

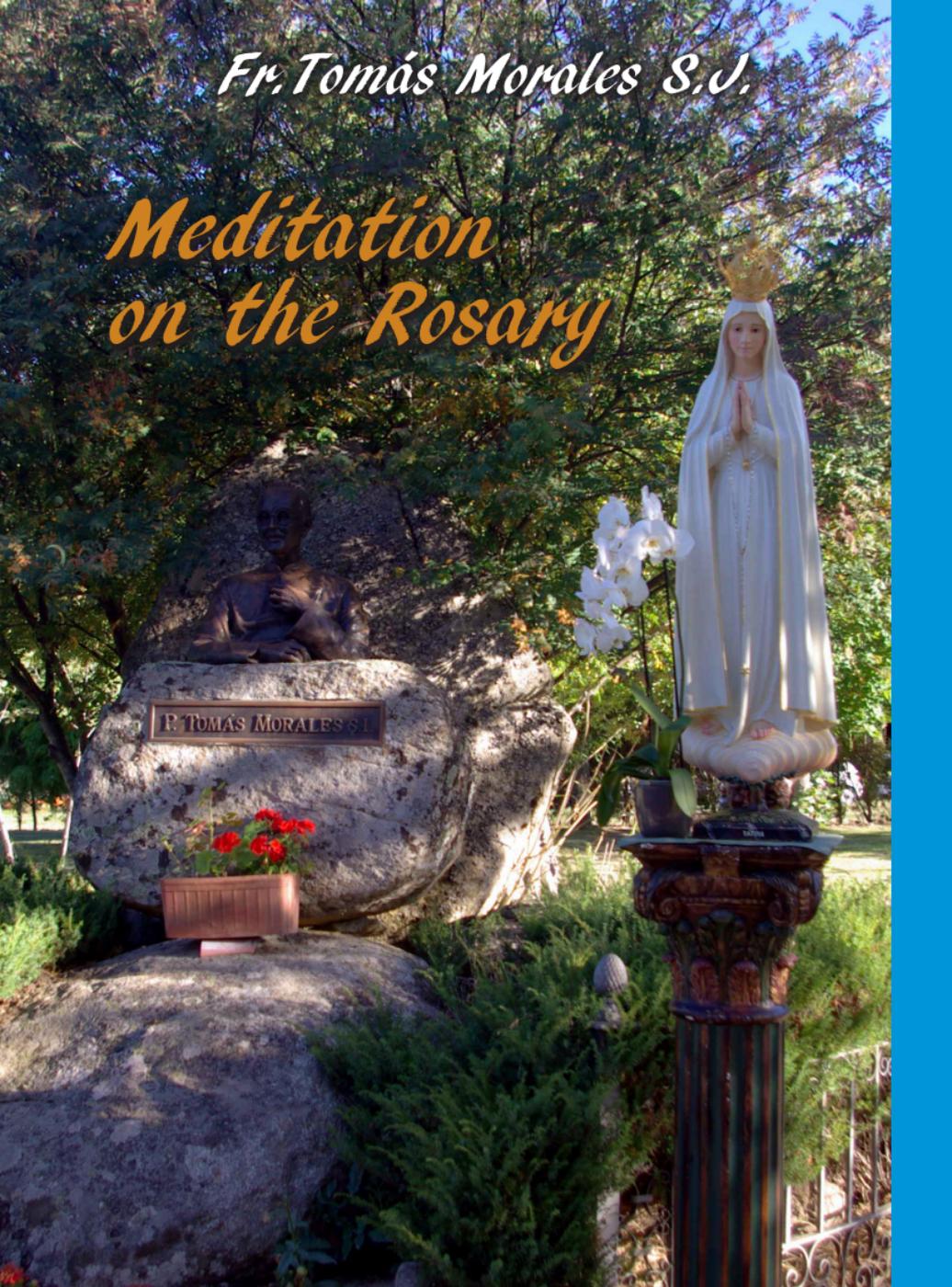
*Venerable  
Fr. Tomás Morales S.J.*

*Meditation  
on the  
Rosary*



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MEDITATION ON THE ROSARY  
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# MEDITATION ON THE ROSARY

## FR. TOMÁS MORALES, S.J.

### **Christological prayer**

What is the rosary and what isn't it? It isn't a routine, it isn't a habit, it isn't something to be rushed. The Rosary is the whole Church gathered together with Mary contemplating Jesus. The Rosary isn't a Marian devotion, but a Christocentric devotion that centres the life of the baptised person perfectly in Christ. The whole Church, and you as a living part of it, contemplates the mysteries of Jesus with the eyes, and above all with the heart of Our Lady. The Rosary isn't a mechanical, distracted repetition of fifty Hail Mary's said in a hurry or out of habit.

