

In *Mary's Touch Program 2.39*, Mike shares his journey of faith, which was nurtured by our Blessed Mother and by praying the Rosary. His love for Mary now inspires him to write contemplative prayers. Here, he shares his Meditations on the Mysteries of the Rosary.

The Joyful Mysteries

The Annunciation (LK 1:26–28)

In the sixth month the Angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary.

The Angel Gabriel comes to Mary to announce she is to be the Mother of the Messiah—the Mother of God. So great was Mary's love and faith in God that she accepted God's will in this, even though she knew there could be grave personal consequences. Mary is the model of perfect human acceptance of God's will over personal will. She truly and completely turned her life over to the care and love of God.

In the same way, God wants us to say yes to His will. God makes His presence in our lives known in many ways. Sometimes we have an open heart and open mind to hear His voice. Sometimes our minds and hearts are closed by our own selfishness and fear.

We can turn our lives and our wills over to the care of God in many important ways. But, too often we take back what we give up. Mary did not take back any of it. She became the living model of human spiritual perfection.

Mary comes into our lives and asks us to follow her example. God sends the Holy Spirit into our lives to help us.

Do I open my heart and mind to hear the voice of God calling me to do His will? Do I say yes to His will regardless of the possible consequences to myself?

I pray that I can open my heart and mind to hear the will of God in my life. I pray that I see the example given to me by my Holy Mother, the Virgin Mary. I pray that I accept the help sent to me through the Holy Spirit.

The Visitation (LK 1:39–45)

Mary set out at that time and went as quickly as she could to a town in the hill country of Judah. She went into Zechariah's house and greeted Elizabeth. Now as soon as Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leapt in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. She gave a loud cry and said, "Of all women, you are the most blessed, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. Why should I be honored with a visit from the mother of my Lord? For the moment your greeting reached my ears, the child in my womb leapt for joy. Yes, blessed is she who believed that the promise made her by the Lord would be fulfilled."

Mary, after consenting to become the Mother of God, became aware that her cousin Elizabeth would also be giving birth, even in her old age. Mary traveled a good distance to serve her cousin in her time of need. Mary could have remained home. She could have basked in the glory of the

knowledge she received from Gabriel. But she did not. By visiting her cousin Elizabeth, Mary shows us the perfect model of charity. At a time many of us would have let pride and self-centeredness consume us, she humbly went out of her way to serve someone else. She saw God and His works in another and went to take care of her. She focused on the needs of someone else.

Do I look outside of myself for opportunities to perform service for others? Do I humbly serve the will of God, or do I look for personal recognition for what I do?

I pray that I can turn my life and my will over to the care of God and that I can act upon it. I pray that I put my faith into action through service to others in need.

The Birth of Our Lord (LK 2:1–20)

Now at this time Caesar Augustus issued a decree for a census of the whole world to be taken. This census—the first—took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria, and everyone went to his own town to be registered. So Joseph set out from the town of Nazareth in Galilee and traveled to Judea, to the town of David called Bethlehem, since he was of David’s house and line, in order to be registered together with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. While they were there, the time came for her to have her Child, and she gave birth to a Son, her first-born. She wrapped Him in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger because there was no room for them at the inn. In the countryside close by, there were shepherds who lived in the fields and took turns watching their flocks during the night. The Angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone round them. They were terrified, but the Angel said, “Do not be afraid. Listen, I bring you news of great joy, a joy to be shared by the whole people. Today, in the town of David, a Savior has been born to you; He is Christ the Lord. And here is a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes lying in a manger.” And suddenly with the Angel there was a great throng of heavenly host, praising God and singing:

*“Glory to God in the highest heaven,
And peace to men who enjoy His favor.”*

Now when the Angels had gone from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened which the Lord has made known to us.” So they hurried away and found Mary and Joseph and the Baby lying in a manger. When they saw the Child, they repeated what they had been told about Him, and everyone who heard it was astonished at what the shepherds had to say. As for Mary, she treasured all these things and pondered them in her heart. And the shepherds went back glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen; it was exactly as they had been told.

Mary and Joseph went to Bethlehem for the census. Traveling was difficult, especially for someone in Mary’s condition. But she and Joseph once again accepted God’s will. Mary gave birth to God’s only Son in a cave, the humblest of conditions. Although poor, Mary and Joseph brought Jesus into this world with perfect love and dignity. The birth of Christ was the perfect model for what is truly important in our lives. God came into this world without any worldly possessions. There were no distractions to draw attention away from the most important thing of all. There was no pride or self-centeredness to take away from the miracle of His birth. Mary in all humility and love brought the salvation of all mankind into this world. In Jesus’s birth, God is telling us that nothing is more important than His presence in our lives and His will for us.

