

For Me, To Live is Christ

Rosarium Virginis Mariae Lecture Five

##26-31

A Proposed Addition ...

- * In the course of those mysteries [of Light] we contemplate important aspects of the person of Christ as the definitive revelation of God. Declared the beloved Son of the Father at the Baptism in the Jordan, Christ is the one who announces the coming of the Kingdom, bears witness to it in his works and proclaims its demands.
- * It is during the years of his public ministry that the mystery of Christ is most evidently a mystery of light: “While I am in the world, I am the light of the world” (Jn 9:5) RVM #19





The Rhythm of the
Rosary helps us
remember the Truth of
who we are ... our
identity before God.

Each mystery of the Rosary,
carefully meditated,
sheds light
on the mystery of man.

For Me, To Live is Christ



- * Although the repeated Hail Mary is addressed directly to Mary, it is to Jesus that the act of love is ultimately directed, with her and through her. The repetition is nourished by the desire to be conformed ever more completely to Christ, the true program of the Christian life. #26
- * Contemplation in the Catholic Tradition is aimed at a new way of life
- * We become, and therefore live, what we behold in prayer.
- * The Rosary is aimed at assimilating the life of Christ into our own daily life
- * By recalling what Mary contemplated in this prayer, the life of Christ takes hold in us.

Contemplation and the Human Vocation

Jesus Christ ... in the very revelation of the mystery of the Father and of his love, makes man fully manifest to himself and brings to light his exalted vocation. (GS 22 as cited in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1701)

