

# The Rosary and Contemplation

Contemplating the Face of Christ  
in St. John Paul II's Rosarium Virginis Mariae





POPE ST.  
JOHN PAUL II

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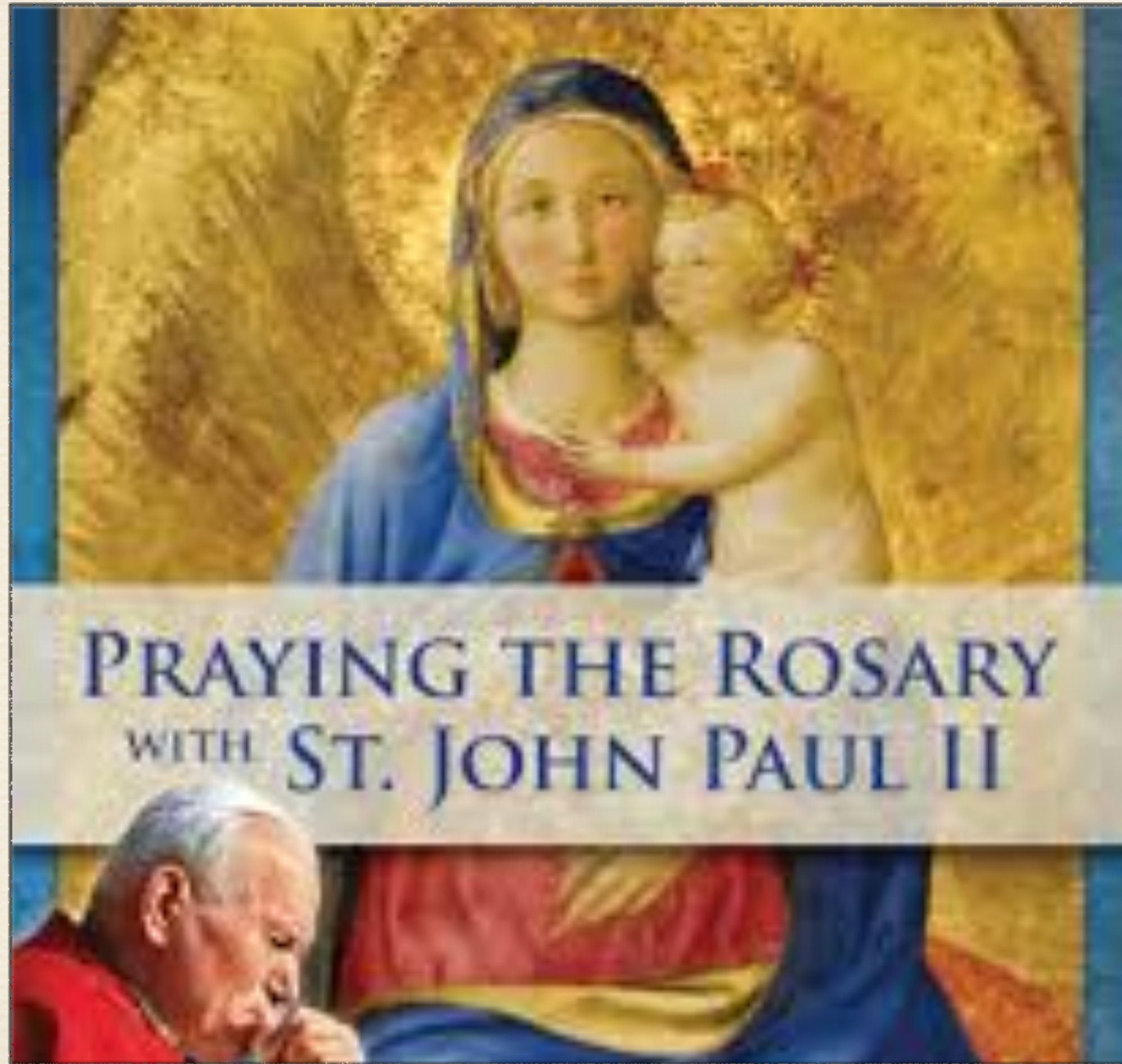
October 22th

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St. John Paul II, Mary and the New Millennium  
The Maternal Dimension of the Church's Contemplation of Christ



# The Rosary and Vatican II



- ❖ Yet the Rosary clearly belongs to the kind of veneration of the Mother of God described by the Council: a devotion directed to the Christological centre of the Christian faith, in such a way that “when the Mother is honored, the Son ... is duly known, loved and glorified”.(8) RVM #4



# The Rosary and Contemplation

- ✦ **The Rosary belongs among the finest and most praiseworthy traditions of Christian contemplation.**
- ✦ Developed in the West, it is a typically meditative prayer, corresponding in some way to the “prayer of the heart” or “Jesus prayer” which took root in the soil of the Christian East. RVM #5





# What is Contemplation?

Contemplation is a gaze of faith, fixed on Jesus. “I look at him and he looks at me”: this is what a certain peasant of Are used to say to his holy curé about his prayer before the tabernacle. This focus on Jesus is a renunciation of self. His gaze purifies the heart; the light of the continuance of Jesus illumines the eyes of our heart and teaches us to see everything in the light of his truth and his compassion for all men. Contemplation also turns its gaze on the mysteries of Christ’s life. Thus it learns the “interior knowledge of our Lord,” the more to love him and follow him.