Am I easily distracted by worldly possessions and other temptations? Do I humbly bring Christ into this world through my prayers, thoughts, words, and actions?

I pray that when I bring Christ into this world, I do so humbly without pride or self-centeredness. I pray that the things of this world do not distract my focus away from what is truly important—God's presence in my life and His will for me.

The Presentation in the Temple (LK 2:22–35)

And when the day came for them to be purified as laid down by the Law of Moses, they took Him up to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord—observing what stands written in the Law of the Lord: Every first-born male must be consecrated to the Lord—and also to offer in sacrifice, in accordance with what is said in the Law of the Lord, a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons. Now in Jerusalem there was a man named Simeon. He was an upright and devout man. He looked forward to Israel's comforting, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death until he had set eyes on the Christ of the Lord. Prompted by the Spirit, he came to the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for Him what the law required, he took Him into his arms and blessed God, and he said:

*"Now Master, you can let your servant go in peace,
Just as you promised;
Because my eyes have seen the salvation
Which you have prepared for all nations to see,
A light to enlighten the pagans
And the glory of your people Israel."*

As the Child's father and mother stood there wondering at the things that were being said about Him, Simeon blessed them and said to Mary His Mother, "You see this Child: He is destined for the fall and for the rise of many in Israel, destined to be a sign that is rejected—and a sword will pierce your own soul too—so that the secret thoughts of many may be laid bare."

According to the law, Mary and Joseph took their new Son to the Temple to be consecrated to the Lord. Simeon recognized Jesus as the Messiah. Mary gave Jesus to God through the priest—a sacrifice. God gave Jesus back to us through the priest—a sacrament. Simeon prophesied about Jesus.

Jesus is not subject to the Law of Moses; yet, to teach obedience, He submits to it. Mary is not subject to the law of purification; yet, in humility she submits to it. Jesus and Mary submitted themselves publicly to the law. They are true and pure models for the Word of God. In their submission to the law, Simeon confirmed the presence of the Messiah in the world. He publicly prophesied Jesus's mission and the effect it would have on the world. He also confirmed Mary's role and the suffering she would endure for Jesus and for us as our mother.

Do I turn to the traditions and laws of the Church to guide and direct me to God? Do I turn to devotions, like the Rosary, to give me strength and grace to fulfill the will of God?

I pray that I might use the teaching of the Church created by Christ and nurtured by the Virgin Mary to guide and direct me to God. I pray that I might use suffering in my life to bring me closer to God as shown to me by the lives of Jesus and Mary.

The Finding of the Child Jesus after Three Days in the Temple (LK 2:41–52)

Every year, His parents went to Jerusalem for the feast of Passover. When He was twelve years old, they went up for the feast as usual. When they were on their way home after the feast, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem without his parents knowing it. They assumed He was with the caravan,

and it was only after a day's journey that they went to look for him among their relations and acquaintances. When they failed to find Him, they went back to Jerusalem looking for Him everywhere.

Three days later, they found Him in the Temple, sitting among the doctors, listening to them, and asking them questions; and all those who heard Him were astounded at His intelligence and His replies. His parents were overcome when they saw Him, and His mother said to Him, "My child, why have you done this to us? See how worried your father and I have been, looking for You?" "Why were you looking for me?" He replied. "Did you not know that I must be busy with my Father's affairs?" But they did not understand what He meant.

He then went down with them and came to Nazareth and lived under their authority. His mother stored up all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom, in stature, and in favor with God and men.

Mary and Joseph went to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. When it came time to return home, it was the custom of the Jewish people to travel in large groups for security and company. It was also their custom for the men and women to travel separately within the caravan. Because Jesus was only twelve, He could have comfortably traveled in either group. Mary probably thought that Jesus was with Joseph, and Joseph probably thought He was with Mary. What panic must have overcome them when they discovered He was missing?

Jesus did not lose His family. They thought He must be with them. They took it for granted that He was there. What a hole was left in their lives when they discovered He was not there—what panic! We often take it for granted that Jesus is there with us. He does not lose us. He is always there in the "temple" doing His Father's business. We know where to find Him now that He has taught us, but we must go there to be with Him.

When I lose Jesus in my daily life, do I go frantically searching for Him like I would my lost child? Do I know where to find Him? Do I go straight to the obvious place to look for Him?

I pray that in those times when I feel like I have lost Jesus Christ in my life I realize that He has not lost me. I pray that I remember where to find Him at all times—He is busy with His Father's affairs.

