

## **“The Rosary, A Prayer for the Family.”**

At the close of our Golden Jubilee celebration on this feast of Our Lady of the Rosary, I offer these brief reflections on the events in the life of the Holy Family and some applications to our present day family life. These events are called mysteries because they probe the depth of God’s life of grace within each of us and call us to live life to the fullest as did Jesus, Mary and Joseph. I pray that this pastoral letter may bring about a renewed appreciation of the Sacrament of Matrimony and an opportunity to promote wholesome, healthy spiritual renewal for family living in the Archdiocese of Miami. It is my hope that this letter will inspire in the reader a desire to recite the Rosary daily and to reflect regularly on the mysteries.

The mysteries of the rosary offer opportunities for us to probe deeply into the episodes in the life of a family, the Holy Family: Jesus, Mary and Joseph. The Holy Family holds a special place in our Catholic tradition because it serves as a role model for the family in every age.

Reflecting on the Holy Family we can learn the love, devotion, responsibility and sacrifice of a mother and foster-father for a child, and the love, respect and obedience of a son for his parents.

Basically that is what the calling of every family entails. The Holy Family is special not because their life was much different from yours and mine, though circumstances of time and place certainly have changed. The Holy Family’s life was special because from that family came the Redeemer and Savior of the whole world. Into that family the Son of God was born in the flesh to be for us the Way, the Truth and the Life. But the Holy Family lived one day at a time, just as we do.

## **“The Rosary, A Prayer for the Family.”**

### **The Joyful Mysteries**

The Holy Family story begins with the announcement that a child is to be born.

The Annunciation is joyous, yet perplexing news of a new life. This mysterious conception calls for trust on Mary and Joseph’s part even in the face of events that are not understood.. “Nothing is impossible with God.” The conception of every child requires trust in God if parenting is to be successful.

The Visitation scene shows how important relatives and extended family are in sharing joy, mutual support and caring for the wellbeing of family members. Family gatherings, for whatever purpose, should strengthen each individual member. Wholesome family life must be guarded at all cost. Good laws should always promote and strengthen family life and the institution of marriage.

The Nativity is such a common event for all families. With each birth, we renew our awe over the great gift every life is, the boundless potential each person has for good. All life comes from God and has a special purpose in God’s Divine Providence. Parents share in God’s creative love. Their love, attention and example to children is the most precious gift they can ever give their children.

## **“The Rosary, A Prayer for the Family.”**

The Presentation of Jesus in the temple reminds every Catholic parent of the obligation they have in raising and educating their child in the Faith as Mary and Joseph did. It calls parents themselves to be the model of religious observance for their children. Parents teach most effectively by their good example to their children. They are the first teachers of the faith to their offspring; schools are to support parents in their responsibilities.

The Finding of Jesus teaching in the temple demonstrates how every family has its problems and anxieties as when Jesus was separated and strayed from his parents. Joseph and Mary both presumed the other was looking after Jesus. This mystery points up how important it is to have good communication among all the family members. Jesus’ conversation with the learned elders of the law also reminds us that no matter how intelligent and well-educated one may be, there is always more that Jesus can add to our human knowledge.

### **The Luminous Mysteries**

Here we move to the adult life of Jesus. Saint Joseph is no longer mentioned in the Scriptures so we can presume that he has already gone to meet the Lord. Mary looks after Jesus and Jesus looks after Mary. As their adult relationship continued, we see Jesus doing his work of salvation as the itinerant preacher by using signs and miracles to prove his divine mission as God’s chosen one.

The Baptism in the Jordan is the beginning of Jesus’ public ministry. John the Baptist calls him the Lamb of God indicating his sacrificial likeness to the Pascal lamb that was slain at Passover and by whose blood the

## **“The Rosary, A Prayer for the Family.”**

Hebrews were freed from the slavery in Egypt. Through this baptism, Jesus is set on the mission to promote His Father’s kingdom, just as our baptism commissions each of us in our own way to be associated with the Church’s mission. The local parish Church offers numerous opportunities for all of us to participate and serve that mission. The parish helps families to keep their focus on belonging to God’s kingdom, not to the world. Today, secularism is a strong influence on families and draws them away from spiritual values. But with our faith and Jesus’ guidance, we can maintain our family values.

At the beautiful Marriage Feast of Cana, our Lord worked his first miracle and elevated marriage to the level of a sacrament, a sign that the natural love of man and woman now represents on earth the love of God for his people, a love that is faithful, sacrificial and always full of forgiveness and mercy. Jesus, Mary and the disciples enjoyed this joyous wedding celebration as every family does on occasion. The sacraments are simple natural signs that raise us to a new level. We participate in life beyond this life, life the way God intends it. Every Catholic marriage becomes sacred when Jesus is present to assist with the couple’s needs. The strength of our society depends on the strength of the sacred marriage bonds and family life.

