

Secret of the Rosary
by St. Louis de Montfort

by Jim Davidson
jim@resilientways.net

"The learned Franciscan, Carthagen, as well as several other authors, says that an extraordinary event took place in 1482: The Venerable James Sprenger and other religious of his order were zealously working to re-establish devotion to the Holy Rosary and also to erect a Confraternity in the city of Cologne.

"Unfortunately two priests who were famous for their preaching ability were jealous of the great influence they were exerting through preaching the Rosary. So these two Fathers spoke against this devotion whenever they had a chance, and as they were very eloquent and had a great reputation they persuaded many people not to join the Confraternity.

"One of them, bound and determined to achieve his wicked end, wrote a special sermon against the Rosary and planned to give it the following Sunday. But when it came time for the sermon he never appeared and, after a certain amount of waiting somebody went to fetch him. He was found dead, and evidently had died all alone without anyone to help him and without seeing a priest.

"After convincing himself that death had been due to natural causes, the other priest decided to carry out his friend's plan and to give a similar sermon on another day. In this way he hoped to put an end to the Confraternity of the Rosary. However, when the day came for him to preach and it was time to give the sermon God punished him by striking him down with paralysis which deprived him both of the use of his limbs and of his power of speech.

"At last he admitted his sin and likewise that of his friend and immediately, in his heart of hearts, he silently besought Our Lady to help him. He promised her that if she would only cure him he would preach the Holy Rosary with as much zeal as that with which he had formerly fought against it. For this end he implored her to restore his health and speech which she did, and finding himself instantaneously cured he rose up like another Saul, a persecutor turned defender of the Holy Rosary. He publicly acknowledged his former error and ever after preached the wonders of the Most Holy Rosary with great zeal and eloquence."

The above excerpt is from " Tenth Rose: Miracles" by St. Louis de Montfort in his book [The Secret of the Rosary](#)

My own experience with the rosary began in the Summer of 2020 when I experienced a very strong leading to go buy a rosary. At the time, I was still living in Dayton, Ohio, so I found a nice store downtown that had them in stock.

Upon buying a rosary, I then needed to learn the prayers involved. There are quite a few prayers, the most important of which were known in the day of St. Louis de Montfort. Those prayers are, the Sign of the Cross, the Apostles' Creed, the Our Father, the Hail Mary, the Glory Be, the Fatima Decade Prayer, and the Hail Holy Queen. It took me quite a while, not having grown up within any church organisation, but I have before the end of 2020 memorised all the words for these prayers. Or, any way, the words as they were provided to me in a [guide to praying the rosary](#). It seems that there are variations in the exact wording.

For example, the Our Father, or the Lord's Prayer, is given in the gospels. In the gospel of Matthew, chapter 6, starting at verse 9, Jesus says, "After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen."

Now, I was taken to task by one of my friends, Venkat Manakkal, a spiritual mentor who had shown many mysteries to me at the Goldenrod Wisdom Centre in the Ithaca, New York area back in 2006. He knew that I used to work for astronaut Deke Slayton and in other parts of the space industry. And he wanted me to know that just because many people say "...Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven" that is not correct. Also, necessarily, just because you are in orbit does not mean you are not in the earthly realm to which Jesus referred. Quite the contrary, in fact.

Venkat wanted me to be sure to know that I was not free to do improper things in orbit, should I ever have the opportunity to fly in space, because the same God rules over all. And, of course, I have been alert ever since to see whether the Lord's prayer is quoted as it appears in Matthew, in the King James version - which I prefer because it is a word-for-word translation. And, no, the Aramaic or Greek word for "in" is not the same as the word for "on."

Further to this point, there is a slightly different set of words in the book of Luke, chapter 11, starting at verse 2, "And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth. Give us day by day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil."

Notice in particular that the last words in the version from Matthew, "...and the glory, for ever. Amen," are of some contrast to the last words in Luke, "...deliver us from evil." So, my own preference is use the words from Matthew. You are, of course, free to pray as you were taught. The intention is a vital part of the work of prayer, and praying the prayer that Jesus taught to his disciples is your intention, whether you pray from the book of Matthew or the book of Luke or words as they were given to you on printed cards for praying the rosary.

The Sword of Sorrow

When contemplating the mysteries of the most holy rosary of the blessed Virgin Mary, I believe it is possible to unlock certain aspects of understanding by considering the following thought: The key to the rosary is the sword of sorrow.

That idea appeared in my mind about two weeks ago, while I was praying the rosary. There are three sets of mysteries that I pray: the joyful, the sorrowful, and the glorious. I do not pray St. Pope John Paul II's "luminous" mysteries, on specific instruction from Jesus. I pray the sorrowful mysteries on Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday. I also endeavour to pray a complete rosary of all 15 decades every day.

