



# LIGHT & LIFE

VOICE OF THE ROSARY CENTER & CONFRATERNITY

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Fr. Joseph Sergott, O.P., *Director*    May-June 2020, Vol. 73, No 3    Western Dominican Province

## YOUR DAILY PRAYER HOUR

*By Fr. Joseph Sergott, OP*

In this time of pandemic people have had to stay at home to an extent that they never had to before, perhaps in their entire life. For some, it has been a time of growth; they have discovered new things that they can do at home that are constructive, e.g., taking up gardening, tackling long-forgotten home projects, or actively participating in virtual meetings online with loved ones. For others though, this has been a time of great challenge—even crisis. It has led some to indulge in things that are not good for them, e.g., buying too much on the internet, over-eating, watching too much TV, binging on alcohol, or viewing pornography.

Recently a friend of mine asserted that God has the world in “time-out,” something usually given to children who act up so that they can reflect on their behavior. Maybe God sees the need for a world-wide “time-out” so that his children can reflect on their lives and cast off the things that don’t matter—or worse, the things that lead them away from God. As we find ourselves stuck at home with extra time on our hands, maybe we could use that time for spiritual renewal, for taking “time out” to seek the Lord.

Our situation need not be seen in a bad light however; but as a time of discovering new opportunities or possibilities found right at home that can open doors to unexplored avenues that we never knew existed, pathways that lead us to God in ways that transform us and give us life. God is infinite and there are countless ways that lead to him, and ALL of them provide renewal, help, blessing and wisdom for the one who travels them. All it takes is a spirit of adventure and the desire for discovery to make sheltering at home a time of drawing nearer to the Lord; we can do that by getting creative and investing in our own life of prayer.



*Sacred Heart Appearing to St. Margaret Mary Alacoque*

In its most basic form, *prayer* is communication with God through our thoughts, words and gestures. The wonderful thing about prayer is that God stoops down to meet us where we are. He takes seriously every single prayer, from the child who kneels at her bedside, to the infirm confined to his bed, and to the sinner or addict asking for deliverance from their captivity. The Lord looks into each heart and even hears and responds to our groanings when we don’t know how to pray. (Cf. Romans 8:26) I assure you, the Lord listens to your prayers through every sincere effort you make to reach him no matter how stumbling the attempt.

The way we pray speaks about our relationship with God. “The spiritual life is not primarily about certain practices of piety and techniques of prayer, but about a relationship. It’s about responding to the One who has created us and redeemed us.”<sup>1</sup> All prayer is grounded in Jesus Christ. Jesus is *the* Intercessor before the Father. All things flow through him, as he says, “I am the way, the truth, and the life;

no one comes to the Father except through me.” (John 14:6) Further, he says, “I give you my assurance, whatever you ask the Father, he will give you in my name . . . Ask and you shall receive, that your joy may be full.” (John 16:23-24)

To set out on this journey of prayer, I recommend a Daily Prayer Hour that you can do every morning or evening, or whatever time of the day that is best for you, with the mindset that it will become part of your daily life even when the pandemic has passed. It’s easier than you think. Further, if you stay with it, you will find that it will in fact change your life, your marriage, or your entire family.

Many people shudder at the idea of praying for one hour. After all, most people get scared at the thought of meditating in silence for 5 minutes! Before you dismiss this as being impossible for yourself, consider just how much you need to draw closer to God and the practical ways in

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### THE ROSARY LIGHT & LIFE

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# THEOLOGY FOR THE LAITY

## Understanding the Rosary

By Fr. Basil Cole, O.P.

Adapted from "To Know Him" Vol. I, 2006

Many Catholics today do not pray the Rosary because, as they say, they find it too difficult to think about two things at the same time: the Hail Marys and the Rosary mystery. As a result, many persons of good will have simply given up praying the Rosary because they misunderstand how the Rosary should be prayed. In their confusion they hope that Mary will not mind, since their prayers have been so muddled with distractions and boredom.