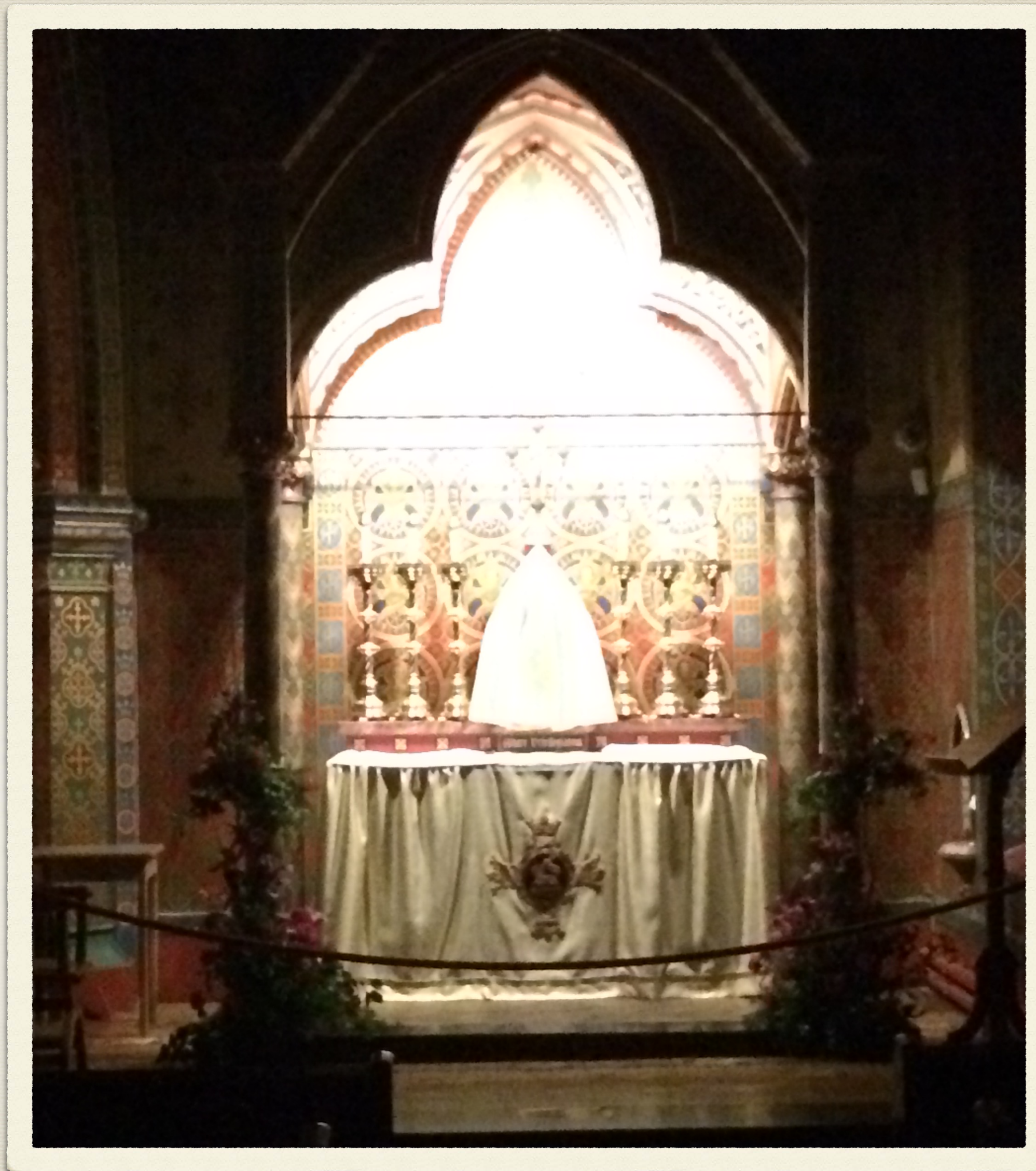


Contemplation of God

Life of Humanity

The glory of God is the living man, and the life of man is the vision of God. If what God shows of Himself in creation brings life to all life on earth, how much more is brought to life in those who see God when the Word reveals the Father

(Adversus Haereses IV, 20, 7).



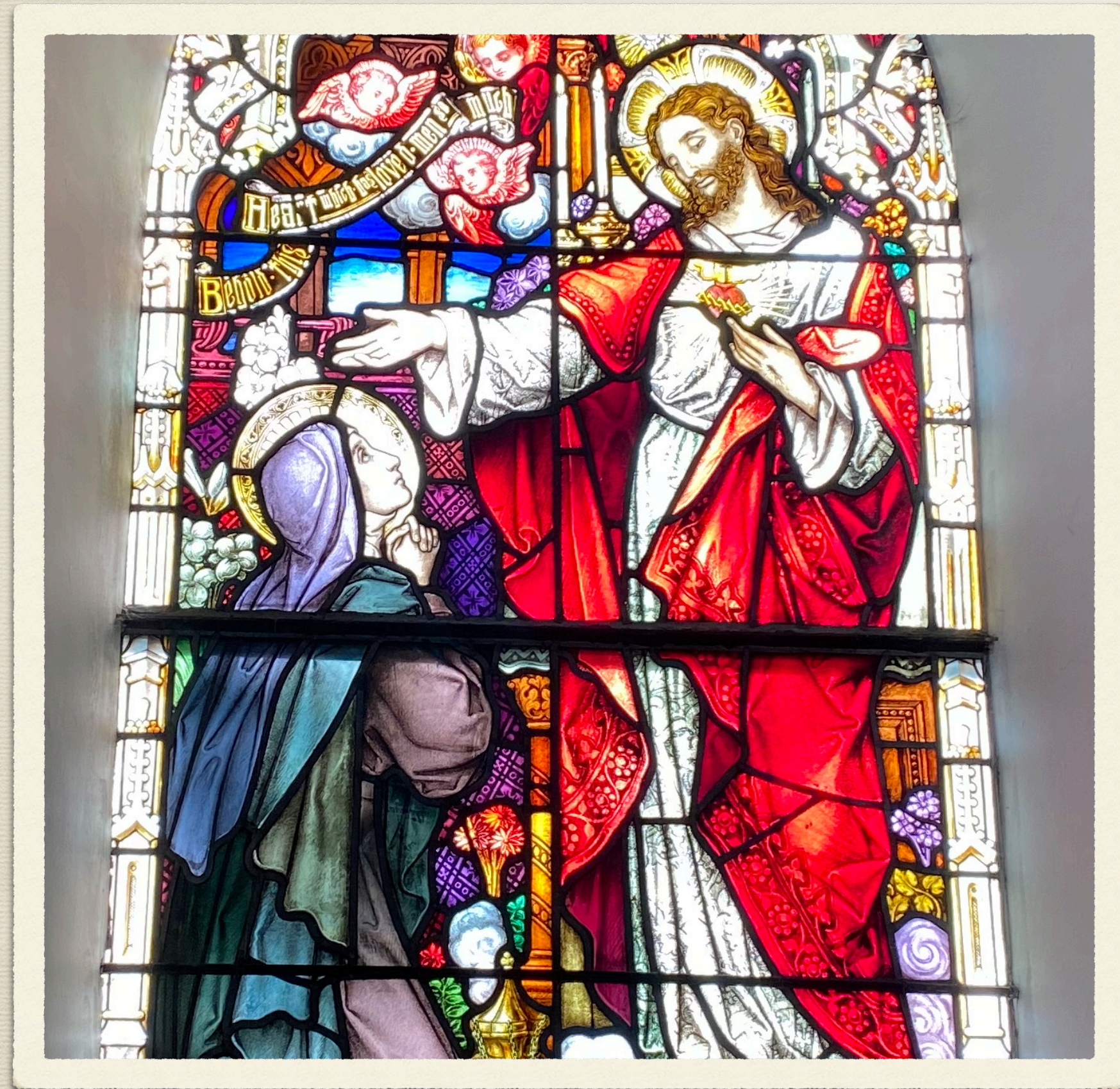
Christian Contemplation Spiritualizes Human Existence

