



## Teaching the Luminous Mysteries of the Rosary

By Page McKean Zyromski

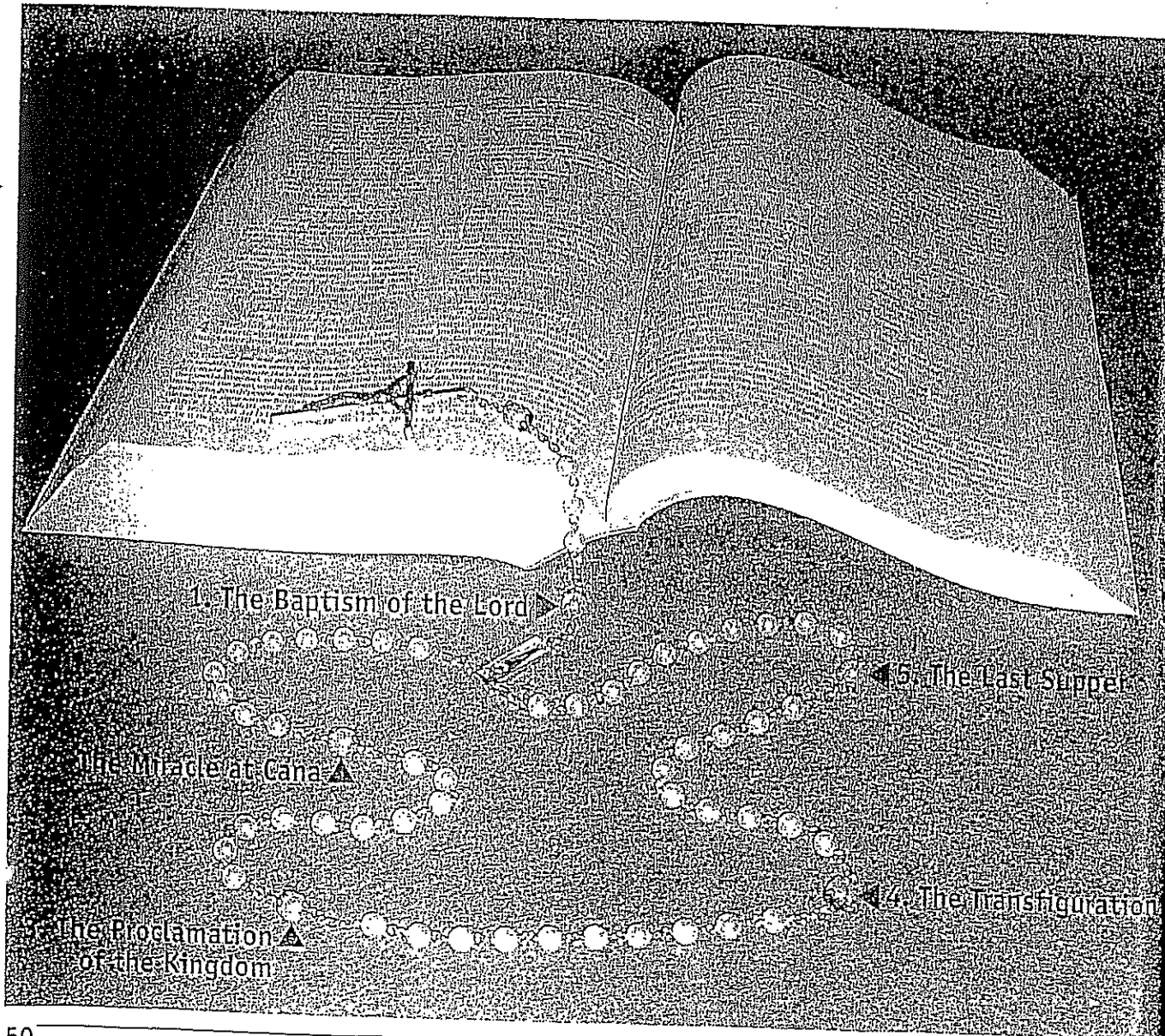
In October 2002, Pope John Paul II introduced a new set of mysteries of the rosary. In teaching the five new mysteries, the biggest favor we can do for our students is to help them meditate on the Bible stories behind each mystery. The rosary is intended, after all, to provide us with a simple way to ponder the key events in Jesus' life. As he has done throughout his whole pontificate, Pope John Paul II is encouraging us to get back to the Scriptures.

Should we call these new mysteries the "Mysteries of Light" or the "Luminous" Mysteries? Both terms are being used. Advocates of "Luminous" say the word is an adjective that fits neatly with the names of the other mysteries of the

rosary: Joyful, Sorrowful, and Glorious. Promoters of "Mysteries of Light" point out that this title opens the rosary for other cycles of meditations based on our Lord's life and ministry: "Mysteries of Healing," for instance, or "Mysteries of Discipleship." Myself, I like the latter title, for the reasons given above and for the fact that it's simpler to explain to children. Choose for yourself.

