On May 13, 1917 the figure of a woman clothed in light brighter than the sun appeared to three children tending sheep in Fatima, Portugal. She was to appear five more times, on the thirteenth of each succeeding month. Although the woman was not visible to the thousands of spectators who flocked to Fatima to see the miracles, they were aware of her arrival by the accompanying flashes of lightning and the presence of a small white cloud and luminescent globe. On the thirteenth of October, 1917, when the woman left the sun paled, and then began to spin on its axis. As it spiraled towards the earth the sun emitted a rainbow of colors. It drew close and then spiraled back to its former place in the sky. During that visit the woman had revealed herself to the children as the Lady of the Rosary. Her message to the children during all six of her visits was that they and others must say the rosary in order to bring about world peace. In a series of three secret messages the woman had shown the children people burning in fire, and told them that unless people changed another more terrible war was to follow the one that was currently going on. The third secret message was withheld by the Bishop of Leira in whose keeping it had been left.¹

Perception is a complex neurophysiological process of development, which continues throughout life. It is greatly affected by cultural concepts which it in turn reinforces and perpetuates. Spiritual belief systems, through mythology and ritual, are the framework which most profoundly defines cultural perception of the world around us. Control of mythology and ritual are therefore essential to cultural control.

Knowledge of this factor seems to have affected most major religions and has been the foundation for many bloody conversion tactics throughout history. As women in a patriarchal culture which deifies the male to the virtual exclusion of the female, except for reproductive purposes, it is important to question how this affects our perception of ourselves.

We in North America live in a highly technological society where images can be homogenized for an extremely large section of the population. Additionally media produced in

the United States is shipped around the world affecting global cultural perception. Watching and listening to this media may become a ritual for many groups of people, each group choosing their favorites. The mythological sources for many of these plots are based in patriarchal religions which have honored men; for example, those most successful in battle or those engaged in supremely sacrificial acts. Very few utilize mythological sources which honor wise women, women who fight to protect their devotees, or women who celebrate autonomous sexuality and fertility. When they appear they are given minor roles and usually perform in tandem or opposition to male heroes. More frequently images of women reflect female deities who share and appease sorrow and pain. These images have profoundly affected our perception of women, in our own culture, and in other cultures. This rosary meditation of "strength through diversity" is an attempt to create a ritual which is based in women's community; a multi-sensory approach which seeks to change our perception of ourselves, and the world around us.

As an occupational therapist I was trained to analyze and design activities which enhance or encourage development. When occupational therapists do this they examine the activities from several perspectives, particularly addressing the physical, cognitive, emotional, and social components. I have a particular interest in a relatively new theory of development called sensory-motor integration. This theory was developed by Jean Ayres, a therapist who worked with learning disabled and perceptually dysfunctional clients. It seeks to integrate the brain by stimulating sensory receptors during activities which will encourage a more functional motor (ie. physical) response. This methodology will form a framework for my analysis of the rosary as a meditative activity. It will also form a framework for adapting the rosary.

Use of this methodology presupposes a cultural perception of women which is less than positive; a perception which does not encourage women to develop their full potentials. A complete feminist analysis of this position is beyond the scope of this paper, but it is well documented in a wide variety of sources.² The meditation on "strength through diversity" is designed to change this perception in a way which will encourage and enhance women's activity in the world. One of the most effective means used to oppress women and other groups

² A partial listing: The Second Sex, Simone de Beauvoir; Women and Madness, Phyllis Chesler; Against Our Will, Susan Brownmiller; Sexual Politics, Kate Millett; On Lies, Secrets and Silence, Adrienne Rich.
is isolation, both in time and space. Women are isolated from other women historically when each achievement by a woman is lauded as the "first" or "only" one. Women are isolated from each other mythically by patriarchal religious traditions which deny or trivialize the existence of female deities. Women are isolated from each other in their daily lives, by race and class distinctions which separate them physically from one another. Women are separated from each other by patriarchal social customs which prevent or discourage female to female bonding. The meditation of "strength through diversity" is designed to change this perception of ourselves as isolated to one in which we see ourselves linked together and able to draw strength from Women.

The religious and spiritual beliefs which inform the development of a women's rosary could best be called Pagan or Neo-Pagan.\(^3\) These belief systems are varied and based more in multiplicity and variety rather than in single unifying principles. Deities tend to be immanent rather than transcendent, and this is reflected in some of the symbolism used for the meditation. Additionally Pagan and Neo-Pagan traditions have a rich variety of mythologies which feature female deities, and these sources have also influenced the meditation for the experimental rosary. Pagan and Neo-Pagan mythologies and rituals inform their cultures with perceptions of women which are sometimes radically different than of Western patriarchal cultures and these perceptions will be used in the slide show part of the meditation “strength through diversity”.

What follows will be an analysis of rosary meditation based in the methodologies of occupational therapy, feminism, and Neo-Pagan theology. Using the same methodologies, a rationale and plan for an experimental rosary will be outlined. It is hoped that through this meditation our perceptions of ourselves as women may be changed.

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\(^3\) Margot Adler defines "Pagan to mean a member of a polytheistic nature religion, such as the ancient Greek, Roman or Egyptian religions, or, in anthropological terms, a member of one of the indigenous folk and tribal religions all over the world. People who have studied the classics or have been deeply involved with natural or aboriginal peoples are comparatively free of the negative and generally racist attitudes that surround the word Pagan" Isaac Bonewits defines Neo-Paganism as "polytheistic (or conditional monotheistic) nature religions that are based upon the older or Paleopagan religions: concentrating upon an attempt to retain the humanistic, ecological and creative aspects of these old belief systems while discarding their occasional brutal or repressive developments, which are inappropriate..." Margot Adler, *Drawing Down the Moon*, (New York: Viking Press, 1979), p. 10.
WHAT IS A ROSARY?

For most of those who are raised in a predominantly Protestant culture, rosaries have been those "funny necklaces" that Catholics have. The Catholic or Marian rosary is actually one of the most modern (13th century) forms of prayer beads; older forms are found in Moslem, Buddhist, and Hindu religions, as well as in other Christian sects. Prayer beads, prayer counters, and other forms of beads as mnemonic devices were in use well before the thirteenth century, even within the Christian religion. It was Saint Dominic, in the thirteenth century who has been credited with the promotion of the rosary, but it was two other Dominicans, Alan de Roche, and Jacob Sprenger who historically are responsible for the founding of the Confraternity of the Rosary in 1475.4

The Christian rosary came to be used almost exclusively by Catholics after Henry VII of England condemned the use of beads in the Royal Injunctions of 1538. Many rosaries were destroyed at that time, and in fact there are few rosaries of pre-Reformation days extant in England.5 The Christian rosary has been used both as prayer counter and meditation device. The arrangement of the Marian rosary is structured by the number of prayers recited. (See Appendix A) As with other forms of the rosary there is a numerological significance to the number of beads and prayers. The meditative use of the Marian rosary is for contemplation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, her five joys, five sorrows, and five glories. The purpose of this rosary is to honor the life of Jesus Christ and the mystery of Redemption. The Marian rosary is attributed with a great many magical or supernatural powers and it often figures in both miracles and visions. Forms of meditation or prayer on beads are common to other cultures and religious traditions as well. Although this paper will deal primarily with the Christian rosary it is of interest to mention some of these other forms of prayer counters in passing.

