

Sports Themed Reflections on the Mysteries of the Holy Rosary

The Rosary is a form of prayer and devotion that refers to a series of prayers focused on the life of Christ from the scriptures. Dedicated to Mary and asking for her intercession through a repetition of prayers that include the Our Father, Hail Mary and Glory Be, the devotion is particularly popular in the tradition of the Catholic Church. Though not required, it is most often prayed using the strand of beads bearing the devotion's name, with each bead representing one of the prayers. The beads of the Rosary are divided into five sections (called "decades") and each decade represents an event from the life of Christ. These five events are grouped into a set of Mysteries, each with five events. The four Mysteries (Joyful, Sorrowful, Glorious, Luminous) focus on an important part of the life of Christ. Those who pray these prayers can meditate on the individual mysteries and the life of Christ as a whole while connecting them to their own faith journey.

Play Like a Champion encourages teams to pray the rosary together. Looking for a special way to pray the Rosary? Try bringing a **Living Rosary** to your sport team. This beautiful prayer service takes some preparation and practice, but many find it makes for a powerful and prayerful tradition. A living rosary is when people are used to represent each bead of the rosary. Each person leads one prayer of the rosary. Gather your athletes (61 spots in all) to embody the Rosary. If you have fewer than 61 people, you may double-up duties.

This document includes meditations on all four sets of Mysteries of the Rosary, with a scripture verse related to each mystery and a reflection designed to connect that mystery to the athlete's individual and team experience. This can be a powerful way for teams to pray together and to help athletes reflect on God's presence in their sports experience.

The **LUMINOUS MYSTERIES** of the Rosary

Traditionally prayed on Thursdays throughout the year, these "Mysteries of Light" were added by Pope St. John Paul II in 2002. They focus on the life and ministry of Jesus Christ.

1. The Baptism of Our Lord in the Jordan (Matthew 3:13-16)

¹³ Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. ¹⁴ But John tried to deter him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" ¹⁵ Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." Then John consented. ¹⁶ As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him.

Reflection: Every athlete can have a "heaven opening" experience when you excel... work towards becoming the best version of yourself that God created you to be. Baptism is a cleansing of sin enabling a new birth into a deeper life with Christ. The heavens opened following Jesus' Baptism. As an athlete, where are you right now in need of "cleansing" or re-imagining your game so that the heavens will open for you and deliver God's spirit to you?

2. The Wedding Feast at Cana (John 2:1-11)

On the third day, a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there,² and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding.³ When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no more wine."⁴ "Woman, why do you involve me?" Jesus replied. "My hour has not yet come."⁵ His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."⁶ Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons.⁷ Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water"; so they filled them to the brim.⁸ Then he told them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet." They did so,⁹ and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realize where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew. Then he called the bridegroom aside¹⁰ and said, "Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now."¹¹ What Jesus did here in Cana of Galilee was the first of the signs through which he revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

Reflection: How will you "reveal your Glory"? God, who endowed us with gifts and attributes to serve our teams and our communities in order to bring about His Kingdom, uniquely creates each of us. What distinctive gifts "reveal your glory" as an athlete playing for the greater glory of God?

3. The Proclamation of the Kingdom of Heaven (Mark 1:14-15)

After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God.¹⁵ "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!"

Reflection: God's kingdom is not far away, above us in the heavens. The kingdom is up to us to create with justice, mercy, compassion, care, love, concern for all. How can we, individually as athletes and together as a team, bring the Kingdom to our team and the game?

4. The Transfiguration of Our Lord (Matthew 17:1-8)

After six days Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves.² There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light.³ Just then there appeared before them Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus.⁴ Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah."⁵ While he was still speaking, a bright cloud covered them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!"⁶ When the disciples heard this, they fell facedown to the ground, terrified.⁷ But Jesus came and touched them. "Get up," he said. "Don't be afraid."⁸ When they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus.