The new mysteries of the rosary and some Scripture citations are: (1) the Baptism of the Lord (Matthew 3:13-17); (2) the Miracle at Cana (John 2:1-11); (3) the Proclamation of the Kingdom (Matthew 5-7); (4) the Transfiguration (Luke 9:28-36); and (5) the Last Supper (Matthew 26:17-30; John 13). Other passages in the Gospels give slightly different slants on these events in Jesus' life. The Proclamation of the Kingdom, for example, is such a rich gold mine that there are many ways to approach it with your classes.

How to begin? First, we want to convey to our students the excitement of having the first "official" changes in the rosary in five hundred years, even though this prayer form has always invited us to meditation on other mysteries. In 1973, for instance, the Catholic bishops encouraged such





flexibility in their pastoral letter *Behold Your Mother*: "Besides the precise rosary pattern long known to Catholics, we can freely experiment," they wrote. "New sets of mysteries are possible. We have customarily gone from the childhood of Jesus to His Passion, bypassing the whole public life. There is rich matter here for rosary meditation" (#97). It is exactly this "rich matter" that the pope placed before us when he proclaimed October 2002 to October 2003 as the Year of the Rosary.

Second, after reading one story at a time from your classroom Bible, teach key words and quotes found in each story. Here are some starters (Scripture quotes are from the New Revised Standard Version translation of the Bible):

#### 1. The Baptism of the Lord

*Key words:* Jordan River, John the Baptist, dove

*Quotes:* "I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals" (Mark 1:7). "This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17).

#### 2. The Miracle at Cana

*Key words:* wedding, Cana, Galilee, water to wine, six stone water jars

*Quotes:* "My hour has not yet come" (John 2:4). "Do whatever he tells you" (John 2:5). "You have kept the good wine until now" (John 2:10).

#### 3. The Proclamation of the Kingdom

*Key words:* Beatitudes, Sermon on the Mount; the Lord's Prayer

*Quotes:* "Blessed are the poor in spirit" (Matthew 5:3). "You are the salt of the earth" (Matthew 5:13). "You are the light of the world" (Matthew 5:14). "Our Father who art in heaven" (see Matthew 6:9).

#### 4. The Transfiguration

*Key words:* Peter, James, and John; Moses and Elijah; Mt. Tabor

*Quotes:* "Lord, it is good for us to be here! Let us make three dwellings" (Mark 9:5). "This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him" (Matthew 17:5).

#### 5. The Last Supper

*Key words:* Passover, upper room, reclining at table, washing of feet, Judas

*Quotes:* "This is my body" (Mark 14:22). "This is my blood" (Mark 14:24). "Surely not I, Lord" (Matthew 26:22).

You might also help children to learn and remember key words associated with each mystery by creating mobiles. Take five sturdy plastic-coated plates and punch evenly spaced holes about one inch from the rim. Then hang around the rim key words or pictures of symbols, each tied to a separate thread of varying length. Run another thread through a hole in the center of the plate to hang the mobile. In a similar way, you could simply attach quotes and key words to one long horizontal strip of cardboard with the name of the mystery written on it.

Here are two other games you can play while introducing these new mysteries:

1. Flashlight: This game piggybacks on the word "light." Have the class sit in a circle. Give each student an index card on which one of the new mysteries has been written. It

doesn't matter how many of each mystery you hand out as long as one of each is included in the game. (Be sure you do not pass out the cards in the order of the mysteries.) Tell the children to begin passing the index cards to the right while you flash the light where they can all see it, perhaps on the floor. When you say "Stop," turn off the light and call out the name of one of the mysteries. The children holding index cards with that mystery on it tell the class some fact about the stories behind the mystery. Keep on playing until you have talked about all five mysteries. Then challenge the students to arrange the mysteries in order.

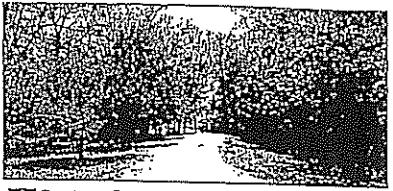
2. Walking the Mysteries: This game works best if your class already knows the 15 traditional mysteries. Take 20 inexpensive white paper plates and place them on the floor in a big circle with plenty of room between them. Have students step on them like stepping stones, while naming all 20 of the mysteries as they go. (You may want to tape the plates to the floor to keep the students from slipping and falling.)

The biggest challenge, of course, in teaching these mysteries of the rosary is to help your students love the rosary as a prayer form. This, as they say, is "caught not taught." It seems to me that we can succeed only if we love the rosary ourselves and model praying it. We should go slowly, taking only one decade at a time and introducing each new mystery by adding a short spontaneous prayer. Examples: "Help me to do whatever you tell me, Lord Jesus," for the Miracle at Cana, or "Thank you, Lord Jesus, for showing your glory to your special friends" for the Transfiguration.

And these little prayers, it goes without saying, come as the fruit of our own prayer life.

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