The Moslem rosary is used as a counter, for all of the names of Allah, as well as a meditative device. There are one hundred naming beads, and two dividing beads in the complete Moslem rosary. The naming beads are divided into three groups of thirty-three beads.

5 Wilkins, pp. 55,74.
Buddhist beads, like other rosaries, have a number of interpretations, one of which is to count the number of distractions which keep one from doing the appropriate things in life. These distractions are thought of as habits which keep one from using one's will. The distractions, represented by the 108 beads, are not generally recited. The Buddhist rosary is used primarily for meditation, as a reminder of the interaction of habit, outside forces and the use of the will.

The Hindu rosary, which may be the oldest form of prayer beads found within the major world religions, most commonly contains 108 beads, but this may vary. Worshippers of Siva may use a rosary of 32 beads, while worshippers of Viśnu use 108. Small rosaries called boberkhas may contain a submultiple of 108: ie. 6,9,12,18,27,36 or 54 beads. Hindu names for rosaries often contain the word mala which means wreath or garland. A japamala would be a garland of mantras. A malamantra may be a spell or text which is written in the form of a garland. Hindu prayer counters have a variety of uses and forms. The Sikhs use knotted wool or iron beads connected by links. A rosary of 27 beads connected by links or on a rigid hoop may be worn on the wrist. This rosary called Lohe ká Simarna, forms a tribal mark.

There is a recognition that there is power in the relationship of creation and knowledge (art and science) in the resemblance of the Chinese characters for "jade" 成 and "emperor" 八, both of which may derive from an older character which was the representation of a knotted or beaded string. The knotted fringes of Jewish prayer shawls are also used as prayer counting devices.

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6 Wilkins, p. 56 gives these other interpretations, a) the number of Brahmins summoned at Guatama's birth to foretell his destiny, b) Buddha’s footprints, c) the volumes of sacred writings, d) columns surrounding the Sacred Pagoda of Peking, e) welcome fires on the seashore in Japan, f) alms given during the Festival of the Dead in Japan.

7 This usage of Buddhist beads was given to me by Virginia Ikeda, of Tucson, Arizona, an American Japanese Buddhist who currently uses the beads herself.


10 Blackman, p. 849.

11 Wilkins, p. 202. She writes "gem" and "ruler". I am indebted to John Yung-hsiang Lai at the Harvard Yenching Library for the characters of "jade" and "emperor" which is his interpretation of Wilkin’s statement, not otherwise documented by characters or other footnotes.
Only a brief exploration of the rosary reveals that the use of prayer beads is widespread and multi-traditional. Although in-depth cross-cultural analogies of beads as prayer counters will not be made, this multi-traditional aspect is important to the meditation of "strength through diversity".

WHY A ROSARY?

There is a good deal of mystery associated with rosaries. It appears to have many magical, especially numerologic connections. Its value often seems superstitious to the uninitiated, and it is often criticized by the academically minded as a superstitious practice of poorer and ignorant members of the religion. Yet the rosary remains, even though its meanings may change, or be lost over the centuries. There have often been associations for the poor between science and magic, whence comes the name pagan. The why of the rosary can be explained in both magical and scientific contexts.

Numerology is an occult science which has been used since antiquity to explain forces within the universe, by attributing vibrational or energy characteristics to particular numbers. Letters of the alphabet also have number values and the numerologist juggles these about to understand forces within an individual to predict or estimate external and apparently unrelated events. To people familiar with numerological values, (i.e. most learned people prior to the "scientific age" of the last two centuries) the choice of numbers is always significant. Rosary numbers are not random events, even if their inspiration may seem a random choice to the casual modern observer.

Given this explanation, there will follow a few basic numerological principles which can then be applied to the numbers of beads in the rosary. Numbers themselves represent unfolding consciousness, as well as the unfolding universe. Zero represents the chaos of the universe before time began, as well as awareness of the vast and boundless spaces of life. One represents the

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12 Drourah Setel, Harvard Divinity School, 1981
13 Saint Louis de Montfort, The Secret of the Rosary, Mary Barbour, translator (New York: Montfort Press, 1954), p. 35. “You have managed to convince yourself that the prayers in these books are for scholars and for rich people of the upper classes and that the Rosary is only for women and children and the lower classes.” Wilkins, p. 57.
14 Margot Adler, Drawing Down the Moon, pp. 9, 21.
16 Tay.or, pp 31-36 and 44-48, for all numerologic values unless otherwise cited.
Self, or the creative and daring spirit some might identify as the id or the anima. Two gives the duality of male/female or spirit/matter. The shape of its two lines joined together indicates receptivity. Three gives the triangle, the trinity, and the completion of an architecturally stable structure. Three also relates to mother, father, child and sun, moon, earth. Four makes a square, which often occurs in nature as the result of human creation; thus it represents abodes, possessions and knowledge. (Consider the four gospels which survived in the Canon, despite the existence of other apocryphal gospels.) Five is associated with the senses and their use in exploration of the universe. It is an important number in the Marian rosary because its decades are multiples of five, as is fifteen, the number of mysteries recited when saying the rosary. Fifteen is a multiple of five, and three, which adds to its significance. Five is often represented by a circle. The rosary is a circle, and architecturally stable like the triangle.

Six forms the hexagon of the bee's cell and symbolizes domestic life and community. Seven represents the colors of the rainbow, the notes of the scale, and the days of the week. It forms the shape of a triangle over a square, symbolizing the illumination of god and nature; thus its association with metaphysics and the occult. Eight represents infinity and the interface of life and death. Nine is special because it is the trinity squared. If it is added to another number, the result, when added, will equal the original figure (9+3=12, 1+2=3). The degrees of a circle also add up to nine (3+6+0=9). It represents sharing of material resources, giving of the Self to others, and the limits of conscious activity.

Ten represents the "digits" of the hands and feet, as well as the number system. It is considered perfect because it brings everything back to unity, that is 1+0=1. The numerologist will usually add any multiple of digits together until a single digit is reached.