The Luminous Mysteries

The Baptism of Jesus at the Jordan (MT 3:13–17)

Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. John would have prevented Him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now; for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he consented. And when Jesus was baptized, He went up immediately from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and alighting on Him; and lo, a voice from heaven, saying, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

The baptism of Jesus marks the beginning of His public life. In the Luminous Mysteries, Christ reveals Himself to us in many ways. And true to His way, Jesus *shows* us what we must do to follow Him home to God the Father.

Jesus goes to John to receive a baptism of repentance. John prophesies about one greater than he that is to follow him. When Jesus comes to be baptized, John tries to stop Him, saying, "It is I who should be baptized by you," but Jesus tells him it must be so to fulfill the Scriptures. Jesus shows us we must humbly receive a baptism of repentance in order to follow Him.

Then He reveals Himself and the Holy Trinity to us. As He rises from the water, John proclaims, "Behold the Lamb of God," the skies are opened, the voice of God is heard saying, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased," and the Holy Spirit in the form of a white dove descends upon Jesus. The Sacrament of Baptism is instituted.

In His own baptism, Jesus is calling us to follow Him. It is a personal invitation to all of us. When He reveals Himself to us, He gives us the basis of our faith and the hope of our own salvation. He is showing us how much He loves us by coming personally into our lives. Our baptism is our initiation into our faith—the beginning. In our baptism, God reveals Himself to us and personally invites us to follow Him.

Do I accept the invitation of God to follow Him, which begins at my baptism and continues each day of my life? Do I renew my baptism each day by repenting my sins, rejecting sin, and following Jesus?

I pray that each day I recall my baptism of repentance—my beginning; that I am filled with the Holy Spirit and renewed in my faith in God.

The Miracle at Cana (JN 2:1–12)

On the third day there was a marriage at Cana in Galilee, and the Mother of Jesus was there; Jesus also was invited to the marriage, with his disciples. When the wine failed, the Mother of Jesus said to Him, "They have no wine." And Jesus said to her, "O woman, what have you to do with me? My hour has not yet come." His Mother said to the servants, "Do whatever He tells you." Now six stone jars were standing there, for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to them, "Fill the jars with water." And they filled them up to the brim. He said to them, "Now draw some out, and take it to the steward of the feast." So they took it. When the steward of the feast tasted the water now become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward of the feast called the bridegroom and said to him, "Every man serves the good wine first; and when men have drunk freely, then the poor wine; but you have kept the good wine until now." This, the first of His signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested His glory; and His disciples believed in Him. After this He went down to Capernaum, with His Mother and His brothers and His disciples; and there they stayed for a few days.

Jesus again reveals Himself to us in the second Luminous Mystery. When His Mother comes to Him with the dilemma that the wedding party has run out of wine, He says to her, "Dear woman, why do you involve Me?" In saying this, Jesus reveals to us that He has not come for Himself. This is not His problem. He has come to serve, not to be served. He shows compassion for the bride and the groom. He converts the water into wine—the common into the finest. Likewise, He has come to convert us, common sinners into faithful believers—the finest to be presented to the "Master of the banquet."

Do I recognize that, like Jesus, I too am called to serve? Am I prepared to be converted from the common to the finest?

I pray that each day I see my opportunities to serve in the manner of Jesus, so that I might be converted from the common to the finest.

The Proclamation of the Kingdom and the Call to Conversion (MK 1:14–15; MK 2:3–13; LK 7:47–50; JN 20:22–23)

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the Gospel of God and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the Gospel." (MK 1:14-15)

And they came, bringing to Him a paralytic carried by four men. And when they could not get near Him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above Him; and when they had made an opening, they let down the pallet on which the paralytic lay. And when Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, "My son, your sins are forgiven." Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, "Why does this man speak thus? It is blasphemy! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" And immediately Jesus, perceiving in His Spirit that they thus questioned within themselves, said to them, "Why do you question thus in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise, take up your pallet and walk'? But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins" —he said to the paralytic—"I say to you, rise, take up your pallet and go home." And he rose, and immediately took up the pallet and went out before them all; so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, "We never saw anything like this!" He went out again beside the sea; and all the crowd gathered about Him, and He taught them. (MK 2:3-13)

"Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much; but he who is forgiven little, loves little." And He said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." Then those who were at table with Him began to say among themselves, "Who is this, who even forgives sins?" And He said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace." (LK 7:47-50)

And when He had said this, he breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." (JN 20:22-23)

Throughout the Gospels, Jesus reveals the Kingdom of God to us in various ways. But the message is always clear and consistent. We are called to God's Kingdom through Jesus Christ. He came into our world to show us the way. We are to repent for our sins and trust in God. For He, in His mercy, will forgive our sins and draw us to Him.