Reflection: The athletic road has real challenges and clear difficulties. With Christ, anything is possible. Imagine Jesus looking directly at you and speaking directly to you: “You are my son/daughter with whom I am well pleased. How would Christ be pleased with you? How are you living God’s gifts on your team? Rest in the knowledge that you are spiritually protected so the words “Be Not Afraid” are believed in your heart.

5. The Institution of the Eucharist at the Last Supper (Matthew 26)

On the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread, the disciples came to Jesus and asked, “Where do you want us to make preparations for you to eat the Passover?” ¹⁸ He replied, “Go into the city to a certain man and tell him, ‘The Teacher says: My appointed time is near. I am going to celebrate the Passover with my disciples at your house.’” ¹⁹ So the disciples did as Jesus had directed them and prepared the Passover. ²⁰ When evening came, Jesus was reclining at the table with the Twelve. ²¹ And while they were eating, he said, “Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me.” ²² They were very sad and began to say to him one after the other, “Surely you don’t mean me, Lord?” ²³ Jesus replied, “The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with me will betray me. ²⁴ The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him. But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born.” ²⁵ Then Judas, the one who would betray him, said, “Surely you don’t mean me, Rabbi?” Jesus answered, “You have said so.” ²⁶ While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, “Take and eat; this is my body.” ²⁷ Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you. ²⁸ This is my blood of the ^[b] covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. ²⁹ I tell you, I will not drink from this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.”

Reflection: The Eucharist is the foundation of our faith – the bread that gives us real strength. It is the proof of Christ’s love and the most powerful means of fostering His love in us. As we receive the body and blood of Christ, we become Christ’s hands and feet in this world. How does the Eucharist nourish you to be Christ for your teammates? How can you be Christ for your opponents? For the Officials? For all in our sport community?

The JOYFUL MYSTERIES of the Holy Rosary

Traditionally prayed on Mondays and Saturdays. These mysteries focus on the coming of Jesus into the world through the infancy narratives of Jesus and his youth.

1. The Annunciation of Gabriel to the Virgin Mary (Luke 1:26-38)

In the sixth month of Elizabeth’s pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, ²⁷ to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin’s name was Mary. ²⁸ The angel went to her and said, “Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.” ²⁹ Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting

this might be.³⁰ But the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God.³¹ You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus.³² He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David,³³ and he will reign over Jacob’s descendants forever; his kingdom will never end.”³⁴ “How will this be,” Mary asked the angel, “since I am a virgin?”³⁵ The angel answered, “The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called^[a] the Son of God.³⁶ Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month.³⁷ For no word from God will ever fail.”³⁸ “I am the Lord’s servant,” Mary answered. “May your word to me be fulfilled.” Then the angel left her.

Reflection: Remember a time you received news that filled you with anxiety. Perhaps your coach called you into a game at a critical time or when you learned you would be facing your toughest opponent in the play-off’s. Believe that God is standing with you in the uncertainty and fear. Have the courage like Mary to say “Yes” to these difficult invitations, despite your fear.

2. The Visitation of Virgin Mary to Elizabeth (Luke 1:39-56)

At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea⁴⁰ where she entered Zechariah’s home and greeted Elizabeth.⁴¹ When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.⁴² In a loud voice she exclaimed: “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear!⁴³ But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?⁴⁴ As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy.⁴⁵ Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill his promises to her!”

Reflection: Sport teams can be like a family. Think of a teammate who has become a trusted confidante, as close as a brother or sister. Like Mary and Elizabeth, in these close relationships, we can encourage each other, be there for one another in good times and times of challenge. This love for our teammates is reflective of God’s unconditional love for us. Express to a special teammate that s/he is “blessed.”

