

SCRIPTURE
&
MEDITATIONS
FOR THE ROSARY
3rd edition

Barbara Mulvey Little

Scripture & Meditations for the Rosary: Third Edition

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Dedicated to

Our Lady of Guadalupe and to my grandmothers

Mercedes Quiroga Rivera

Hannah O'Keefe Mulvey

who both loved Our Lady
and who both loved me.

Feed my lambs

—Jesus of Nazareth

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Introduction

This book is for anyone who has ever wondered why people say the rosary, how to say it, or why it matters. It is for anyone unfamiliar with the rosary as a prayer form. It is for Catholics who do not remember—or never learned—how to say the rosary, for new Catholics in OCIA programs, and for people from other faith traditions (or no tradition) who are curious about what the rosary has to offer.

Within these pages you'll find both scriptural references and meditations from one ordinary Catholic who has been graced and blessed with Mary's friendship.

Why We Say the Rosary

We say the rosary to encounter God. The rosary involves praying specific prayers while meditating on a series of joyful, sorrowful, luminous (light), and glorious mysteries. These mysteries are significant events that occurred in the lives of Mary and Jesus which took great faith and courage to navigate. Meditating on these events can enable us to better understand Jesus and Mary's relationship to God. This understanding helps us navigate our own joys, sorrows, light, and glories in our lives while drawing us deeper into relationship with God.

Mary, as an ordinary human being with extraordinary faith, has a special knowledge of the challenges we encounter throughout our lives. She is especially well versed in the sense of loss and pain that accompanies losing a loved one to death. Yet because she had a deep and abiding prayer life, her dedication to God and her faith never flagged even after watching her son's death in the horror of the crucifixion. As the first Christian, the first one to say "yes" to a relationship with Jesus, Mary has so much to teach us about Jesus and about following God's call.

Jesus, however, is the ultimate teacher about being human and following God's call. Jesus' response to God was one of total trust and obedience. His life, like Mary's, was a constant communication with God and a model of the kind of faith for which we strive. Meditations with the rosary walk us through the joy, the horror, and the glory of Jesus' life and show us the light of God that Jesus brings into the lives of Mary, the disciples, and into our lives too.

Mary's deep desire is that we all come to know her son and the saving grace he offers. Prayer with the rosary is one way to do that.

I have found that when I pray the rosary that the act of consciously using my body, mind, and spirit helps me feel more connected to God. The tactile sense triggered by touching beads or stones while praying keeps me rooted in the present moment while I meditate on the wonder of God. And somehow, touching the beads while praying helps connect me to my own wholeness as I reach out to the holiness of God.

What Is the Rosary?

The rosary is a type of meditative prayer. Tradition has it that Mary revealed this form of the rosary to Saint Dominic in a vision in 1208 (some say 1214).

Although using beads to count and recite prayer predates the rosary by centuries, Mary gave this particular pattern of prayer (the Roman Catholic form that we call the rosary) to Dominic. In accordance with the vision, Dominic wrote down joyful, sorrowful, and glorious “*mysteries*” in the lives of Jesus and Mary to use with prayer and meditation. The simplicity of the prayers, along with keeping count on the beads allows the mind to wander and reflect on the spiritual lessons inherent in these selected events.

The basic prayers of the rosary are the *Hail Mary*, *Our Father*, and *Glory Be*. The *Hail Mary* is a prayer taken from Elizabeth’s greeting to Mary when Mary visited her after the angel Gabriel announced to Mary that she would bear God’s son. The *Our Father* is the prayer Jesus taught his disciples when they asked him how to pray. And the *Glory Be* is a hymn of praise.

A complete rosary consists of praying all the mysteries—each of the five Joyful, Sorrowful, Luminous (added by Pope Saint John Paul II), and Glorious mysteries—consisting of five *decades* of prayer. However, most people will focus on one set of mysteries per day.

Each decade includes:

- one *Our Father* to begin

- ten *Hail Mary's* while meditating on the chosen mystery
- one *Glory Be* and the Fatima prayer to close the decade

This sequence is repeated while meditating on each of the five Joyful, Sorrowful, Luminous, or Glorious mysteries.

The Prayers for the Rosary

The rosary opens with the *Apostle's Creed*: said while holding the crucifix.

I believe in God, the Father almighty, Creator of heaven and earth. And in Jesus Christ, His only son, our Lord, who was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilot, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell. On the third day he arose from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God, the Father almighty from where He will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body and life everlasting. Amen.

The introductory prayers continue next with saying the *Our Father* on the bead next to the crucifix, then the *Hail Mary* three times for faith, hope, and love on the next three beads, and finally the **Glory Be** on the next higher bead.

Then to begin a decade of prayer for each mystery say one *Our Father* (the version below is as Jesus taught it) on the differently colored or shaped bead.

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors; and do not subject us to the final test, but deliver us from the evil one.

Next say the *Hail Mary* ten times, once on each of the ten succeeding beads while meditating on the chosen mystery.

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you. Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death.

The decade closes by praying the *Glory Be* and the *Fatima* prayer.

All glory be to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now and ever more shall be, world without end. Amen.

Oh my Jesus, forgive us our sins, save us from the fires of hell. Bring all souls to you, especially those most in need of your mercy.