### MISUNDERSTANDINGS

This objection stems from a misunderstanding of what the Rosary is and how it is to be prayed. The Rosary is a combination of vocal prayer, the Hail Marys and the Our Fathers, and of mental prayer, the meditation on the various incidents or mysteries in the life of Our Lord and His Mother. Yet there is no conflict in this combination, but rather a blending of one with the other, for while the lips pronounce the words of the Hail Mary (vocal prayer), the mind should reflect (mental prayer) on the mystery of the Rosary that has been announced. The repetition of the 10 Hail Marys is used as a measuring device to determine the length of time to meditate on the mystery at hand. So, the Rosary, properly understood, brings before us for our reflection, not the vocal prayers being recited, but the mysteries of our redemption. However, one might well reflect on the Hail Mary during the Joyful Mysteries of the Rosary, for the words of that prayer recall those mysteries.

As regards those who see the Rosary as being insignificant, claiming that it is not in keeping with the spirit of Vatican II, the Second Vatican Council in the Decree on the Liturgy (no. 13) clearly states that "popular devotions of the Christian people are warmly commended, provided they accord with the laws and norms of the Church." Moreover, the fact that Pope St. John XXIII who called the Council, and Pope St. Paul VI, who presided over its sessions and conclusion, so highly recommended the Rosary, is clear evidence of the mind of the Church in this regard. In his Apostolic Letter, Pope St. John Paul II testified, "How many graces have I received in these years from the Blessed Virgin through the Rosary. *Magnificat anima mea Dominum!* I wish to lift up my thanks to the Lord in the words of His most Holy Mother, under whose protection I have placed my Petrine ministry: *Totus Tuus!*"

Not only were these three Popes, who reigned during Vatican II or afterwards, great lovers of the Rosary, but so was their predecessor Pope Pius XII, who wrote in an encyclical on this prayer of Mary: "We well know the Rosary's powerful efficacy to obtain the maternal aid of the Virgin." And speaking of the vocal and mental prayers that make up the Rosary, he said: "What prayers are more adapted

and more beautiful than the Lord's Prayer and the angelic salutation, which are the flowers with which this mystical crown is formed?"

### MORE DIVINE THAN HUMAN

The Rosary is not only an important means of instruction in the truths of our faith, but an important means to bring Catholics to love and to be loved by Mary who gave this form of prayer to the Church. As Pope Pius XII points out, its very origin and the wisdom of its composition is "more divine than human."

Yet the Rosary is not simply devotion to Mary. It is a devotion that leads one to the divine Trinity of Persons through the hearts and minds of Jesus Incarnate and Mary Immaculate. It is Mary's instrument to bring us closer to her divine Son, and to become more involved in our lives as her children.

I am often saddened by the number of children and adults who do not know how, or do not care, to pray the Rosary; for when it is understood and prayed with devotion, it is a celebration of faith, of confidence and of love in the Most Holy Trinity.

### OTHER MISCONCEPTIONS

In addition to the above-mentioned reasons why some have given up praying the Rosary, is the fact that some find its recitation monotonous. This problem, as a rule, comes from the misconception already referred to, namely, reflecting merely or mainly on the vocal prayers being recited. Such is like a body without a soul. A mere repetition of Hail Marys, fruitful as it may be as a prayer, or even as a source of meditation, is not the Rosary.

The Rosary, in the words of Pope St. Paul VI, is a "compendium of the Gospel." It is so devised that it helps us to reflect briefly on the principal events of our redemption. If some find it difficult to meditate on these mysteries, either because of lack of instruction, or because of fatigue, or some physical or mental difficulty, the Rosary will not be without its fruit, if they do the best

*"Redeemed by reason of the merits of her Son and united to Him by a close and indissoluble tie, the Virgin Mary is endowed with the high office and dignity of being the Mother of the Son of God, by which account she is also the beloved daughter of the Father and the temple of the Holy Spirit. Because of this gift of sublime grace she far surpasses all creatures, both in heaven and on earth."* – *Lumen Gentium*, n. 53

they can, keeping in mind that involuntary distractions do not detract from the value of prayer. In prayer, what we want to do and try to do, is more important before God than whether or not we actually succeed in doing it. Those twenty minutes (more or less) given to this prayer, doing the best we can, are very pleasing to the Mother of God, and the source of much fruit, even if they might leave us without much personal satisfaction. We don't measure the value of prayer by the "lift" we get out of it.

As Pope Pius XII wrote, speaking of the Rosary: "the recitation of identical formulas, repeated so many times,

rather than rendering the prayer sterile and boring, has on the contrary the admirable quality of infusing confidence in him who prays, and causes a sweet compulsion towards the maternal heart of Mary.”