3. The Birth of Jesus (Luke 2:1-21)

In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world.² (This was the first census that took place while^[a] Quirinius was governor of Syria.)³ And everyone went to their own town to register.⁴ So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of

David.⁵ He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child.⁶ While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born,⁷ and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.⁸ And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night.⁹ An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.¹⁰ But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people.”¹¹ Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord.¹² This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”¹³ Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,¹⁴ “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”¹⁵ When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.”¹⁶ So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger.¹⁷ When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child,¹⁸ and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them.¹⁹ But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.²⁰ The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.²¹ On the eighth day, when it was time to circumcise the child, he was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he was conceived.

Reflection: Pope Francis reminds us that sports should be an opportunity for friendly encounters between peoples and contribute to peace in the world. Together with your team, praise God for the opportunity to play sport and make a commitment to create a team culture that is positive, joyful and contributes peace to all whom you encounter.

4. The Presentation of Our Lord in the Temple at Jerusalem (Luke 2:22-38)

When the time came for the purification rites required by the Law of Moses, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord²³ (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, “Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord”^[a]),²⁴ and to offer a sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the Law of the Lord: “a pair of doves or two young pigeons.”^[b]²⁵ Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was on him.²⁶ It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord’s Messiah.²⁷ Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required,²⁸ Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying:²⁹ “Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you may now dismiss^[c] your servant in peace.³⁰ For my eyes have seen your salvation,³¹ which you have prepared in the sight of all nations: ³²a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the

glory of your people Israel.”³³ The child’s father and mother marveled at what was said about him.³⁴ Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: “This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against,³⁵ so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too.”³⁶ There was also a prophet, Anna, the daughter of Penuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage,³⁷ and then was a widow until she was eighty-four.^[d] She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying.³⁸ Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.

Reflection: Rituals are very important for athletes. Think of your pre-game meal or the music you play in the locker room to fire your team up. These customs are essential to your preparation and team experience. What do we already do, or what can we plan to do, to build team rituals dedicated to honoring God?

5. The Finding of the Child Jesus in the Temple at Jerusalem (Luke 2:41-52)

Every year Jesus’ parents went to Jerusalem for the Festival of the Passover.⁴² When he was twelve years old, they went up to the festival, according to the custom.⁴³ After the festival was over, while his parents were returning home, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but they were unaware of it.⁴⁴ Thinking he was in their company, they traveled on for a day. Then they began looking for him among their relatives and friends.⁴⁵ When they did not find him, they went back to Jerusalem to look for him.⁴⁶ After three days they found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions.⁴⁷ Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers.⁴⁸ When his parents saw him, they were astonished. His mother said to him, “Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you.”⁴⁹ “Why were you searching for me?” he asked. “Didn’t you know I had to be in my Father’s house?”^[a]⁵⁰ But they did not understand what he was saying to them.⁵¹ Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. But his mother treasured all these things in her heart.⁵² And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.

Reflection: Think of a time you made a choice that made your coach unhappy. How did s/he react? Even when we feel justified for an action, healthy relationships mean we must communicate with the person in authority. Always show respect for coaches, administrators, officials and keep at the top of your mind that you represent your school community everywhere you go.

The SORROWFUL MYSTERIES of the Rosary

Traditionally prayed on Tuesdays & Fridays; often prayed daily during Lent. These mysteries focus on the passion and death of Jesus Christ.

1. The Agony of Our Lord in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26:36-56)

Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, “Sit here while I go over there and pray.” ³⁷ He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled.³⁸ Then he said to them, “My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me.” ³⁹ Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, “My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.” ⁴⁰ Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. “Couldn’t you men keep watch with me for one hour?” he asked Peter. ⁴¹ “Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.” ⁴² He went away a second time and prayed, “My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done.” ⁴³ When he came back, he again found them sleeping, because their eyes were heavy. ⁴⁴ So he left them and went away once more and prayed the third time, saying the same thing. ⁴⁵ Then he returned to the disciples and said to them, “Are you still sleeping and resting? Look, the hour has come, and the Son of Man is delivered into the hands of sinners. ⁴⁶ Rise! Let us go! Here comes my betrayer!”