- * Original Sin has trapped the human heart in the world of the material, visible or what the Scriptures call “fleshly thinking.” But with the grace of Christ, a new kind of thinking becomes possible - where the heart reigns over the earthly drives and dreams that would otherwise threaten its integrity. The Bible calls this kind of thinking “fresh, spiritual thinking.”
- * “You must lay aside your former way of life and the old self which deteriorates through illusion and desire, and acquire a fresh, spiritual way of thinking. You must put on that new man created in God’s image, whose justice and holiness are born of truth.” Ephesians 4:22-24
- * The contemplation opened up by the Rosary is an aid in acquiring this fresh, spiritual way of thinking because it helps us see Jesus Christ - who is the New Man. “For me, to live is Christ” Phil. 1:21

Meditation of Assimilation

- * Meditation on the mysteries of Christ is proposed in the Rosary by means of a method designed to assist in their assimilation.
- * It is a method based on repetition. This applies above all to the Hail Mary, repeated ten times in each mystery.
- * As an outpouring of that love which tirelessly returns to the person loved with expressions similar in their content but ever fresh in terms of the feeling pervading them. #26

The Dynamic of Love in the Rosary



- * In Christ, God has truly assumed a “heart of flesh”. Not only does God have a divine heart, rich in mercy and in forgiveness, but also a human heart, capable of all the stirrings of affection....
- * To understand the Rosary (and its repetitive character), one has to enter into the psychological dynamic proper to love.
- * The Rosary helps us to be conformed ever more closely to Christ until we attain true holiness.

Forms of Mystical Silence in the Rhythms of the Rosary

- * We should not be surprised that our relationship with Christ makes use of a method. God communicates himself to us respecting our human nature and its vital rhythms.
- * Hence, while Christian spirituality is familiar with the most sublime forms of mystical silence in which images, words and gestures are all, so to speak, superseded by an intense and ineffable union with God, it normally engages the whole person in all his complex psychological, physical and relational reality.



