



ROSARY REFLECTIONS

The Joyful Mysteries





THE 1ST JOYFUL MYSTERY

The Annunciation

In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin's name was Mary. And coming to her, he said, "Hail, favored one! The Lord is with you." But she was greatly troubled at what was said and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father, and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end... 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"... Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word." (LUKE 1:26-38)

Not too long ago, some friends and I committed to praying the rosary together on a daily conference call. I did not have much knowledge of the twenty mysteries, much less the spiritual fruit that each mystery offers. I was immediately intrigued by the fruit of humility from meditating on "The Annunciation." I would have guessed it would have been obedience or fear of the Lord. I knew this event to be a popular scene depicted in religious art and the basis of The Angelus prayer, which some pray three times a day. But until then I had not meditated on this mystery's magnitude. I came to understand Mary's humility stems from her sole focus on God's will: "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word."

She did this through awareness, understanding, and action—the hallmarks of discernment. Eve failed to discern the identity and aim of the serpent and God's will, separating humanity from divinity. Eve was focused on the fleshy pleasure of the created and how it might appease her own will, similar to the bondage of addictions and/or unhealthy attachments. Mary was focused instead on God and appeasing His will. Christ becoming a man involved Mary's willing cooperation in undoing the web of sin that Eve introduced. In a similar way, to undo the web of our addictions and/or unhealthy attachments, we must give our "fiat" to God and allow the Holy Spirit to "overshadow" us. Let us ask for Mary's help to gaze at the Lord with prayerful attention and be filled with wonderment and awe for His great love for all of us. | REFLECTION BY STEPHANIE N.

— Reflection Questions —

- How are you being called to let the Holy Spirit "overshadow" you in your recovery?
- Are you in danger of giving your "yes" to the serpent of addiction and self-will? What can you do today to combat such a temptation with God's grace?



THE 2ND JOYFUL MYSTERY

The Visitation

During those days Mary set out and traveled to the hill country in haste to a town of Judah, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the infant leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, cried out in a loud voice and said, "Most blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And how does this happen to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For at the moment the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled."

(LUKE 1:39-45)

What a wonderful mystery we have been given. Our Blessed Mother, after being visited by the angel Gabriel, sets out to visit her pregnant cousin Elizabeth overjoyed about her own "good news" growing in her womb. Mary likely knew how thrilled Elizabeth was to be pregnant as well since it wasn't until Elizabeth was advanced in age that she was blessed with a child (similar to Sara, the wife of Abraham). And then Gabriel's promise is confirmed when Mary sees Elizabeth and the baby within Elizabeth jumps for joy sensing the presence of our precious Lord inside Mary!

As recovering people of God, we can certainly learn from this joyful mystery. Mary's service to Elizabeth is an example of how we are called to appreciate, serve, and love our family and friends. It invites us to let go of our selfishness, allow Jesus to grow in the womb of our hearts, and ask God for the humility to visit and love the people in our lives—even when it is difficult. When we do so, our loved ones can come to see, just like Elizabeth, the Son of God dwelling inside us and proclaim the goodness of the Lord. | REFLECTION BY MARCIA G.

— Reflection Questions —

- What family members or friends can you offer up to the Lord as you meditate on this mystery?
- Is there a family member or friend you feel called to call or visit? How might you reveal to this person the living Christ within the "womb of your heart"?



THE 3RD JOYFUL MYSTERY

The Nativity

While they were there, the time came for her to have her child, and she gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. Now there were shepherds in that region living in the fields and keeping the night watch over their flock. The angel of the Lord appeared to them and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were struck with great fear. The angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For today in the city of David a savior has been born for you who is Messiah and Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.” (LUKE 2: 6-12)

Why did the birth of Jesus take place in a dark and cold stable? Would God really have allowed His son to be brought into this world in such harsh conditions, exposed to the elements and surrounded by barn animals? And how did Joseph and Mary react to such strange and difficult circumstances? Were they filled with fear, tempted toward resentment and anger? While many of us may have been in their situation, by trusting in God there would have been no room in their hearts for such things. Instead, with faith deepened by love they trusted that they were chosen to fulfill the Lord’s plan of salvation, even if they didn’t quite understand it at the time. Their hearts must have burst with joy the moment Mary gave birth to the child who is “Messiah and Lord!”