Jesus Arrested

⁴⁷ While he was still speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, arrived. With him was a large crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests and the elders of the people. ⁴⁸ Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them: “The one I kiss is the man; arrest him.” ⁴⁹ Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, “Greetings, Rabbi!” and kissed him. ⁵⁰ Jesus replied, “Do what you came for, friend.”^[a] Then the men stepped forward, seized Jesus and arrested him. ⁵¹ With that, one of Jesus’ companions reached for his sword, drew it out and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear. ⁵² “Put your sword back in its place,” Jesus said to him, “for all who draw the sword will die by the sword. ⁵³ Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels? ⁵⁴ But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way?” ⁵⁵ In that hour Jesus said to the crowd, “Am I leading a rebellion, that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me? Every day I sat in the temple courts teaching, and you did not arrest me. ⁵⁶ But this has all taken place that the writings of the prophets might be fulfilled.” Then all the disciples deserted him and fled.

Reflection: We are often like the disciples...hanging back without giving our full effort and energy to our team. Inspire us, Jesus, to be more like you by putting our whole heart and full energy into our team so that we can become all that you created us to be.

OR

Reflection: As an athlete, you may have felt betrayed by a coach, a teammate or a game situation. Perhaps you didn't get the starting position when you felt you deserved the spot or maybe a teammate betrayed your trust and shared something with others that you wanted kept confidential or an official made a bad call. Pray for the fortitude to not react with anger or violence. In the example of Christ's response in the Garden, pray to respond with forgiveness and acceptance.

2. Our Lord is Scourged at the Pillar (Matthew 27:26)

Then he released Barabbas to them. But he had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified.

Reflection: There are days when we feel "beat up" as an athlete...sore muscles, an exhausted will, or an injury that takes us out of play can be devastating. Pray for the strength to accept these pains by "offering them up" to God.

3. Our Lord is Crowned with Thorns (Matthew 27:27-31)

Then the governor's soldiers took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole company of soldiers around him. ²⁸They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, ²⁹and then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on his head. They put a staff in his right hand. Then they knelt in front of him and mocked him. "Hail, king of the Jews!" they said. ³⁰They spit on him, and took the staff and struck him on the head again and again. ³¹After they had mocked him, they took off the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him.

Reflection: Have you or a teammate been mocked or insulted by an opponent? These experiences are humiliating, hurtful and unjust. They should never happen, but if they do, dedicate yourself to always play with fairness, never stooping to retaliate. As children of God, we are created to lift others up and never tear down. Dedicate your team to living the golden rule: do unto others as you have them do unto you.

4. Our Lord Carries the Cross to Calvary (Matthew 27:32)

They were going out, they met a man from Cyrene, named Simon, and they forced him to carry the cross.

Reflection: When we see someone struggling...a teammate who is challenged to complete conditioning or having a hard time learning a new play or an opponent who has been knocked down during a game, become Simon for him/her. Don't wait to be asked, jump in and lend a supportive hand to help him/her up, give a positive encouraging word or hug. When you do this for someone, you are extending this kindness to and for Christ.

5. The Crucifixion of Our Lord (Matthew 27:33-56)

And when they were come unto a place called Golgotha, that is to say, a place of a skull, ³⁴They gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall: and when he had tasted thereof, he would not drink. ³⁵And they crucified him, and parted his garments, casting lots: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots. ³⁶And sitting down they watched him there; ³⁷And set up over his head his accusation written, THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS. ³⁸Then were there two thieves crucified with him, one on the right hand, and another on the left. ³⁹And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads, ⁴⁰And saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross. ⁴¹Likewise also the chief priests mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said, ⁴²He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. ⁴³He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God. ⁴⁴The thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth. ⁴⁵Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour. ⁴⁶And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? ⁴⁷Some of them that stood there, when they heard that, said, This man calleth for Elias. ⁴⁸And straightway one of them ran, and took a sponge, and filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink. ⁴⁹The rest said, Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to save him. ⁵⁰Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. ⁵¹And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; ⁵²And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, ⁵³And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many. ⁵⁴Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God. ⁵⁵And many women were there beholding afar off, which followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering unto him: ⁵⁶Among which was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedees children.