Mystical Silences and all the Dimensions of the Person

- * Just as “Sacraments and sacramentals are structured as a series of rites which bring into play all the dimensions of the person,” so too “non-liturgical prayer” such as the Rosary.
- * This is confirmed by the fact that, in the East, the most characteristic prayer of Christological meditation, centered on the words “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner” is traditionally linked to the rhythm of breathing; while this practice favors perseverance in the prayer, it also in some way embodies the desire for Christ to become the breath, the soul and the “all” of one's life. #27

Non-Christian Methods of Meditation

- * The West is now experiencing a renewed demand for meditation, which at times leads to a keen interest in aspects of other religions. Some Christians, limited in their knowledge of the Christian contemplative tradition, are attracted by those forms of prayer.
- * While the latter contain many elements which are positive and at times compatible with Christian experience, they are often based on ultimately unacceptable premises.
- * Much in vogue among these approaches are methods aimed at attaining a high level of spiritual concentration by using techniques of a psychophysical, repetitive and symbolic nature.
- * The Rosary is situated within this broad gamut of religious phenomena, but it is distinguished by characteristics of its own which correspond to specifically Christian requirements. #28

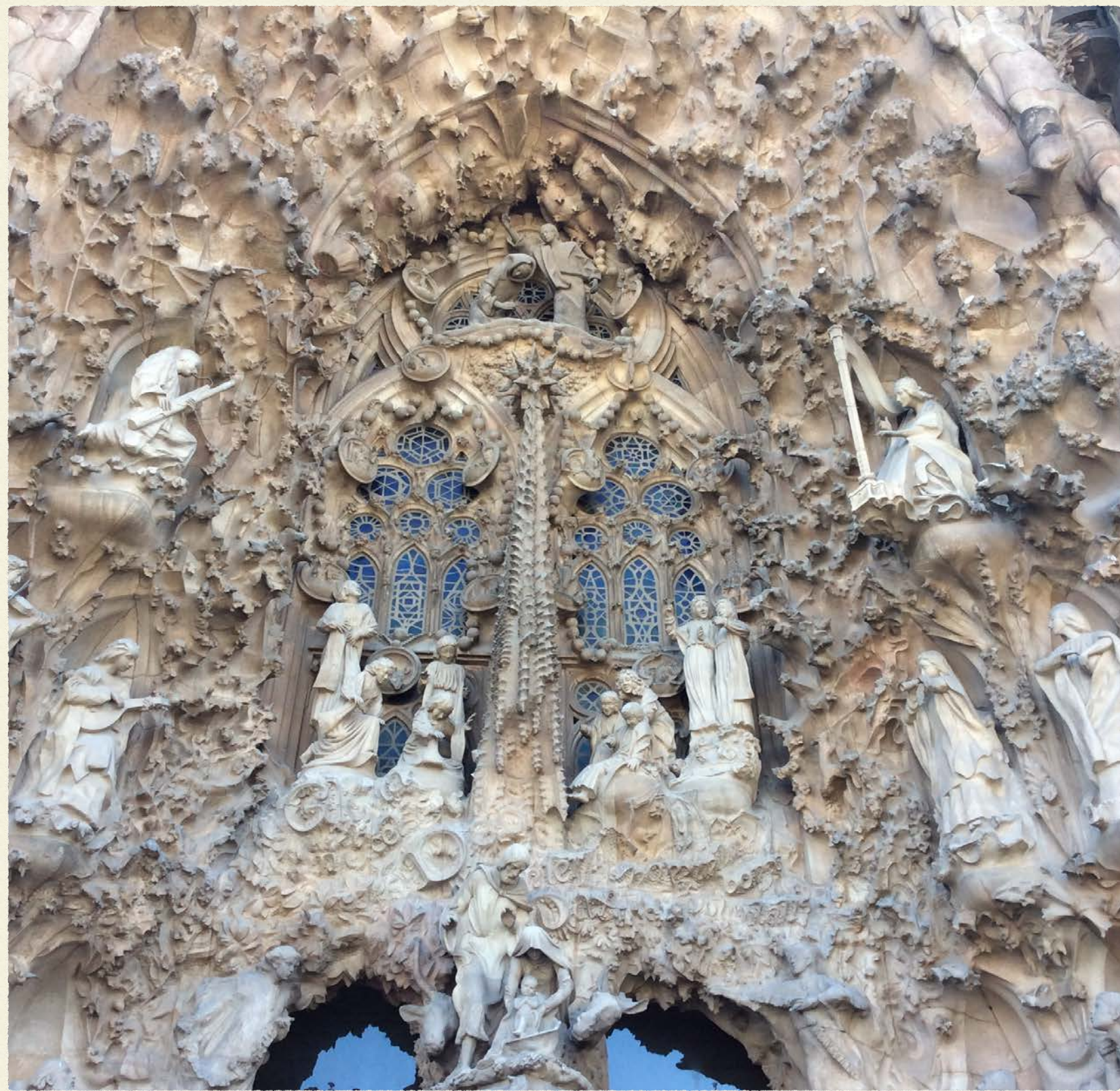


The Primacy of Faith over Method

In the Catholic Tradition of Contemplation, method is subordinated to God's action through our Living Faith in Him.



The Rosary as a Method



- * **As a method, it serves as a means to an end and cannot become an end in itself.**
- * This is not to say, however, that the method cannot be improved. Such is the intent of the addition of the new series of mysteria lucis ... intended to help the faithful to understand it **in the richness of its symbolism and in harmony with the demands of daily life.**

Compositio Loci - Incarnational Contemplation

- * Composition of place can be internal and external —
 - * External: best when praying the Rosary to have sacred images, a candle, a Crucifix. (St. Francis of Assisi's Nativity scenes or stations of the Cross)
 - * Internal: the use of the imagination whereby we allow we use our internal powers to make the memories of Mary alive in our hearts (The exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola)
- * "This is a methodology, moreover, which corresponds to the inner logic of the Incarnation: in Jesus, God wanted to take on human features. It is through his bodily reality that we are led into contact with the mystery of his divinity." #29

The Rosary and *Lectio Divina*

