
Praying For Vocations

A Meditated Rosary
for Vocations to the Priesthood
and Consecrated Life

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INTRODUCTION

In the Mysteries of the Rosary, we contemplate the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. But, if we look carefully with the eyes of faith, we may also see the life of a vocation to serve the Lord in His Church unfolding in the rhythm of the mysteries, following the path of the life of Jesus.

In the Joyful Mysteries, we first see the seed of vocation appearing, the “infant” vocation, and we pray for its nurturing in devout homes, parishes, and schools.

In the Luminous Mysteries, the Mysteries of Light, we contemplate the vocation as it takes its first steps into the light of the Church, and we pray for prayerful discernment.

In the Sorrowful Mysteries, we call to mind Jesus’ words, “...unless a grain of wheat falls to the [earth] and dies, it remains a grain of wheat, but if it dies...”¹ We pray for young men and women as they enter into formation, preparing to give their lives in service to the Church, the Mystical Body of Christ.

Finally, in the Glorious Mysteries, we contemplate in the Resurrection of Jesus the glorious entrance of the newly ordained or professed into the life of Holy Mother Church, and we pray for their mission, service, and fidelity.

Let us turn our eyes, then, to Mary and join with her in praying to the Master of the Harvest that He may send an abundance of laborers into His Holy Vineyard.

THE JOYFUL MYSTERIES

The Annunciation

The angel Gabriel was sent by God to a virgin named Mary of the town of Nazareth, greeting her and announcing that she would bear a son who would be called Son of the Most High. Mary was “greatly troubled” and questioned, “How can this be...?”² But trusting the Lord, she responded, “Let it be done to me according to your word.”³ Thus does the Father’s plan for our salvation come to pass.

And just as the Incarnation of the Son of God was in the Father’s plan of salvation from all eternity, so every true vocation to serve the Lord is another part of this plan – a part of His mission to bring the Good News of our salvation to the world.

We pray that all young men and women who hear God calling to them in their hearts and are “questioning” or “greatly troubled,” will, as Mary did, place their trust in the Lord and say with Mary, “Let it be done to me according to your word.”

The Visitation

Mary enters the house of Zechariah and her greeting reaches the ears of Elizabeth. The infant in Elizabeth's womb leaps for joy and she exclaims, "Who am I that the mother of my Lord should come to me? Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled."⁴

Scripture says she is "blessed" who believed, but so often, those who become aware that God may be calling them to the priesthood or consecrated life begin to doubt, even fear. We pray for all who sense that God is calling them, that they will believe...and, in believing, be blessed...and being blessed, will be filled with the sheer joy of being chosen.

The Birth of Christ

Mary gives birth to the Son of God. The Word made flesh becomes visible in a stable in Bethlehem. The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph make their home in Nazareth.

We pray in this mystery for all families, for it is here in the devout living of the Faith that the seed of a vocation to the priesthood or consecrated life may first be planted and nurtured.

We pray that all parents will have a deep love and respect for one another, thus establishing a loving Christian environment for their family. We pray that they will be respectful and obedient to the Church, diligent in living and teaching the Faith, and holy in their practice of devotion.

And we pray that mothers and fathers will pray for vocations – in the Church and in their own families – gently encouraging sons and daughters to pray and consider whether they, too, may be called to the priesthood or consecrated life.

The Presentation

Mary and Joseph present the infant Jesus in the Temple. They are met there by Simeon, a “holy and devout man,”⁵ and Anna, who “worshipped night and day”⁶ in the Temple. Called forth by the Spirit, both came to greet the infant Messiah.

We pray here for the Church, the parish environment, in which every “infant vocation” is presented.

We pray for holy and devout priests whose witness of joy and zeal in living out their priestly calling will invite young men to consider whether they, too, might be called to the priesthood.

We pray that there may be many generous souls in every parish who “worship night and day,” that their prayers to the Master of the Harvest might produce an abundant harvest and nurture the vocations developing in their midst.

Finally, we pray that every parish, as a family, might be a witness to the truth that all must know, love, and serve the Lord in order to fulfill and be fulfilled in every Christian vocation.

The Finding of the Child Jesus in the Temple

When Mary and Joseph return from the Feast of Passover in Jerusalem, Jesus remains behind. After three days of searching, they find Him “in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions.”⁷

We pray for all our Catholic schools, home schools, catechetical and youth ministry programs, that in all these environments, parents, teachers and youth ministers, priests and consecrated, will take time to teach about vocations in the Church and pray with the youth for their own vocations, thus opening young minds and hearts to the many possibilities. We pray that, by their word and example, those who minister to youth will encourage them to consider a life in service to the Lord.