The Ongoing Conversion of life is required of every family member if there is to be peace and harmony among the members. It requires a reliance on God’s grace. We make no spiritual progress in overcoming sin against God and one another without God’s grace. But we need to seek it through prayer, confession and the daily reflection on the Lord’s love and our own tendencies to sin and selfishness. All of us hurt one another from time to time, willingly or unwillingly. We need to ask one another’s pardon and

## **“The Rosary, A Prayer for the Family.”**

forgiveness. And each one must try to make the first move toward reconciliation. Regular confession is the ultimate aid to conversion of heart.

The Transfiguration of Jesus, when he reveals his divine power to Peter, James and John on Mount Tabor, evokes hope from each of us. The Father has given us his beloved Divine Son and directs us to follow him. In doing so, we too will have a transformation in our lives. The divine life God shares with us in Baptism can begin to radiate in our lives. Each of us by God’s grace can and will become a son or daughter of God in whom God is well pleased. It means we must always let the best, the finest within us, shine forth. The more we imitate Jesus, the beloved Son, the more that will happen.

The Eucharistic Last Supper is the family meal for the household of the Lord. Just as the family meal each day is meant to solidify the family members in love as they share a common meal, so too the Sunday Eucharist binds each of us together in the Father’s love. For each of us, the importance of the daily family meal with all members present cannot be over-emphasized. Here you share your life, joys and sorrows. Here you find strength, support and hope. The more we understand and appreciate the daily family meal, the more we will appreciate the Sunday Eucharist in our parish with the spiritual family. The reverse is also true. A genuine appreciation of the Sunday Eucharistic Liturgy urges us to reflect its meaning in the daily meal with the family members.

### **The Sorrowful Mysteries**

## **“The Rosary, A Prayer for the Family.”**

Every family of every age has had its time of suffering and sorrow. Suffering can be spiritual, physical or emotional. Misunderstandings, alienation, sickness, depression, death, come into all our lives. So too it came to Jesus and Mary. No one of us can avoid these eventualities. While they can be represented as negative, if we look to Jesus we can learn to accept these times in a way that is hopeful and redemptive. Jesus’ suffering and death brought new life for him and for all of us. Mary’s steady, constant presence in those dark moments of her son’s life was rewarded with the joy of seeing Jesus after the resurrection. Then all of her sorrow was turned into joy because she believed.

The Agony in the Garden finds Jesus at prayer as danger and death approaches. The many disappointments with the weaknesses of his chosen apostles and others are so heavy for him to bear. His every act of goodness is met with acts of evil, lies and rejection. Every life has its times of depression and regrets over misunderstanding. The sense of impending danger can make us sweat blood as Jesus did. Prayer in the face of dread and darkness can allow us too to drink the cup when it will not pass from us. Alone with the Lord in prayer we are reminded that God is always with us and never abandons us.

The Scourging at the Pillar was such cruel punishment for Jesus. When Jesus put on our flesh, he made the body sacred. Our human body is a gift from God. In our bodies resides our soul which makes us in God’s image and gives us the capability of living forever with God and of engaging in spiritual activities such as prayer, contemplation and searching for God. To inflict deliberate harm on our body or another’s is to misuse God’s gift.

## **“The Rosary, A Prayer for the Family.”**

Care should be taken to preserve our health and to use the body’s physical and sexual powers in accord with God’s Plan. Unfortunately, domestic violence is all too prevalent today. The stresses of daily living must not be allowed as excuse for family violence. The virtue of modesty can help us here. Modesty teaches us to respect our bodies and the bodies of others. The way we act and dress should reflect our belief that we are temples of the Holy Spirit. Immodest conduct and dress violate the body’s sanctity. Parents should teach their children the ways of modesty.

The Crowning with Thorns was meant to make a mockery of Jesus and his kingdom. How insulting this must have been to Jesus who dies to save all mankind. So many times we too insult others without even intending it, and other times we deliberately insult others, family and friends. What painful abuse we can bring upon others just by using our gift of speech. We can inflict much cruelty on family and friends by the unkind remarks, lies and cursing. Beautiful, good, clean language has given way in our times to vulgar, demeaning and unkind speech. Though society in general has gone this way, families should not tolerate these vulgarities at home or elsewhere. Our common life together should aim for higher respect for one another by the kind of speech we use with everyone. Our gift of speech should be used to enhance life not to degrade one another.