The Kingdom of God is nearer to us than we often think, for it is in God Himself and in all His creation. It is not in some far-off place or time. We are called each and every day by the voice of God to follow Jesus into God's Kingdom. We have but to trust completely in God and follow. Crossing over into the Kingdom of God is a matter of faith for which we are completely dependent on the mercy and grace of God.

Do I seek the Kingdom of God each day by reconciling myself with God and praying for His mercy? Do I follow the example of Jesus each day by trusting completely in God for all things?

I pray for the grace and mercy of God so that I might empty myself and enter into His Kingdom by turning all things over to Him.

The Transfiguration (LK 9:28–35)

About eight days after Jesus said this, He took Peter, John, and James with Him and went up onto a mountain to pray. As He was praying, the appearance of His face changed, and His clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning. Two men, Moses and Elijah, appeared in glorious splendor, talking with Jesus. They spoke about His departure, which He was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem. Peter and his companions were very sleepy, but when they became fully awake, they saw His glory and the two men standing with Him. As the men were leaving Jesus, Peter said to Him, "Master, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters—one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." (He did not know what he was saying.) While he was speaking, a cloud appeared and enveloped them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. A voice came from the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to Him." When the voice had spoken, they found that Jesus was alone. The disciples kept this to themselves, and told no one at that time what they had seen.

The Transfiguration of Jesus reveals some portion of His true glory to us. In presenting Moses and Elijah, Jesus connects the law and the prophets to Himself for us to clearly see who He is and why He is here. In His brilliant appearance, Jesus gives us a glimpse of where He is leading us — He gives the hope of salvation from sin. The voice of God the Father confirms for us and directs us to "Listen to Him."

Peter, James, and John want to build three tents, but Moses and Elijah vanish, and they are left alone with Jesus. This is not where Jesus is leading them. He admonishes them to not tell what they have seen until He is resurrected—He is not finished. Jesus will lead us all the way into the Kingdom of God. He revealed some small portion of His glory in His transfiguration to encourage us. He refreshes our faith and fills us with hope for the rest of our journey.

Do I recognize Jesus for who He really is and why He comes into our lives? Do I see how He reveals Himself in our world today? Am I encouraged and filled with hope so that I may follow Jesus for the rest of my journey into God's Kingdom?

I pray that I may recognize Jesus revealed in our world and that I may be refreshed and filled with hope for the remainder of my personal journey with Christ into the Kingdom of God the Father.

The Institution of the Eucharist (MK 14:22–25)

While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take it; this is my Body." Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, and they all drank from it. "This is my Blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many," He said to them. "I tell you the truth, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it anew in the Kingdom of God."

The institution of the Eucharist is another revelation to us. Jesus reveals His sacrifice to us—He is willingly giving up His Body and His Blood for us. He is holding nothing back from God the Father. He will completely empty Himself to show us what we must do to follow Him into the Kingdom of God. By taking the Body and Blood of Jesus into ourselves, we are given the grace and strength we need to follow Jesus where He is going. He tells us where He is going when He says "I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it anew in the Kingdom of God." He gives us hope that by following Him, we too will share in His life and drink with Him in the Kingdom of God.

Do I receive the Eucharist in memory of Jesus, understanding what He revealed to us in His sacrifice? When I receive the Eucharist, do I allow the true living Body and Blood of Jesus Christ to enter me to give me the grace and strength I need to follow Him where He is going?

I pray that in the Eucharist I accept the true living Body and Blood of Christ to enter and dwell in me, so that I have the grace to carry me with Christ into the Kingdom of God.

The Sorrowful Mysteries

The Agony in the Garden (MT 26:36–46)

Then Jesus came with them to a small estate called Gethsemane; and He said to His disciples, "Stay here while I go over there to pray." He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee with Him. And sadness came over Him, and great distress. Then He said to them, "My soul is sorrowful to the point of death. Wait here and keep awake with Me," and going on a little further, He fell on His face and prayed. "My Father," He said, "if it is possible, let this cup pass Me by; nevertheless, let it be as You, not I, would have it." He came back to the disciples and found them sleeping, and He said to Peter, "So you had not the strength to keep awake with Me one hour? You should be awake and praying not to be put to the test. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." Again, a second time, He went away and prayed, "My Father," He said, "If this cup cannot pass Me by without my drinking it, Your will be done!" And He came back again and found them sleeping, their eyes were so heavy. Leaving them there, He went away again and prayed for the third time, repeating the same words. Then He came back to the disciples and said to them, "You can sleep on now and take your rest. Now the hour has come when the Son of Man is to be betrayed into the hands of sinners. Get up! Let us go! My brother is already close at hand."