THE LUMINOUS MYSTERIES

The Baptism in the Jordan

Jesus is baptized by John in the waters of the River Jordan. “The heavens were opened and...the Spirit of God descended like a dove upon him. And a voice came from the heavens, saying, ‘This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.’”⁸

At the beginning of every lived vocation to the priesthood or consecrated life is the need to acknowledge that one may be called and to respond with prayerful discernment.

We pray for holy vocations directors, that, immersed in a life of prayer themselves, they will be able to guide those who are being called to the priesthood or consecrated life to attentive spiritual listening, discerning, and responding.

We pray also that every bishop will be kindly and attentive to the needs of each of the young men and women in his diocese who are discerning a vocation in service to the Church.

The Wedding Feast of Cana

Mary, aware that the young couple at the wedding had run out of wine, says to her Divine Son, “They have no wine.”⁹ And to the servants at the wedding, she says, “Do whatever He tells you.”¹⁰ Jesus responds to her faith with His first public miracle – turning water into wine.

We pray here for all parents that, as they strive to live out their own holy vocation to marriage, they will lovingly and willingly give their parental blessing to a son’s or daughter’s expressed desire for a vocation in service to the Lord - that they will say from their hearts with Mary, “Do whatever He tells you.” They will be greatly blessed.

We pray, too, that all spiritual directors guiding young men and women who are discerning vocations may lead them to a proper understanding of the roles of spiritual fatherhood and motherhood as these roles are lived out in the priesthood and consecrated life.

The Proclamation of the Kingdom and Call to Discipleship

When Jesus called His disciples, He simply said, “Follow me...”¹¹ Peter, James, John, Andrew, Matthew – in fact, all the apostles – got up, left what they were doing and followed Him. Why? Because the sound of His voice reached not just their ears, but their hearts as well.

We pray that all who are being called to a life in service to the Church may grow deeper in their life of prayer and union with God. Their acceptance and willingness to go forth, to answer this special call to discipleship, will be the fruit of their time in prayer – of hearing His voice and falling in love with the One who calls.

The Transfiguration

Jesus leads Peter, James, and John up the mountain where He is transfigured before their eyes and converses with Moses and Elijah. Peter exclaims, “Lord, it is good for us to be here...”¹²

We pray here for all seminaries, convents, and houses of formation, that, immersed in and living the life envisioned by their holy founders, and ever faithful to the teachings of the Church, they may be authentically attractive to the one seeking the right place to live out his or her call to serve the Lord, that he or she may truly and rightfully say with Peter, “Lord, it is good for [me] to be here.”

The Institution of the Holy Eucharist

Jesus, at the Last Supper, says, “This is my Body...this is my Blood,”¹³ leaving for us a perpetual memorial of His suffering and death. What a magnificent gift for us to cherish!

God is love, and love seeks union. We pray that, through frequent reception of the Eucharist and time spent adoring the One who is Love, those who are being called will at last be able to surrender their lives entirely to the Lord and follow Him. “My heart is ready, O God, my heart is ready...”¹

THE SORROWFUL MYSTERIES

The Agony in the Garden

Jesus, in the Garden of Gethsemane, was in agony and, in his human nature, struggled over what lay ahead. “Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass me by...”¹⁵ And there appeared an angel from Heaven to strengthen Him.

We pray for all men and women who, having entered formation for the priesthood or consecrated life, are now uncertain, filled with doubt or struggling with their vocation. We pray that they will remain faithful to prayer and that the Lord will send His ray of light and encouragement into their minds and hearts that they may truly know the Father’s will and, like Jesus, find peace in surrendering to it.

The Scourging at the Pillar

Jesus is bound to a pillar and His sacred body is scourged and torn. Only a few hours earlier, at the Last Supper, Jesus had said to His apostles, “This is my Body, which is given up for you.”¹⁶

Young men and women entering formation for a life in service to God must, in a certain sense, begin the process of giving themselves up for others. It is not that they are scourged or beaten or that they lose their personality or identity. Yet, in a very personal way, each must begin to die to self so that he or she may prepare to live in imitation of Christ who gave Himself up for the Church.

We pray for all young men and women in formation as they accept the gift of celibacy and begin to live its discipline. We pray that they may understand and learn to live joyfully the role of spiritual fatherhood or motherhood in the Church and come to say with Jesus, “This is my body, which is given up for you.”

The Crowning with Thorns

Jesus is crowned with thorns and He is mocked and spat upon. The Son of God takes on our sins of pride with the crown of thorns and shows us the path of true humility.

We pray that those in formation may be led, through the process of prayer and spiritual direction, to a deeper knowledge of themselves that they may begin to recognize and overcome that selfishness so embedded in our fallen human nature. And we pray that, as they become more focused on the needs of others, Jesus will truly open their eyes and ears and hearts to the needs of His Mystical Body, the Church.