The foregoing is a much simplified version of numerological principles, designed to give some background in looking at rosaries from a numerological point of view. Numerology is only one cognitive process involved in analyzing and designing rosaries. Although it is a method which is no longer considered "academic" it was once important to those women and men called "wise". This methodology is still used by those who study "occult sciences". Applied to the Marian rosary one keeps in mind several things.
There are 59 beads in an average Marian rosary. \(5+9=14\). \(1+4=5\). Thus five is a significant number for the Marian rosary. Ten is also an important number. There are usually five decades of beads in a modern rosary and these decades count the numbers of Aves said to honor Mary, who is the perfect woman. Fifteen reduces to six, and the rosary is often recited in families, by religious communities, or even over radio or T.V.. The number fifteen itself is represented by the Devil in the Tarot deck, and that card symbolizes the life force of sexuality and bondage to the flesh in this world.\(^{17}\)

Gail Fairfield interprets the Tarot card of the Devil in this way.

**NEUTRAL:** The Devil does show that you are experiencing some boundaries and limits in your life. You are seeing that your options and choices are being narrowed and your life is becoming more structured and somewhat less flexible. By making certain assumptions or establishing baseline conditions, you are ruling out some of your options.

**POSITIVE:** You are choosing to create some positive and supportive boundaries and limits in your life. The structures you're creating are solid foundations for your future growth and development. By making some assumptions and clear choices now, you're arriving at a manageable and effective course of action. The surrounding walls or boundaries are providing a space in which you can focus your energy and become centered.

**NEGATIVE:** The limitations and boundaries in your life have become a trap. You have narrowed your options to the point where the only choices available are harmful or unappealing to you. Things that you thought would function as solid, secure foundations and support systems have now become cages. You need to begin looking for new options -- your old assumptions are no longer healthy for you.\(^{18}\)

Boundaries and bondage are familiar to most women in patriarchy. Fairfield's interpretations of the Devil card are ones which ring true for many women.

The Kabbalah, which influenced the Tarot, also uses fifteen to represent the associations of evil, lust and sexuality/sensuality.\(^{19}\) Sexuality has long been feared in women. Fifteen relates to the five senses from which sexuality and carnal lusts derive. Three represents the higher

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powers which combine with the senses to give not only fifteen, but metaphorically, the duality of mind and body, spirit and nature, which can be represented by two. Two multiplied by five gives the decade.

So much for the esoteric rationale of occult science as explanation of the inner workings of the rosary. What does twentieth century science, more specifically neurophysiology, have to offer in the way of explanation of the rosary? How does the rosary affect the inner workings of the mind?

All external information enters the brain through the senses. The rosary acts primarily on the sense of touch, both through the sensitive receptors in the tips of the fingers, as well as through receptors in the joints of the fingers as they move the beads. Importance of function is generally held to correlate to the amount of brain tissue allotted for that function. In the brain the receiving areas for the sense of touch allots the largest amount of tissue to the lips, thumb, fingertips and genitalia. Sensations which affect the fingertips and thumb, thus affect comparatively large amounts of brain tissue.

Touch is also interesting in that the tissue of the brain and nervous system, as well as the skin develop from the same embryological layers of tissue. There is a very strong relationship between the sense of touch and the function of the brain. Harry F. Harlow, in his experiments with infant monkeys at the University of Wisconsin, indicated that insufficient tactile stimulation, provided by "wire mothers" resulted in more pathological (self-abusive, fearful, and aggressive) behavior, than for those monkeys raised with "cloth mothers". The sense of touch is closely involved in organization of the nervous system, through tactile experience; this includes almost all processes, physical and emotional.

Another sense which is important to the rosary, at least historically, is the sense of smell. Smell is frequently related to religious experiences and is often cited as a component of visions. The rosary derives from garlands of flowers, roses predominantly, but in cultures

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such as the Hindu, it is also related to another fragrant flower, the lotus.\textsuperscript{23} The sense of smell is evolutionally one of the oldest senses.

Olfactory sensations are received and processed by the amygdaloid and septal nuclei, which develop out of the oldest parts of the brain, that is the parts of the brain which we have in common with lower animals, such as reptiles. Because smell is processed by these centers, which are part of a system known as the limbic system, a system of many interconnections, smell then is intimately involved with other processes of the limbic system.\textsuperscript{24}

The limbic system is a poorly understood, and complicated part of the brain. It is the clearing house for most neurological processes as it contains a structure known as the hypothalamus which is a key structure for most automatic processes of the body. The hypothalamus controls the autonomic system which regulates the body's state of relaxation and excitement, as well as other unrelated functions such as weight, and fluid and hormonal levels.\textsuperscript{25} The gateway to the hypothalamus, through which every message must pass, is the previously mentioned septal nucleus.\textsuperscript{26}

The limbic system is responsible for both species and individual survival. It contains the genetic, species specific, protective memories (Jung might call these part of the collective unconscious), as well as associations with individual memories. Its close association with smell is one reason why smell often brings back memories, or why smell is associated with memories. The limbic system also governs the emotional tone through what physiologists refer to as the three F’s: that is feeding, fighting and sex.\textsuperscript{27} Since so many emotions are associated with these three drives, it is easy to see how the limbic system and the sense of smell can be so important. One can also see that the sense of touch figures highly in these areas, particularly the first and third.

\textsuperscript{23} Wilkins, p. 110.
\textsuperscript{25} Guyton, p. 692.
\textsuperscript{26} Moore, \textit{op. cit.}
Visual and auditory senses are also stimulated by the rosary, though these senses are newer evolutionally. The saying of the prayers, particularly when they are sung, which was common in some times, relates back to numerology and to the effect on the nervous system caused by the rate of vibration of various tones.\footnote{Ayres, pp. 40-42.}

Vibration is only one form of input to an extremely important and complex system known as the vestibular system. This sense, which is not usually included in the five common senses, might be thought of as the sense of balance. It is one of the earliest developing senses, coming into play sometime about the eleventh week of gestation.

The vestibular receptors are located in the inner ear in a structure known as the labyrinth. They respond to gravity and movement, even the smallest of these changes. They have multiple connections to other parts of the nervous system, including centers of pleasure. Spinning is the activity which makes us most conscious of the vestibular system, and anyone who enjoys or avoids amusement park rides can begin to understand the powerful effects that the vestibular system can have on the body.