Jesus suffered in many ways for us. His passion was the completion. The point had to be driven home in a way that we would always remember. Because He was human, Jesus suffered fear, doubt, rejection, frustration, hurt, and all other human emotions we associate with abandonment. Because He was God, He knew what was about to happen to Him and its significance. He was taking on the sin of the world—all that had ever been and all that would ever be. He was going to save and forgive the world for His Father—our God. What an overwhelming rush of knowledge and emotion; to in a single moment suddenly experience all that had ever, or would ever be wrong in this world. Jesus's humanity must have suffered immensely that night in the garden. His divine nature knew what was to come. But Jesus, in all His pain, did not despair. He did not lose faith in the Father. He asked God to take away the suffering to come, but He also knew God's will in this. He prayed for God's will, not His own. Even with His "God-knowledge" of the terrible physical pain and humiliation He was about to suffer, with the knowledge that so many of the people He was about to die for might never believe or appreciate His sacrifice, Jesus chose God's will, not His own. He knew this was the only way to our salvation—it was the only way we would remember and follow. He gave us the perfect model of choosing God's will over our own. So, with all of His "God-knowledge" and His human doubt and fear, He went forward.

Do I choose God's will over my own despite my fear and doubt, or do I try to escape? When I am suffering and in pain, do I turn to God and His will for me, or do I fall into despair and self-pity?

I pray that I can better follow His example, despite my fears and doubts. I pray that I learn to hear the voice of God in my suffering and answer His call.

The Scourging at the Pillar (MK 15:1–16)

First thing in the morning, the Chief Priests together with the Elders and Scribes, in short the whole Sanhedrin, had their plan ready. They had Jesus bound and took Him away and handed Him over to Pilate. Pilate questioned Him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" "It is you who say it," He answered. And the Chief Priests brought many accusations against Him. Pilate questioned Him again, "Have you no reply at all? See how many accusations they are bringing against you!" But to Pilate's amazement, Jesus made no further reply. At festival time, Pilate used to release a prisoner for them, anyone they asked for. Now a man called Barabbas was then in prison with the rioters who had committed murder during the uprising. When the crowd went up and began to ask Pilate the customary favor, Pilate answered them, "Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?" For he realized it was out of jealousy that the Chief Priests had handed Jesus over. The Chief Priests, however, had incited the crowd to demand that he should release Barabbas for them instead. Then Pilate spoke again. "But in that case," he said to them, "what am I to do with the man you call King of the Jews?" They shouted back, "Crucify him!" So Pilate, anxious to placate the crowd, released Barabbas for them and, having ordered Jesus to be scourged, handed Him over to be crucified.

Pilate knew Jesus was innocent. "He could find no cause in Him," but to appease the Jews, he had Him scourged. He took the easy way out. He did what was popular rather than what was right. Jesus suffered humiliating, disfiguring, excruciating pain for Pilate's weakness and failure to do what was right. How often do we do what is popular rather than what is right? The Jews wanted Jesus put to death, but Pilate knew this was not right, not just. So he rationalized and went along with the crowd, but not all the way—not yet, anyway. We often live right on the edge like this—rationalizing that 'it's not as bad as ...'. The scourging of Jesus at the pillar is another model for us. Jesus was mutilated and humiliated because Pilate could not stand up for what was right. He was not willing to be unpopular with the crowd, to be humiliated himself for what was right. Jesus willingly took on Pilate's sins at great cost and pain to Himself. When we act like Pilate (not doing what we know is right), Jesus suffers again for us.

How often do I go along with crowd, even when I know it is wrong? How often do I forgive others' behavior toward me? Am I willing to endure and accept ridicule, pain, and suffering to do the right things?

I pray that I have the strength to follow Jesus's example in the scourging—to do what is right—not what is popular.

The Crowning with Thorns (MT 27:27–31)

The governor's soldiers took Jesus with them into the praetorium and collected the whole cohort around Him. Then they stripped Him and made Him wear a scarlet cloak; and having twisted some thorns into a crown, they put this on His head and placed a reed in His right hand. To make fun of Him, they knelt to Him saying, "Hail King of the Jews!" And they spat on Him and took the reed and struck Him on the head with it. And when they had finished making fun of Him, they took off the cloak and dressed Him in His own clothes and led Him away to crucify Him.

