



Mary in May (by Fr. Gerard O'Shaughnessy sbd and Sr Susan Richert pbvm)

*Using your rosary beads – in a different way: Take an event in Mary's life and reflect on it. You might use one event each day and **either** over 1 decade or 5 decades – say the short refrain on the small beads.*

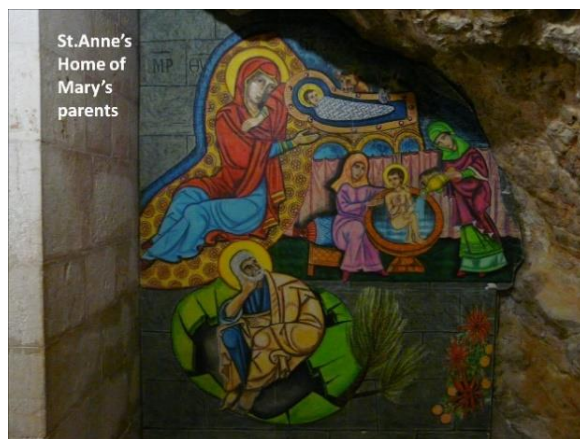
Alternatively, you might wish to say the rosary in the usual way but reflect on these events of Mary's life.

Main door of the Annunciation Basilica in Nazareth

Mary where she was born - St. Anne's in Jerusalem -

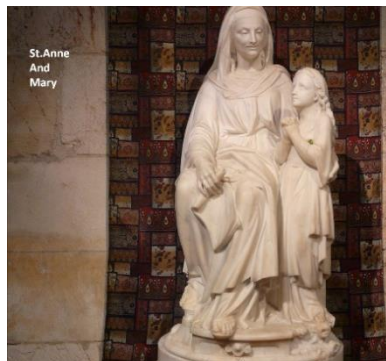


The New Testament says nothing about the birthplace of Mary. However, an ancient tradition, recorded in the apocryphal Gospel of James which dates from around AD 150, places the house of her parents, Anne and Joachim, close to the Temple area. A church built around 450 on the site of St Anne's was dedicated to "Mary where she was born"



Read and reflect -

The reality of Incarnation is that Jesus was born into a real family; scripture highlights Bethlehem as the city of David, the family associated with Joseph. As we begin our traditional devotion of the rosary, it is good to look at the maternal side of Jesus's family. One of the hardest parts of this pandemic and the necessary physical isolation, is that our elders are seen as especially vulnerable. We cannot connect with our grandparents and those significant older people in our lives. We miss their hugs, their cuddles and their spoiling; they miss us too and often the only contact they have is through a glass window. Pray for our wonderful elders who have shared their vision, values and faith with us, just like Anna and Joachim did with Mary and their very special grandchild.



Say a Hail Mary on the large bead and then – on each small bead say

Mary, born like us into a family, be with all parents and grandparents.

- on the next large bead – say: Glory be to the Father....

Mary is presented in the Temple

After her birth, Anne and Joachim dedicated Mary to God at the temple of Jerusalem and she spent much of her childhood there. “When the child reached the age of three her parents took her to live in the temple. Joachim gathered the young girls from the neighbourhood to form an escort. Mary joyfully followed not once looking back at her parents and the Lord God sent grace upon her. Mary danced and all the house of Israel loved her. Zacharia, the high priest, welcomed her at the entrance of the sanctuary. She dwelt day and night in the sanctuary until the age of twelve.” _ Protoevangelium of James 7:4-10; 8:1



Read and reflect -

Tradition has it that Mary’s father, Joachim, worked in the Temple of Jerusalem. As a devout Jewish family, he and his wife would naturally want to give thank you God for the gift of Mary. We join them also, in spirit, for the gift of Mary to our Church. In our own lockdown and isolation what can we offer today? Perhaps we need to appreciate what we are all doing, as a nation: by staying home, we have helped to keep EVERYONE safe. Even at the start of March, nobody could have imagined that the UK would spend six weeks without the Premier League, McDonald’s or nightclubs - let alone losing those joys of our national life at a time when everyone, other than key workers, had to stay at home. Today thank God for all that YOU have presented to the Lord for the greater good-that is real SACRIFICE! Thank you for your service!

Say a Hail Mary on the large bead and then – on each small bead say

Mary, may we grow more like you each day as we give ourselves to you and others.

- on the next large bead – say: Glory be to the Father

Betrothal of Mary and Joseph

In his 1989 Apostolic Exhortation, *Redemptoris Custos*, Pope John Paul II, describing the marriage ceremony of the Virgin Mary and St. Joseph: “According to Jewish custom, marriage took place in two stages: first, the legal, or true marriage was celebrated, and then, only after a certain period of time, the husband brought the wife into his house. Thus, before he lived with Mary, Joseph was already her husband.”

Joseph and Mary fulfilled the Law. At this betrothal ceremony, Mary held out her hand and Joseph would have put a gold ring on her finger, a symbol of union and possession, with the words “Here is the ring that unites you to me in the sight of God according to the Mosaic Rite.”



Read and reflect -

Some scholars agree that Joseph, the master carpenter met Mary during the re-construction of the great Jerusalem Temple, where his skills would have been greatly appreciated and needed. Love is so important in our lives-we need it for our own well-being. In these times of severe hardship, we have also seen the power and strength of real love and care: from the amazing Captain Tom and his century walk around his garden to the nurse copying the last message of a dying mum to her children. Married love is not about one person in the relationship having their desires and demands fulfilled. Married love is about mutual respect and unconditional love, one for the other. I’m thinking of a very special couple whose marriage has had to be postponed because of the regulations we have had to build up around CORVID-19.

