

August 9, 2009

When Pope John Paul II published his Apostolic Letter dedicated to the rosary in 2002, he added five new mysteries to this venerable eighth century-old prayer.

The pope referred to the rosary as “the school of Mary” in which we are “led to contemplate the beauty of the face of Christ and to experience the depth of His love.”

Pope John Paul II referred to the rosary as a “Christ-centered prayer” that “contains all the depth of the Gospel message in its entirety.” In order to bring out the depth of Jesus’ public life, the pope added the Mysteries of Light or Luminous Mysteries: His Baptism in the Jordan; Jesus’ self-manifestation at the wedding of Cana; His proclamation of the Kingdom of God with His call to conversion; Jesus’ transfiguration; Jesus’ institution of the Eucharist.

The rosary has been a daily prayer of mine since grade school days, and I urge you to pray it regularly as a way to come to know Jesus more deeply by meditating upon His Incarnation and hidden life (the Joyful Mysteries), the very significant moments in His public life (the Mysteries of Light), Jesus’ sufferings and death (the Sorrowful Mysteries), and the triumph of His Resurrection (the Glorious Mysteries).

On this past Thursday (August 6th), we celebrated the fourth Mystery of Light, the Feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord. This feast occurs 40 days before the Feast of the Triumph of the Cross (September 14th). Let us consider the Transfiguration Gospel which is also always proclaimed on the Second Sunday of Lent.

Jesus invited Peter, James, and John to ascend a high mountain top, probably Mt. Tabor in Southern Galilee. Mountains were places of divine revelation in the Jewish Scriptures (Moriah, Sinai, Horeb, Jerusalem). The glory of Jesus' divinity glowed brilliantly through His humanity, totally transfiguring Him: "His face shown like the sun and His clothes became white as light" (Mt 17:2).

The Transfiguration reminds us that this glorified Jesus is the central figure of all history, the one who gives meaning to the past and promise to the future. The past is represented by Elijah (the prophets) and Moses (the Law). The present and the future are personified by the three disciples. We might place ourselves in this scene.

Overwhelmed by this miraculous appearance, Peter suggests that they make it permanent. Our Heavenly Father intervenes: "This is my Son, my beloved. Listen to Him."

Pope John Paul II reflected upon this mystery: "The Transfiguration is not only the revelation of Christ's glory but also a preparation for facing Christ's cross. It involves both going up the mountain and coming down the mountain."

In Mark's Gospel, this episode occurs on the way to Jerusalem, shortly after Jesus' first passion prediction and before a further dialogue alluding to His death.

Peter, James, and John were given a glimpse of Jesus in glory so that they would not be scandalized by His suffering and death on the cross. The Transfiguration experience also remained for them a source of hope as they experienced their own sufferings in giving witness to Jesus.

The brief reflection on the fourth Mystery of Light, the Feast of the Transfiguration which we celebrated on this past Thursday, is only an indication of how the rosary can be for us a way for coming to know Jesus more deeply at

the school of His Mother Mary. As we recite the prayers of the rosary, we gaze on Jesus with His Mother's eyes and come to love Jesus more deeply with His Mother's heart.