## THE BODY AND SOUL OF THE ROSARY

In order for us to appreciate the Rosary, and overcome its obstacles, it will be helpful if we examine its body and soul, especially if we want to share with others its powerful help for our lives, whether we be very spiritual persons, or have a touch of the rascal within us.

After World War I, shell-shocked soldiers were introduced into a therapy that helped them deal with tensions. Doctors discovered that the art of knitting greatly relieved tensions. Somehow the fingers are the little avenues relieving anxieties for restoring natural calm. Perhaps one of the reasons why people love to smoke comes down to the pleasantness of touching the cigarette or pipe.

In a similar manner, the purpose of beads in any religion that uses them, is to boost the art of concentration. The mere fingering of the beads has an effect of calming the mind, while the frequent repetition of the Hail Marys is an attempt to further increase the attention span, helping to shut out distractions, something like the soft murmur of a river which helps to drown out competing noises.

As we have already indicated, the fingering of the beads while repeating the angelic salutation and the Lord’s Prayer is the body of the Rosary; but it is a body that needs a soul, and its soul is the reflection successively on the 20 mysteries which for many centuries have been fixed on five Joyful, five Sorrowful, five Glorious, and the five Luminous (added in 2002 by Pope St. John Paul II) events or mysteries in the life of Our Lord and His Mother.

## ROSARY MEDITATION - LIMITLESS IN SCOPE

Nineteen of the twenty mysteries are taken directly from the New Testament, while one (the Assumption) comes from Tradition. The 5th glorious mystery, the Queenship of Mary, many think has its basis in the book of Revelation (Ch. 12). The woman of the Apocalypse, according to most scholars, seems to refer to the universal Church. However, as it is customarily thought in the Church today, whatever perfections are attributed to the whole Church, reside in their perfection in Mary and are attributed to her, the one individual member of the Church (other than Christ) without stain.

These mysteries of the Rosary are like high points of the New Testament that contain explicitly or implicitly all the fundamentals of our faith. For that reason, the more we are familiar with the content of these mysteries, the more profound will be our use of the Rosary. Our meditation on the mysteries of the Rosary might bring us to reflect on a wide variety of themes, such as: God the Father, His will, His love, His wisdom, the Holy Spirit, eternal life, the Incarnation of His divine Son, our Redemption through his death on the Cross, and the major events in the life of Jesus, Mary and Joseph, and so on.

## SCHOOL OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

All of us can reflect on the various virtues of Jesus, Mary

and Joseph that we contemplate in the Gospel story, and strive to apply these lessons to our own lives. Pope Pius XII stated how efficacious this can be. “From the frequent meditation on the mysteries,” he said, “the soul draws and imperceptibly absorbs the virtues they contain, . . . and becomes strongly and easily impelled to follow the path which Christ Himself and His Mother have followed.” For this reason, he declares, “the Holy Rosary will . . . form the most efficacious school of Christian life.”

Pope St. John XXIII spoke in similar terms: “In reciting the Rosary, the thing that matters is devoutly meditating on each of the mysteries as we move our lips. Therefore, we are sure that our children and all of their brethren throughout the world will turn it into a school for learning true perfection, as with a deep spirit of recollection, they contemplate the teachings that shine forth from the life of Christ and of Mary most holy.”

## ANTIDOTE FOR THE ILLS OF LIFE

It was yet another Pope, Leo XIII, the “Rosary Pope” of the 19th Century, who wrote nine encyclicals on devotion to Mary through the Rosary, who expressed the theology of this prayer so simply. He spoke of the Joyful Mysteries as an antidote for the boredom and tedium of ordinary life; the Sorrowful Mysteries as an antidote for those who feel suffering has no meaning; and the Glorious Mysteries as an antidote for those who forget their real homeland.

## LOOKING AT A MYSTERY IN DEPTH

One can pray the Rosary privately, or in common with others. When praying it privately one can determine his own pace, spending up to a half hour on one decade, or if one’s time is limited he can skip along at about four minutes a decade, which is equally legitimate, as long as one lovingly considers the mystery under some aspect.