More humiliation and cruelty piled on top of a savage beating. Jesus's torturers beat Him mercilessly, but that did not satisfy their sadistic cruelty—they needed to humiliate Him further by mocking Him. They took His truth and debased it. Jesus came into this world humbly to teach the way of salvation. But God's way is not man's way. God's way is through humility—recognizing nothing good is possible without God. Man is proud, believing he can achieve greatness without God's grace. In this pride, man is capable of great cruelty as demonstrated by the crowning with thorns. Jesus endured the humiliation and mockery of God's way with love and tolerance. He did

not despair or turn away from God's will because it was unpopular or because the crowd made fun of Him. In loving tolerance, He forgave all of His tormentors—He saved all of mankind— past, present, and future—from the bondage of sin. We have but to follow in His path—to follow the model He presented to us when His tormentors crowned Him King of the Jews.

Do I deny God's path out of fear of embarrassment or ridicule? Do I back down when challenged or when I am made fun of for choosing Christ's way? How often have I joined in on the humiliation of another person?

I pray that I humbly pursue Christ's path of love and tolerance toward those who might persecute or ridicule me; that I do not allow ridicule or embarrassment to ever deter me from Christ's way.

The Carrying of the Cross (MK 15:20–22)

They led Him out to crucify Him. They enlisted a passerby, Simon of Cyrene, father of Alexander and Rufus, who was coming in from the country, to carry His Cross. They brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha, which means the place of the skull.

Jesus was forced to carry His Cross to His own execution. After torture and humiliation—of mind and body—beyond human comprehension, Jesus picked up His Cross and headed to Calvary. He had a mission to complete. He experienced in that short period of time all the sin and evil in this world—past, present and future—and now it was all in that Cross. He carried it to fulfill His Father's will and to save all mankind. He did it in this way so that we could see and never forget. He gave everything, and He did not despair. And when His human body could no longer endure the abuse, He fell—but He did not despair. He allowed Simon to show charity. God worked through Simon for us to see. When, in our human frailty we fall, we must not despair. We must find God in others and accept help on the way to fulfilling God's will for us, regardless of the pain and suffering we might be forced to endure. Conversely, when we see others suffering to fulfill God's will, we must allow God to work through us, like Simon. He initially did not want to help. He did not want to get involved. He did not want to get dirty. However, once he started, he had a conversion and found reward in the very act of charity. We, too, must act in charity.

Do I act, like Jesus, with complete selflessness in my times of suffering? Simon did not know the "stranger" was Jesus, the Son of God. Do I see the Son of God in the strangers around me?

I pray that my eyes are opened to see Christ in those around me. I pray that I carry my cross lightly and have charity even in my own suffering. Jesus carried His Cross so that my cross might be bearable—even then, He is there to help me carry mine—for on my own, I am incapable.

The Crucifixion (LK 23:33–46)

When they reached the place called 'The Skull', they crucified Him there and the two criminals also, one on the right and the other on the left. Jesus said, "'Father, forgive them; they do not know what they are doing.'" Then they cast lots to share out His clothing.

The people stayed there watching Him. As for the leaders, they jeered at Him. "He saved others," they said, "let Him save Himself if He is the Christ of God, the chosen one." The soldiers mocked Him too, and when they approached to offer Him vinegar they said, "If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself." Above Him there was an inscription: 'This is the King of the Jews'.

One of the criminals hanging there abused Him. "Are you not the Christ?" he said, "'Save yourself and us as well.'" But the other spoke up and rebuked him. "Have you no fear of God at all? You got

the same sentence as He did, but in our case we deserved it; we are paying for what we did. But this Man has done nothing wrong. Jesus." he said, "remember me when you come into Your Kingdom." "Indeed, I promise you," He replied, "today you will be with Me in paradise."

It was now about the sixth hour and, with the sun eclipsed, a darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour. The veil of the Temple was torn right down the middle; and when Jesus had cried out in a loud voice, He said, "Father, into Your hands I commit my Spirit." With these words, He breathed His last.

The Crucifixion of our Lord is the final and ultimate indignity inflicted upon Christ. But even in death, caused by our selfishness, pride, and lack of charity, Jesus loved us enough to finish what He came for. He was tortured and humiliated, suffered, and died so that we could be with the Father. We would have everlasting life with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. As everything in His life, Jesus's death serves as a model for us.

