

Excerpts from Pope St. John Paul II's Apostolic Letter  
***ROSARIUM VIRGINIS MARIAE***  
on the Most Holy Rosary

INTRODUCTION

“The Rosary of the Virgin Mary, which gradually took form in the second millennium under the guidance of the Spirit of God, is a prayer loved by countless Saints and encouraged by the Magisterium. Simple yet profound, it still remains, at the dawn of this third millennium, a prayer of great significance, destined to bring forth a harvest of holiness” (#1).

...“The Rosary... ***has all the depth of the Gospel message in its entirety***... It is an echo of the prayer of Mary, her perennial Magnificat for the work of the redemptive Incarnation which began in her virginal womb. With the Rosary, ... (we are) led to contemplate the beauty on the face of Christ and to experience the depths of his love” (#1, emphasis added).

Mary, Model of Contemplation

“The contemplation of Christ has an incomparable model in Mary. In a unique way the face of the Son belongs to Mary. It was in her womb that Christ was formed, receiving from her a human resemblance which points to an even greater spiritual closeness. No one has ever devoted himself to the contemplation of the face of Christ as faithfully as Mary. The eyes of her heart already turned to him at the Annunciation, when she conceived him by the power of the Holy Spirit. In the months that followed she began to sense his presence and to picture his features. When at last she gave birth to him in Bethlehem, her eyes were able to gaze tenderly on the face of her Son, as she ‘wrapped him in swaddling cloths, and laid him in a manger’ (Lk 2:7). Thereafter Mary's gaze, ever filled with adoration and wonder, would never leave him” (#10).

Mary's Memories

“Mary lived with her eyes fixed on Christ, treasuring his every word: ‘She kept all these things, pondering them in her heart’ (Lk 2:19; cf. 2:51). The memories of Jesus, impressed upon her heart, were always with her, leading her to reflect on the various moments of her life at her Son's side. In a way those memories were to be the ‘rosary’ which she recited uninterruptedly throughout her earthly life. ... Mary constantly sets before the faithful the ‘mysteries’ of her Son, with the desire that the contemplation of those mysteries will release all their saving power. In the recitation of the Rosary, the Christian community enters into contact with the memories and the contemplative gaze of Mary” (#11).

The Rosary, a Contemplative Prayer

“The Rosary, precisely because it starts with Mary's own experience, is an exquisitely contemplative prayer. Without this contemplative dimension, it would lose its meaning, as Pope Paul VI clearly pointed out: ‘Without contemplation, the Rosary is a body without a soul, and its recitation runs the risk of becoming a mechanical repetition of formulas, in violation of the admonition of Christ: ‘In praying do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do; for they think they will be heard for their many words’ (Mt 6:7)’ (#12).” *In contemplation of the mysteries, the fullness of the Rosary is manifest.*

For the entire Apostolic Letter, click [here](#).