Think of all those whose lives and loves are being hurt by our lockdown. Sadly, we also need to remember those relatively few couples who are experiencing pain, hurt and abuse because of the situation. Like Mary and Joseph, we are called to share mutual respect, seeing the dignity of our partners.

Say a Hail Mary on the large bead and then – on each small bead say

Mary, betrothed to Joseph, help us to be faithful in our commitments.

- on the next large bead – say: Glory be to the Father

Mary receives a message from God



St. Anne's Church, Sepphoris

Joseph may have found employment in the new city of Sepphoris close to Nazareth. Tradition has it that Mary's parents moved here from Jerusalem obviously bringing their daughter north with them. There is a church dedicated to St Anne built on what is thought to be their home. This great city is "perched like a bird" on a 400 foot hill that overlooks the Bet Netofa Valley and helps to explain its other Hebrew name, Zippori (bird). From this panoramic view of Lower Galilee you can gaze on Nazareth and Cana as Herod Antipas probably did.

Read and reflect -

In Nazareth, Mary now betrothed to Joseph, the love of her life is asked by the messenger to do the impossible: to bring God not the world. What an ask! What responsibility! What trust! In these past few weeks, you have been asked to live the impossible: we are sharing, with Mary, confusion and difficulty. Above all, Mary showed her trust and utter faith in a God who chose her. God is with us through this lockdown and the challenge, for us, is to see that care and love perhaps in those little things: making cupcakes together, emailing an elderly friend or your teenage son tidying his room...at last!

Nazareth



Say a Hail Mary on the large bead and then – on each small bead say

Mary, may we too say – "behold the servant of the Lord, be it done to me according to your word".

- on the next large bead – say: Glory be to the Father

Mary Visits Elizabeth



Ein Karim, five miles from Jerusalem, has been considered the traditional site of the home of Elizabeth and Zachariah since the sixth century. It is a tranquil place of trees and vineyards. The journey was about 80 to 100 miles and would probably take Mary three to four days. The Visitation Church on the hill is probably the “summer House”. The church down in the valley is where John the Baptist was born.



Read and reflect -

The wonder of God is that the impossible can, and does, happen. Mary has been given the news of the birth of her child; a child destined to change history. Mary is literally the means through which God can enter human history. One would forgive her for feeling full of herself—she was told by the angel, “rejoice so highly favoured” (Luke 1:28). Mary is not arrogant or selfish so, on hearing that a much older mother needs support, she leaves home and goes to help Elizabeth. Not for her and Joseph will be trips to the Nazareth branch of ‘Mothercare’ to pick out a pram for their new arrival! Mary’s instinctive action is one of support and help. Isolation and the need to support each other in these times of crisis is essential. Those little acts of kindness can mean so much and just help people to get through another day in the hope of a return to some sort of normality—new or otherwise.

On her recent fifth birthday, Princess Charlotte was seen delivering food to the elderly; the cynics will cry that this is another photo-op for the Royals. However, it would be much better to think that the young Royal was trying to follow the example of Mary, the help. Anyway, in these challenging days, you do not have to be a royal; as Christians it should be instinctive as, together, we continue to build up the reign of God. Elizabeth can see that “of all women” Mary is the most blessed (Luke 1: 42). As we pray this part of the rosary, it might be best to join with her in a total outpouring of praise to God.

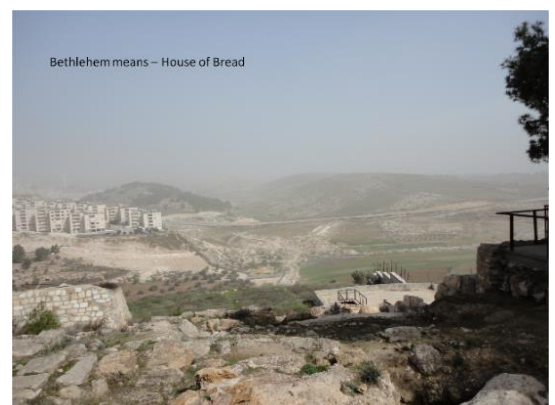
Say a Hail Mary on the large bead and then – on each small bead say

Mary, with you, my soul also sings thanksgiving for all God’s blessings.

- on the next large bead – say: Glory be to the Father

Mary gives birth to Jesus

The city of Bethlehem is about six miles southwest of Jerusalem. It is still a very important place because it is built on an aquifer. Bethlehem is a “place that guards water”. Bethlehem - *beit lechem* - means “house of bread,” and is also the City of David. Here, the young David was anointed by the prophet Samuel to be king over Israel (1 Samuel 16:1-13). Mary and Joseph travelled to Bethlehem at the time of the census to register because Joseph was of the house of David. It was St. Helena that put Bethlehem on the pilgrimage map and built the first church over the cave where the manger (trough) was thought to have been where baby Jesus was laid.



Read and reflect -

We are all familiar with the Christmas story, that brings light and joy to the darkest of winters. Joseph and Mary again journey down from Nazareth to the city of David, Bethlehem as they joined the mass exodus of people to join in the Roman requirement for census. Not for them a Bethlehem lockdown in the local Hilton or even a B&B. The Saviour of the World, the Messiah is born in the simple poverty of the stable. Jesus Christ brings simplicity and invites us to share it more than ever in our 2020 isolation.



So many of those familiar props have been stripped away from our lives; Covid-19 has forced us to live that simple life without air travel, going to the gym, going to the salon, eating out or having a quick pint at the local. As we are forced to live the simple life, perhaps reflect on those child-like qualities we are invited to embrace—we might want to hang on to a lot of them when the new normal returns.