Vestibular sensation provides a sense of orientation and balance which is essential to almost all activities. Not just those physical tasks such as walking and sitting, but more complex activities such as language and vision. The vestibular system provides an essential background for the functioning of the senses of vision and hearing.\footnote{Ayres, pp. 35-36, 40-41, 69-88.}

The vestibular system also provides the background for countless other abilities, of which we have only just begun to learn. The extreme sensitivity of the receptors to gravity leads one to speculate that gravitational effects of celestial bodies such as the moon and planets could in fact have some effect on the vestibular system, perhaps lending some credence to astrological theories.

As we return to some of the symbols associated with the rosary it is important to remember these numerolgical and neurophysiological constructs. They may be able to provide insight into certain of the customs and rituals which have been associated with the rosary.
THE ROSE

The symbol of garden has been one which is associated with harmony and meditation. It is found in references as diverse as: the Biblical Garden of Eden; the seventeenth century Chinese mandarin custom of cultivating miniature gardens in a circular bowl of water; the sacred groves and orchards of the Celts.\(^{30}\) Buddha Guatama once preached a sermon simply by holding up a flower.\(^{31}\) Roses, flowers, and gardens have been used to symbolize the female genitalia and reproductive organs.\(^{32}\) Flowers have also been symbolic of goddesses and the mystery of virgin birth. The Elusinian mysteries involved a ritual of holding up an ear of corn, a symbol of life springing up from death. The Indian symbol of the lotus is taken to mean the world womb, virgin and divine birth. Roses, lotuses, lilies, and violets have all been associated with Mary\(^{33}\) and the distinctive scents of these flowers could trigger olfactory-limbic system responses. Memory triggers smell, which triggers memory. The association of beads with flowers might possibly tap into powerful individual memories or hypothetically, even the collective unconscious. Gertrude Stein appears cognizant of the power of rose symbolism and its multitudinous connections in the simplicity of her "rose is a rose is a rose" poem.

To return to numerology, the rose is a five petalled flower related to the apple. The five-pointed star of Aphrodite and Venus corresponds to the rose and it is associated with these goddesses.\(^{34}\) Considering the connections of the rose and the apple to female sexuality/sensuality the relationship of the number fifteen in the Marian mysteries is not surprising. Are these symbolic connections contained in the limbic system, which regulates sexual as well as feeding/nursing functions? If so then one can begin to appreciate the considerable psychic and spiritual power which the rosary holds for so many people.

\(^{30}\) Wilkins, p. 119
\(^{31}\) Ibid., p. 115.
\(^{32}\) Ibid., p. 124.
\(^{33}\) Ibid., p. 110.
\(^{34}\) Ibid., p. 108.
THE CIRCLE

The number five is symbolized by the geometric shape of the circle in numerological literature. The circle is also a female symbol and though not all Christian rosaries are circular, the circle predominates and is found cross culturally in prayer beads. Rosary imagery appears in the circular games of childhood, such as Ring-a-Ring-a-Roses. A game which associates life and death in its falling down and getting back up again.

Circle dances are also popular, and the word carol originally meant a circle dance. May, Mary's month, is still celebrated with by dances around the Maypole, which is a circular dance. May festivities have many sexual rites which relate to the previously mentioned sexual/sensual aspects contained in much rosary symbolism.

The movement of the beads through the fingers has often been compared to spinning, which is a circular activity involving a wheel of some sort to accomplish the task. The Book of James in the Apocryphal New Testament portrays Mary as spinning in the Temple when the angel Gabriel appears to her. There are many important goddesses who also spin, the Fates, Maya the cosmic Hindu spider, Isis, and most Great Mother goddesses. The physical motion also ties into unconscious neural pathways through the vestibular system, thus making multiple connections.

The prayers themselves are said to produce a spinning form of meditation where one moves increasingly into the center of oneself to achieve peace and tranquility. Pagan rituals often begin with the casting of the circle to create sacred space between time and between worlds. The circle invokes the powers of the four elements, earth, air, fire, and water, and the fifth energy of the spirit. Again there is five symbolism and

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35 Taylor, p. 33.
36 Wilkins gives several examples of unjoined or linear rosaries, of which the Chasworth Rosary, pictured facing p. 112, is probably the most famous.
37 Wilkins, p. 100.
38 Ibid., p. 83.
39 Ibid., p. 79.
40 Ibid., p. 96.
41 Ibid., p. 65.
the sacred space reminiscent of sacred groves and rose gardens. The rosary itself is used to create the quiet, or sacred space that allows and elicits meditation.

CONSTRUCTION

Rosaries are made of many different objects. The simplest are formed by knotting yarn, the most elaborate are made of precious jewels and intricately carved wood beads. What is important is that knots or beads are arranged in a certain manner and contain a certain number, depending on the effect one wishes to achieve in symbolism.

Sometimes beads are made of ground rose petals, so that the effect of scent is a direct one. Sometimes they are made of holy objects such as olive wood, ivory, teeth, snake bones, cannabis seeds, or feathers. Each of these items are chosen by the symbolic significance of the object for the user.

For the faithful a rosary of wood, glass, or knots, whether blessed or not, can become a powerful spiritual tool. Rosaries blessed by important religious figures, or touched to relics may gain added symbolic power. It is a custom of some times and places to attach symbolically significant objects such as charms, amulets or herbal pouches to rosaries.

The beads themselves can move or be stationary and they may be strung on yarn, string, silk or twine, or be connected by a chain. Occasionally the counters are attached to a rigid hoop, although flexibility of the circle seems important to the symbolism of spinning and is much more common.

Decorations at the end of the pendants have also varied from Moslem tassels, to intricately knotted crosses, scented pomanders, deaths heads, and saint's relics and medals.

A Tibetan Buddhist rosary may have a dorie terminal which resembles the Cretan double-bladed axe called a labrys.

43 Wilkins, picture facing p. 48.
44 Ibid., p. 45.
46 Ibid., picture facing p. 48.
47 Ibid., p. 199.
48 Ibid., pp. 61-62.
The choice of construction is most indicative of the desired effect of the meditation and those effects are varied, complex and obscure.

MIRACLES AND VISIONS

The rosary has also figured prominently in Christian miracles and visions. Saint Louis de Montfort lists many miracles in his book *The Secret of the Rosary.* Most of these are stories which show how the saying of the rosary has profound effects on the lives of sinners. Usually they are saved from contracts with the devil or other hideous fates through the intercession of Mary and Jesus. Mary has appeared to many people over the centuries and sometimes she has carried her own rosary.