The Carrying of the Cross

Jesus takes up His cross, embracing it as the Father's will for Him, and sets out on the path to Calvary. Falling again and again under His burden, He rises each time, His eyes fixed on the Father in Heaven and the glory to come.

Young men and women, at this point, have come far in their journey. They have prayed and discerned their call, entered formation, and renounced themselves in order to serve the needs of others. They must now, with Jesus, take up their cross in earnest and set out on their path. They must embrace this road to Calvary as their way of life with its daily crosses and hardships, always pressing on to the joy that lies ahead. It will be a life-long process; they will fall, and they will get up again. We pray that, through their fidelity to prayer, they will always know the presence of Christ who walks with them to help shoulder the burden.

The Crucifixion and Death of Jesus

“Unless the grain of wheat falls to the earth and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat...but, if it dies, it produces much fruit.”¹⁷ Jesus, the Son of God, obedient unto death, takes on the sins of mankind and dies on the cross for us. His death is the glorious culmination of His life, lived in perfect surrender and obedience to the will of the Father.

This life of total self-surrender and obedience is also the glorious culmination of discernment and formation of the young men and women preparing to serve the Church. They now enter willingly the life-long process of dying to self in order to live in surrender to the will of the Father, to live wholly in the service of others, to live in a love so strong that it overcomes all obstacles. They are ready for ordination or final profession. Let us pray for these men and women with all our hearts as they prepare to make this sacrifice for us.

THE GLORIOUS MYSTERIES

The Resurrection

Jesus Christ rises, glorious and triumphant on Easter Sunday. He has conquered death. He lives forever!

And just as Jesus bursts forth, glorious and radiant, from the tomb, so does the newly ordained or professed come forth into the dazzling light of Holy Mother Church. They, too, are radiant – eager to live out their calling, and the Church surrounds them with her love and prayers.

Let us pray in fervent thanksgiving to the Master of the Harvest who, in His great love and mercy, has provided laborers for the harvest.

The Ascension

Jesus, before He ascended into heaven, said to His apostles, “Go out to all the nations, baptizing in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit...and know that I am with you to the end of the age.”¹⁸

The young man or woman, newly ordained or professed, wherever he or she will serve, is truly sent out to “all the nations.” From small country churches to great universities, from the seclusion of the cloister to large city parishes to the poorest missions of distant continents, they go forth to live and bear witness to the Gospel, to share the Good News of our salvation, that all may come to know and believe.

Let us pray for these young men and women that they will continue to grow ever deeper in their love for God and remain faithful to the Gospel as they take on their duties, giving themselves to the needs of the universal Church.

The Descent of the Holy Spirit

The Spirit of God descends in tongues of fire on the apostles and they are filled with the gifts of the Holy Spirit. With the fire of holy zeal, they go forth to announce the Gospel to the nations.

The newly ordained or professed may say with great zeal in his or her heart, “Here I am, Lord, I come to do Your will.” But the will of God is costly, and zeal can fade in the face of reality.

We pray for a new and continuous outpouring of the gifts of the Holy Spirit in the lives of all who serve the Lord in His Church. And we pray that, along with fidelity to a life of prayer, they will properly seek out support, friendship, and study with their brothers and sisters and spiritual direction from those through whom the Spirit may lead them to holiness.

The Assumption

Mary is taken, body and soul, to Heaven. She is gloriously triumphant. But this most loving mother, so beautiful in her triumph, lived a life of deep humility and service to others. And just as Mary cradled and nurtured the infant Jesus in her womb, prayed and pondered, and served Him throughout His life, so does this heavenly mother cradle and nurture every vocation in her Immaculate Heart, always praying and interceding for them.

We pray for all the newly ordained and professed that they will grow in humility, remain faithful to their duties and that, as they turn their face to this loving mother each day, they will find her present in their every need.

The Coronation

Mary is crowned Queen of Heaven and Earth by her Divine Son. She is the “woman clothed with the Sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars.”¹⁹ She is “blessed”²⁰ forever!

We pray for all our brothers and sisters who live their lives in the service of Holy Mother Church, especially the newly ordained and professed, that they will turn to Mary and, imitating her virtues in every circumstance of their lives, come to know with her the reward of their fidelity to Christ.

Biblical References:

1. John 12:24
2. Luke 1:34
3. Luke 1:38
4. Luke 1:43, 45
5. Luke 2:25
6. Luke 2:37
7. Luke 2:46
8. Mark 1:10-11
9. John 2:3
10. John 2:5
11. Matthew 4:19
12. Matthew 17:14
13. Matthew 26:26-28
14. Psalms 57:7
15. Matthew 26:39
16. Luke 22:19
17. John 12:24
18. Matthew 28:19-20
19. Revelation 12:1
20. Luke 1:48