There is no question that, for me, the most difficult part of the rosary is the sorrowful mysteries. These reflect the agony of Jesus at the Garden of Gethsemani, the scourging of Jesus at the pillar, the crowning of Jesus with the crown of thorns, the carrying of the cross by Jesus, and the crucifixion of Jesus. These events are meant to be called to mind, to be imagined, to be envisioned as one is praying the Glory Be and the Hail Mary, ten times each, alternating.

Let's take that again, more slowly. A decade of the rosary is ten Hail Mary prayers, each said on the round beads that appear between (in the case of my rosary necklace) the St. Benedict medallions. Each of those beads is connected by a chain, and on the chain, one prays the Glory Be. So, a decade begins with a medallion, on which one prays the Our Father, and then a Glory Be on the chain, then a Hail Mary on the next bead, a Glory Be on the chain, a Hail Mary on the next bead, and so forth, until one is on the chain leading to the next medallion, at which point one prays the Fatima prayer.

That's a very repetitive process, and like many aspects of repetition, it gives the mind an opportunity to think of other topics. St. Louis de Montfort in his book, *The Secret of the Rosary*, describes distractions that come to mind or that happen near you when you pray the rosary, as "flies." You can, of course, learn to ignore them if you choose. So, then, if you are not to be thinking about your check book balance, or your last visit to your family home, what should you be thinking?

The goal of the repetitive prayers is to place you in a receptive frame of mind for meditation, and the subject of your meditation during a given decade of the rosary is a particular mystery. For example, from the sorrowful mysteries, the Carrying of the Cross by Jesus.

Contemplate what that was like, please, for Jesus. He had been violently scourged. The whips used in the scourging would today be called "cat o' nine tails" and each tail had a little barb at the end which would rip off the flesh of the victim. Jesus has spoken to saints about his particular wound on the right shoulder from the scourging. Perhaps one of the Roman soldiers assigned this duty by Pontius Pilate was a bit careless, or over-zealous. Anyway, there was a large wound that was extremely painful and made the carrying of the cross more difficult.

There is the weight of the cross itself, which must have been substantial. It was Roman practice to crucify people on wooden crosses, as they had done to thousands and thousands of the followers of Spartacus at the end of the Servile War in which Spartacus and many others were killed. (There were several of these wars, because slaves do not like slavery.) Well, you don't just take two small thin sticks and expect to be able to suspend the weight of a man from them. So the cross was heavy.

As Jesus carried the cross along the way to Calvary, there were many people weeping and wailing along the way. One of the most intensely painful moments to contemplate is when Mother Mary sees her son, Jesus, carrying the cross, bearing the marks of the scourging, and wearing the crown of thorns embedded in his scalp by the cruel work of those who pushed it down onto his head. Trying to imagine this scene gets even more intense when you come to the moment when Jesus falls, dropping the cross, and is perhaps knocked unconscious when the crown of thorns hits the pavement and one or more of its thorns is driven forcefully against his skull. Jesus is revived and someone grabbed by a Roman soldier from the crowd carries the cross the rest of the way up the hill.

Saint Simeon's Prophecy

One of the joyful mysteries of the rosary is called "The Presentation." It reflects the visit, after the birth of Jesus, at the time of his circumcision, to the Temple in Jerusalem. Joseph would have purchased two pigeons or turtle-doves to be sacrificed at the Temple in accordance with tradition.

The book of Luke, chapter two, starting at verse 25, has another part of the story, "And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him. And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And he came by the Spirit into the temple: and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the

law, Then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel. And Joseph and his mother marvelled at those things which were spoken of him. And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against; (Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed."

This prophecy reflects on the "sword of sorrow" which pierces the soul of Mother Mary. There is a particular devotion that I pray, the Seven Sorrows of St. Mary, which reflects on times in her life when she felt great sadness. The first of these is the prophecy of Saint Simeon. The next was the flight into Egypt, to avoid the massacre of the innocents by Herod. The third is the time when Jesus stayed at the Temple having learned discussions with others while his parents headed back to Nazareth, only to notice he was not among their caravan about a day out from Jerusalem. So they had to head back to find him, at which point he says, "I must be about my Father's work."

The fourth sorrow is the meeting of Mary and her son Jesus on the way to Calvary as he is carrying the cross. The fifth sorrow is watching while he was nailed to the cross, lifted into place - which must have been extremely painful and jarring as the bottom of the cross was thrust into a hole in the ground to keep it upright, and then staying there while Jesus dies. Saint John in his gospel notes that Mary and John were the only two of the family and disciples of Jesus who witnessed the entire Crucifixion. At one point, Jesus tells Mary to behold her son, the Apostle John, and tells John to behold his mother, Mary.