Take a moment and ponder the similarities of this mystery to those of us seeking recovery. Our “God consciousness” breaks through the darkness of sin, allowing light to expose our need to become free from our addictions and/or unhealthy attachments—just like Jesus who breaks into this world of darkness at His birth. We then humble ourselves by walking through the doors of recovery. We know we must surrender and become rigorously honest with ourselves, others, and God to stay sober. We learn to rely on others in recovery as they become living testimonies to its principles and generous bearers of the Twelve Steps. We abandon our old selves and are clothed in the spirit and body of Christ, living our faith and being continually renewed by the sacraments. In doing so, we allow Christ to be born in the manger of our spirits so that he may be “Messiah and Lord” over our entire lives. | REFLECTION BY KATHY B.

— Reflection Questions —

- How does your life reflect that you have let Christ be born in the manger of your spirit?
- How do you share the living “Messiah and Lord” with others in recovery? How might you be called to do so today?



THE 4TH JOYFUL MYSTERY

The Presentation

Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon. This man was righteous and devout, awaiting the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he should not see death before he had seen the Messiah of the Lord. He came in the Spirit into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus to perform the custom of the law in regard to him, he took him into his arms and blessed God, saying: "Now, Master, you may let your servant go in peace, according to your word, for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you prepared in sight of all the peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and glory for your people Israel." (LUKE 2:25-32)

In keeping with Jewish tradition and law, Joseph and Mary brought Jesus, their first-born male child, to the temple so they could present Him as an offering to God. This act of presenting Jesus along with two turtle doves was a prefiguration of baptism through which we now all enter the Church. They offered Jesus to God, much like we are offered to God through our baptism.

As we enter recovery for our addictions, compulsions, and/or unhealthy attachments, we are also born into a new life of healing and sobriety. As critical as this first step is—our initial “yes” to recovery—we are encouraged to regularly present our whole being to God as we journey in recovery. *Alcoholics Anonymous* states, “What we really have is a daily reprieve contingent on the maintenance of our spiritual condition.” For us Catholics, that also means remaining in a state of grace with active participation in the sacraments, particularly the Sacrament of Reconciliation and the Eucharist, which both reinforce our recovery and spiritual development.

Whether we came into recovery already Catholic or have entered the Church since embarking on our recovery journey, we are often called upon to publicly reaffirm our baptismal vows to renounce Satan and all his works as well as surrender ourselves to the triune God. While we do this from time to time during the liturgy of the Mass, we can also do this on our own to begin each day—as a way of maintaining conscious contact with the Lord. So, let us renew our baptismal vows today to help us in our recovery journey as we meditate on the mystery of “The Presentation.” | REFLECTION BY KEVIN S.

— Reflection Questions —

- How have you “presented” yourself to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit on a regular basis as part of your recovery?
- Are there certain areas of your life that you are not “presenting” as an offering to the Lord? What might be keeping you from doing so?



THE 5TH JOYFUL MYSTERY

The Finding of Jesus in the Temple

Each year his parents went to Jerusalem for the feast of Passover, and when he was 12 years old, they went up according to festival custom. After they had completed its days, as they were returning, the boy Jesus remained behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it... After 3 days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions, and all who heard him were astounded at his understanding and his answers. When his parents saw him, they were astonished, and his mother said to him, "Son, why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been looking for you with great anxiety." And he said to them, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" But they did not understand what he said to them. (LUKE 2:41-50)

The Holy Family had the regular tradition of traveling to Jerusalem every year for the Passover celebration. In prior years, Jesus likely stayed within earshot of Mary or Joseph. But this year, perhaps as Mary and Joseph were focused on the significance of the Passover season with their close friends and family, they lost track of Jesus. Realizing Jesus was not with them, they immediately turned all of their attention to finding their missing son. Panic-stricken, they must have experienced tremendous relief and joy when they finally found Him in the temple at Jerusalem.

How easy it is for us to press on with our own lives, traveling the courses we have set without consciously maintaining a close connection with Jesus. As we drift, complacency can set in until we are jarred by a realization that we have "lost" Jesus in our lives. And if this doesn't change, we can easily fall back into our addictions and/or unhealthy attachments. Yet, by returning to Jesus, like Mary and Joseph, we can once again experience that wonderful sense of relief and joy.

Our relationship with Jesus and indeed our recovery only remains strong if we actively foster and nurture them. If we feel that we're losing or have lost that connection to Jesus, all we have to do is "return to the temple" to find Him. We can return to the Mass and the Eucharist, the Sacrament of Reconciliation, our parish faith community, and regular prayer. And once we do, as Step 12 encourages us to do, we can share Christ's presence in our lives as a message of hope to others. | REFLECTION BY KEVIN S.

— Reflection Questions —

- Have you remained in the presence of Jesus when it comes to your recovery? If not, how might you "return to the temple" to find Jesus today?
- Are there individuals in your life you feel called to encourage to find or return to Jesus so that they too may experience joy and peace?