. Praying the Rosary gives us the strength to hold on to God and to let go of those creature comforts that we tend to rely on, particularly in times of stress and confusion. While those comforts make us feel good and provide relief from our troubles, their effects are only temporary and do nothing to advance us toward Heaven, which is our final destination for all eternity according to God's plan.

To advance toward Heaven, the mysteries of the Rosary show us how to bring God's graces to life through our daily living and even in times of great sorrow. We see the way of faith, hope, and love through the lives of Jesus and Mary who offered themselves to God and to us for the sake of our salvation.

Through this offering, they put their lives completely into God's hands. Shouldn't we do the same? Consider this: When we unite our lives with Jesus and Mary and become one with them—through faith, hope, and love—everything that we say and do and think and experience can be an offering to God. When we put our earthly lives in God's hands and allow the Spirit of our Savior to work in us and through us, we will be raised in holiness for eternal life in Heaven. There is no greater, more satisfying work than this!

Are we willing to take on this work and responsibility? We can choose to do nothing or we can accept God's graces and the responsibility to obey God's will to sin no more. This responsibility requires us to clear away anything that impedes our growth in holiness. We need to make room for the Holy Spirit—God's gift of love for us which increases when we receive the gift of the Holy Eucharist.

The mysteries of the Rosary show us that these gifts and graces prepare and fortify us so that even in pain and suffering we can offer ourselves to God and in turn, help those in most need of God's mercy by sharing His love. When we pray the Rosary and absorb its lessons and blessings into our daily living, we will surely reap a harvest of holiness and spread peace, hope and love in our world. #

Prayer

*Dearest Mother,
Help me to pray
as you want me to pray.
Many distractions,
wandering thoughts,
and
daily temptations
disrupt my prayers.
Draw me close
to you and your Son,
Jesus Christ,
and
open my heart to our
Lord's loving graces.
Give me the strength
to let go of my
earthly habits and
creature comforts
so that I may dedicate
my words and deeds
to spreading
peace, hope, and love
through my daily living.
Amen.*

Thy Kingdom Come!

When we pray the Lord's Prayer, do we realize that it is the most perfect prayer? This prayer was given to us by Jesus Himself. Imagine yourself at the Sermon on the Mount; the Son of God teaches us how to pray so that we may have a place in His heavenly Kingdom, now and forever!

The Lord's Prayer, coupled with the Mysteries of the Rosary, lifts our sights toward Heaven, helping us to seek first the Kingdom of God and all His righteousness, [Matthew 6:33] which will guide us in establishing our priorities for our daily living. For God's Kingdom to come, we are called to follow His will on earth "as it is in Heaven."

Each time we pray to Our Father for what we need to live a holy life, we also need to adhere to what is expected of us in obeying His will. What is expected? To love God above all else, to love one another as God loves us, to forgive as well as to seek forgiveness, to avoid evil and temptation, and to receive the strength of God's merciful love through the Holy Eucharist, the Scriptures and the Holy Spirit.

In other words, we are called to be children of God. Otherwise, how can we call God, Our Father? How glorious it is to be children of God! Within this holy family, we have God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit with Mary as our Mother, plus all the angels and saints ready to guide our every step in life.

When we say "Thy Kingdom come, Thy Will be done," we are inviting Our Father and heavenly family into our lives to lead us, help us, protect us, and to have mercy on us. We are acknowledging that we cannot live without God's merciful love because when we rely only on ourselves, the Kingdom of God and the holiness Our Father wants us to have for our salvation are out of reach.

Therefore, as children of God, let our hearts be open, humble, trusting, and loving so we can respond to God's graces—His call to holiness—to enable each of us to share God's love and mercy with our world. In unity with the Holy Trinity, we can say with all sincerity: Thy Kingdom come! Thy Will be done! So be it! #

Pray for Us Sinners

What do we think of when we pray to the Blessed Virgin Mary? Do we think of Mary as a statue in Church or as a painting or image in a stain glass window? Or do we think of her as she actually was—a human being, a daughter, a caring companion, a loving wife and mother. Mary was and is someone we all can count on in whatever circumstance each of us may face. Truly, Mary is our mother.

While the Scriptures tell us little about our Blessed Mother's life, they tell us enough to illustrate that Mary—in all her humanness—lovingly guides us on our spiritual journey in unity with her Son. And as we pray the Hail Mary, let us think about what we are saying and asking our Mother, the Mother of God. We are asking Mary, who is full of grace—filled with the presence of God—to pray for us sinners.

How can we possibly go wrong with the Mother of God praying for us? The truth is we can go wrong when we do not keep the promises we make to Mary. When we pray to Mary, we entrust our lives with her, which means we promise to trust all that Mary gives us to help us with our lives. When we open our hearts to Mary, we promise to open our hearts to the Holy Trinity because Mary is the one human being perfectly united with God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. However, if we do not pray with an open and trusting heart, we prevent ourselves from receiving the fullness of Mary's love and the graces that protect us from sin.

