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Meditate on the Mysteries of Christ

St. Bernard of Clairvaux
Doctor of the Church



This excerpt from a homily by Saint Bernard of Clairvaux (Sermo de Aquaeductu: Opera Omnia, Edit. Cisterc. 5 {1968, 282-283) is used in the Roman Office of Readings for the Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary on October 7. This commemorative feast was established by Pope Saint Pius V on the anniversary of the naval victory won by the Christian fleet over the Turks at Lepanto in the late 16th century. The victory was attributed to the help of the holy Mother of God whose aid was invoked through praying the rosary. The celebration of this day invites all to meditate upon the mysteries of Christ, following the example of the Blessed Virgin Mary who was so singularly associated with the incarnation, passion and glorious resurrection of the Son of God, as well as with many of the events in his public ministry which we now meditate upon in the luminous mysteries added by Pope John Paul II.

*The child to be born of you will be called holy, the Son of God, the fountain of wisdom, the Word of the Father on high. Through you, blessed Virgin, this Word will become flesh, so that even though, as he says: *I am in the Father and the Father is in me*, it is still true for him to say: "I came forth from God and am here".*

*In the beginning was the Word. The spring was gushing forth, yet still within himself. Indeed, *the Word was with God*, truly dwelling in inaccessible light. And the Lord said from the beginning: *I think thoughts of peace and not of affliction*. Yet your thought was locked within you, and whatever you thought, we did not know; for who knew the mind of the Lord, or who was his counsellor?*

*And so the idea of peace came down to do the work of peace: *The Word was made flesh and even now dwells among us*. It is by faith that he dwells in our hearts, in our memory, our intellect and penetrates even into our imagination. What concept could man have of God if he did not first fashion an image of him in his heart? By nature incomprehensible and inaccessible, he was invisible and unthinkable, but now he wished to be understood, to be seen and thought of.*

But how, you ask, was this done? He lay in a manger and rested on a virgin's

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breast, preached on a mountain, and spent the night in prayer. He hung on a cross, grew pale in death, and roamed free among the dead and ruled over those in hell. He rose again on the third day, and showed the apostles the wounds of the nails, the signs of victory; and finally in their presence he ascended to the sanctuary of heaven.

How can we not contemplate this story in truth, piety and holiness? Whatever of all this I consider, it is God I am considering; in all this he is my God. I have said it is wise to meditate on these truths, and I have thought it right to recall the abundant sweetness, given by the fruits of this priestly root; and Mary, drawing abundantly from heaven, has caused this sweetness to overflow for us.

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