Say a Hail Mary on the large bead and then – on each small bead say

Mary, may we too, bring Christ to birth in our hearts and our lives.

- on the next large bead – say: Glory be to the Father

The Shepherds help Mary to reflect

The name Beit Sahour consists of two Arabic words: *beit* meaning “house,” and *sahour* meaning “night watch.” The name of the area reflects its importance for the shepherds of long ago. The land provided their flocks with good grazing during the day and safety in its numerous caves at night.

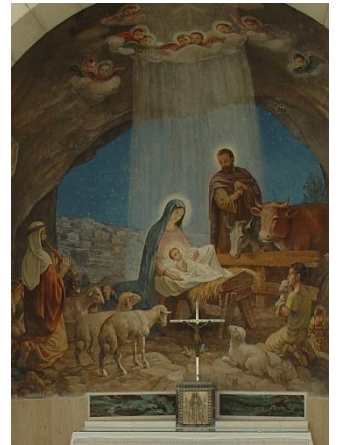


Read and reflect -

In the Gospel of Luke, it the shepherds who are the first greet the Messiah—we are presented with those simple hardworking shepherds as the initial sharers of the Good News. The angels shared the “Glory of God” (Luke 2: 14) and Mary was able ponder on these amazing turns of events and treasure them in her heart (Luke 2:19)—very often it can be strangers who come into our lives and leave us as friends! They help us to see other ways of doing things and being Church. At this time we are being asked to live a totally new way of being community; it is strange and hard but this post in the parish website certainly made me ponder: “This lockdown is proving to be a blessing in disguise—it’s so eye opening how unifying praying together” is.



At this time, being a shepherd was not the career choice for those aspiring to achieve and earn a strong wage. Yet, time and time again, the adult Jesus presents the shepherd as the symbol of care and trust. Therefore, it so it is fitting that it was the shepherds who come to visit and share with the Christ-child. I hope that you can stop and reflect on what this period in your life has meant to you; ask forgiveness where necessary, and TREASURE and remember all that is good.



Say a Hail Mary on the large bead and then – on each small bead say

Mary, may we too ponder, with those God’s sends to us, on the events of our lives.

- on the next large bead – say: Glory be to the Father

Mary takes Jesus to be Presented in the Temple



Remains of the Temple

This feast has other traditional names which include the “Feast for the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary” as well as the “Meeting of the Lord”. At the end of the fourth century, a woman named Etheria made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. In her journal, discovered in 1887, she describes the gala procession in honour of his Presentation in the Temple. Under the Mosaic Law, a woman was ritually “unclean” for 40 days after childbirth, when she was to present herself to the priests and offer sacrifice—her “purification.” Contact with anyone who had brushed against mystery—birth or death—excluded a person from Jewish worship.

Read and reflect -

As good Jews, Mary and Joseph come to bring their first born and present Jesus to God. In doing so they meet with two wonderful elders and prophets, Simeon and Anna. I hope that these unusual times have forced us to look to the wisdom of our elders and share their life stories, especially with our children.

As parishes, schools and families, we have a wonderful and rich story to tell and now we have no excuse. Children will be amazed to realise that they have to ensure that they not only re-tell their story, but make their own personal contribution to the continuing story.

Simeon is now free as he has “seen the salvation which you have prepared for all the nations to see” (Luke 2:31-32). In the midst of the joy of new birth, ever the realist, he warns Mary of the pain that is to come (Luke 2:33-35). Parents will always want what is best for their children-always! They will do anything to ensure that their loved ones do not suffer and will take the pain onto themselves just like Mary. The pandemic and isolation will make us want the well-being that we are honoured to share this extra time with. Like wonderful Anna, we are called to “praise God” (Luke 2:38) in what we do and say. What we DO and SAY in this time of crisis says a lot about us; pray that it speaks volumes of the great Christian story that we share.



Say a Hail Mary on the large bead and then – on each small bead say

Mary, by our words and actions, may we share the light of Christ with those we meet,
- on the next large bead – say: Glory be to the Father

Mary, with Joseph, takes the child and flees into Egypt



A short distance south of the [Church of the Nativity](#) in [Bethlehem](#) is a shrine called the Milk Grotto, on a **street** of the same name. According to tradition, while Mary and Joseph were fleeing [Herod's](#) soldiers on their way to Egypt, they stopped in this cave while Mary nursed the baby Jesus. A drop of Mary's **milk** fell upon the stone and it turned white.

The grotto has been a site of veneration since the 4th century, the first structure being built over it in around AD 385.



Egypt is about 65 kilometres from Bethlehem and they lived for either a few months or up to three years (until after the death of Herod in 4 B.C.)



Even in the midst of good times, we can see pain and hurt; how many of us celebrated New Year's Day 2020 with confidence and hope, little thinking that only three months later a global pandemic would force us all into isolation? In the joy of new life and the glory of a special birth, King Herod can see only threat and disaster as he orders his troops in to murder the Holy Innocents. Why do bad things happen to good people? Thus, the Holy Family are forced into a new journey, the journey of the refugee.

Today millions share that same fate, displaced by terrorism, war, religious disputes, sexual difference, racism, economic hardship and, now, COVID-

19. It is sad to reflect that the Dheisheh Refugee Camp is located in Bethlehem-the birthplace of Jesus-it is constant reminder to us that refugees are still with us: the United Nations estimate that there are around 70.8 million forcibly displaced people in the world. 70.8 million people who are not at home, often in living conditions that do not allow space for physical distancing. While we might find our own living conditions hard during lockdown, please take time to think of those 70.8 million people who share the fate of the Holy Family. As we move towards a new normal, so we will need to begin a new way of living, a new way to socialise, a new way of working, a new way of going to school and new way of being Church-perhaps even a new way of being family. Jesus and his family have had to enter a new way as they flee to Egypt.