Without contemplating the mysteries of the life of Jesus, the Rosary is like a body without a soul. It ends up dead, being said in a rush or routinely. The most beautiful thing that can be offered to God the Father after the Holy Mass (the Sacrifice of Christ, Christ in Communion, Christ in the Tabernacle) is the Rosary contemplating the mysteries of the life of Jesus. The prayer that the Church has given us in the liturgy is beautiful: Oh God,

whose only begotten Son, through His life, death and resurrection has purchased for us the rewards of eternal salvation. Grant that by meditating on these mysteries of the Holy Rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary we may imitate what they contain, and obtain what they promise.

Our weapon, Mother, will be your Rosary. Hundreds of documents on the Magisterium of the Church recommend it to us. More than fifty Popes have insisted on it. 'To this our predecessors have devoted close attention and care. On many occasions they have recommended its frequent recitation, encouraged its diffusion, explained its nature, recognized its suitability for fostering contemplative prayer-prayer of both praise and petition-and recalled its intrinsic effectiveness for promoting Christian life and apostolic commitment'. It is a compendium of the whole Gospel.

The psalter has 150 psalms. I whisper 150 Hail Mary's every time I pray the Rosary, the psalter of Our Lady, through which I am humbly associated to the canticle of praise and universal intercession of the Church, the most important after the Holy Mass. The wonders of the Rosary don't have to be elaborated: First, after the Holy Mass it is the best form of communion, of personal, silent prayer. It is the best way to get to know Christ.

## Prayerful contemplation

It is a contemplative and Christological prayer at the same time. It begins as a contemplative prayer: see the people, listen to what they say, contemplate what they do. Like all the mysteries of the life of Jesus, the mysteries of the Rosary are a reproduction of the *Christus Humilis* of St Augustine. They teach me to disappear; they show me my insignificance, my nothingness and my sin. They wonderfully prepare me to contemplate the God of majesty, of wisdom, of eternity, beauty, goodness and mercy.

It is a contemplative prayer, although it begins by being a prayer of petition both in the Hail Mary's and in the Our Father that links them. This prayer of petition with which the Rosary begins fuses almost unnoticeably firstly with recollected prayer, later with quiet prayer until finally reaching a transforming union. That's what St Teresa says on recommending a prayer of recollection first, in which you recollect your sight, your hearing, your speech, you recollect your imagination, the sensitivity to see the characters, to hear what they say, to see what they are doing.

Then, almost without realising it, this recollection brings you to quiet prayer. Your soul is quiet, in peace, as if it were somewhere other than in the noisy world



in which we live and which passes on that noise to our souls. The rhythm of the Hail Mary's facilitates this recollected prayer, and later prayer of quiet and, in end, I am transformed. The divine rays of Jesus Christ have enveloped me as they did the apostles in the Transfiguration. The rhythm of repeated Hail Mary's is like the waves of the sea. They carry us to the heights of contemplation.

It is a contemplative prayer, but most of all it is a Christological prayer. It allows us to understand that Christ did not just live twenty centuries ago in Jerusalem, but that Christ is living His mysteries in us for love of each one of us. You become completely alone, quiet. Time passes by, life passes by and all that remains is eternal life, forever. The Rosary not only shows me how to live, but it teaches me to live with Mary, the best contemplator of Jesus Christ, the one who loved God the most.

The Rosary is made up of one fundamental mystery: the Incarnation - the Life, Passion, Death, Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus. And on contemplating the Eternal Word made flesh I become quiet, serene, with such a great peace that I have no other choice than to transmit it to others.

It is the evangelical prayer par excellence. There is no better way to pray than to open the Gospel with the

eyes, the ears, the gaze and most of all the heart of Our Lady. She transmits to me a love of God. Without even realising it I become enchanted, I fall in love with Christ, as if he were my older brother, my friend, my spouse, my father and my mother at the same time. I become used to his teaching and transforming example. When I pray the Rosary I become more and more a disciple of Christ.

### **With the Rosary, everything is possible**

Once, Napoleon was very taken with a painting of Philip II of Spain, attributed to Pantoja. The figure of the king was imposing, majestic, almost god-like. The 'Colossus of the Nineteenth Century' saw that, entwined in the fingers of the left hand of the king, were his rosary beads. It was what most struck him. From accounts at the time, it is said that he spent an hour silently contemplating the painting. The excellent strategist couldn't understand how Philip II had won so many battles with such simple arms. Among the beads of that rosary he was surprised to see the trophies of a hundred victories.

When Philip II consecrated his son, Philip III as the heir to the throne he gave him a very important piece of advice, which also applies to me: "if you want your states to prosper, if you want to prosper in life, never fail to pray the Rosary".