Reflection: We all have felt the crushing agony of total defeat as an athlete....losing a race, missing the final shot at the game buzzer. Remember through Christ's darkest moment, his death, he created the most awesome act of all time – the Resurrection. Embrace St. Paul's words, "for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For

when I am weak, then I am strong.” 1 Cor 12: 10. With the proper attitude, defeat can propel us to new heights of excellence.

The GLORIOUS MYSTERIES of the Rosary

Traditionally prayed on Wednesdays and Sundays through the year. These mysteries focus on the Resurrection and Ascension of Christ into heaven, as well as the descent of the Holy Spirit and Mary’s eternal place in heaven, where she intercedes for us as the “Queen of Heaven and Earth.”

1. The Resurrection of Our Lord (John 20:1-29)

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. ² So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don’t know where they have put him!” ³ So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. ⁴ Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵ He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. ⁶ Then Simon Peter came along behind him and went straight into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, ⁷ as well as the cloth that had been wrapped around Jesus’ head. The cloth was still lying in its place, separate from the linen. ⁸ Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. ⁹ (They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.) ¹⁰ Then the disciples went back to where they were staying.

Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene

¹¹ Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb ¹² and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus’ body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot. ¹³ They asked her, “Woman, why are you crying?” “They have taken my Lord away,” she said, “and I don’t know where they have put him.” ¹⁴ At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus. ¹⁵ He asked her, “Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?” Thinking he was the gardener, she said, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him.” ¹⁶ Jesus said to her, “Mary.” She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, “Rabboni!” (which means “Teacher”). ¹⁷ Jesus said, “Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’” ¹⁸ Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: “I have seen the Lord!” And she told them that he had said these things to her.

Jesus Appears to His Disciples

¹⁹ On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" ²⁰ After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. ²¹ Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." ²² And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ If you forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."

Jesus Appears to Thomas

²⁴ Now Thomas (also known as Didymus^[a]), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. ²⁵ So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he said to them, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe." ²⁶ A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" ²⁷ Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe." ²⁸ Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!" ²⁹ Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

Reflection: Mary does not recognize the Risen Christ until Jesus calls her by name. With deep respect and love, Mary responds, "Teacher." Athletes have numerous teachers, coaches of the physical skills of sport, but also mentors of character and faith. Thank God for your coaches today and pray for them to model the Ultimate Teacher, Jesus.

2. The Ascension of Our Lord into Heaven (Luke 24:36-53)

While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." ³⁷ They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. ³⁸ He said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? ³⁹ Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have." ⁴⁰ When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. ⁴¹ And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, "Do you have anything here to eat?" ⁴² They gave him a piece of broiled fish, ⁴³ and he took it and ate it in their presence. ⁴⁴ He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms." ⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. ⁴⁶ He told them, "This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷ and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ You are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹ I am going to

send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.”

The Ascension of Jesus

⁵⁰ When he had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, he lifted up his hands and blessed them. ⁵¹ While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven. ⁵² Then they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. ⁵³ And they stayed continually at the temple, praising God.

Reflection: “Believe” is a powerful sport word. Believe in your abilities, believe in your team, believe you can win. Full belief relies on faith and trust in each other. When you are struggling to believe in yourself and your team’s potential, remember the disciples seeing the Risen Jesus ascend into heaven. Believe that with God, all things are possible.

3. The Descent of the Holy Spirit on the Virgin Mary and the Apostles at Pentecost (Acts 2:1-41)

When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place.² Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³ They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. ⁴ All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues^[a] as the Spirit enabled them. ⁵ Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. ⁶ When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. ⁷ Utterly amazed, they asked: “Aren’t all these who are speaking Galileans? ⁸ Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? ⁹ Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia,^[b] ¹⁰ Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome ¹¹ (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!” ¹² Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, “What does this mean?” ¹³ Some, however, made fun of them and said, “They have had too much wine.”