As we continue to pray, remember those who, for whatever reason, are being forced to flee and run away today. They have to run into oblivion without the chance to say "thanks" or "goodbye!" As they flee, they cry out with Joseph and Mary: "why do bad things happen to good people?"

Say a Hail Mary on the large bead and then – on each small bead say

Mary, be with all those who are having to flee from their homes and families

- on the next large bead – say: Glory be to the Father

Mary, Joseph and the child return to Nazareth

The **return** of the family of **Jesus** to Nazareth,

After the death of Herod, having heard that Archelaus had become the new king. Of Judea, the family travelled to Nazareth which took them a journey of at least 170 kilometres. Archelaus was such a violent and aggressive king that in the year 6 AD he was deposed by the Romans, in response to complaints from the population. Galilee was ruled by a much calmer king, Herod Antipas, and there is historical evidence that Galilee had become a refuge for those fleeing the iron rule of Archelaus.



Read and reflect -

The Gospel tells us that the Holy Family returned to Galilee and the town of Nazareth once it was safe. Perhaps Joseph was able to return to the security of employment working on the expanding city of Sepphoris-it is also interesting to reflect that Joseph might have had an apprentice as it was common for sons to follow their fathers' job choice. Jesus returns to normality after an amazing infancy; the school of life taught him some hard lessons that would stay with him throughout his life, preaching and ministry of care, no doubt giving him an empathy for those in need.



Jesus is now able to have a time of contentment and peace. Jesus and his family live the ordinary. In these days of international pandemic, we can look back on the 'ordinary' with a sense of nostalgia. We have been forced to change our whole way of doing everything from shopping to cutting hair to exercising to learning to become a teacher. We now long for an 'ordinary time' which seems so far away-even as the new normal draws closer. Pray at this stage that we can return to the ORDINARY and share the reality and power of Incarnation.

Say a Hail Mary on the large bead and then – on each small bead say

Mary, be with us in the ordinary, day-to-day, events of our lives.

- on the next large bead – say: Glory be to the Father

Mary finds Jesus the teenager in the Temple



One of the most amazing experiences one can have at the great Western Wall in modern Jerusalem is when a family bring their teenage boy for bar mitzvah, their coming of age. The singing, dancing and sense of celebration is awe inspiring and gives us a picture of the joy of Jesus's own coming of age-the songs, dances and prayers go right back into Old Testament times



Read and reflect -

Jesus was taken by his family on pilgrimage to Jerusalem. We are well aware of the confusion that ensued when Jesus stayed behind. For anyone who has lost a child, there is a panic and real fear as we frantically search for that loved one, a living part of us.

Mary and Joseph find Jesus with the teachers of the law, based at the Temple; they are AMAZED at his wisdom and the questions that he asks. In education we have to be open to learning at all stages in life; a good teacher is one who learns from their students, just like the Temple teachers.

The exchange between Jesus and his mother can come across as cheeky and failure to show respect Mary says "Your father and I have been searching for you." (Luke 2: 48). Jesus answers, "You should have known I would be at the house of my Father." (Luke 2:49). In other words, Jesus has chosen this crucial stage in his life, on the brink of manhood, to tell his parents in an unforgettable way that he now knows who his real Father is and what it will mean for his mission. The time will come when Jesus will be killed in Jerusalem, and after three days rise from the dead, and that will be a great pain to Mary. And is not this three-day vigil of Mary and Joseph a foreshadowing of that experience? She said, "Your father and I have been seeking you in pain.

As a young man, probably already working with Joseph as his apprentice, he goes home to Nazareth to continue living that ordinary life but with a new sense of vision and purpose. All of us have been asked to live an extraordinary life in these times of lockdown and, I pray, that you can share this vision of Jesus too, especially as you LISTEN and LEARN from your own children.

Say a Hail Mary on the large bead and then – on each small bead say

Mary, may we too, seek to find God in these strange days, in strange places.

- on the next large bead – say: Glory be to the Father

Mary bringing up Jesus the Teenager



View of Nazareth from
the Basilica

The Basilica of Jesus the Adolescent also simply known as the Salesian church and is located next to the school of the Salesians. In Gothic style, it was built between 1906 and 1923 on a hill called "Mount of the Start" which overlooks the city, where, according to tradition, Jesus spent his youth.



Read and reflect -

I love to visit the Basilica of Jesus the Adolescent built on a hill overlooking the town of Nazareth, known as the Mount of Start-tradition has it that Jesus played with his friends in these hills. This makes the incarnation even more real for me; Jesus was a real teenager and played real games up here. Next to the simple gothic church is the Salesian School, offering education to local teenagers. It is wonderful to hear, while praying in this basilica, the shouts and cries of the young people playing basketball. I never find it a distraction, rather I see it as a way to connect once again with the beauty of the Fifth Gospel-the experience of a pilgrimage to the Holy Land that is alive.

Don Bosco wanted his schools to be places of learning, but also a place where young people can feel at home and feel free to celebrate; in Salesian thought, it must also be a playground of fun and games where the young find unconditional acceptance and a sense of hope. The pilgrim to Nazareth will find all of this when they go to the Basilica. Pray deeply today for all our young people; Don Bosco saw their potential and how we NEED their wisdom in the Church. If you find yourself locked down with young people in these days, see beyond the untidy rooms, the backchat and the rows. Recognise with Pope Francis the gift and blessings of our teenagers to the Church:

“Christ is alive and He wants you to be alive.....The Church needs your momentum, your intuitions, your faith....And when you arrive where we have not yet reached, have the patience to wait for us.” (Christus Vivit 1 & 299)

Say a Hail Mary on the large bead and then – on each small bead say

Mary, may we recognise the gift of the young and give them the keys to open the doors.

