

# The Joyful Mysteries of the Rosary

God wants us to have complete joy. He created us for it. Jesus came so we could be immersed in complete joy: “I have told you this so that my joy might be in you and your joy might be complete” (John 15:11). The Joyful Mysteries celebrate when Joy entered the world, when God entered into the mess of the world because of his incredible love for us.

## The First Joyful Mystery: The Annunciation

**Scripture:** In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin’s name was Mary. And he came to her and said, “Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you!” But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and considered in her mind what sort of greeting this might be. And the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there will be no end.” And Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I have no husband?” And the angel said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God. And behold, your kinswoman Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. For with God nothing will be impossible.” And Mary said, “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be done according to your word.” And the angel departed from her. (Lk 1:26-38)

**Reflection:** This is Mary’s moment, the moment when her “yes” changed the world. Imagine the monumental courage that would have required. Think about it. An angel appeared to Mary, and told her she would be the mother of the savior, the mother of God. She was a teenager, only a child. And what the angel said made no earthly sense. What was Mary thinking? What would have happened if she had said no?

**The spiritual fruit:** associated with this mystery is *humility* or the desire to do God’s will.

### Points for Meditation:

- God makes our redemption dependent on Mary’s free decision (Catechism, No. 488).
- Mary said “Yes “in the name of all human nature” (Catechism, No. 511).
- What Eve lost through disobedience, Mary gained again by obedience (Catechism, No. 494)
- This is the moment of the Incarnation: The Word becomes flesh. God becomes a tiny embryo.
- “The first man was from earth, a man of the dust; the second man is from heaven” (Catechism, 504).
- Since Christians are the mystical body of Christ, Mary became our mother, too, at the Annunciation (Catechism, 973).
- As he does with Mary, God wants to become intimately and closely associated with me.
- Messengers of God, in daily circumstances and opportunities, come to me, too. I need only pay attention.
- Mary says Yes to God without knowing the whole picture – what will happen and how it all will end. I shouldn’t demand God give me the whole picture, either.
- God became an embryo – I shouldn’t refuse opportunities that would be good even if I think them “beneath me.”

## The Second Joyful Mystery: The Visitation

**Scripture:** In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a city of Judah, and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and she exclaimed with a loud cry, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! And why is this granted me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For behold, when the voice of your greeting came to my ears, the babe in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord.” (Lk 1:39-45)

**Reflection:** God turned Mary’s world upside down. What did Mary do? She rushed off to serve her cousin, Elizabeth, who was pregnant in her old age. It was Mary’s first reaction. Too often our first reaction is one of selfishness: “I don’t feel like it,” “I’ll do it later,” “Can’t someone else take care of it?” But Mary had an instinct to serve, an entrenched humility.

**The spiritual fruit:** *love of neighbor (charity)* and selfless service.

### Points for Meditation:

- Mary is quick to aid Elizabeth; she will be quick to aid me.
- The practice of authentic Christian charity is the essence of Christianity.
- Elizabeth calls the unborn Jesus “Lord” (and John the Baptist witnesses to him) at the very beginning of Mary’s pregnancy.
- The angel Gabriel’s words and Elizabeth’s together make up the bulk of the Hail Mary prayer.

- Mary is humble but says the Magnificat (which begins in the passage given here). The humble recognize their giftedness and worth, which come from God.
- Christ is the center of these scenes, but he stays hidden, unseen, as he does in our lives.
- Like Elizabeth, we should be eager to recognize Christ in others.
- Like Mary, we should bring Christ into the homes of others.
- Mary's first Christian apostolate was doing household chores. Mostly, our Christian life means small things done with love.
- It is Christ in her that makes Mary attractive and that draws people's attention. He wants to use me in the same way.

### **The Third Joyful Mystery: The Birth of Jesus**

**Scripture:** In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be enrolled. This was the first enrollment, when Quirinius was governor of Syria. And all went to be enrolled, each to his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be enrolled with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. And while they were there, the time came for her to be delivered. And she gave birth to her first-born son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. (Lk 2:1-7)

**Reflection:** The world is a mess: war, poverty, corruption, greed, selfishness, violence, abuse, injustice. The face of evil torments ordinary people every day, and yet God chose to put himself in the middle of our mess. The humility of God is incredible. He places himself right in the middle of our mess as the solution to it. We don't deserve it. We have no claim to it. God gives us a new beginning, a fresh start, freely and without merit.

**The spiritual fruit:** *poverty of spirit* or detachment from worldly goods, emphasizing that God chose a simple entrance into the world.

#### **Points for Meditation:**

- Imagine being all-powerful God – and limiting yourself to the abilities of a baby. That's love.
- Shepherds, not known for their piety, were the first to receive the good news.
- "The Magi's coming to Jerusalem in order to pay homage to the King of the Jews shows that they seek in Israel the ... King of the nations" (Catechism, 528).
- The world usually either bitterly opposes Christ, like Herod, or is indifferent to him, like the innkeepers.
- Baby Jesus had no words to offer, only his presence. And it was enough to attract a lot of attention.
- Christ can be quiet, almost imperceptible. He's also the God of glory, angel choirs and supernovas.
- An innkeeper who could have been transformed by Christ – even his business might have prospered – refused. How often do we refuse to let Christ into our lives?
- We can count on God's answers to our prayers, but often in unexpected ways – a stable instead of a room.
- The Wise Men read the books, learned where to find Christ, and traveled for days to meet him. For us he's a short drive away, in the tabernacle.
- The Wise Men give their best to God. Do we give our best time, best efforts, best talents? Or what we don't want anyway?

