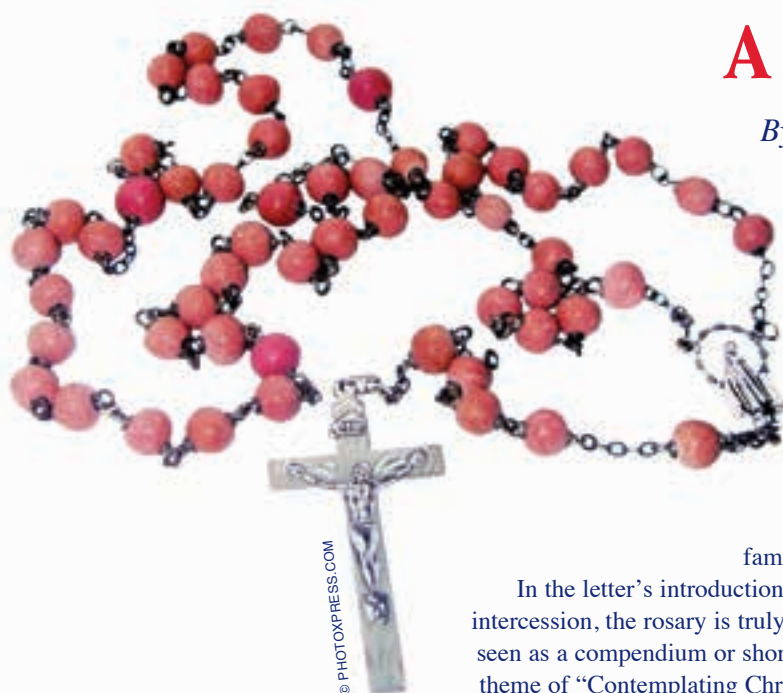


The Rosary

A Prayer for All Seasons

By Gloria Hutchinson



Like an Olympic champion emerging from early retirement, the rosary has come back into its own as a prayer beloved by everyday Catholics. It had suffered a slow decline after the Second Vatican Council (1962–65). Let's look back and celebrate this newly expanded and ever-reliable prayer for all seasons.

The reemergence of the rosary has been propelled, in part, by Pope John Paul II's apostolic letter *The Rosary of the Virgin Mary* (*Rosarium Virginis Mariae*). The letter announced a Year of the Rosary and expressed the Holy

Father's hope that the prayer would once again be embraced by families and all who seek the gift of peace.

In the letter's introduction, John Paul II emphasizes that though we pray for Mary's intercession, the rosary is truly about Jesus. It is "at heart a Christo-centric prayer" that can be seen as a compendium or short summary of the gospel. The first chapter then reflects on the theme of "Contemplating Christ with Mary."

As Chapter 2 begins, the unsuspecting reader has no idea that something new and groundbreaking is about to occur. With the skill of a preacher who rouses his congregation with a just-minted story, the Holy Father then introduces five new mysteries to be added to the traditional fifteen.

The effect on most Catholics, reading news summaries of the apostolic letter, was an enlivening mix of surprise, curiosity, and a pleased recognition that John Paul II was right on the mark. His proposed Luminous Mysteries (Mysteries of Light) would focus on Christ's public ministry between his baptism and his passion.

These five new mysteries now take their place between the Joyful Mysteries and the Sorrowful Mysteries, which focus respectively on Christ's childhood and on his suffering and death. "Why didn't I ever notice what was missing before?" people asked themselves.

The traditional fifteen mysteries, including the Glorious Mysteries, which follow the Sorrowful Mysteries, had become so familiar that few ever questioned whether the rosary might be incomplete as a Christ-centered prayer. However, once the proposed addition became known, a common response went something like this: "The rosary used to be like a biography that jumped from birth to death without an in-between. Now, we can stay with Jesus as he gathers his disciples and gets them ready for what's to come."

We hope you enjoy these sample pages. For ordering information, visit Liguori.org.