By carrying his Cross, Jesus gave us an example. Everyone has a cross to carry. That is why Jesus had one; he was like us in all things but sin. Crosses come into every life and every family. Jesus’ Cross was the burden of our sins – not his. Our sins bring crosses to us and others. As Jesus embraced that Cross with love, he modeled for us what the mystery of

## **“The Rosary, A Prayer for the Family.”**

the cross is all about. Acceptance of the cross with love identifies us with Jesus and takes us from selfishness to selflessness. Offering our daily crosses for others is the way many souls become saints. Suffering for others has brought many souls to God. Jesus' Cross brought each of us salvation. Parents carry crosses for their children and children should be taught to carry their crosses for their parents and others.

The death of Jesus on the Cross like a common thief was ignominious and degrading. No one of us will probably die that way, but death comes to all of us. It is part of life; it is part of every family. We have no control over how we will die. It is a blessing when one can die surrounded by family and friends, praying, watching for the Lord when he comes. When our loved ones are seriously ill, we should call for the priest to administer the sacrament of Holy Anointing and the whole family should join in attentive prayer. Likewise, when death comes, family should remember the Church's desire to pray for the deceased, to have a suitable funeral Mass, to have Masses offered for the deceased and to have family visits to their burial places where they can pray and unite with their loved ones. Our belief in the communion of saints teaches us that death is not the end of our relationship with loved ones; the relationship only changes and we await the grand reunion with loved ones and with the Lord for all eternity.

Our families all experience suffering and death of one kind or another. In our times spouse abuse, child abuse, domestic violence increase the pain in many families. Every dark suffering and death event can lead to bright resurrection, a return to new life. That is the teaching of Jesus' paschal events of Holy Week.

## **“The Rosary, A Prayer for the Family.”**

### **The Glorious Mysteries**

Every family has its time for joyous celebration. Our Lord's Resurrection was met with much excitement by Mary, the Apostles and the disciples who saw Jesus. Can you imagine the reunion of Jesus and Mary after he is risen! At the Ascension, he left them to prepare a place for them and us in the Father's mansion where he wants to live with us together. Life on earth is only a gateway to the life we will share with the Lord forever. We are destined by God to be family members with him forever. His household will be ours. Life here is temporary; life with God is forever.

The Pentecost event transformed the apostles gathered with Mary in the Upper Room. That same Spirit, through Baptism and Confirmation, forms disciples of Jesus in every age. Hesitant and fearful souls are changed by the Grace of the Holy Spirit into strong men and women of faith. The key to that change is a willing, loving heart open to the Holy Spirit's inspiration. Family celebrations at these times emphasize our life in the Lord and his Church and from that children can learn that God's life is an essential part of our family life. Your family has enjoyed the excitement of new life, baptisms, confirmations, marriages, ordination of a family member as deacon, priest, bishop, consecration as a religious. Other personal family traditions are among your most revered memories.

Fathers and mothers hold special places of honor at these family gatherings and well they should for they are the source of life, stability and guidance for family members. So, too, Mary has a special place in the household of the Lord.

## **“The Rosary, A Prayer for the Family.”**

Mary’s Assumption already assures us as she precedes us, body and soul, to heaven that we too are all destined to be in heaven. There with the Father, she has the place of primacy after her Son, Jesus the King. She is the Queen of Heaven. Jesus’ mother had the privilege of going to the Lord directly because she had a special grace. We are promised that if we follow the Lord’s commandments of love, when the Lord returns in final judgment, we will join him, Mary and all the saints in our heavenly home. And we will be united with all of our loved ones who have gone before us in the faith.

### **Conclusion**

Family life is meant to be a reflection, a preparation and a foretaste of life in the household of the Lord we are all called and invited to live. Heaven is our destiny. God the Father awaits us. It is God’s desire to share his life with his family forever. It begins, however, here on earth in every family with God’s help.

As we reflect on the life of the Holy Family through the mysteries of the Holy Rosary, may each of us increase our desire to enjoy fully the life God has placed within us at Baptism. The Rosary reminds us of the Holy Family whose simple life still serves as a pattern for us today.

Even in our complex, sophisticated society with all of its challenges, it is the genuine desire for simplicity that makes for holiness of life. The Holy Family is our best guide for family living. We pray that Jesus, Our Lord, Saint Joseph, Guardian of the universal Church, and Mary, Our Lady of the

**“The Rosary, A Prayer for the Family.”**

Rosary, enlighten, inspire and guide all families in the Archdiocese of Miami to a wholesome holiness of life. May each family member taste the peace that comes only from walking by the light of faith in the pathways of the Lord.