Repeat this pattern for each of the five mysteries of that given day.

Following the recitation of all five mysteries, the rosary ends with the prayer, *Hail holy Queen*.

Hail, holy Queen, Mother of mercy, our life, our sweetness, and our hope. To you we cry, poor banished children of Eve; to you we send up our sighs, mourning, and weeping in this valley of tears. Turn, then most gracious advocate, your eyes of mercy toward us, and after this our exile, show us the blessed fruit of your womb, Jesus.

Oh, clement, oh loving, oh sweet virgin Mary. Pray for us oh holy mother of God that we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ. Amen.

Oh, God, whose only begotten Son by his life, death, and resurrection has purchased for us the rewards of eternal life, grant that by meditating on the mysteries of the rosary we may imitate what they contain and obtain what they promise through Christ, our Lord. Amen

Those who pray the rosary daily, usually pray

- the Joyful Mysteries on Mondays and Saturdays
- the Sorrowful Mysteries on Tuesdays and Fridays
- the Luminous Mysteries on Thursdays
- the Glorious Mysteries on Wednesdays and Sundays

If you choose to use the rosary as a form of prayer, feel free to pray whatever the Spirit leads you to do, whatever mystery suits your mood.

The scriptural references and holy writings included help illuminate each event portrayed by a mystery. The reflections contain my personal insights gained through my own prayer and friendship with Mary. You may use the scripture or the reflections to help guide your meditations while you pray or you may choose to use them simply as information or as a guide before or after your own prayer and meditation.

Why I Wrote This Booklet

During a particularly trying period of my life, I began to say the rosary daily after a bit of serendipity (also known as grace) brought Our Lady of Guadalupe more deeply into my life.

I made a rosary bracelet for myself and the weight of the bracelet on my wrist reminded me constantly of God's love and the help that prayer and Mary could give me. Wearing the bracelet and praying the rosary daily gave me great consolation. I felt peace in the midst of the struggle.

A few months later, when my cousin's twenty-year-old daughter tragically and suddenly died, I was at a loss for how to help the family. I decided that making rosary bracelets and pocket rosaries for the parents, sibling, cousins, and others might help them pray when grief made spoken prayer impossible. They told me that wearing the bracelets gave them the same wonderful sense of consolation it had given

me. Soon though, I realized that although they had been raised Catholic, they were not familiar with how to say the rosary. So, I prepared this selection of scriptures and meditations to help them pray. If wearing the rosary bracelet could give them consolation, I realized that actually praying the rosary would help even more.

It is my hope that your prayer with the rosary will be more meaningful with reflection on the scriptures which are the foundation of the rosary. I also offer my thoughts, the reflections that have sprung from mind and heart of one ordinary Catholic, to encourage you on this prayer-filled journey that is life on earth.

ONE

The Joyful Mysteries

THE ANNUNCIATION

THE VISITATION

THE NATIVITY

PRESENTATION OF JESUS AT

THE TEMPLE

FINDING JESUS IN THE TEMPLE

The Annunciation

Luke 1: 27-38

In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin's name was Mary. And coming to her, he said, "Hail, favored one! The Lord is with you." But she was greatly troubled at what was said and pondered what sort of greeting this might be.

Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father, and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

But Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I have no relations with a man?" And the angel said to her in reply, "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 called holy, the Son of God. And behold, Elizabeth, your relative, has also conceived a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month for her who was called barren; for nothing will be impossible for God." Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

Reflection on the Annunciation

The angel Gabriel appears to Mary to announce that God has found favor with her and wants her to bear his Son. Mary's YES to God is an example of her great faith and courage. In that day, an unmarried woman found with child could be stoned to death yet Mary responds, "Let it be done to me according to your word."

Mary's YES is full of trust in God. She would have to tell her parents; she would have to tell Joseph—a widower to whom she was betrothed but was not intimate; and she would have to face the ridicule of her neighbors. Who among them would believe she was carrying the son of God? How could she herself begin to truly understand just what that meant?

But in her moment of truth, Mary did not hesitate; she did not ponder the cost of her faith. She knew her God to be faithful and she put her complete trust in God to make right what would surely be a difficult situation. She trusted that God would not only help her take care of the immediate problems of telling her family, but also God would ultimately teach her how to fulfill her role in salvation history.

Her faith-filled YES opened the door for God to become human in Jesus so that Jesus could teach all of us how to become perfectly human. Through our own deep longing for God both in our lives and in our midst, God will call us in prayer to fulfill our own unique destiny.

We pray that we also are able to trust God completely and not hesitate to walk the path that God asks us to journey. Like Mary, may we know and trust that God is with us always and will teach us our own role in salvation history.

We may not be giving birth to the physical presence of Jesus, but we are constantly being asked to be "God with skin on" for others because God has no hands but ours to hold the wounded and no voice but ours to comfort those who suffer. God asks us, like God asked Mary, to "give birth" to his Saving Love—as personified in Jesus—through every action and decision in our lives.

Our prayer is to be like Mary giving a resounding YES to God's call. Like Mary, may we conceive of Jesus in our hearts so that we may embody Jesus in our day-to-day responses to our family, neighbors, co-workers, and all those who cross our path.