The Virgin appeared fifteen times to Bernadette Soubrious of Lourdes; each time she carried her rosary. It was this round of visions, in 1858, which popularized and seemed to ratify the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of 1854.\(^{50}\)

In addition to the appearances in Lourdes and Fatima, which are directly connected to the rosary, the visions of the children at Beauraing, Belgium, and Banneaux, France were preceded by the visionaries saying of their rosaries. The vision then encouraged the children to tell others to say the rosary.\(^{51}\)

Whether the foregoing are idle stories, magic, creatures from outer space, or true appearances of Mary the mother of God, it remains true that they enhance the value of the rosary for millions of people. They illustrate the magical attributes of the rosary, to heal, convert and save sinners in an extremely graphic way.

THE ROSARY AND WOMEN

As a woman and a Neo-Pagan, I take great pause at the knowledge that the Confraternity of the Rosary was founded by Jacob Sprenger, who authored the *Malleus Maleficarum* in the

\(^{49}\) Ibid., p. 57.

\(^{50}\) Frances Parkinson Keyes, “Bernadette and the Beautiful Lady,” *A Woman Clothed with the Sun,* e. John J. Delaney.

\(^{51}\) Don Sharkey, “The Virgin with the Golden Heart”, Robert M. Mallow, “The Virgin of the Poor”, *A Woman Clothed with the Sun.*
fifteenth (there it is again 15) century. The *Malleus*, one of the most famous of misogynist texts, was the impetus behind the execution of hundreds of thousands of women during the Middle Ages. In all dealings with the rosary and other Marian devotions it is important for women to remember that many of Mary's most devoted followers have hated women to great degree.

Also of note is the fact that rosaries in other cultures are not particularly woman identified, either in legend, prayer recital, or meditation. Even given the neutrality or male identification of many of the prayers and meditations, there remains the symbolism of the circle, the flowers, and the spinning, all of which are strongly female identified. For feminists who have read Mary Daly's *Gyn/Ecology* spinning takes on an even deeper meaning. The symbolism of her writing also connects one to deeper meanings and draws on meditative principles similar to the rosary itself.

Spinsters spin and weave, mending and creating unity of consciousness. In doing so we spin through and beyond the realm of multiply split consciousness. In concealed workshops, Spinsters unsnarl, unknot, untie, unweave. We knit, knot, interlace, entwine, whirl, and twirl. Absorbed in Spinning, in the ludic cerebration which is both work and play, Spinsters span the dichotomies of false consciousness. and break its mindbinding combinations.\(^{52}\)

The Background into which feminist journeying spins is the wild realm of Hags and Crones. It is Hagocracy. The demons who attempt to block the gateways to the deep spaces of this realm often take ghostly/ghastly forms, comparable to noxious gases not noticeable by ordinary sense perception. Each time we move into deeper space, these numbing ghostly gases work to paralyze us, to trap us, so that we will be unable to move further. Each time we succeed in overcoming their numbing effect, more dormant senses come alive. Our inner eyes open, our inner ears become unblocked. We are strengthened to move through the next gateway and the next. This movement inward/outward is be-ing. It is spinning cosmic tapestries. It is spinning and whirling into the Background.\(^{53}\)

Daly likens spinning to "the ecstatic process of Spinsters dis-covering the labyrinth of our own unfolding/becoming." She calls it the "Ecstatic Labyrinthine Journey of Survivors."\(^{54}\)

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53 Daly, p. 3.
54 Daly, p. 32.
One cannot but be struck by the connections of this to the vestibular system which processes the movement of spinning in the labyrinth of the inner ear.

Awakening the deeper senses calls to mind the limbic system and the deeper recesses of the brain. Also mentioned are the Crones, which connect in the writer's mind to the old women who sit saying their rosaries in church. For many the rosary is associated with older women.\textsuperscript{55}

Returning again to the limbic system one notes that maturation of that system, through myelination (covering the nerves with a protective sheath) does not occur until the fourth decade of life and may continue throughout life. Maturation of the limbic system may be one reason why students in their thirties and forties frequently perform better than those in their twenties.\textsuperscript{56}

Magic itself works by using symbols and word play to alter spiraling energy patterns outside the self as well as to change inner thought patterns à la power of positive thinking.\textsuperscript{57}

To someone interested in the magic of Pagan theologies the rosary as a symbolic tool looks extremely interesting. Its numerological properties are varied and malleable. Its history is long, and at least in the case of the Marian rosary, successful; that is if one is to believe even a part of the long list of miracles attributed to its use. The tool itself is important only as a symbol through which energy can be concentrated and conducted. Developing a ritual for the rosary involves not only making up new prayers and meditations, but evaluating the effectiveness of the connection or disconnection to past meanings given to the rosary. Rosaries have often been used to work miracles. Miracles could be defined as anything from stopping smoking, to getting a woman out of jail, curing a friend, lowering the cost of living, or preventing the building of a nuclear reactor. As with any other ritual, the energy drawn from the spiritual world is only as effective as the energy spent in the material one. Rosaries alone could not be expected to cure untreated illness, or stop the deployment of an MX missile. One wonders about the effect on authorities at the sight of a demonstration of women all saying rosaries, particularly if the prayers were specific to the situation and said out loud. Women have begun to use ritual and spirituality in just this way in such places as the Pentagon, Seneca Falls, New York, and Greenham Common, England where Women's Peace Encampments have been staged. They are finding ritual a creative and empowering tool in political action.

\textsuperscript{55} Wilkins, p. 197.
\textsuperscript{56} Moore, January 12, 1980.
\textsuperscript{57} Starhawk, pp.11-114
Rituals such as the rosary can be spiritual tools which concretize abstract concepts. The meditation "Strength Through Diversity" is designed as an experimental woman identified meditation for the rosary. It is hoped that it will spark others to play with meditative and spiritual tools such as the rosary. It is only through such experimentation that we may learn the effectiveness and limitations of spiritual tools. As long as we continue to experiment we maintain that connection with the abstract, and the ritual can remain flexible and grow. When we lose touch with the abstract concepts rituals become superstitions which cease to grow and cease to generate understanding.

STRENGTH THROUGH DIVERSITY

This meditation for the rosary has been designed to change our perception of ourselves from the handmaidens or mothers of an authoritative male deity to autonomous and collective agents of change in the world. It is designed to link us with other women so that we may share our considerable strengths.

My authority for choosing the community of women as a spiritual source of power comes most forcefully from a woman who was involved in Alcoholics Anonymous. In this program alcoholics and addicts admit their own powerlessness over alcohol and turn their will and their lives over to a Higher Power so that they may maintain sobriety. When my friend turned her life over to her Higher Power she had a drug and alcohol history of fifteen years. She was taking 35 Percodan (a highly narcotic pain-killer in the opiate family) every morning before she got out of bed and another 35 Percodan during the day. The Higher Power which enabled her to stay sober was the Community of Women. Her experience was not unique, but it is one which comes strongly to me when I try to explain the power of Women's Community.