*CCC 2715*





# The Face Radiant as the Sun RVM #9

- \* The Gospel of the Transfiguration as an **Icon of Christian Contemplation**: “He as transfigured before them, and his face shone like the Sun” (Mt. 17:2)
- \* **To contemplate is to gaze upon** and a liturgical icon in the eastern churches is a window through which heaven gazes on the believer and the believer gazes on the things of heaven.





# The Task of Every Christ: To gaze on Christ amid Daily Events

- \* To look upon the face of Christ, to recognize its mystery amid the daily events and the sufferings of his human life, and then to grasp the divine splendour definitively revealed in the Risen Lord, seated in glory at the right hand of the Father: **this is the task of every follower of Christ and therefore the task of each one of us.** In contemplating Christ's face we become **open to receiving the mystery of Trinitarian life**, experiencing ever anew the love of the Father and delighting in the joy of the Holy Spirit. Saint Paul's words can then be applied to us: **“Beholding the glory of the Lord, we are being changed into his likeness, from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit”** (2Cor 3:18). RM #9



How do we do  
gaze on Christ in a  
transforming way?

Mary as an incomparable model  
for contemplating Christ





# The Scriptures reveal Mary's Contemplation of Christ

- \* A questioning look as when Mary finds Christ in the Temple, "Son, why have you treated us so?"
- \* A penetrating gaze into Christ's hidden feelings and anticipating his decisions as at Cana.
- \* A look of sorrow beneath the Cross where her vision remains maternally hope-filled even to the point of receiving a new son in the face of death
- \* A gaze radiant with the joy of the Resurrection
- \* A gaze afire with the outpouring of the Spirit
- \* See RVM #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. RVM #II





# Mary Shares her Memories in the Rosary

- \* Even now, amid the joyful songs of the heavenly Jerusalem, the reasons for her thanksgiving and praise remain unchanged. They inspire her maternal concern for the pilgrim Church, in which she continues to relate her personal account of the Gospel. 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. RVM #II





# An Exquisitely 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
- \* Without contemplation, the Rosary is a body without a soul
- \* By its nature the rosary calls for a quiet rhythm and lingering pace. RVM 12





- \* **A Remembering Contemplation with a Biblical and liturgical character**
- \* Mary's contemplation is above all a remembering. **We need to understand this word in the biblical sense of remembrance (zakar)** as a making present of the works brought about by God in the history of salvation.
- \* The Bible is an account of saving events culminating in Christ himself. These events not only belong to “yesterday”; they are also part of the “today” of salvation.
- \* **This making present comes about above all in the Liturgy:** what God accomplished centuries ago did not only affect the direct witnesses of those events; it continues to affect people in every age with its gift of grace.
- \* To some extent this is also true of every other devout approach to those events: to “remember” them in a spirit of faith and love is to be open to the grace which Christ won for us by the mysteries of his life, death and resurrection. RVM #13



# A Salutary Contemplation

- \* If the Liturgy, as the activity of Christ and the Church, is a saving action par excellence, **the Rosary too, as a “meditation” with Mary on Christ, is a salutary contemplation.**
- \* By immersing us in the mysteries of the Redeemer's life, [the Rosary] ensures that **what he has done and what the liturgy makes present is profoundly assimilated and shapes our existence.**  
RVM # 13





# Learning from Mary to “Read” Christ

- \* Contemplation the scenes of the Rosary in union with Mary is a means of learning from her to “read” Christ, to discover his secrets and to understand his message.





# Brought Mystically to Mary's Side

- \* In the spiritual journey of the Rosary, based on the constant contemplation – in Mary's company – of the face of Christ, this demanding ideal of being conformed to him is pursued through an association which could be described in terms of **friendship ... we entrust ourselves to the enteral care of the Blessed Virgin.**
- \* The Rosary mystically transports us to Mary's side ... This enables her to train us and to mold us with the same care, until Christ is “fully formed” in us (cf. Gal 4:19). RVM 15





# The Rosary Petitions and Proclaims

Both meditation and supplication...  
based on confidence that her maternal  
intercession can obtain all things from  
the heart of her Son. ...the Rosary is  
also a path of proclamation and  
increasing knowledge. RVM 16-17





For next week:

The Mysteries of Christ, the Mysteries  
of His Mother RVM 18-25