



The Pilgrim Rosary

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Introduction: The Vatican’s Congregation for Divine Worship has explained the spirituality of a pilgrimage. In its document *Directory on Popular Piety and the Liturgy: Principles and Guidelines*, the congregation outlines six dimensions of the inner journey of a pilgrim to a sacred shrine. These dimensions are eschatological, penitential, festive, worship, apostolic, and Communion. The six dimensions have been incorporated into the Pilgrim Rosary. Since there are six dimensions and only five decades of the traditional rosary, the penitential and festive dimensions have been folded into the second decade, “The Prodigal Son Returns to his Father.”

1. First decade: God Brings the Israelites into the Promised Land (eschatological dimension)
 - a. Our pilgrimage mirrors our journey through life. We should think of the destination as the Promised Land, where we want to stay forever after a life of loving service. As we have journeyed to arrive at the site, whether it has taken us minutes, hours, or days and whether on foot, in airplane or in car, we leave aside pleasures and comforts so that we might come to know God “face-to-face.” We are like the Israelites who, rescued from slavery to both work and pleasures in Egypt, come to know freedom of the children of God.
 - i. Exodus 3:7-8 - But the Lord said: I have witnessed the affliction of my people in Egypt and have heard their cry against their taskmasters, so I know well what they are suffering. Therefore I have come down to rescue them from the power of the Egyptians and lead them up from that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey, the country of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Girgashites, the Hivites and the Jebusites.
 - ii. Hebrews 12:1-2 - Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us rid ourselves of every burden and sin that clings to us and persevere in running the race that lies before us while keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus, the leader and perfecter of faith. For the sake of the joy that lay before him he endured the cross, despising its shame, and has taken his seat at the right of the throne of God.
2. Second decade: The Prodigal Son Returns to his Father (penitential and festive dimensions)
 - a. Our pilgrimage has afforded us time to reflect on our sins. Deliberately or carelessly, we have neglected and even have hurt others. As we have come to our destination, we can take some moments to seek forgiveness.

We should think of ourselves as the prodigal son arriving at the home of his father. He hardly emits words of repentance before his father prepares a welcome banquet. The feast is beyond reckoning – food and drink, music and dancing simply because he had the courage to admit his fault to his father. We partake of this joyful banquet to complete our pilgrimage.

- b. Biblical passages
 - i. Psalm 51:11-12 - Turn away your face from my sins;
blot out all my iniquities.
A clean heart create for me, God;
renew within me a steadfast spirit.
 - ii. Luke 15:20-21 - So he got up and went back to his father. While he was still a long way off, his father caught sight of him, and was filled with compassion. He ran to his son, embraced him and kissed him. His son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you; I no longer deserve to be called your son.'
3. Third decade: The Journey of the Magi (worship dimension)
- a. We should think of the destination as the house of God where we will rejoice and worship Him forever. Like the Israelites we sing, "I rejoiced when they said to me, 'Let us go to the house of the Lord'" (Psalm 122). We are like the Magi journeying from a faraway country to enter the house of Joseph and Mary. As they rejoice to see the star and then worship Jesus, the newborn king, we are grateful to come to this sanctuary. Here we rest in comfort knowing that the Lord will accept our thanksgiving and fulfill our requests.
 - b. Biblical passages
 - i. Psalm 43:3-4 - Send your light and your fidelity,
that they may be my guide;
Let them bring me to your holy mountain,
to the place of your dwelling,
That I may come to the altar of God,
to God, my joy, my delight.
Then I will praise you with the harp,
O God, my God.
 - ii. Matthew 2:1-2, 10-11 - When Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of King Herod, behold, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, "Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star at its rising and have come to do him homage."... They were overjoyed at seeing the star, and on entering the house they saw the child with Mary his mother. They prostrated themselves and did him homage. Then they opened their treasures and offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.
4. Fourth decade: Jesus Consoling the Women of Jerusalem (apostolic dimension)
- a. We will find people looking at us as we make our pilgrimage. They will want to know where we are going and why. Their questions do not bother us; much less do they threaten our peace. Rather they provide an opportunity for us to fulfill our responsibility of announcing God's love to the world. We want to be like Jesus on the *Via Dolorosa*. He stopped to console the women of Jerusalem who were weeping for him! We will tell others of how greatly we have been blessed. We are grateful to have been born, most of us into caring families. More than that, we have come to know Jesus' love as our Savior and our friend. We will want to reflect

this love on our journey. We will respect fellow travelers, listen to those who wish to share their stories, and assist those in need.

b. Biblical passages

- i. Psalm 89:2-5 - I will sing of your mercy forever, Lord
proclaim your faithfulness through all ages.

For I said, "My mercy is established forever;
my faithfulness will stand as long as the heavens.

I have made a covenant with my chosen one;

I have sworn to David my servant:

I will make your dynasty stand forever

and establish your throne through all ages."

- ii. Luke 23:27-28 - A large crowd of people followed Jesus, including many women who mourned and lamented him. Jesus turned to them and said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep instead for yourselves and for your children."

5. Fifth decade: The Road to Emmaus (Communion dimension)

- a. We also meet Jesus on the road to the pilgrimage site. He appears to us in different ways. Found in our companions, he helps us clarify both his will and our intentions. Met in strangers who open their hearts if not their homes to us, he shares his food and drink. As the one to whom we direct our prayers, he listens to our concerns and the needs of others whom we raise up. Finally, in the Most Blessed Sacrament, Jesus encourages us not to worry but to draw on his strength to do what is right. He assures us as he said before ascending, "...I am with you always..."

b. Biblical passages

- i. Psalm 23:2-4 - In green pastures he makes me lie down;
to still waters he leads me;
he restores my soul.

He guides me along right paths

for the sake of his name.

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,

I will fear no evil, for you are with me;

your rod and your staff comfort me.

- ii. Luke 24:30-32 - And it happened that, while he was with them at table, he took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them. With that their eyes were opened and they recognized him, but he vanished from their sight. Then they said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning [within us] while he spoke to us on the way and opened the scriptures to us?"