As an occupational therapist I have often used multisensory activities to encourage the development of more functional perception in clients who have suffered some brain damage. The slide show presentation of "strength through diversity" has been extrapolated from these kinds of concepts and is meant to be presented with music and visual imagery as well as with the tactile stimulation of the rosary beads themselves.

The saying of the rosary "strength through diversity" is not meant to be limited to this presentation alone. However it is felt that this presentation will be most effective in moving beyond the more traditionally Christian and Marian imagery so long associated with the beads.

The rationale for the visual imagery, prayer forms, and rosary construction will be presented so that this process is not mystified. It is to be hoped that others may then develop their own versions of rosary meditation in ways which are most effective for themselves.

There are a number of reasons for choosing a meditative system of repetitive prayer on beads. One of these reasons is its long history and cross cultural precedents. Another is that the Marian rosary has long been popular with women, who did not have access to the Latin prayers of the official liturgy, and instead said their beads. Later when the liturgy became more accessible the Church tried to discourage the saying of the beads, particularly during the liturgy. Women, especially older women, still continue to say their beads, forming a sort of organic resistance to the official Church policy which continues to exclude their input.

Still another reason is motivated by my understanding of the Navajo response to witchcraft. Navajos believe that witchcraft originated in the greed and murders performed by First Man. The way to counteract the evils perpetrated by modern greed is to send that same magic back to the perpetrators in a manner that transforms it, destroying the greedy ones with their own evil.\(^5^9\) In such a way "strength through diversity" seeks to return the submissive and sacrificial imagery of women which has historically functioned as part of the Marian rosary, by transforming it into an imagery of women as powerful agents for change and growth.

There are six decades of beads separated by five beads, and a five bead pendant for the meditation of "strength through diversity". This totals 70 beads, which reduces numerologically to seven. In the Tarot deck seven is represented by the Chariot in the Major Arcana. Gail Fairfield interprets the Chariot as:

\begin{quote}
You are totally in tune with a fast-moving process or event. You are aware of the tolerances and limits of the situation and you know, instinctively, how to act and react in order to direct or affect the movement from within. You are not standing outside the situation; you can't control it from outside. By
\end{quote}

immersing yourself init, you have become part of it and are therefore able to direct its course.\textsuperscript{60}

This energy is in keeping with the purpose of the meditation. Some of the numbers, such as five, and ten are kept as well. Another number associated with this rosary is six.

Six is represented by the Major Arcana card, the Lovers. Fairfield interprets the Lovers in this way:

You are involved in the process of cooperation. Two or more forces or people in your life have joined together in coalition because they are working for a common goal. The forces will probably never become one unit, they may not work together in all ways, but they do combine energies for a general or specific purpose.\textsuperscript{61}

This energy too is in keeping with the meditation of "strength through diversity". The rosary is not designed to accommodate the numerology, rather the numerology is used as a means of checking the occult energies or powers of the rosary itself.

The beads themselves are seven different colors. There are a number of reasons for this, besides esthetics. Each decade is meant to represent a geographical area of the world. (See map, Appendix B) In the meditation each bead represents an individual woman, so that by including many geographic and cultural areas one may link with women on a planetary level.

One reason for maintaining this global vision is that the future of the planet depends on our awareness that our actions always affect others, no matter how distant. Another reason is to emphasize the cultural diversity within our own local communities. This seems necessary because we live in a society which seeks to portray us as homogeneous, thus excluding more of us than it ever includes.

At the beginning of the beads on the end of the pendant is a special charm or charms. These may best be chosen by the individual using the rosary and can have whatever special meaning one chooses.

\textsuperscript{60} Fairfield, p. 90.
\textsuperscript{61} Ibid., p. 89
In changing the prayers and meditations of the rosary care has been taken to follow a somewhat familiar format. The Marian rosary is familiar to many women who learned to say their beads as children. As with other patriarchal traditions, feminist awareness caused many to reject the oppressiveness of the rosary and similar religious rituals. But because of their multisensory aspects, rituals, especially those learned in childhood, continue to have the power of familiarity. By keeping in older traditional formats, while changing the oppressive aspects one can try to hold on to what feels good, that is the sensual aspects of the ritual.

Audre Lorde speaks about the power of the erotic. It is this effect which is attempted by using a format of the traditional rosary.

The dichotomy between the spiritual and the political is also false, resulting from an incomplete attention to our erotic knowledge. For the bridge which connects them is formed by the erotic—the sensual—those physical, emotional, and psychic expressions of what is deepest and strongest and richest within each of us, being shared: the passions of love, in its deepest meanings.

The considered phrase, "It feels right to me", acknowledges the strength of the erotic into a true knowledge, for what means and feels is the first and most powerful guiding light towards any understanding. And understanding is a handmaiden which can only wait upon, or clarify, that knowledge, deeply born. The erotic is the nurturer or nursemaid of all our deepest knowledge.62

The focal meditation used in this experimental rosary is that of "strength through diversity". This is done both through a multi-cultural approach, via the decades and through a multi-generational approach via the fifteen mysteries. The Marian rosary traditionally uses meditation on fifteen mysteries in the life of Mary. These are: the Joyful Mysteries, Annunciation, Visitation, Nativity, Presentation, and Finding in the Temple; The Sorrowful Mysteries, Agony in the Garden, Scourging at the Pillar, Crowning with Thorns, Carrying of the Cross, Crucifixion, and Death of Jesus; the Glorious Mysteries are Resurrection, Ascension, Descent of the Holy Spirit, Assumption of the Virgin, and Coronation of the Virgin in Heaven.

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Some of these mysteries appear both oppressive and obsessed with themes of violence and torture, aspects all too common in everyday life to bring much meditative peace. For this experimental rosary the mysteries have tentatively been changed to reflect developmental events in the lives of women. The Joyful mysteries could be related to those of youth, for instance: The onset of menstruation; first sexual experience; first creation of art or work recognized by others; the first trip made alone; the recognition of a special skill or gift.

The Sorrowful mysteries might be related to those of adulthood and maturity. They may include: the separation from a loved one, a beloved project or piece of work; taking a stand in opposition to a group; establishment of one's own home; establishment of a particular skill within a community; and the realization of the limitations of one's own life and abilities.

The Glorious mysteries would be those of age. They might be: recognition of the scope of one's power or ability; overcoming the fear of death; teaching of the young; healing of the sick; and carrying on or changing a tradition.

These mysteries are not necessarily all common to Western culture, at least not in a celebratory sense, but they have been culled from a number of traditions and are the beginnings of restating the mysteries of life in a way which is meant to be affirming of women's lives.