- on the next large bead – say: Glory be to the Father

Mary at the wedding feast in Cana of Galilee

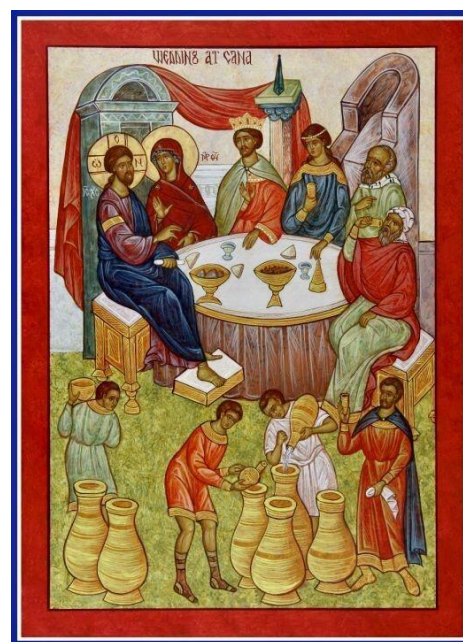


This village is about 3 miles from Nazareth. Excavations recovered beneath the present church in the early 1900s confirm the presence of a Jewish-Christian synagogue and the remains of living structures from the 1st century, a basilica and a small stone cistern. Here, at Mary's request, Jesus performs the first of His signs. Each of the six stone water jars held approx. 23 gallons of water.



Read and reflect -

I love the fact that John's Gospel; generally seen as the deepest of all the gospels, begins the public ministry of Jesus at Cana with a miracle of pure fun! John sets the scene with an experience that most of us can identify with: being a guest at a wedding. We want to make sure that we get the best outfit and ensure that the best present is bought. We do not know who the mystery couple are, but we do know that Jesus, his mother and the disciples are guests (John 2: 1-2). Typical of Mary is that she sees the potential for disaster and family embarrassment; she knows that Jesus will come to the rescue as she tells the servers, "do whatever HE tells you!" (John 2:5). This is Mary's intuitive gift and simple prayer for the whole Church: if we DO WHATEVER HE TELLS us, then how much better the Church will be. This is our simple calling to DO Eucharistic as we continue to DO THIS IN MEMORY OF ME.



This is where the fun comes in; John does not choose a miracle of healing a leper or a calming of a storm or a rising from the dead. Jesus offers gallons of wine of the finest vintage that everyone can enjoy. This miracle stands in the tradition of all gospel multiplications: God will provide more than enough; we will always enjoy plenty if we trust in God.

As we continue our prayer, name the married couples you know and pray for them, especially in this time of crisis when tensions can surface if we are not careful. Jesus and Mary witnessed the vows taken at Cana; as wedding guests you too have heard those vows: to have and to hold from this day forward, for better or worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, till death do us part. This is an exchange between TWO equals; in these days of isolation, please listen to the wisdom of Mary, DO WHATEVER HE TELLS YOU

Say a Hail Mary on the large bead and then – on each small bead say

Mary, may we heed your words – “Do whatever he tells you.”

- on the next large bead – say: Glory be to the Father

Mary, the model of discipleship



In Matthew's gospel, we read that While Jesus was still speaking to the crowds, his mother and his brothers were standing outside, wanting to speak to him... pointing to his disciples, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother."...

The mount of Beatitudes looking over the Sea of Galilee

Read and reflect -

Our scripture for this part of our Rosary centres on that rare occasion when we meet Mary in the public ministry of Jesus. For some this might appear as a snub towards his family by Jesus. However, what we see is Jesus showing that his ministry is INCLUSIVE; the outreaching and unconditional love of God is for all. Discipleship must mirror that; as the ultimate disciple, Mary shows us the way. From following God's will with trust to bringing God into the world; from helping a newly married couple to offering practical and spiritual support to grieving friends. Mary listened to her son, who, in turn, listened to her; their relationship is the example we can follow. Mary shows that trust that we are called to share especially in this time of uncertainty. For that pre-Pentecost Church of lockdown, Mary is the focus of unity, a gentle presence who is always available. Our Church of lockdown in 2020 needs that focus of unity too: Mary can be the model of patience and trust that all of us need as we cope as best we can. In the home of the Eucharist, Mary invites us all to “do this in memory of me!”

Say a Hail Mary on the large bead and then – on each small bead say

Mary, mother of Jesus, you walk with us on the road of discipleship.

- on the next large bead – say: Glory be to the Father

Mary at the foot of the Cross



The Church of the Holy Sepulchre in the Old City of Jerusalem covers what we believe is the site of the **most important** event in human history: The place where Jesus Christ rose from the dead



On entering the church, one turns hard right and ascends a steep and curving flight of stairs – you are ascending the “hill”

of **Calvary** (from the Latin) or **Golgotha** (from the Aramaic), both words meaning “place of the skull”. The stairs open on to a floor that is level with the top of the rocky outcrop on which Christ was crucified. It is about 4.5 metres above the ground floor. On the floor of Calvary are **two chapels** side by side, Greek Orthodox on the left, Catholic on the right. Mary sees Jesus being nailed to the cross and is with him when he dies.

