

# THE ROSARY: A SOURCE OF GRACE AND PEACE

**By Bishop Edward J. Burns**

If you look very closely at my Episcopal coat of arms, you will see that it possess an image of the rosary. From a young age I learned the importance of the rosary. It is interesting to note that I learned how to pray the rosary when I attended Holy Rosary Parish School in Pittsburgh. Nevertheless, it was not until later in my life that I discovered the grace and peace that came from praying the rosary.

The rosary is a meditative and contemplative prayer. It is a way in which we can contemplate the face of Jesus through Mary. No one has contemplated Jesus any more than Mary. Her 'yes' to the Lord by saying, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; Be it done to me according to your word" has served as a model for us in our lives as disciples.

It is wonderful to reflect on Mary's faithfulness to the Lord and her life-long contemplation of her Son, Jesus. In his pastoral letter, *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, Pope John Paul II writes, "In a unique way the face of the Son belongs to Mary. It was in her womb that Christ was formed, receiving from her a human resemblance which points to an even greater spiritual closeness." When Jesus was born, our Blessed Mother, like any mother, lovingly gazed upon the face of her child. She must have looked at him in different ways. When he was found in the temple at a young age, the look she gave her Son may have been one of bewilderment. Or she may have given a penetrating gaze when she looked at him during the wedding feast of Cana alerting him that "...They have no more wine." And, she watched her son die on the cross with total sorrow and pain. It is powerful for us to contemplate the face of Jesus through Mary and we do just that through our praying the rosary.

The rosary becomes an effective way of growing in our relationship with Jesus Christ. Through Mary and the meditations of the rosary, we come to know Jesus in a fuller way.

During the last priests' retreat held at the Shrine of St. Therese, I led the priests of the Diocese in the recitation of the rosary. In preparation for those prayers, I asked to have them recorded so that we could share the opportunity of praying the rosary with others. In light of this, I am pleased to present the rosary recited by the priests of the Diocese on our website ([www.dioceseofjuneau.org](http://www.dioceseofjuneau.org)) and in the near future, available on CD. It is my hope that many faithful will join us in these moments of reflecting on the face of Jesus with our Blessed Mother.

Pope John Paul II states in his apostolic letter, "To look upon the face of Christ, to recognize its mystery amid the daily events and the sufferings of his human life, and then to grasp the divine splendor definitively revealed in the Risen Lord, seated in glory at the right hand of the Father: this is the task of every follower of Christ and therefore the task of each one of us. In contemplating Christ's face we become open to receiving the mystery of Trinitarian life, experiencing ever anew the love of the Father and delighting in the joy of the Holy Spirit."

The Blessed Mother was entrusted to us as Jesus hung on the cross when he said to the beloved disciple, "Behold your mother." She is our spiritual mother and as Jesus' beloved disciples of today, we should know a close bond to her. I am sure that Mary knew many of the first disciples, and in particular, the apostles. While scripture never tells us this, I am confident that she looked into the eyes of the apostles and that they looked upon her – knowing her to have brought into this world the Word made flesh. Now, as the disciples of today, let us take the Good News of Jesus Christ into the world. As we continue this task of bringing Christ to others, let us conform to Christ with Mary, pray to Christ with Mary and proclaim Christ with Mary – and strengthen ourselves in the process, every time we pick up the rosary.