In the Marian rosary these particular meditations are designed to be stated on the separating beads. They may be reserved for special days of the week. Joyful mysteries are said on Mondays and Thursdays. Sorrowful mysteries are said on Tuesdays and Fridays. Glorious mysteries are said on Wednesdays, Saturdays and Sundays. In the experimental rosary a similar pattern might be followed. Mysteries of the Maiden might be said on Mondays and Fridays. These days relate to the Moon which governs poetry, fertility, and travel, and Venus, which governs harmony, pleasure, and sexuality. The Mysteries of the Mother might be said on Tuesdays and Fridays. Mars which governs strength, struggle, and conflict is associated with Tuesdays. Jupiter, governing politics, honor and success, is associated with Thursday. The Mysteries of the Crone might be said on Wednesday (Mercury's day), Saturday (Saturn's day) and Sunday. Mercury rules intelligence, creativity,
and communication. Saturn is associated with history, obstacles, and death. The sun governs leadership, growth and healing.\textsuperscript{63}

Alternatively the mysteries might be said to correspond with the waxing, the full, or the waning Moon. The Moon's changes are often likened to life stages.

Mysteries are recited on the separating beads. There are five mysteries and six separating beads in the experimental rosary. The extra bead might be used to say the life stage itself, eg. Maiden, Mother, Crone. Or the extra bead might be used to repeat an event which seemed to deserve special importance. The extra bead might even be used to state an event not mentioned previously.

The Marian rosary begins on the charm with the Nicene Creed. This is a prayer which makes a belief statement. It might be replaced with a statement which connects one to what Mary Daly has called the Ground and Center of Be-ing. Sunshine's Re-Embering a Creed does this.

\begin{quote}
I connect through Demeter the Mother, fruitful one
Creatrix of Heaven and Earth
And in Persephone the Daughter, Maiden
Who is conceived in the Wisdom of the Old One
Born of our virgin love
Travelling deep into the void
She receives, renews the dead
Without growing weary;
The third month ascends from the dark chasm
And runs into waiting arms,
Dancing and hugging and laughing;
From thence the crocuses purple and white
Spring to life.
I connect through the Seductive Goddess,
The wholly bliss of wemoon love,
The communion of the spinning ones,
The wildness of our coming,
The insurrection of the body And life recycling.\textsuperscript{64}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{63} Starhawk, pp. 204-208 for planetary symbolism.
In the Marian rosary on the bead after the charm the Lord's prayer is said. In this rosary a song to the Goddess is sung. There are three versions of the song, one for the Maiden, the Mother and the Crone. The song uses Moon imagery and each version is meant to be sung on the corresponding phase of the Moon. That is Virgin for waxing crescent, Mother for full, and Crone for waning crescent.

Virgin, Huntress, Lover, Moon,  
Shine your light on me.  
Virgin, Huntress, Lover, Moon,  
Shine your light on me.  
Fill me with your womonspirit.  
Fill me with your energy.  
Touch me with your crescent brightness.  
Moon shine down on me.

Mother, Goddess, Womon, Moon,  
Shine your light on me.  
Mother, Goddess, Womon, Moon,  
Shine your light on me.  
Fill me with your womon spirit.  
Fill me with your energy.  
Touch me with your full light brightness.  
Moon shine down on me.

Wise One, Healer, Dreamer, Moon,  
Shine your light on me.  
Wise One, Healer, Dreamer, Moon,  
Shine your light on me.  
Fill me with your womonspirit.  
Fill me with your energy.  
Touch me with your crescent brightness.  
Moon shine down on me.

The Lord's Prayer is considered an invocation, so that these invocations to female deities although not corresponding in meter to the Lord's Prayer, nevertheless correspond by their invocational nature. They also relate to the life cycle mysteries previously discussed.

On the next three beads of the Marian rosary the Ave or "Hail Mary" is said. This prayer has overtones of immanence, in its phrases "the Lord is with thee" and "pray for
us now and at the hour of our death”. In the experimental rosary a repetitive round of immanence replaces the Ave.

We all come from the Goddess
And to her we shall return
Like a drop of rain
Flowing to the ocean.65

In the space between the three beads and the next bead the Gloria is said. This prayer seems more transcendental than immanent. It is replaced by another transcendental prayer, the "Serenity" prayer.

Goddess give me the Serenity
To accept what I cannot change,
The courage to change what I can,
And the wisdom to know the difference.66

On the following bead the first mystery is stated and the invocation is made. The prayer of immanence is repeated on the next decade of beads, followed by the prayer of transcendence, followed by the next mystery and so forth around the circlet.

At the conclusion of the circle a prayer which directs the energy of the meditation is said. In the Marian rosary this prayer is called the "Hail, Holy Queen". (See Appendix A)

For the experimental rosary a song by Meg Christian and Holly Near entitled "The Rock Will Wear Away" is sung to direct the energy of "strength through diversity". As with the other prayers this song may be substituted by any prayer or song which performs a similar function.

Sixteen-year old virgin
Springtime takes her to the park
Where the moon shines down like the future calling her out of the dark
But her nightmare finds her freedom
And leaves her lying wounded, worn from invasion

Light as a feather floating by
Landing, then covered with soot

65 Z Budapest, Ritual performed during Women’s Music Festival, Michigan, 1980.
66 Popularized by Alcoholics Anonymous (William Rheinhold Neibur?)
Waiting now, watching now for rain
To wash clean her pain

CHORUS
Can we be like drops of water falling on the stone
Splashing, breaking, dispersing in air
Weaker than the stone by far
But be aware that as time goes by
The rock will wear away
And the water comes again

Thirty-year old mother
Autumn finds her pregnant once more
And the leaves like gold and copper reminding her that she is poor
And her children often are hungry she hungers too, for knowledge, time, and choices

Eighty-year old poet
Winter keeps her home and alone
Where she freezes and darkness keeps her from writing her final wisdom
But she lights her last red candle
And as it is melting, tilting it, writing now

The slide show which accompanies the rosary is designed as a means of making our diversity visible within the meditation. Of these slides, there will be three different kinds. Some of these are made to connect the meditators with the Earth and the forces of nature which we may call our own if we choose. There are a number of traditions, such as the Native American ones which envision the Earth and elemental forces as spiritual powers. A brief survey of a number of different traditions reveals that no image is exclusively male or exclusively female cross-culturally. Therefore, a variety of natural images are used to represent the lines of "Re-Embering a Creed" and the "Serenity" prayers at the beginning of the rosary.

For the initial invocation and the first three prayers of immanence slides of female deities from a wide variety of cultures will be shown. For those who have been raised in a society where patriarchal religion dominates it often comes as a surprise to note that female deities are ubiquitous. Presentation of the rosary is meant to draw on women's mythical history. From it as well as from each other we can gain strength.

