Grotto Meditation

"The Joyful Mysteries of Creation"

Dr. Christopher Thompson, Academic Dean,
The Saint Paul Seminary

What a privilege to find oneself here in this beautiful setting, among these paths that trace their way through this peaceful grove. There is the marvelous image of Our Lady of Guadalupe and the stations of the cross to help us in our recollection.

But even more basic than these inspiring works of art are the spiritual tools, the prompts, that are given to us freely just in this simple setting of creation: the trees, the plants, the flowers, the stream. We can sometimes look past the fact that Christ is speaking to us in these things, too, in this tabernacle of his creation, an outdoor sanctuary ready made for a spiritual encounter.

For so many of us, it was this way of creation that first led us to an encounter with God. And it is this path that is open before us again today. The beauty and peace of created things can call us forward -- or call us back-- to a renewed exchange of hearts in the divine friendship. Why not seize this moment of grace to renew, refresh, and experience this friendship with God?

It is in this spirit that we offer here, as a personal suggestion, a set of meditations that reflects the experience of the splendor of creation together with the structure of the rosary. If you happen to know how to pray the rosary, you can use these prompts as a meditation for each decade. If you are not familiar, you can simply take a few minutes to mediate on each mystery, asking for the grace of God to lead you to a deeper knowledge of his love.

Let us begin ...

Come Lord, Jesus! Come Creator and Redeemer and fill my heart! With a childlike trust, a wonder you first stirred in me through the quiet corners of your creation. Draw me once again to rest in the company of your divine presence, in the company of your mother.



The First Mystery of Creation: The Incarnation

"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us." (Jn. 1:14)

This famous line from the opening of the Gospel of John marks an excellent point of departure for prayer in this setting. The beauty of creation is not alien to God, not in the least. Instead, dwelling among us, God chose to enact his plan of love and redemption in this space, this land. Indeed, all creation bears the impress of the Divine Word, the Logos, the one through whom all things are made. Awe before the beauty of creation is a kind of adoration of the Son. In this first meditation, we can reflect on those occasions of awe and thank God for His presence in our lives.

The Second Mystery of Creation: The Power of Beauty

"Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin; yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." (Mt 6:28)

In this second mystery, consider something beautiful; perhaps turn to a flower nearby as a spiritual aid, ponder its incredible intricacy, its delicate nature, its beauty, its fragility – and yet, its power -- to produce something beautiful for God. Jesus uses this occasion of a flower to remind us not to worry. God is in charge and we can take comfort in Him. In knowing something beautiful, we know God is with us. In this second decade, we can recall a wondrous location and consider how God seeks to meet and care for us there.

The Third Mystery of Creation: The Power of Christ

"Who is this that even winds and sea obey Him?" (Mt 8:27)

We need to be honest; encountering nature is not always a rosy experience. Pondering the beauty of a flower is one thing; bracing for the impending storm on the horizon another. Especially with the introduction of sin, we can count on misunderstanding nature and resenting its ways. But Christ takes the occasion of ill weather to remind the disciples of the importance of faith, and that inordinate fear has no place for one who rests in the Lord. In grasping the power of nature, we can learn to trust in God. In this meditation, we pray for the graces to trust in the Providence of God for all of creatures.

The Fourth Mystery: The Future of Creation

"All things were created through Him and for Him." (Col 1:16)

It is not unusual when standing under a starry sky, or within a grove of trees, to wonder: what is all of this for? Well, it's for us, in many ways. The glory of this universe is the setting in which we live out our lives in gratitude to the Father. Christ joins us in this desire, especially in the Eucharist, and it is there, in that universal prayer of the church, that the world is given its final purpose and direction. In this decade, we pray that we may return the gifts of creation, including our labors, to the Father.

The Fifth Mystery: The Renewal of Creation

"Behold, I make all things new." (Rev 21:5)

What is the status of the earth and its creatures in the final judgment and the kingdom? In Laudato Si', Pope Francis makes the bold suggestion that "eternal life will be a shared experience of awe, in which each creature, resplendently transfigured, will take its rightful place…" Though theologians have offered various interpretations, one thing is clear: the life that we lived here on earth will be fulfilled, not dismissed. How we have loved God, neighbor, and His creatures will be a testament to our faith. In this decade, we pray for the courage and hope to live out our remaining days giving thanks to the Lord for the gift of His earth.

Our Lady of Guadalupe … pray for us!

For further exploration of the importance of creation in the spiritual life, see *The Joyful Mystery: Notes Toward a Green Thomism* (Emmaus Press, 2017) by Christopher Thompson.