

# Finding Jesus in the Mysteries of the Rosary

*The rosary spiritually enriches us as we meditate on the life of Christ through the eyes of Mary*

by Supreme Chaplain Archbishop William E. Lori



DURING A RECENT visit to New Haven, I was asked to bless several pallets loaded with more than 30,000 rosaries. In fact, I bless large numbers of rosaries whenever I'm at the Supreme Council headquarters. The reason is that a rosary is given to every Knight of Columbus when he becomes a member. I still have the rosary I was given when I became a Knight in 1986 and a few newer ones to spare. A rosary is "standard operating equipment" — if I might use that phrase — for every Knight. Members of the Knights and their families are encouraged by the Order to pray the rosary daily. Indeed, every Catholic should try to pray the rosary frequently. And what better month than May — dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary — for us to revisit this devotion.

## SPIRITUAL MEDICINE

By word and example, Pope Francis certainly encourages us to pray the rosary. The Holy Father prays 15 decades of the rosary daily and often can be seen praying it in public. He has even written a pocket-sized book of meditations on the mysteries of the rosary. Through these easy-to-read reflections, Pope Francis invites us to ask the help of Mary so that our hearts might be prepared to enter into the mysteries of Christ's life.

The pope also talks about the rosary in his addresses and homilies. In one Angelus address, for instance, he called

the rosary "spiritual medicine ... for the heart, the soul and the whole of life." On another occasion, he pulled a rosary from his pocket, held it up, and asked the people if they too had rosaries. Then, he asked if they merely carry the rosary in their pockets or if they actually pray it!

We might ask why it is that popes, great saints and pastors, and masters of the spiritual life are nearly unanimous

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in urging us to pray the rosary. Many others have answered that question more convincingly than I ever could. Yet, emboldened by the Blessed Mother's love for me, I am willing to try! And I'd like to take my cue from a prayer that is often recited at the end of the rosary. It goes like this:

"O God, whose only begotten Son, by his life, death and resurrection, has purchased for us the rewards of eternal salvation: Grant, we beseech thee, that while meditating on these mysteries of the most holy rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary, we may both imitate what they contain and obtain what they promise, through Christ our Lord. Amen."

Let's consider two phrases in that prayer: 1) "meditating on these myster-

ies of the most holy rosary" and 2) "imitate what they [the mysteries of the rosary] contain and obtain what they promise." I believe that these two phrases can help deepen our understanding of the rosary and motivate us to pray it daily.

First, this concluding prayer reminds us that the rosary is a prayer for meditation on the mysteries of the life of Christ. In a daily Mass homily, Pope Francis said that prayer is not mindlessly repeating words "like a parrot!" The rosary, too, is not merely a matter of saying Our Fathers and Hail Marys. Rather, when we address the Blessed Mother using the words of the archangel Gabriel — "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you!" (Lk 1:28) — she calms our spirit and leads us to Jesus. She helps us enter into the "mysteries" of her Son's life.

## THE PROMISE OF JOY

When we refer to the "mysteries" of the rosary, we do not mean something that is difficult or even impossible to explain. Rather, the word "mysteries" refers to events in the earthly life of Christ that reveal the saving work of our heavenly Father. Mary, who shared in these events like no one else, guides us through the incarnation, birth and childhood of Jesus (joyful mysteries);



LEARNING THE FAITH, LIVING THE FAITH

through the events of Jesus' public life that manifested the Father's glory (luminous mysteries); through Jesus' saving passion and death (sorrowful mysteries); and through the triumph of the Lord over sin and death (glorious mysteries).

By allowing Mary to help us to reflect prayerfully on these events in the life of Christ, we begin to "imitate what they contain." For example, the first joyful mystery is the Annunciation. As we greet Mary and ask her intercession, we ponder the news that the angel Gabriel brought — the birth of the Savior. We should be moved to give

thanks and praise to God for loving the world so much that he sent us his only Son (cf. Jn 3:16). We should also ponder Mary's response to this astonishing news: "Let it be done to me according to thy word!"

When we pray each successive Hail Mary attentively, we always receive some benefit for our spiritual life. The Good News that the angel brought might dispel our gloomy outlook and rekindle our Christian hope. The response of Mary might challenge our tendency to be a Christian on our own terms, not the Lord's.

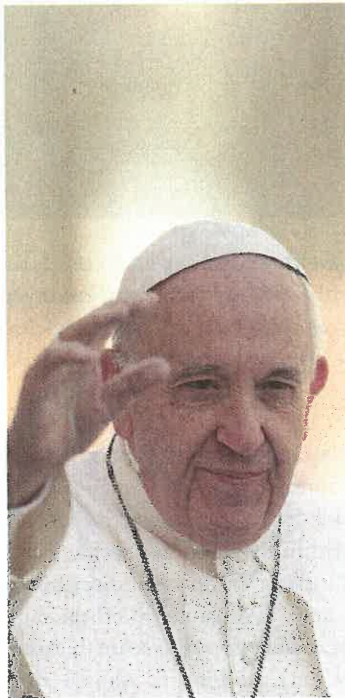
As we enter into the mysteries of Christ's life, we also "obtain what they promise" — first and foremost the blessedness and joy of growing in the likeness of Christ. This overarching blessing is specified in the 15 promises of the Blessed Mother to those who pray the rosary, as promoted by the Dominican order — promises that strengthen our hope for eternal life and that give us encouragement in the misfortunes and challenges of life.

In this month of May — and in every month thereafter — let us put our K of C rosaries to good use! ♦

HOLY FATHER'S PRAYER INTENTION

Offered in Solidarity with Pope Francis

CHRISTIANS IN AFRICA: That Christians in Africa, in imitation of the merciful Jesus, may give prophetic witness to reconciliation, justice and peace.



POPE FRANCIS: CNS photo/Paul Haring — FATHER FLANAGAN: CNS Photo

CATHOLIC MAN OF THE MONTH

Father Edward J. Flanagan (1886-1948)

THE EIGHTH of 11 children, Edward Joseph Flanagan was born July 13, 1886, into a hardworking, close-knit Catholic family in County Roscommon, Ireland. As a boy, Flanagan was fond of praying the rosary while pasturing sheep and at age 8 expressed the desire to become a priest. An exceptional student, he immigrated to the United States in 1904 to pursue his vocation.

After studying at Mount St. Mary's College in Emmitsburg, Md., and then at St. Joseph's Seminary in Dunwoodie, N.Y., ill health forced Flanagan to convalesce in Omaha, Neb., where most of his family had since settled. He completed his priestly formation in Rome and later in Innsbruck, Austria, where he was ordained for the Diocese of Omaha in 1912.

Father Flanagan was assigned to parish work and opened a men's shelter in Omaha in 1913. Moved by the plight of homeless and wayward boys, in 1917 he started what soon was called Boys Town, which within four years housed, educated and trained some 500 boys.



"I do not believe that a child can be reformed by lock and key and bars," Father Flanagan said. "A boy given the proper guidance will prove my statement that there is no such thing as a bad boy."

With the 1925 launch of a radio show, Father Flanagan became a respected authority on childcare. Following World War II, President Truman asked him to travel to Asia and Europe on behalf of war orphans.

Father Flanagan suffered a heart attack and died in Berlin on May 15, 1948. Soon after, Omaha Council 652, of which he was a member, changed its name in his honor. The Archdiocese of Omaha opened the cause for Father Flanagan's canonization in 2012. ♦