

*Fr. Perozich comments —*

*In confession, in spiritual direction, and in my own personal life I encounter thoughts wandering during a meditation.*

*Meditation is not a complete letting go to allow the mind to wander as it wishes.*

*Rather, it is an willful effort of concentration on a particular truth that has been revealed.*

*Grace Abruzzo offers her reflection on how to focus on God and on the life of Jesus while praying the Rosary with Mary.*

## **The Blended Rosary: Intro And First Mysteries**

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Confession Time: sometimes when I pray the rosary, my mind wanders. Most of those wanderings do not merit recording.

But sometimes, my mind wanders between the mysteries, and even between the sets of mysteries. In these wanderings, I've uncovered and explored some interesting themes.

Sometimes I find themes within a set of mysteries; for example, I might reflect on how the Luminous Mysteries each deal with the theme of transformation. Or I might find it incongruous how a set of mysteries corresponds to an unrelated liturgical day or season, such as the Joyful Mysteries on Holy Saturday. This past Spring I led a pilgrimage to Greece "in the footsteps of St. Paul" and considered how the various rosary themes often matched themes from St. Paul's writings. (I couldn't help but wonder if he ever met Our Lady, perhaps in Ephesus, and what those conversations might have been like...)

But perhaps my favorite exploration is to recognize how the mysteries of various sets enrich and complement one another. For example, in the First Joyful Mystery Our Lady says: "Let it be done to me according to your Word" and in the First Sorrowful Mystery, Our Lord in agony prays, "Not my will but thine be done." Pondering these together gives each a new depth. I also noticed how drops of sweat become drops of blood in the Garden of Gethsemane; but tears of sorrow become tears of joy in the Garden of the Resurrection.

These thoughts deepened on our pilgrimage. And as I was leading the group rosary, I also shared some of my meditations and showed how we might experience these seemingly very different mysteries together. I used what I call a "blended rosary." In this series of articles, I will show themes from different mysteries grouped together in a new way. For example, first I will look at just the First mystery from each of the four sets, Joyful, Luminous, Sorrowful and Glorious, and then the Second another time and so on. I will begin here with the First Mysteries, and over the next few posts will continue with the others.

These themes are “meat not milk;” I invite you to choose one or two to taste and savor rather than try to consume them all at once. Come explore with me!

All Things New

## **The First Mystery**

The Annunciation; The Baptism of Jesus; The Agony in the Garden; The Resurrection

It has been millennia since Adam and Eve rebelled in the Garden. Their “No” to the Word of God shattered the harmony of nature, of their marriage, and of their relationship with God. Since then all creation has labored under the curse and consequences of their choice.

It is in reverential awe that we contemplate the First Joyful Mystery, the Annunciation, the most important event in human history, the dawning of a new age, as a young Jewish girl is invited to become the New Eve and in simplicity and humility accepts her mission.

A mighty angel descends from his place around the throne of God to appear in the humble village of Nazareth, to an even more humble Virgin. St. Bernard of Clairvaux tells us that all of heaven and earth—the angels and men, those from Adam on down—watch and wait intently on Mary’s reply. Her “Yes” marks the turning point for all of human history. Her “Yes” is the entryway for an even greater descent than that of the angel, as the Holy Spirit comes down and overshadows her, and the eternal Son of God descends into her womb, humbly “taking the form of a slave.” In the First Luminous Mystery, Jesus humbly and obediently repeats both consent and descent—this time taking His own deliberate step into the waters of the Jordan to be baptized, a sign He is willing to take on not only our physical condition but our spiritual condition as well. At His baptism, the heavens open, and the Holy Spirit descends, and the voice of the Father speaks over

the Incarnate Eternal Word, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.” With this blessing and anointing by the Holy Trinity, the now public ministry of the Messiah commences.

Yet as Jesus tells His disciples, “There is another baptism I must undergo.” In the First Sorrowful Mystery, Jesus goes further in a new and defining decision, to yet more fully take on the condition of sinful humanity.

In the Garden of Gethsemane, He asks His disciples to keep Him company in His sorrow, but they are unable to stay awake. He knows the cup the Father has set before Him. His body bears the strain as He contemplates not only the torture and death He is to undergo, but more especially the tragedy of human hearts all too ready to abandon and betray Him. We are told His sweat becomes drops of blood—a now medically recognized phenomena called hematidrosis, that is brought on by acute fear and stress. In this agony He prays, “Father if it be possible, let this cup pass me by...” But then, echoing the words of His Mother which began His life, “Let it be done unto me according to your word,” He now ushers in the end of His life with similar sacrificial words to His Father: “Yet not my will, but yours, be done...”

I wonder if in His humanity Jesus called to mind His mother’s Yes at the Annunciation—which He watched her enact again and again with the entirety of her life. I wonder if this comforted and encouraged and strengthened Him as He did the same. Or if perhaps the angels ministering Him brought back to mind His Father’s words of love from His baptism—words that He also desperately desired to speak over all estranged by sin. We do know that here in this new Garden, the New Adam still more thoroughly, more decisively echoes the “Yes” of the New Eve, thus “undoing the knot of disobedience” and surrendering in trust to the heart and plan of the Father.

In the First Glorious Mystery an angel again comes to bring glad tidings: this time not to announce His presence in the womb, but His absence from the tomb. The descent and ascent have now

become a glorious ascent—as Jesus is raised from the tomb. In the Garden of Gethsemane His agony had become drops of blood. But in the Garden of the resurrection, the tears of Mary Magdalene turn to tears of joy, as she beholds the risen Christ. Yet He tells her not to “hold onto Him” because He is going to the Father, and an even greater closeness is yet to come.

This resurrection is not merely a spiritual reality—but emphatically a concrete, physical one. That same body that began as a single cell in the womb of the Virgin has returned from the grave intact and glorified. As Father James O’Connor noted, the linens lying about “testify the fleshiness of the resurrection.” Jesus shows the apostles the marks on His hands and feet; He eats in front of them to assure them, “I am not a ghost.”

In Greece the icon of the resurrection includes the hands of risen Christ reaching into Sheol to pull from it Adam and Eve. “Behold I make all things new.”

We too are invited to be made new. The baptism of Jesus now takes on a new dimension: we who say “Yes” (often at first through our godparents) to baptism, share in the life and death of Jesus—and in His resurrection. We too are recipients of a heavenly voice that says over us, “This is my beloved child, with whom I am well pleased.” And like Mary and Jesus, we are invited to continue our Yes with the whole of our lives.