Let us ask ourselves, when we pray the Hail Mary, especially in the Rosary, are we giving Mary full rein to our hearts, minds, and souls? Or does the repetition of the prayer become mechanical? Our Lady's intent is not to cause monotony; the intent of praying to Our Lady is to replenish us, strengthen us, and help us to grow in virtue and holiness. The more we absorb this prayer into our being, the more we embrace all that our Heavenly Mother want us to be—brothers and sisters to her Son Jesus Christ.

May Mary, our Mother, pray for us sinners and may we give thanks for our Mother's heavenly embrace. #

Heavenly Glory!

“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.”

The *Glory Be* is more than a concluding prayer at the end of each decade of the Rosary. Let us ask ourselves: To raise our hearts, minds, and souls toward Heaven, how do we give glory to the Holy Trinity on earth?

Consider the Transfiguration of Jesus in all His glory with a voice from Heaven saying: “This is my beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him.” [Matthew 17:5] To listen, to follow, to unite, to obey, to be conformed to the image of Jesus to become His brothers and sisters by the power of the Holy Spirit—that is how we give glory to God in the highest.

Imagine how heavenly our world would be if every person lived the way of Christ! To share faith, hope, and love even in times of pain and sorrow so that every person is drawn into God's loving embrace—that is what we are called to do. The mysteries of the Rosary show us how.

We learn that every moment of our lives serves a purpose when we offer ourselves—body and soul—to our Lord and allow Him to work through us in whatever way He pleases because His work is for the good of all. We also see that God gives us the graces and blessings we need to live a full life to serve Him—to

serve humanity. We should take care to not bury these treasures; instead we should use them in our daily lives, invest them in good works, and share them so that others may benefit.

To share in our Lord's work is the greatest mission we will ever have. What we do and how we serve our Lord will be different for each of us, but the outcome will be the same. We will join our Father's Kingdom to live in heavenly glory for all eternity—that is God's plan for each of us. #



Prayer

*Heavenly Mother,
Open my heart, mind,
and soul
so that I may be conformed
to the image
of your Son, Jesus Christ.
With your heavenly
embrace,
help me to embrace
all of God's graces
and blessings
with humility, love,
and trust.
May I never forget
that my purpose
in this world
is to serve God
by serving humanity
with love and mercy,
just as Jesus taught us.
May my life give
glory to
God the Father, the Son,
and the Holy Spirit,
now and always.
Amen.*

Dear Angel,

You know so well the pitfalls and obstacles I face on my heavenly journey; please take me under your wing and protect me. Do not let me falter in doubts and confusion. Help me to move forward and to hold on to God's love.

When we let go of God's love and take our sight away from Heaven, that is when sin intrudes upon our lives. Give me support and assurance so that I do not weaken under the strain of my travails. Help me to see God's light.

No matter how many twists and turns I may face in life, may I always remain steadfast in my faith, hope, and love for God and humanity. Amen.



Right Love, Wrong Time?

Let us be clear: God's love is always right for us, but oftentimes we are not ready to accept it wholeheartedly. We feel the need to go out on our own and to live life our own way in order to find what we want. God patiently waits for us to find our way back to Him—to the love that is ever-lasting. God knows we belong with Him, but we have to come to that realization for ourselves.

Why is God's love so hard to accept? Perhaps it is the responsibility that comes with God's love that makes many of us shy away. Do we prefer to live for passions and pleasures; to engage in activities that we know are wrong, but we do so anyway for the thrill of misbehaving? Although we are raised as Christians, do we really follow the Christian way?

How much time and energy do we spend experimenting and experiencing what life has to offer—the good and the bad—without any regard beyond our own self-satisfaction? While passions and pleasures may give us a temporary satisfaction in the exhilaration or excitement of the moment, a profound emptiness remains in our souls. True, we may love God's many creations on earth, but in our heart of hearts, do we have a longing that cannot be abated? That longing is to love and to be loved by the Creator.

Let us learn from the saints who came before us. Being human, our saints started out as sinners, but they allowed God's love to draw them into communion with Him, realizing where they belonged. In God's loving hands, they received all the graces and blessings they needed to live life fully, giving meaning and purpose to all the events and circumstances in their lives. Immersed in God's love, they followed the path to holiness during their earthly lifetime.

God believes in each of us and wants all of us to become saints. Even though He calls us, He does not force Himself on us. Truly, with God's love comes great patience, mercy, understanding, and a readiness to welcome us in His heavenly Kingdom. Are we ready? How much time do we need to answer His call? How long will it take for each of us to realize where we belong?

Praying the Rosary can help us to see that we are called to be God's children. The mysteries of the Rosary show us that there is no greater love than God's because God's entire being is love. It is a love that never leaves us. While His love is infinite, our time in this world is not and it is during this time that we can either immerse ourselves in God's love, accept His love half-heartedly, or reject Him completely.

May we find inspiration through our prayers and the lives of the saints so that our hearts, minds, and souls come to see that we belong with God now and forevermore.

Journey to Our Lady

Pray to Our Lady on the last Sunday of each month in the Great Upper Church at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception. Mass begins at 2 p.m., followed by Eucharistic Adoration, Benediction, the Rosary, and prayers. The Shrine is located at 400 Michigan Avenue, NE in Washington, D.C.

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