### **The Fourth Joyful Mystery: The Presentation**

**Scripture:** And when the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the law of the Lord, "Every male that opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord") and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the law of the Lord, "a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons." Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, looking for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And inspired by the Spirit he came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the law, he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said, "Lord, now let your servant depart in peace, according to thy word; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation which thou hast prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to thy people Israel. And his father and his mother marveled at what was said about him; and Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, "Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is spoken against (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that thoughts out of many hearts may be revealed." And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher, she was of a great age, having lived with her husband seven years from her virginity, and as a widow until she was eighty-four. She did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day. And coming up at that very hour she gave thanks to God, and spoke of him to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem. (Lk 2:22-38)

**Reflection:** Mary presented Jesus at the temple in Jerusalem, dedicating him to God according to the Jewish custom. As she did so, a man named Simeon said something astounding, “Lord, now let your servant depart in peace, according to thy word; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation” (Luke 2:29-30). Have you ever waited for something with great anticipation? Did you wait patiently? What are you waiting for in your life right now? Simeon had waited. He had waited patiently, and prayed patiently for the savior. Now, he took baby Jesus in his arms. Imagine the emotion as he pulled the child to his chest. His face filled with a strange combination of joy and anguish. Joy for the present, anguish for the future he knows the child will face.

**The spiritual fruit:** *obedience* to God's laws and purity of heart and body.

**Points for Meditation:**

- “The presentation of Jesus in the Temple shows him to be the firstborn son who belongs to the Lord” (Catechism, 529).
- Simeon’s faith allowed him to recognize Christ.
- “The sword of sorrow predicted for Mary announces Christ’s cross” (Catechism, 529). Simeon foretells pain for Christ – and his followers.
- Trust in God’s promises sustained Simeon.
- Christ’s religious life was that of a Jew obedient to the law (Catechism, 31).
- Joseph’s offering was a poor man’s alternative to a lamb. God wants me to sacrifice even in small things, too.
- Simeon was content after one glimpse of Christ. The Eucharist gives me many glimpses.
- This encounter with Christ takes place in the Temple. For us, it happens in the Church.
- I should present Christ in the “temple of the Holy Spirit,” my body.
- Anna, in following scene, “Talked about the child to all.” My encounters with Christ should lead to evangelization.

**The Fifth Joyful Mystery: The Finding of Jesus in the Temple**

**Scripture:** Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the Passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up according to custom; and when the feast was ended, as they were returning, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. His parents did not know it, but supposing him to be in the company they went a day’s journey, and they sought him among their kinsfolk and acquaintances; and when they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem, seeking him. After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions; and all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. And when they saw him they were astonished; and his mother said to him, “Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been looking for you anxiously.” and he said to them, “How is it that you sought me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?” And they did not understand the saying which he spoke to them. And he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them; and his mother kept all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature, and in favor with God and man. (Lk 2:41-52)

**Reflection:** On their way home from celebrating the Passover in Jerusalem, Mary and Joseph actually lost Jesus. God, the Creator of the universe, had entrusted Jesus the Messiah to Mary and Joseph’s care—and they lost him. Imagine what they were thinking and how they were feeling: grief, torment, distress, anguish, torture. So often we lose Jesus in our own lives and don’t even notice.

**The spiritual fruit:** *piety* or devotion to Jesus and recognizing the importance of being in God's house.

**Points for Meditation:**

- Joseph & Mary assumed Jesus was with members of their close-knit extended family in which cousins were “brothers.”
- Here Jesus lets us catch a glimpse of the mystery of his total consecration to his mission: “I must be about my Father’s work” (Catechism, 534).
- “Even the closest of human relationships are challenged by the absolute demands of the Kingdom” (John Paul II, *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, 20)
- Jesus’ obedience to his mother and legal father fulfills the fourth commandment perfectly and mirrors his obedience to his Father in heaven” (Catechism, 532)
- In the hidden years of Jesus we learn the importance of: Silence, family life, work and the ordinary events of daily life (Catechism, 533).
- The holy Family made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem every year. Do I take my family on special trips to holy places?
- Feel like you’ve lost Christ? You can always find him in the tabernacle.
- Jesus imparts wisdom to the rabbis who listen in the Temple. He will give me wisdom if I spend time with him in the tabernacle.
- Mary’s question is direct, simple and honest: “Why have you done this to us?” our prayers should be direct, simple and honest.
- Joseph and Mary “do not understand” Jesus’ answer, and yet they accept it (Catechism, 534). Do I accept, or demand to know it all up front?