The sixth sorrow occurs after Jesus has breathed out his soul, when the body is taken down from the cross. You can see a depiction of this event in [The Pieta](#), a sculpture by Michaelangelo, showing the Blessed Virgin Mary holding the body of Jesus on her lap. The seventh sorrow is the burial of Jesus.

The Key to the Rosary

This phrase, "the sword of sorrow is the key to the rosary" came to mind, and one of the things I did in response was to search on that phrase. That led me to the book "The Secret of the Rosary" about which this essay is a review. However, the phrase does not appear in that book nor, as far as I have found, anywhere else.

Shortly after attempting to apply this key, thinking of images of the Sword of Sorrow piercing the Immaculate Heart of Mary, another phrase came to mind: A key is not a hammer. So, don't try bludgeoning your imagination of the mysteries by hammering the meditation with a giant image of a sword piercing a heart, as found in many Catholic popular art pieces. Rather, focus your meditation on how the event affected Mary or Jesus or God the Father or the Holy Spirit.

For example, the Annunciation includes, in my meditation, the appearance of the angel Gabriel in the Temple while Zacharias is preparing the incense offering. These events are detailed in the first chapter of Luke. Zacharias is told that his wife, Elizabeth (Elisha-beth or house of Elisha) is to give birth to John the Baptist. Zach doesn't believe Gabriel, because his wife is "well-stricken in years." So Zach is mute until his son is named - a fact that would certainly have been known by all in the Temple, where Mary had been raised from childhood.

Think, then, of how God perceived the incense offering and sent Gabriel with the message about John's coming birth, and of how Mary would have learned of these events. And, of course, contrast how Zach

reacted with how Mary responded when told she was to conceive, "Behold the hand maiden of God." Her husband Joseph was similarly faithful and humble on learning of this miraculous conception.

In meditating on these mysteries of the rosary, it is a good thing to imagine those events, the Second Temple still standing, the streets of Jerusalem, the roads to different parts of Judea, the Roman occupation which had not yet fomented rebellion. See what you can do to bring to life those days and those events. After all, somewhere in the universe, along one of the dimensions of time, those events are occurring now, and always: Glory be to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, as it was, is now, and ever shall be, world without end, amen.

Applying the Key

Throughout his book, the 17th and early 18th Century priest Saint Louis de Montfort gives examples of how the rosary has been important. The book is divided into 53 "roses" each of which is like a chapter of a few pages. Many miracles, blessings, promises, and suggestions are presented. Anyone who wants to pray the rosary and do a good job of it should consider reading this book.

The editors of one edition of the book wrote an after word that says, in part, "Having finished reading *[The Secret Of The Rosary](#)*, you are called upon by our lady to act and to apply these life-saving instructions in your daily life. The world is in grave peril from Communism, and the Church is equally in peril from the enemy within, who seeks to disarm her by suggesting that we should abandon the Holy Rosary."

I think it is important to note that we are now engaged, as a species, in a spiritual war, in a culture war, and in a physical war. If you mean to win, you should understand the nature of the conflict. I believe that prayer is important to winning the spiritual war. The rosary is a good structure for prayer, consisting of 130 separate prayers for each five decades of the rosary, or a total of 390 prayers for all 15 decades completing the five joyful, five sorrowful, and five glorious mysteries.

If you want to know more about the promises and indulgences that accompany saying the rosary, even one time, you should read St. Louis de Montfort's book. If you want to help mankind in the current war for our souls, pray the rosary. The salvation of many stands in the balance.

=====

Jim Davidson is an author, entrepreneur, actor, and director. He is the vision director of HoustonSpaceSociety.net You can find him on [Twitter.com/planetaryjim](https://twitter.com/planetaryjim) as well as [Pocket.app](https://pocket.app) and [Flote.app](https://flote.app) also as planetaryjim. He appreciates any support you can provide as times are very difficult. See the Paypal link on this page. Or email your humble author to offer other choices. This week Jim learned that [SubscribeStar.com/planetaryjim](https://subscribestar.com/planetaryjim) is working, so he'll be adding new things there soon. Visit [IglooLuau.com](https://iglooluau.com) for more information. Those seeking a multi-jurisdiction multi-hop VPN for communications privacy please visit <https://secure.cryptohippie.com/houstonspacesociety.php> For those seeking colloidal silver try [ppmSilver.com/Jim](https://ppmsilver.com/Jim) Ask Jim about CryptoWealth. Coming soon: FreedomLandDAO.com - under construction. Just arrived: [FreedomDeFiSoftware.com](https://freedomdefi.com)