Peter Addresses the Crowd

¹⁴ Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: “Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. ¹⁵ These people are not drunk, as you suppose. It’s only nine in the morning! ¹⁶ No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: ¹⁷ “‘In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. ¹⁸ Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. ¹⁹ I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire

and billows of smoke. ²⁰ The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. ²¹ And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. ²² “Fellow Israelites, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. ²³ This man was handed over to you by God’s deliberate plan and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, ²⁴ put him to death by nailing him to the cross. ²⁵ But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him. ²⁶ David said about him: “‘I saw the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. ²⁷ Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest in hope, ²⁸ because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, you will not let your holy one see decay. ²⁹ You have made known to me the paths of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence. ³⁰ “Fellow Israelites, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day. ³¹ But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne. ³² Seeing what was to come, he spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, that he was not abandoned to the realm of the dead, nor did his body see decay. ³³ God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it. ³⁴ Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear. ³⁵ For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said, “‘The Lord said to my Lord: “‘Sit at my right hand ³⁶ until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.”’ ³⁷ “Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah.” ³⁸ When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?” ³⁹ Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ⁴⁰ The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.” ⁴¹ With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.” ⁴² Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

Reflection: When you need to talk to someone about something or you have a big decision to make, one that will affect not only you, but your team, you can turn to the Holy Spirit. Jesus calls the Holy Spirit the “Advocate”. Turn to the Third Person of the Holy Trinity to receive seven gifts to empower athletes: wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety and wonder of the Lord.

4. The Assumption of the Virgin Mary into Heaven (*Munificentissimus Deus*, Pope Pius XII 1950)

God, who from all eternity regards Mary with a most favorable and unique affection, has "when the fullness of time came" put the plan of his providence into effect in such a way that all the privileges and prerogatives he had granted to her in his sovereign generosity were to shine forth in her in a kind of perfect harmony. And, although the Church has always recognized this supreme generosity and the perfect harmony of graces and has daily studied them more and more throughout the course of the centuries, still it is in our own age that the privilege of the bodily Assumption into heaven of Mary, the Virgin Mother of God, has certainly shone forth more clearly... She, by an entirely unique privilege, completely overcame sin by her Immaculate Conception, and as a result she was not subject to the law of remaining in the corruption of the grave, and she did not have to wait until the end of time for the redemption of her body. Thus St. John Damascene, an outstanding herald of this traditional truth, spoke out with powerful eloquence when he compared the bodily Assumption of the loving Mother of God with her other prerogatives and privileges. "It was fitting that she, who had kept her virginity intact in childbirth, should keep her own body free from all corruption even after death. It was fitting that she, who had carried the Creator as a child at her breast, should dwell in the divine tabernacles. It was fitting that the spouse, whom the Father had taken to himself, should live in the divine mansions. It was fitting that she, who had seen her Son upon the cross and who had thereby received into her heart the sword of sorrow which she had escaped in the act of giving birth to him, should look upon him as he sits with the Father. It was fitting that God's Mother should possess what belongs to her Son, and that she should be honored by every creature as the Mother and as the handmaid of God."

Reflection: Our time in this life should be focused upon serving others lovingly, in particular our teammates. Our actions on earth, prepare us to join Jesus, Mary and all those who have gone before us in eternal life. Our salvation is freely given, but we must be mindful of the legacy we are leaving behind. How have I served my teammates and how will they remember me?

5. The Coronation of Mary as Queen of Heaven and Earth (Revelation 12:1)

A great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head.

Reflection: We can seek spiritual help through the intercession of Mary. As a caring divine Mother, Mary can be a source of comfort in an often hurtful earthly life. Invite Mary to envelop you in her caring mantle, confident in the knowledge that you are deeply loved.