Jesus's death has ultimate meaning. Death is the final human act on this earth. In death, as in His life, His only thoughts were His love for God and His mission to save humanity. One can only imagine what any other person would be thinking in His place: fear, self-pity, self-preservation, resentment, despair. Perhaps the shock and trauma would be too much for any thought—maybe sheer terror would fill our minds. But not Jesus. His mind and His words were filled with forgiveness, love, and charity. Even in death He teaches us—He showed how abundant His mercy is. He forgave the thief to show we only need to ask to be forgiven and we are, even in the last moments of our life. In giving us to His Mother, and her to us, He showed ultimate charity and love. In His humanity, Jesus showed us what is possible for us—if we only have faith in God and trust in His will. Jesus's crucifixion is not about despair—it is about hope. It is about what is possible in God. If Jesus in His humanity can display the best of all human characteristics during His trauma, can't we emulate Him in our lives?

In my trials and tribulations, do I become a selfish, self-pitying, resentful creature? Do I despair?

I pray that I may follow Christ's example even in my most difficult times to become more Christ-like and continue my mission of faith and hope.

The Glorious Mysteries

The Resurrection (MT 28:1–10)

After the Sabbath and towards dawn on the first day of the week, Mary of Magdala and the other Mary went to visit the Sepulcher. And all at once, there was a violent earthquake, for the Angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, came and rolled away the stone and sat on it. His face was like lightning, his robe white as snow. The guards were so shaken, so frightened of him, that they were like dead men. But the Angel spoke; and he said to the women, "There is no need for you to be afraid. I know you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here, for He has risen as He said He would. Come and see the place where He lay, then go quickly and tell His disciples, 'He has risen from the dead and now He is going before you to Galilee; it is there you will see Him'. Now I have told you'." Filled with awe and great joy, the women came quickly away from the tomb and ran to tell the disciples.

And there, coming to meet them was Jesus. "Greetings," He said. And the women came up to Him and, falling down before Him, clasped His feet. Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers that they must leave for Galilee; they will see me there."

There was much fear and anxiety about the resurrection. The Chief Priests were afraid that Jesus's followers would steal His body to make it appear as if He had risen. Some were even afraid He would actually rise from the dead. His disciples were lost—they were afraid He would not rise as He had promised. They were afraid of what would happen to them.

The Resurrection of Christ is about hope. It is the fulfillment of God's Word. Everything that had ever been prophesied about Him, everything He had ever said or done is fulfilled in His resurrection. Jesus conquered death and sin. He completed His mission to redeem us with the Father so that we can follow Him into eternal life. Christ's resurrection is the fulfillment of our faith. It is beyond our comprehension. It defies all that we know of our world—of nature itself. It is truly a miracle. The resurrection is proof that all things are possible in Christ.

Do I have faith that God will fulfill His promise to me in my life?

I pray that each day my faith grows and is strengthened through the power and mystery of Christ's resurrection.

The Ascension (LK 24:44–53)

Then He told them, "This is what I meant when I said, while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses, in the prophets and in the Psalms, has to be fulfilled." He then opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and He said to them, "So you see how it is written that the Christ would suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that, in His name, repentance for the forgiveness of sins would be preached to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are the witnesses to this."

"And now I am sending down to you what the Father has promised. Stay in the city then, until you are clothed with the power from on high."

Then He took them out as far as the outskirts of Bethany, and lifting up His hands He blessed them. Now as He blessed them, He withdrew from them and was carried up to heaven. They worshipped Him and then went back to Jerusalem full of joy, and they were continually in the Temple praising God.

Jesus remains on earth for forty days. He must finish His work here so that we might understand. He must prove to us that He has truly risen because our faith is weak. When His time here is complete, He tells us we will not be left orphans. On the Cross, He made us children of Mary. Now He promises to send the Holy Spirit to enlighten and strengthen us. He blesses His disciples and ascends body and soul into heaven.

As witnesses to this glorious miracle, Jesus's disciples gain the hope and belief that they will follow Him into heaven. In the same way, Jesus's ascension gives us hope that we too might follow Him into heaven to be with God the Father. After all, we were created to be with God. All of our faith points us in this direction. Jesus loves us and wants us to follow Him.

Do I use Jesus's ascension into heaven to strengthen my faith and hope each day? Do I allow the Holy Spirit to come to me to guide and direct my life?

I pray that I find faith and hope in Christ's ascension so I too might follow Him to the Father.

The Descent of the Holy Spirit (JN 14:15–21)

I shall ask the Father, and He will give you another Advocate to be with you forever, that Spirit of truth whom the world can never receive since it neither sees nor knows Him; But you know Him, because He is with you, He is in you. I will not leave you orphans; I will come back to you. In a short time, the world will no longer see me; but you will see me because I live, and you will live. On that day, you will understand that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. Anybody who receives my commandments and keeps them will be one who loves me, and anybody who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I shall love him and show myself to him.