If one is praying alone and time permits, it can be helpful to pause a bit after declaring the mystery under consideration. Let us take, for example, the mystery of the Annunciation. As you announce this mystery, you can pause as long as you wish, putting yourself and your problems into the meaning of the mystery. Since there are many different types of prayer, from petition to thanksgiving, from praise

to sorrow, or from submission to simple love, we can begin to look at the Annunciation from any of these angles.

We can, for instance, pray for the gift of faith and confidence, as Mary consented to a most difficult

assignment from Heaven with faith and confidence in God. Or we can thank Mary for having consented to be the Mother of God on our behalf, welcoming the Savior of the world. We can also praise the work of the Holy Spirit for creating in the womb of Mary the human body and soul of the Word. We might simply express to God the Father, or to the Son, or to Mary, our sorrow for those who refuse the gift of human life and have aborted it; or for those who refuse the gift of divine life, or have doubted it.

Then again, we might be rebelling against some necessary decision either for ourselves, our family, or our

*Continued on page 4*

*“Come, let us wonder at the Virgin most pure, wondrous in herself, unique in creation. She gave birth, yet knew no man; her pure soul with wonder was filled, daily her mind gave praise in joy at the twofold wonder: her virginity preserved, her child most dear. Blessed is He who shone forth from her!” – St. Ephraim the Syrian*

### **Understanding the Rosary** (Continued from page 3)

work - that will entail personal pain or difficulty. We reflect on this in the light of Mary's trusting and total surrender. Or we may be fascinated with the Angel Gabriel, and we think of the many times we have either listened to or rejected the suggestions of our guardian angel. Or we might just be wrapped up in loving wonder of the Trinity, that the Divine Persons would plan such a mystery of love, the Word becoming flesh through the love of the Holy Spirit. For some, these considerations might hold their attention for a considerable time, and while they finger the beads their whole personality could experience a deep and trusting surrender to the divine Trinity.

From all this, we can see there is no limit to the extent of the depth and breadth to which one's Rosary meditation can lead. Its freedom within the consideration of the mysteries gives a structure to our meditation, and yet will let the inspiration of the Holy Spirit lead one towards those meanings which are more helpful for stirring up love and devotion to the Holy Trinity. In each mystery we are considering lovingly a different aspect of the merciful love of God. Thus, through it all, while fingering the beads, we are trying to imitate Mary's spirit of reflection, of which St. Luke says: "His Mother meanwhile kept all these things in her heart." (Luke 2:51)

### **DO WHATEVER HE TELLS YOU**

So, what we are doing in the Rosary is recalling the chief mysteries of our faith, in a manner taught us by a loving Mother, Mary the Mother of Jesus and of us all. And the love of this Mother does not stop with her, for her role is to lead us to her Son. Mary's last words recorded in Scripture - at the marriage feast of Cana - summarize well her whole concern in our regard: "Do whatever He tells you." (John 2:5) She leads us to her Son, not only by her words, but especially by her example, for more perfectly than all others she mirrors his virtues.

May the Rosary see an increase in the contemplative life of each one who takes up his beads seeking union with the Divine Trinity through the perspective of Jesus and Mary. When we reflect on these mysteries, we ask that Mary help us to "imitate what they contain, and obtain what they promise." She not only reflected on those mysteries in the past, and had an intimate part in them, but she prays along with us now, and helps us to understand them, and to live them. ■

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### **Daily Prayer Hour** (continued from page 1)

which you can achieve this goal. You can begin gradually but consistently, and if you stick with it, you will discover that your need will become a desire that you seek to fulfill.

When you pray, go to a physical place that is conducive to prayer, e.g., a special room in your home or in the backyard, where you will not be disturbed or distracted. Remember what the Lord says, "When you pray, go to your inner room, close the door, and pray to your Father in secret . . ." (Matthew 6:6) Pray at the time of day that is optimal for you, e.g., if you're a morning person, pray in the morning. As you begin, put aside the business of the day, quiet your thoughts, calm your anxieties, and focus on the Lord. Place yourself in the presence of God. Ask the Lord to calm your mind and your heart, to help you open your heart to him and to orient yourself toward him. Ask him to reveal himself to you, to share with you the

mysteries of his life, his wisdom, and especially his love. In my experience, *invitation* is very important to the Lord; the One who can do all things, rushes into the soul of the person who voluntarily opens the door of their heart to Him.

