

To Imitate and Obtain: The Rosary within Family Discipleship

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In the preface for Holy Mass on the Solemnity of the Christian Family, the priest gives thanks and praise to God the eternal Father because He sent his Son “into the world to teach us the sanctity of human love and show us the value of family life.” In these few words, the Church acknowledges the wondrous and profoundly beautiful truth that God the Son entered the world as its Redeemer precisely by *willingly becoming a member of a family*. Think about that: God thought so much of the human family that He became an immediate member of one, and in doing so, consecrated family life, elevated it to a supernatural dignity and established it as the first school of discipleship.

We all know that the Lord Jesus, his most Blessed Mother and St. Joseph together form the Holy Family and as the child in the family, Jesus was *all in*, so to speak! Scripture tells us He was “obedient to them” (Luke 2:51) and we know that it was within the everyday happenings of family life that Jesus “advanced in wisdom and age and favor before God and man” (2:52). Within the Holy Family, God sought and received the greatest measure of human cooperation so that his full plan for our sanctification and eventual glorification, “hidden from ages and from generations past,” might finally be revealed and begin to move toward its consummation (Colossians 1:26).

In the story of the Holy Family, we find the gradual emergence of a new *pathway of virtue and holiness* blazed by the Lord and travelled faithfully from the start by his Mother and righteous foster father as well. From within their family life, however, this road began to stretch outward, and while his Blessed Mother continued to travel it without fail even as St. Joseph’s journey in this world came to an end, others also accepted Jesus’ invitation to follow Him, beginning to accompany Him throughout his public ministry, journeying with Him toward his Passion, Death and Resurrection and then, after his glorious Ascension, racing headlong into the world to carry out the Great Commission of the Church through the power of the Holy Spirit. This is the very same *pathway of virtue and holiness* that every Christian is called to walk, this is to be the daily story of our discipleship: to follow Jesus faithfully as others have before us. We find the road map to do this in the Mysteries of the Holy Rosary.

Every Mystery of the Rosary contains a piece of the Lord’s labors on our behalf, and when we reflect upon them, we come to understand more fully the depths of Jesus’ perfect obedience to the Father and his limitless love for us. We *also* see that it is indeed possible to answer his call to follow, as we acknowledge our forebears in the faith working diligently to become more like Him each step of the way. Let us consider, for instance, the humble trust of the Blessed Mother—the first and greatest disciple—at the Annunciation or the piety of St. Joseph when the Lord was Presented in the Temple. Again, ponder the compassion that an interceding Mother showed at the Wedding Feast at Cana or the holy fear shown by the Apostles at the Lord’s Transfiguration. Behold the obedient surrender of the Lord Himself when in Gethsemane or the brave faithfulness of the Blessed Mother, the Beloved Disciple and the faithful Women Disciples present at the

foot of his Cross. Meditate upon the generous compassion of St. Joseph of Arimathea and St. Nicodemus removing our Lord's body from the Cross and providing the tomb and burial spices, and then see the loving reverence demonstrated by St. Mary Magdalene and the other myrrh-bearing women as they approached the tomb on Easter Sunday. Finally, rejoice with the Mother of God as she receives the faithful disciple's reward of participating in her Son's Resurrection and humbly receiving the unfading crown of heavenly glory—indeed, reaching the final destination at the end of *the pathway of virtue and holiness*.

The Mysteries of the Holy Rosary recount the work that the Lord Jesus, God the Son who emptied Himself of eternal glory and assumed our nature, undertook to reconcile us to the Father and to bestow the Holy Spirit and also how others responded by cooperating in that wondrous undertaking. When we prayerfully contemplate them while reciting the prayers represented by the beads, we come to more clearly see the road of discipleship as it was travelled by the Blessed Mother, St. Joseph and all the other disciples before us. We hear the call to embrace the challenge of discipleship, to take up our own crosses and become faithful coworkers with Him to proclaim the Gospel and build the Kingdom. In this sense, the Holy Rosary is not just a form of prayer; it becomes our way of life.

Just as the Father's plan for our salvation took shape and the universal pathway of discipleship was illumined within the Holy Family, so God's plan for each of us and our earliest formation as disciples takes place within our individual families. Therefore, during this month when we pay special attention to the great value of the Rosary, all of the families within the Church should make (or reaffirm) their commitment to praying the Holy Rosary together every day. There is no more powerful a way—save attending and participating in the Holy Mass together every Sunday and on other holy days—to grow as disciples of Jesus together...to clearly see and gain the grace to walk *the pathway of virtue and holiness* as exemplified by the Lord and the others who have gone before us...to live the very Mysteries contained therein that “we may imitate what they contain and obtain what they promise”...and thus to more fully become a truly Christian Family.

