

True Enlightenment

by Johann Roten, SM

The word “Enlightenment” designates a period in history. It stands for modernity, and modernity supports liberation and freedom. The new mysteries of the rosary, called “mysteries of light,” are a message of enlightenment in their own right. They are called “mysteries of light” because they shed light on who Jesus is. He is a light figure. He brings light into the world. He understands his public ministry, indeed his whole person and life, as a mission of light: “While I am in the world, I am the light of the world” (Jn 9:5).

Each one of the new mysteries—situated between the Joyful (Incarnation) and the Sorrowful (Passion, Crucifixion) ones—represents a facet or a beam of light. Each mystery reveals a different aspect of his mission in the world, but all of them highlight his divine origin and nature.

1. *The Baptism of the Lord in the Jordan* reveals Jesus as “Son of the Father”: he is one of the Trinity. God the Father himself sheds light on the true origin of Jesus. He is the one who sends him. In turn, Jesus submits himself to the religious ritual of conversion (Baptism). He is one of us, God incarnate.
2. *The Wedding Feast of Cana* marks Jesus’ first miracle and again reveals his divine origin. This time he *acts* as the Son of God, changing water into wine. God deals with human needs. He is a God of ordinary circumstances.
3. *The Proclamation of the Kingdom of God* is a mystery of transformation. It reveals the ultimate goal of God’s plan: the changing of this earth and its inhabitants into a new creation, the Kingdom of God. The light of Jesus in this mystery is justice, peace, and especially love. But the light of the Kingdom will shine in splendor only if we heed Christ’s challenge: “Reform your lives and believe in the Gospel” (Mk 1:15).
4. *The Transformation of Our Lord* is the mystery of light *par excellence*. It announces Christ’s Resurrection, the final victory of light over darkness, life over death. We see in the glory of God shining forth from the face of Christ the promise of our own resurrection and eternal life.
5. *The Institution of the Eucharist* reveals the permanence and fidelity of God’s love. Christ offers his body and blood under the signs of bread and wine. This is how he testifies “to the end” his love for humanity (Jn 13:1).

These new mysteries are revealing or revelatory mysteries. Christ, one of us, is also the Son of the Father, the miracle worker, the challenging God, the risen Lord, and God’s love broken and shared with the whole of humanity.

The rosary is called a synthesis or compendium of the Gospel. The mysteries of light make the rosary even more complete. They also show that the rosary is at heart a Christian’s prayer. John Paul II in his Apostolic Letter on the Rosary summarizes the meaning of the rosary with these words: “With the Rosary, the Christian people *sits* [sic] *at the School of Mary* and is led to contemplate the beauty of the face of Christ and to experience the depths of his love.