- * Saint John Paul II explains that the Rosary is no substitute for Lectio Divina - but presupposes this practice of prayerfully reading the Scripture and studying the Bible.
- * *Lectio Divina* is the practice of prayerfully reading the Scriptures, taking time to ponder their meaning, and with discernment appropriating them to one's own life before God. For the Carthusians, the practice is progressive - from simple reading to deep contemplation:
 - * This method of prayer begins with reading (lectio) in the presence of God and moves on to thinking about the passage (meditatio) in the light of His Holy Presence and one's own life.
 - * As one ponders a passage, the heart is moved with holy desires - articulating these desires in the forms of petitions is prayer (oratio). Here, the prayer moves from thinking about God to speaking to Him.
 - * As prayer is poured from the heart, a great silence is entered and this place of awareness of the presence of God is contemplation (contemplatio). Human words give way to movements of heart no words can express.
- * In the Rule of St. Benedict, this practice is associated with *conversatio morum*, a ongoing commitment to bring every aspect of one's life into dialogue with the Gospel of Christ.

The Bible and the Rosary

- * In order to supply a Biblical foundation and greater depth to our meditation, it is helpful to follow the announcement of the mystery with the proclamation of a related Biblical passage, long or short, depending on the circumstances.
- * No other words can ever match the efficacy of the inspired word. As we listen, we are certain that this is the word of God, spoken for today and spoken “for me”.
- * If received in this way, the word of God can become part of the Rosary's methodology of repetition without giving rise to the ennui derived from the simple recollection of something already well known.
- * It is not a matter of recalling information but of allowing God to speak. In certain solemn communal celebrations, this word can be appropriately illustrated by a brief commentary. #30



The Rosary and Silence

- * Listening and meditation are nourished by silence. After the announcement of the mystery and the proclamation of the word, it is fitting to pause and focus one's attention for a suitable period of time on the mystery concerned, before moving into vocal prayer.
- * **A discovery of the importance of silence is one of the secrets of practicing contemplation and meditation.**
- * **One drawback of a society dominated by technology and the mass media is the fact that silence becomes increasingly difficult to achieve.**
- * Just as moments of silence are recommended in the Liturgy, so too in the recitation of the Rosary it is fitting to pause briefly after listening to the word of God, while the mind focuses on the content of a particular mystery. #31



Next Week ##32-43 and our
concluding conversation