One last thing, St. Teresa of Avila tells us that whether prayers are memorized or said out loud doesn't determine their value; what matters is whether we pay attention to what we're saying and to whom we're speaking.<sup>2</sup> Also, keep in mind our Lord's own admonition, "In praying, do not babble like the pagans, who think that they will be heard because of their many words." (Matthew 6:7)

The Daily Prayer Hour is broken down into interchangeable parts that can be moved around to create the Hour that you desire, although there is a particular order that I see as beneficial. Though I categorize these different forms of prayer, you will see that each one has aspects of the others, e.g., the Rosary is a prayer of Meditation that includes Intercessory Prayer, while *Lectio Divina* has aspects of Praise, Meditation, Intercessory Prayer and Thanksgiving. Further, all Thanksgiving is a form of Praise of God.

1. *Praise of God* (5 minutes)
2. *Rosary* (20 minutes)
3. *Lectio Divina* (20 minutes)
4. *Silent Meditation* (5 minutes)
5. *Intercessory Prayer* (5 minutes)
6. *Thanksgiving* (5 minutes)

*Praise of God* starts us out on the right path. It turns my focus away from *me* and reorients it toward *God*. It's like getting into a boat and pushing off from shore. Praise of God is one of the highest forms of prayer. It is perhaps the one form of prayer that the devil hates the most. Don't overthink it. There are many ways to praise the Lord. You can begin by singing a song to God, or praise Him by using your own words or expressions, or by praying the Psalms. The Psalms have existed for thousands of years and have been prayed by hundreds of millions of people. The *Catechism* states, "Prayed and fulfilled in Christ, the Psalms are an essential permanent element of the prayer of the Church."<sup>3</sup> I recommend the following Psalms of praise—find the one you like and open your prayer with it each day.

- Psalms 150: "Praise the Lord in His sanctuary"
- Psalms 148: "Praise the Lord from the heavens"
- Psalms 111: "I will give thanks to the Lord with all my heart"
- Psalms 103: "Bless the Lord, O my soul"
- Psalms 100: "Sing joyfully to the Lord"
- Psalms 30: "I will extol you, O Lord, for you drew me clear"
- Psalms 138: "I will give thanks to you, O Lord, with all my heart"
- Psalms 117: "Praise the Lord, all you nations"
- Psalms 136: "Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good"
- Psalms 145: "I will extol you, O my God and King"
- Psalms 34: "I will bless the Lord at all times"
- Psalms 92: "It is good to give thanks to the Lord"
- Daniel 3:52-90: "Blessed are you, O Lord, the God of our Fathers"

You could also pray the Divine Praises<sup>4</sup>, or offer praise to God by creating your own litany. This is accomplished by praising God's name while acknowledging his various attributes or things for which you are thankful. As an example, see "My Litany to Jesus".

There is a natural flow as we move from Praise of God to meditating on the mysteries of the life of Jesus Christ and his Mother in the *Rosary*, especially if we include some of those mysteries in our litany. The Rosary is included in this Daily Prayer Hour because of two essential aspects. First, if you pray it correctly you meditate on all of the key mysteries of the life of Jesus Christ. If you pray it earnestly while seeking to draw near to God, the mysteries of the Incarnation (God becoming man) and the Redemption (Jesus redeeming the world by his death on the cross) will suddenly open up to you. The more you seek to draw near to Jesus, the more he reaches back to you and blesses you in ways unforeseen. Second, I recommend the Rosary because it is Mary's prayer. When we pray the Rosary, the Blessed Virgin joins us in our walk of faith, including in our struggles. The Rosary is the means by which Mary unites souls to herself as they journey toward God

and his Son; it assures us of her maternal presence and protection.<sup>5</sup> Further, God has deigned to grant us graces through Mary; she is always about showing us the many avenues that lead to Jesus.

From the Rosary flows *Lectio Divina*. This is a centuries old way of using the Holy Scriptures for meditation and prayer. Sacred Scripture is the divine word of God, inspired by the Lord himself. It is in its own special category. It's alive and speaks to us in every day and age. *Lectio Divina* has always been a key form of prayer for monks and those who live the cloistered life. It encapsulates much of the life of prayer to which all Christians are called. In this way of prayer, you read the Scriptures carefully, then stop to meditate upon them, speak to God about your reflections, and then make related petitions to God as you are inspired. When praying *Lectio Divina*, you are not meant to race through the passage you are reading; just read a little, pray with it, "chew on it," then once you feel the need to pick up where you left off, read further. This form of prayer

is meant to lift our mind and heart to God so that we can listen intently for what He says to us.