The promise of Jesus is fulfilled with the coming of the Holy Spirit. The apostles are once again locked in a room together. Even though they have seen the risen Christ with their own eyes, they are still confused and afraid. They have been given their own missions but don't know where to begin. They lived with Jesus every day. They heard Him speak and saw His works, but they still don't fully understand. Like us, they were weak and afraid. Like us they were incapable of living God's will without the help of His grace. Jesus knew this would be the case for He knew and loved His disciples. As always, Jesus was patient. He knew them and knew what to do. He sent the Holy Spirit to strengthen them and to enlighten them. They accepted the Holy Spirit, and it gave them strength and wisdom. They now understood what they must do. They were no longer afraid. They were willing to die, if they must, to fulfill their missions—just as Christ did.

Like Christ's disciples, it is up to us to accept this gift into our lives. When we do, the confusion and fear about where and how to begin our personal missions melts away and certainty replaces it. The Holy Spirit, once accepted into our lives, speaks to us in many ways. He comes into our thoughts. He speaks through our conscious and through signs all around us. He gives us guidance and direction, strength, and grace to carry out God's will.

*Do I accept the Holy Spirit into my life to give me strength and wisdom to live and die as Christ did?
Do I listen and follow the Holy Spirit's instructions?*

I pray that I accept the Holy Spirit into my heart and into my life. I pray that I follow His direction to become an instrument of God in this world.

The Assumption of Our Lady into Heaven (Catholic Catechism #966)

Finally the Immaculate Virgin, preserved free from all stain of original sin, when the course of her earthly life was finished, was taken up body and soul into heavenly glory, and exalted by the Lord as Queen over all things, so that she might be the more fully conformed to her Son, the Lord of Lords and conqueror of sin and death.⁵⁰⁸ The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin is a singular participation in her Son's resurrection and an anticipation of the resurrection of other Christians:

In giving birth, you kept your virginity; in your dormition, you did not leave the world, O Mother of God, but were joined to the source of life. You conceived the Living God and, by your prayers, you will deliver our souls from death.⁵⁰⁹

...She is our Mother in the Order of Grace.

Mary had spiritual perfection—she was fully human; yet she was full of grace. Although she was spared original sin, she, like us, always had free will to choose. She said yes to becoming the Mother of God even though it might mean her own pain and suffering. She experienced the joy in Jesus's life, and she painfully and lovingly endured His passion—the brutal killing of her Son—because He said it must be so...and yet, she never lost faith in God's will. Her life was the model of discipleship to Jesus. She even forgave those who murdered Him.

While He hung, on the Cross, Jesus asked her to once again be a mother— this time to His infant Church. Again, she said yes. She chose God's will. She is our model. Each day we can choose to follow our mother, Mary, to her Son Jesus Christ.

Mary, without sin, was taken, body and soul, directly to God. Because she was without sin, her body was not allowed to be corrupted. If we follow Mary's example, we too can share in the resurrection.

Do I try to follow Mary's example by saying yes when I am called upon to do God's will? Is my faith and hope strengthened by Mary's assumption, body and soul, into heaven?

I pray that I am given strength and grace each day so that I am prepared to say yes when I am called to do the will of God.

The Coronation of the Blessed Virgin as Queen of Heaven and Earth (Catholic Catechism #966)

"A great sign appeared in heaven; a woman clothed in the sun, the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars." Mary is exalted as Queen of Heaven. There is great joy in heaven shared by the angels, the saints, and by Jesus at the Coronation of Mary as Queen of Heaven.

The Coronation of Mary as the Queen of All Creation is something to celebrate—a joyous event. Once again, Mary shows us that, through the grace of God, all things are possible. Mary could rest on her accomplishment. She could rejoice in the presence of God for the rest of eternity. But she is our mother, and she understands God's will for us. He does not want any one of us to be left behind. So, Mary like the perfect mother she is, accepts her position in heaven humbly, but immediately sets out once again to serve God in shepherding us to Him. Like the Visitation, Mary comes to us to help us; to lead us to God through Christ. For she will not rest as Queen of Creation until all of God's children are with Him in heaven.

Do I follow Mary's example each day? Do I open my heart to receive the grace of God through the Holy Spirit?

I pray that I might follow Mary's example each day, and with the help of her intercession, be brought to Christ in heaven to share fully in God the Father's presence for eternity.

Mary's Touch is a nonprofit organization committed to advancing Our Blessed Mother's "YES." Our work includes the production and broadcasting of *Mary's Touch*, an inspirational radio program designed to bring a greater understanding of Mary, to remind us of Our Blessed Mother's loving presence in our lives, and to help us recognize the healing grace she still brings to this world.

We rely on generous donations to continue this vital work. Please keep us in your prayers.

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