The Rosary can achieve personal victories, for me to follow Christ “because whoever wants to follow me in trials will also follow me in glory” (St Ignatius of Loyola, *Two Standards*). The Rosary reaches for us the grace to be faithful and docile to the call of Christ. The Rosary reaches for us the grace “not to be deaf to the call of Christ, but ready and willing to do His will” (Ignatius).

A Spanish saint, Dominic de Guzmán, was in French lands. From Fanjeaux, looking out over the plains, Our Lady appears to him. It was the beginning of the thirteenth century. Mary again comes to the rescue – she wants to save the world.

She now has a new weapon – the Rosary. The Albigensians deny the divine maternity and virginity of Mary. Dominic had prayed for the help of Our Lady, as he prepared to fight against the heretics. They were about to take over France, and were threatening the world. Mary came down from heaven, and the devotion to the Rosary is born on earth.

From that day onwards, Our Lady of the Rosary comes faithfully to our call each time Christianity is in danger. On the waters of Lepanto, the day of the 7th October 1571 is about to dawn. The soldiers of John of Austria pass the beads of the Rosary between their fingers. A memorable battle is about to begin. The Christians

triumph. St Pius V institutes the feast of Our Lady of the Rosary as a thanksgiving for the victory.

At the bottom of the painting of the victory that hangs in the palace of the Doge of Venice there is the following inscription: 'Neither force, nor arms, nor captains. It was Our Lady of the Rosary who achieved this victory'.

Years before, Charles V had gained victory over the Ottomans in Hungary, and overthrew the siege of Corfu. Meanwhile, the sodalities of the Rosary in Rome and in other cities prayed to Mary.

In our days, mankind is puffed up through technical advances and scientific progress and wants to take the place of God. Our Lady, with the Rosary in her hands, has appeared in Lourdes and Fatima. She wants to save the world, not this time from the Ottomans or from the Albigensians, but from the slavery of pride, of avarice, of money or of impurity. A youth that no longer believes, and that denies, not the virginity or divine maternity of Mary, but her sweet presence on this earth, transmitting love and generosity.

### **The Rosary overthrows armies ... and saves souls**

The Rosary is an important weapon to gain victory over armies, but it is also effective for the salvation of

souls. Every time St Clement Mary Hofbauer went to speak to a sinner, he prayed the Rosary on the way. The beads of the rosary given to him by Pius VII passed through his fingers. After many years, he said: 'every time that I have prayed the Rosary for a sinner, I have obtained his conversion'. When he heard of a sinner, he began to pray the Rosary, and asked others to pray it as well. Convinced of its power, he preserved many young people from sin by handing out rosaries to them as he walked through the streets of Vienna at night.

Trust. Our Lady of the Rosary is Our Lady of Victories. For the Popes, the devotion to the Rosary is a providential refuge in the difficult circumstances that the Church



must go through. Their eyes always turn to Her; saint Pius V and Clement XI, in the face of the Ottoman threat. Leo XIII in the face of the rationalist movement and the apostasy of so many in the nineteenth century. Pius XII, seconding the desires of Our Lady of the Rosary in Fatima, unleashes the crusade 'for a better world' than the one we know. He becomes 'her herald'.

The Rosary, the Lady called Mary, gains the victory for me. When a Christian reaches heaven, they will be filled with wonder to see that marvel of God the Trinity, who is Love. Their heart will be eternally filled with joy on seeing that they have been saved, and they will find that they are surrounded by souls that they have helped save. Looking at Our Lady, they also will repeat 'I have neither merits, nor am I here through personal merit, nor through my own struggles. It is Our Lady of the Rosary who has saved me and them'.

### **At the Last Judgement**

At the beginning of the seventeenth century, King James VI of Scotland ordered the Jesuit Fr John Ogilvie to be martyred in Glasgow. He wanted to leave the hundreds of onlookers around the scaffold a reminder of the faith for which he was to die. He throws his rosary into the crowd. It falls on the chest of a young

German aristocrat – John Heckensdorf. He was there on a leisure trip. A short time later, he would renounce the Lutheran heresy before the Pope and become a Catholic. His whole life, he would repeat that his conversion was due to rosary that wounded his heart. The Rosary converts souls, and it converts souls even more in the month of October when people feel disenchant-ed, empty after a summer which hasn't fulfilled all their desires.

That is why you have given time to give a heartfelt welcome to all those that arrive into first year in University. They are far from home, perhaps in a new city and if they are from the same city their whole panorama changes. They need people to welcome them, to help them. Michelangelo was right when he painted the Last Judgement in the Sistine Chapel. Do you know how the souls are saved? You will only notice it when, full of love for Mary, you contemplate this work of art. To the right of the figure of Jesus Christ the Judge, who occupies the centre of the painting, the souls are going up heaven by holding on to the rosaries of those that have gone before. The Rosary of Our Lady, saving souls. Our life, our sweetness and your hope, pray for us...