There are many options when choosing scripture passages. I've already recommended the Psalms, which can be used in *Lectio Divina*. Especially, I recommend two special Psalms that are easy ways to dive into prayer: my personal favorite, Psalm 63:1-9 ("My God, you are my God, for you I long; for you my soul is thirsting") and Psalm 25 ("To you I lift up my soul, O Lord, my God"). I also recommend St. Paul's letters or various Gospel passages and events that are

rich and speak to our situation in life, e.g., the woman at the well (John 4:4-42), the man born blind (John 9:1-41), the call of the disciples, the Crucifixion and Resurrection accounts, the woman caught in adultery (John 8:1-11), Jesus' miracles, the parables, the theology of the Holy Eucharist (John 6), Jesus' Transfiguration, the Last Supper, the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:1-12), the Annunciation (Luke 1:26-38), and the Visitation (Luke 1:39-56).

*C h r i s t i a n* Meditation, or contemplative prayer, flows naturally from *Lectio Divina*. Sometimes in prayer we need to sit down and shut up! God speaks to our hearts constantly—but do we ever listen? St. Teresa of Avila says,

"Meditation is the basis for acquiring all the virtues, and to undertake it is a matter of life and death for all Christians."<sup>6</sup> In the Christian tradition, Meditation is Trinitarian in its foundation and Christological in its focus. As we pray in meditation, we connect with the divine life of God within us. As we sit in the presence of the Holy Trinity, our prayer unfolds through our relationship with Jesus.<sup>7</sup> (Normally, I recommend that this be done in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament; but for most people this is not a possibility right now.) I recommend five minutes of silent Meditation in which we quiet ourselves—or even empty ourselves—with the objective of allowing Jesus to fill us with his love.

## MY LITANY TO JESUS

To you, Lord Jesus, I open my heart:

### *I Praise your Holy Name, Lord Jesus, (refrain)*

- ... for you so loved the world that you gave your life for us,
- ... for you do not condemn sinners but love them as your own,
- ... for your forgiveness is sweet and your mercy tender,
- ... for the beauty of this world reflects your divine grandeur,
- ... for I see with the eyes of faith because of You,
- ... for giving me hope and trust in You in the midst of struggle,
- ... for the many blessings that you have bestowed upon me,
- ... for my spouse, children, and the people you have placed in my life,
- ... for your Church and her sacraments of life, healing and vocation,
- ... for giving us your Mother as you hung from the Cross,
- ... for the graces that flow to us through your saints and angels,
- ... for your humility as the Eternal Word in becoming man,
- ... for being the Good Shepherd, seeking the lost, broken and forsaken,
- ... for dying on the Cross for our Redemption,
- ... for your glorious Resurrection and the coming of your kingdom,
- ... for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the Church,
- ... for bestowing upon us the love that you share with your Father,

To you, Lord Jesus, I open my heart, fill me with the abundant love that flows from your Sacred Heart!

*Please remember the Rosary Center in your will. By arranging a gift to the Rosary Center through your will, you can continue to support our apostolate of serving the Lord and his Mother into the future.*



If you are a person who struggles with anxiety, you may be amazed at how this kind of prayer can give you peace and serenity. For me it is a two-fold process. First of all, we empty ourselves of distractions, temptations, worries, etc., by giving them to Jesus. Then we pray to be filled with his presence and love. The *Jesus Prayer*, i.e., “Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me,” is a famous prayer often used in Christian contemplative prayer. It has been prayed for centuries by those who seek to be healed and blessed by Christ. As you quiet yourself, breathe out and pray the words, “Lord Jesus Christ,” and when you breathe in pray the words, “Have mercy on me.” (I recommend one of my favorite spiritual classics, *The Way of a Pilgrim*, the story of a man who goes searching for fulfillment. *The Jesus Prayer* features prominently in the book.)

You could also use a phrase of your own choosing, e.g., “Lord Jesus Christ, I trust in you,” or, “Lord Jesus Christ, please rest in me.” You may also just pray using the name “Jesus.”