Read and reflect -

Mary finds herself in the most difficult and hurtful situations as she finds herself at the place of Roman execution with her son as the branded criminal-branded because of lies and failure. She has been asked to make the ultimate sacrifice of any parent: to watch your child die. She has seen the horror and hatred of the Via Delarosa; people screaming and spitting their venom; her only hope is with Simon of Cyrene, Veronica and the Women of Jerusalem. As you pray, it is good to reflect on what side of the divide you find yourself as you try to follow Mary’s prayer for you: “do whatever he tells you!” We might like to think we are a Veronica, bringing comfort in this crisis; or are we fermenting discord and the very hatred that led to the Cross? It is a hard question to ask of ourselves but, in this time of international crisis and we are probably at our lowest, it has to be asked as we stand with Mary at the foot of the cross. Like her we have witnessed death and pain over these past few weeks; we have lost loved ones, neighbours and fellow parishioners. Mary stands with us in our sorrow; she understands our confusion, anger and pain. Like her we cry out for an end to this pain; we cry out for justice and a sense of real community in the new normal. As we move closer to a closure, may Mary’s thoughtfulness, empathy and gentle presence be with us as a guiding light.

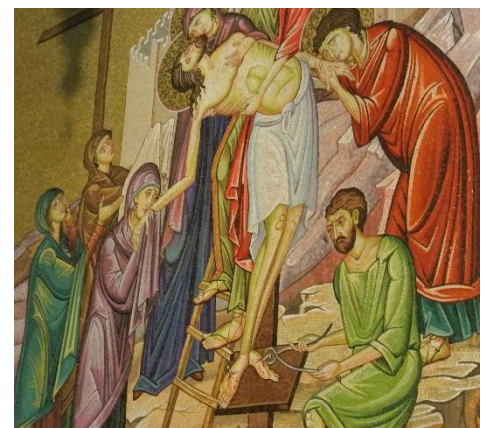
Say a Hail Mary on the large bead and then – on each small bead say

Mary, be with us, as you were with Jesus, as we “watch” those who suffer and die.

- on the next large bead – say: Glory be to the Father

Mary receives the body of her son into her arms.

The Greek mosaic on the wall above the “anointing slab” in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, depicts Christ being taken down from the cross, put in his mother’s arms and then his body being prepared for burial and taken to the tomb.



Read and reflect -

We are invited to join with a sorrowful mother. Years earlier in a Bethlehem crib, a child was laid into the arms of Mary; now we reflect on that same child and mother in death. The dead body of Jesus is placed into the arms of a mother who hugged and cradled him—a mother who was there for him in life and death. Only this morning grandparents on Radio 5 Live were telling us how they missed their grandchildren: while social media keeps us all in touch, it lacks that personal, human contact that so many crave. The real-life stories behind the statistics tell of victims of COVID-19 dying without family support; we thank God for our nurses and carers who have sat with them in their hour of death. In the global pieta, Mary holds us all in her care and love. Let us pray with those in pain as they mourn the deaths of those they love.

As Mary holds her loving son in her arms, a victim of the hatred of others, how does she feel, what are her emotions, can she forgive? Throughout the life, work and teaching of Jesus, we see him bringing peace and forgiveness, expressed so beautifully in the prayer he gave to his disciples: “forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us” (Matthew 6:12). This is a challenge to our Easter faith and perhaps we have had time, during this time of enforced isolation, to reflect on those we feel we cannot forgive. Why is this so? Is there any chance you could reach out and give that Easter gift of peace? Jesus reaches out to the LOST and hurt: in the parables of the lost in Luke’s Gospel, the lost coin, sheep and Son show us how important it is to reach out and accept forgiveness in our lives. These parables also give us an opportunity to meditate on ‘what counts’ in our lives. (Luke 15: 4-32). If we don’t then we are consigned to a life of pain and hurt; we might think that we can get by but we are not living up to that injunction of Jesus to set people FREE and become prisoners to our own hatred. Bitterness and wanting revenge can become a cancer that eats away at us and harm our own wellbeing. Today we have no excuse, in this time of lockdown we need to be bearers of the PEACE of the Risen Lord. There are enough situations of hurt and bitterness in society without any of us adding to that pain. Reach out today and bring your peace to those who genuinely need it in their lives today.

Say a Hail Mary on the large bead and then – on each small bead say

Mary, with you, may we reach out and bring peace to those who are in need.

- on the next large bead – say: Glory be to the Father

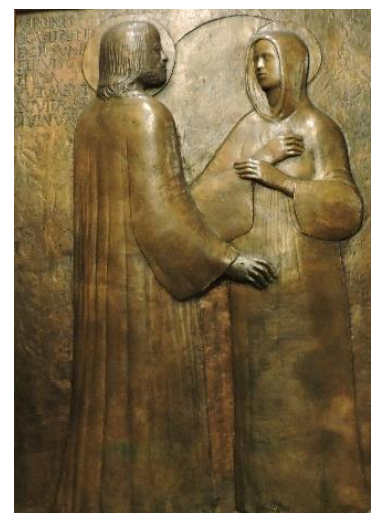
Mary is visited by the Risen Christ.

In the Church of the Holy Sepulchre is the Chapel of the Apparition
-which commemorates the tradition that the risen Christ
first appeared to his Mother.

Could Mary’s absence from the group of women
who went to the tomb at dawn (cf. Mk 16:1; Mt 28:1)
indicate that she had already met Jesus?

Read and reflect -

As we pause again on journey of prayer, we reflect on something that we have NO biblical evidence for—just as we have no biblical reference for the strong Christian tradition of Veronica helping Jesus. As Jesus showed his love for his Mother in life, so we have seen the depth of that love in death. The Gospels refer to Jesus going back to Galilee, his home. What could be more natural and right than mother and son meeting up and sharing their love. In lockdown perhaps you can take time to reflect with those you love on what these past few weeks has taught you: are you going to change? Is the new normal going to mean change in your home? How will the Church adapt to the challenge of change that has to come?



