

## **Contemplating Christ with Mary**

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### **In the school of Mary**

Marian spirituality is particularly significant in the Pontificate of John Paul II. Never however does it become a purpose in itself; it is always in the service of Christological piety for which in some sense it serves as a magnifying glass, by which the secret of Christ becomes understandable. "With the Rosary", according to the words of the Pope in his Apostolic Letter *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, "the Christian people sits at the school of Mary" (No. 1). This takes place by virtue of those who pray simultaneously joining their gaze and thus finding the Savior Himself in the secrets of the Rosary. By this view, they obtain abundant grace "from the very hands of the Mother of the Redeemer" (No. 1), so that this Marian but quite Christocentric prayer is a "spiritual and educational opportunity for personal contemplation, the formation of the People of God, and the new evangelization" (No. 3). The Pope therefore recommends praying the Rosary as a personal prayer, as a family prayer and as a prayer for peace (No.6), which ultimately can only feed on the one who "is our peace" (Eph 2:14). Contemplating Him in the Rosary also means coming closer to peace in the world.

### **Becoming Christ-like**

Christian spirituality aims at growing Christ-like. This is only possible if the individual Christian enters deeper into the person and the life of Jesus Christ, lets themselves into it and thus allows Christ to enter. The Rosary offers the possibility for this. With Mary, who is closer to her Son than any other person, the person praying views the life of Jesus from His conception through to His glorification with the Father, and takes up the individual secrets in their innermost, as it says of Mary at the birth "But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart" (Lk 2:19).

### **Internalization**

This stance of inner acceptance is the fundamental meditative attitude of the Rosary. It is not about mechanically repeating prayers, but about meditating on the individual mysteries of salvation served by the uniformity of the rhythm in repetition. The individual secret hence becomes a spiritual picture which is built up before the inner eye and penetrates the core of the soul. There, it becomes a spiritual potential which forms and shapes the person praying.

### **Prayed Gospel**

Explicitly, the Pope stresses the significance of the Rosary as a prayed Gospel. He calls it quite explicitly a "compendium of the Gospel" (No. 18). If we line up the various secrets, it becomes clear that we are led by the pearls of the Rosary through the entire life of Jesus, from the proclamation through to the praise of His glory, which is also reflected in Him bringing His mother who lived this whole life with Him to Him and crowning her as "the closest to the throne of Heaven" and "Regina Angelorum".

### **Mysteries of Light**

Pope John Paul II added the Mysteries of Light to the joyful, painful and glorious mysteries. It is under the motto "I am the light of the world" (Jn 8:12) and meditates on the life of Jesus in the time of His public ministry. The individual mysteries are:

Jesus, who was baptized by John

Jesus, who revealed Himself at the wedding feast in Cana

Jesus, who proclaimed to us the Kingdom of God

Jesus, who was transfigured on the mountain

Jesus, who gave us the Eucharist

The five new mysteries of light are strictly Biblical in orientation and emphasize the proclamation of the Kingdom of God, which already became effectively present in the person of Jesus Christ, as the Evangelist Luke has Jesus say: "The kingdom of God is among you." (Lk 17:21b).