In the silence of Christian Meditation, a whole new world can open up in our relationship with the Lord. St. Gemma Galgani, when speaking about prayer with her spiritual director, said, “I have been in the presence of Jesus; I said nothing to him, and he said nothing to me; we both remained in silence; I looked at him and he looked at me. But if you only knew, father, how delightful it is to be thus in the presence of Jesus! Have you ever experienced it? You would wish it never to end.”<sup>8</sup>

*Intercessory Prayer* is yet another way in which the Church prays. It goes back to the beginning. St. Paul often spoke to the Christian Community of Intercessory Prayer and its value. He says, “First of all, I ask that petitions, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be offered for all men, especially for kings and those in authority, that we may be able to lead undisturbed and tranquil lives in perfect piety and dignity. Prayer of this kind is good, and God our savior is pleased with it, for he wants all men to be saved and come to know the truth.” (1 Timothy 2:1-5) The Apostle reminds us that it is our Christian duty to pray for the Church and the world, for believers and nonbelievers alike.

In your Daily Prayer Hour, pray for those among your family, friends and coworkers as well as for the people who are suffering or in need throughout the world. Pray for all religious and civil leaders—whether you like them

or not. They need your prayers. This can be engaging for everyone in your family. Even children understand what it means to pray for people.

I advocate finishing your Daily Prayer Hour with prayers of *Thanksgiving*. Like Praise of God, these prayers too can be prayed in the form of a litany, e.g., “For food on the table and good health, Lord we give you thanks,” “For blessings upon our family, Lord we give you thanks,” etc. I consider thanksgiving to be an act of faith because when we thank God, we acknowledge his existence and his beneficence. Recall the leper who returned to Jesus to give him thanks (Luke 17:11-19). Upon receiving the leper’s thanksgiving, the Lord said, “Your faith has been your salvation.” Further, when we reflect upon how we are blessed it begins to change our disposition. Gratitude warms the heart and sanctifies the soul. St. Paul says, “Dismiss all anxiety from your minds. Present your needs to God in every form of prayer and in petitions full of gratitude.” (Philippians 4:6)



*The Journey to Bethlehem*

In summary, if you are getting squirrely and are searching for something new to do at home—or to put it more bluntly, are trying to prevent yourself from going crazy—I recommend that you find a quiet place, or create one where you can pray a Daily Prayer Hour. Each of us is personally called by the Lord to draw nearer to him, to go deeper in our relationship with him, and to explore the depths of his love. Like children, we can recognize when we are hungry but we don’t always fill ourselves with what we need. Create a place and time for God; whatever you give to him you will get back one-hundredfold. Invite Him to draw near, and root yourself in him, so that you can be “like the tree planted near running water, that yields its fruit in due season, and whose leaves never fade.” (Psalm 1) ■

*To All those who look to the Rosary Center for support & prayers, We take our ministry very seriously here at the Rosary Center. If ever you have a request for prayers, please send them to us through our website (look for "Prayer Request" at rosarycenter.org) or via U.S. Mail. I keep a basket at the foot of the altar that is filled with your petitions. Every day I bring these to the Blessed Virgin Mary and ask her to intercede on your behalf to Our Lord. Please know that your petitions, for good health—especially safety from the corona virus, increased faith, family concerns, financial needs, etc., are included in my daily Mass and Rosary.*

—Fr. Joseph OP, Director

1. Martin, Ralph, *The Fulfillment of all Desire*, Emmaus Road Publishing: Steubenville, Ohio, 2006, p. 120.
2. *Ibid*, p. 122.
3. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #2597.
4. Cf. ourcatholicprayers.com/divine-praises.html
5. *In Sinu Jesu*, Angelico Press: Kettering, OH, 2016, p. 96.
6. St. Teresa of Avila, *The Way of Perfection*, Ch 16, #3, p. 94, Ch. 17, # 3, p. 99, Ch 19, # 2, p. 107.
7. Keating, Thomas, *Intimacy with God*, Crossroad Publishing Co.: New York, 1998, p. 32.
8. Ruoppolo, Fr. Germanus, CP, *The Life of Gemma Galgani*, London & Edinburgh Sands & Co.: St. Louis, MO, 1913, p. 235.