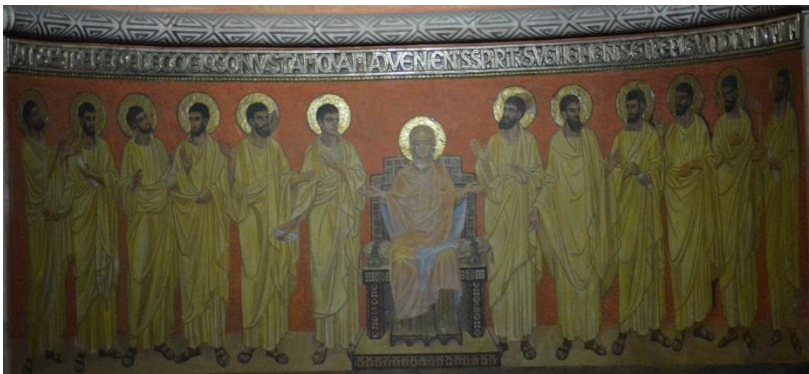
As Pope Francis reflected to his own civil service: “*Here on earth to live is to change, and to change often is to become more perfect. Newman is not speaking about seeking change for change’s sake, or to follow the fashion, but rather to have the conviction that development and growth are the characteristic of earthly and human life, while, in the perspective of the believer, at the centre there is the stability of God*” (Pope Francis at Vatican 21st December 2020)

Say a Hail Mary on the large bead and then – on each small bead say

Mary, rejoice, the Son who you bore has risen as he said he would. Alleluia.

- on the next large bead – say: Glory be to the Father

Mary with his friends awaiting the Spirit



The Upper Room, also known as the Cenacle, is located in the southern part of the Old City of Jerusalem on Mount Zion, the traditional site of the Last Supper since the fourth century AD. The current structure of the room dates approximately from the fourteenth century, which accounts for the existing Gothic-era columns. This is also the place where the Apostles with Mary, the mother of Jesus waits, in prayer, for the promised Spirit.

Read and reflect -

Mary with the disciples waiting for the Holy Spirit in the home of Eucharist.

Even after the glory of Resurrection, the disciples are seen in the Acts of the Apostles as gathered “in continuous prayer”, together with several women, including Mary the mother of Jesus” (Acts 1: 11). This picture of the early Jerusalem community shows a Church in lockdown. As we see at the end of the gospels, the apostles are presented as frightened and scared. They are in need of support and help-Mary fits the bill perfectly. The founder of the Salesian family, Don Bosco saw the need for his educators to be involved in their lives of their students through a kindly presence; this is exactly what Mary was to the disciples in their grief and loss. She, who has lost her beloved son, is the one who offers that unconditional presence and cares for them. In this room of Eucharist, she lives that life for them as she invites them to REMEMBER.

In our strange lockdown, hopefully we have been able to let go of our attachments, the root of which means distraction and hurt. Worry and anxiety require us to buy into, to choose to believe, at least two lies:

- I can control the outcome of things
- I can keep bad things from happening if I worry hard and long enough.

The Gospel invites us to let go of the need to control either by our thoughts or actions and to try trusting God instead. The promise, from Isaiah 40, is that, in waiting, we will renew our strength. But it's the grasping and clutching hand that drains our reserves and saps our energy.

Say a Hail Mary on the large bead and then – on each small bead say

Mary, in our joys and sorrows, be with us and help us to remember....

- on the next large bead – say: Glory be to the Father

Mary falls asleep

The New Testament says nothing about the **death** and burial of Mary, the Mother of Jesus, but a strong Christian tradition places her tomb in a dimly-lit church at the foot of the Mount of Olives. The large crypt containing the empty tomb in the Church of the Assumption is all that remains of an early 5th-century church, making it possibly the **oldest** near-complete religious building in Jerusalem.



The location of the Tomb of Mary is across the Kidron Valley from St Stephen's Gate in the Old City walls of Jerusalem, just before **Gethsemane**. (This is the Orthodox Church of the Dormition)



The hill of Mount Zion, the highest point in ancient Jerusalem, is dominated by the Catholic Church of the Dormition. The location is identified in Christian tradition as the place where the Virgin Mary died — or “**fell asleep**”, as the name suggests.



Read and reflect -

I think it is entirely fitting that the ancient Church speak of the DORMITION of Mary, of her ‘going to sleep.’ It is still the case in the Eastern Church, while we, in the West, have tended to sanitise death. Death, for Mary, is seen as simply falling asleep in the arms of the Lord. Pilgrims to Jerusalem will be aware that the Abbey of the Dormition is literally around the corner from the Upper Room. All of us have been touched by the death of loved ones; each of us will react in a way that helps us; grief is personal and there is no right or wrong way. Our reaction to COVID-19 is rightly one of fear due to the deathly danger it poses. While we naturally want the isolation to end and pray for the new normal when we can move forward. In the meantime, let us pause and remember our loved ones who have fallen asleep into the arms of the Risen Lord. The global pandemic has caused painful deaths and loneliness, let us ask Mary to be us all “now and at the hour of our death.” Pope Francis prayed for the feast: “Mary accompanies us, struggles with us, and sustains Christians in their fight against the forces of evil. The stupendous reality of Mary’s Assumption manifests and confirms the unity of the human person, and it reminds us that we are called to serve and glorify God with all our being, soul and body. To serve God only with the body would be an action of slaves; to serve God only with the soul would be against our human nature.” (Pope Francis 15th August 2019)

Say a Hail Mary on the large bead and then – on each small bead say

Mary, pray for us now and at the time of death, amen.