The Rosary gets you out of danger. One night in London a man chose the park bench on which he was

going to commit suicide. He took out his gun, put it to his head but on taking the gun out of his pocket it had become entangled in his Rosary beads. He got up from the bench and decided to change his life.

Come, Holy Spirit! Help me appreciate the wonders of the Rosary.

### **And help in the everyday things**

Trust in Our Lady, even in the everyday necessities. They are inconsequential when compared to the eternity which we are going towards. At times we are overwhelmed by studies, work, sufferings... Hayden, the German composer, said to his friends one day: 'When I feel inspiration slipping away when I am composing, I take my Rosary in my hands and begin to say a Hail Mary. Then ideas and melodies come flooding into my head. – at times so many that I don't have time to write them down.'

In your doubts and your struggles, imitate the great composer. Take up the beads of the Rosary and, through its powerful influence, you will also reap unmerited and unexpected success. Mozart, who interpreted joy through classical music like few others, would take up the Rosary after each of his works to thank Mary for the inspiration he had received.

## How to pray the Rosary

How should I pray the Rosary? The best way is the prayer of little desires, of wishes, of broken phrases, of those moments of love that St Ignatius proposes in the Exercises. One German soldier wrote to his wife saying, “Here in the trenches we pray a beautiful prayer. The Catholics call it the Rosary. Try to learn it and pray it with the children”. Come, Holy Spirit!

It is a contemplative prayer, full of such a great beauty. It is a prayer of praise, a prayer of petition, a prayer to ask the forgiveness of my sins, my selfishness (the father of pride), my laziness, my hypocrisy, my ungratefulness, my doubts, my fears. It is a prayer of



praise to God the Father, the greatest prayer of praise that can be given to God after the Holy sacrifice of the Mass. It is a prayer of thanksgiving for all the blessings I have received, because in the immaculate heart of Our Lady it is so easy to give thanks. I also, despite my littleness, can give thanks there.

It is a prayer of petition that can obtain individual and collective miracles of transformation, of conversion. And with the miracle that is needed today in Madrid, I should be the whole day, while I am walking in the street, on the Underground, ruminating inwardly the golden summary of the Rosary, the Hail Mary; and on the summary of the Hail Mary, the holy name of Mary. You just need a second to pronounce it, and you are so filled with peace. That is why the Rosary has always received careful and loving attention from the Church, my mother and teacher.

### **Without rushing it**

Come Holy Spirit! That I may escape from the enemies of the Rosary: routine and hurry.

The first enemy is hurry. When on social visits to museums or works of art, you are annoyed that they are constantly spoiled by a guide who is in a confused hurry, and doesn't allow you enjoy the works of art.

The same thing happens with the Rosary if you leave it until the last minute or if you pray it distracted, hoping for it to be finished. Many visits to museums or to other tourist sights lack contemplation, serenity, peace. The Rosary demands, by its very nature, a tranquil and reflective rhythm that favours the contemplation of the life of Jesus seen through the heart of she who was always closest to Him.

The second obstacle, the second enemy, is routine. It's normal that repetition tends to become monotonous, distracted, but you shouldn't stop saying the Rosary just because of that. Psychologists know that repetition in itself, even if it is distracted, leads to a certain recollection that helps us forget what is around us and to begin to reflect. What is dangerous is that at times it can lead us to drowsiness, because of a selfish and lazy imagination. We have to overcome all this with ever increasing love. Repetition is transformed when you react against this danger. The goodnight kiss that a mother receives from her son every night becomes a routine if her son doesn't do it with love. Routine is like a woodworm; it is a virus that corrupts; but love is the vaccination against this microbe. When something has gained value for someone they invent a thousand ways to keep the joy of the first day, of keeping fresh what is not fresh.

## Simple and profound weapon

What is the secret of this wonderful weapon? The popes themselves answer the question. It is a simple devotion which is filled with content. Simple, because even the most uneducated person can pray the Rosary. Full of content, because with order and exquisite gentleness, we can all bring to our memories the main mysteries of the life of Jesus, in the most attractive and efficient way – as His Most Holy Mother lived them.

It is the crown of roses – as it is called in some languages – which is joyful, sorrowful and glorious at the same time. The Church, or rather all my brothers and sisters of every time and place, plait it around the head of Our Lady, until they can repeat in heaven the sweet words which they had repeated thousands of times on earth – ‘Hail Mary,... Holy Mother of God’.

Come, Holy Spirit! Fill us with your light. In this time of prayer, you should savour the words of the Angelus, the words of the Hail Mary, as if you were present in Nazareth when the angel came to announce to the Virgin Mother that she was to be the Mother of God, and therefore Mother of mine and the Mother of all those I meet on the street.

Hail Mary, Our Lady of the Rosary, triumphant in a hundred conversions, save the world, have pity on the youth and, above all, have mercy on me!



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