- on the next large bead – say: Glory be to the Father

Mary, Queen of heaven and earth



Above the main altar in the Basilica of the Annunciation, Nazareth

“From the earliest ages of the catholic church a Christian people, whether in time of triumph or more especially in time of crisis, has addressed prayers of petition and hymns of praise and veneration to the Queen of Heaven. And never has that hope wavered which they placed in the Mother of the Divine King, Jesus Christ; nor has that faith ever failed by which we are taught that Mary, the Virgin Mother of God, reigns with a mother's solicitude over the entire world, just as she is crowned in heavenly blessedness with the glory of a Queen.” Pope Pius XII (1954)

Read and reflect -

In Britain we are familiar with royalty and, in this time of crisis, we look to them for a sense of leadership. Queen Elizabeth II spoke to a nation in lockdown in stirring terms:

“The moments when the United Kingdom has come together to applaud its care and essential workers will be remembered as an expression of our national spirit; and its symbol will be the rainbows drawn by children. Across the Commonwealth and around the world, we have seen heart-warming stories of people coming together to help others, be it through delivering food parcels and medicines, checking on neighbours, or converting businesses to help the relief effort. And though self-isolating may at times be hard, many people of all faiths, and of none, are discovering that it presents an opportunity to slow down, pause and reflect, in prayer or meditation.” (Address to the nation, Palm Sunday 2020).

Queen Elizabeth has been able to capture the symbol of service that true leadership should show; as Jesus said at the Last Supper, “if I, your Master and Lord have washed your feet, you should wash each other's feet” (John 13: 14). She encourages us to reflect or meditate on these challenging days that we are better than the pain that drags us down. Even our action of self-isolating or shielding can actually help and stand brightly as a guide to others-we are ALL trying to do our bit, no matter how small. Another inspirational national leader, President Michael D Higgins expressed the feelings of the nation when faced with death and pain; death diminishes each of us:

“The pain of losing a loved one to this cruel disease has been compounded for so many by the inability of friends and family to offer consolation and support in the way we usually would. The shake of a hand, a sympathetic touch, a comforting embrace, even our physical presence for those few days following a sudden loss, are not available to us for the very good reason that we are all involved in slowing and overcoming the virus. To those of you, too, who have loved ones in intensive care or who are waiting for results of a test, we offer our solidarity.” (President Higgins Radio Address 2nd April 2020).

Say a Hail Mary on the large bead and then – on each small bead say

Mary, Queen of heaven, rejoice. Alleluia. Pray to God for us, Alleluia.

- on the next large bead – say: Glory be to the Father

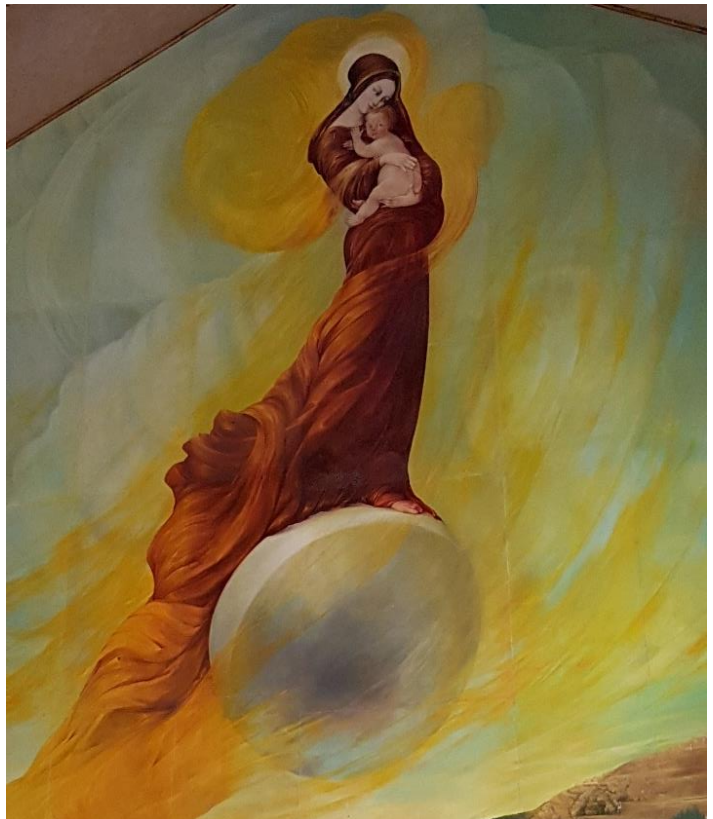
The leadership of Mary is exemplified in service; as both the President and the Queen have shown us, we are called to be there for each other. In looking at the life of Mary in scripture, we see one who listens to God's word with total faith; she is there to bring concrete expressions of support and help. Mary is the one who is there for each one of us. As we strive to make the reign of God real in the world, Mary is our friend and Queen. Let us pray during these difficult days with our Pope, who gives us all a living example of servant-leadership:

We pray -

O Mary,
you always shine on our path
as a sign of salvation and of hope.
We entrust ourselves to you,
Health of the Sick,
who at the cross took part in Jesus' pain,
keeping your faith firm.

You, Salvation of the Roman People,
know what we need,
and we are sure you will provide
so that, as in Cana of Galilee,
we may return to joy and to feasting
after this time of trial.

Help us, Mother of Divine Love,
to conform to the will of the Father
and to do as we are told by Jesus,
who has taken upon himself our sufferings
and carried our sorrows
to lead us, through the cross,
to the joy of the resurrection. Amen.



In the Church of the Visitation, Ein Karem,
Jerusalem.