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As women we have been made to be invisible by an exaggerated focus on the male. Added to this general trend is a focus on white and Anglo-European culture which makes other races and cultures invisible. Even more invisible Lesbians whose existence is frequently denied or erased. To counteract these tendencies slides have been made to present visualizations of women in as much diversity as possible.

The decades of the circlet are designed for the visualization of actual women. Most of the slides presented are of women in the United States, but they are grouped into decades with which they might be most apt to identify as their place of historical origin. While recognizing that this an arbitrary organization at best, it nevertheless provides a point of departure which attempts to include all our differences.

On the lavender beads which separate each decade Lesbians of the geographic area that precedes and follows will be shown. This is not to imply that only these women are Lesbians, but rather to accentuate the fact that Lesbians are present in all groups and to prevent their being lost to our consciousness. The meditation of "strength through diversity" is achieved primarily through the visualization of individual women for each bead of the circket. The decades are arranged so that women from varied geographic areas of origin may be visualized. One round of the rosary attempting to visualize a separate woman for each bead will rapidly heighten one's awareness of racial and cultural isolation. Even when drawing on media and historical figures as well as neighbors, family and friends, one finds some decades more difficult than others. For some it may be the lavender beads which prove particularly difficult.

The slide show rosary is designed to make this process somewhat easier for those saying the rosary for the first time. It is hoped that having participated in the meditation of "strength through diversity" we will be more aware of the women around us, more aware of our own power in the world.

The meditation is not meant to deify women or to put them on a pedestal, for that too prevents action. The meditation of "strength through diversity" is intended to reveal and reinforce our faith in our individual and collective strengths. A poem by Donna Kate Rushin called "The Black Goddess" seems to put this idea across most clearly.
I am not a Black Goddess
I am not a Black Goddess
Look at me
Look at me
I do what I can
That's about it
Sometimes I make it
Sometimes I don't
Sometimes I know what I feel
Sometimes I know what you feel and can say it
But I still get Night Terrors
And sometimes it takes me weeks to
Answer a letter or make a phone call

I am not a Black Goddess
I am not a Black Goddess

Once though I was Harriet Tubman
I sat down in a small room at a small table
Across from a scared Black man shaving himself with a Straight razor
He'd backed the White folks into one corner then
He'd backed himself into the other
Yes, I was Harriet that once
I looked at that straight razor and I looked at him
I got a grip on my guts and I said
Black Man there's nothing here that's good for you
Get your things get in that truck and come with me
I said move Black Man
I said move
Yes I was Harriet that once

But I am not a Black Goddess
I am not a Black Goddess

I was raised to be a good little small town Colored Girl
And I took it seriously
I hung along the edges
I stood outside the door
I squeezed myself into small still polite places
With a smile on my face
Like that was the way it was supposed to be

So who am I Harriet Tubman or a scared little Colored Girl?

Contra? Contra? Contradictions? Contradictions?
No Contra Dictions

I am not a Black Goddess
I cannot save you
I am not a Black Devil
I cannot destroy you
There is healing in my arms
And the cold residue of fear in my cells
Yes I was Harriet once
But I cannot save you

I am not a Black Goddess
I am not a Rock
I am not a Photograph
I am not a picture in your mind
I am myself struggling toward myself

I am not a Black Goddess
I am a Black Woman

Remember
There is the residue of fear in me
Remember
There is Healing in my hands
If you can hold these contradictions in your head/in your heart

You can hold me in your arms

I am not a Black Goddess
I am not a Black Goddess
I am not a Black Goddess
I am a Black Woman
I am a Black Woman
I am a Black Woman
Do you know what I mean?68

Women have increasingly brought together their spiritual and political power in the Peace encampments around the world. These actions call to mind the messages of the Lady of the Rosary at Fatima, in 1917. The destructive technological developments of the past sixty-seven years were unfathomable then. They are difficult to comprehend even now, when we face planetary

destruction from nuclear war or simply everyday technological pollution. If we are ever to stop
the course of this destruction it will be because we begin to listen to ourselves and to hear the
voices of women around the world. It is hoped that the meditation of "strength through diversity"
will call on each of us, as Lady of the Rosary to do just that.
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APPENDIX A

PRAY THE ROSARY

We wish now, venerable Brothers, to dwell for a moment on the renewal of the pious practice which has been called "the compendium of the entire Gospel: The Rosary."

POPE PAUL VI

3. The Our Father

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name; Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.

4. The Hail Mary

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

5. Glory be to the Father

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

6. The first Mystery

Announce the First Mystery, and say the Our Father on the large bead. Say ten Hail Marys, one on each succeeding bead. At end of decade say the Glory be to the Father. On the large bead announce the Second Mystery, and say the Our Father. Repeat the same process for each of the five mysteries.

7. The Hail, Holy Queen

Hail Holy Queen, Mother of Mercy! Our life, our sweetness, and our hope! To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve; to thee do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this valley of tears. Turn thou, most gracious Advocate, thine eyes of mercy toward us; and after this our exile show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus; O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary.

V. Pray for us, O Holy Mother of God.

Let us pray: O God, whose only begotten Son, by His life, death, and resurrection has purchased for us the rewards of eternal life, grant, we beseech Thee, that meditating upon these mysteries in the most Holy Rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary, we may imitate what they contain, and obtain what they promise; through the same Christ our Lord.
The fifteen Mysteries of the Rosary

THE FIVE JOYFUL MYSTERIES

1. THE ANNUNCIATION - The Angel Gabriel announced to the Virgin Mary that God wishes her to become the Mother of His Son. Mary obeys with humility.

Grace of the mystery of the Incarnation, come down into my soul and make it truly humble.

2. THE VISITATION - Mary visits St. Elizabeth, who is to be the mother of St. John the Baptist. She assists Elizabeth for three months.

Grace of the mystery of the Visitation, come down into my soul and make it truly charitable.

3. THE BIRTH OF CHRIST - Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is born in a stable. His Mother places Him in a manger. Shepherds and Wise Men visit Him.

Grace of the mystery of the Nativity, come down into my soul and make me truly poor in spirit.

4. THE PRESENTATION - Mary and Joseph take the Child Jesus to the Temple at Jerusalem to present Him to His Heavenly Father.

Grace of the mystery of the Purification, come down into my soul and make it truly wise and really pure.

5. THE FINDING OF THE CHILD JESUS IN THE TEMPLE - Having lost Jesus, Mary and Joseph seek Him. After three days they find Him in the Temple.

Grace of the mystery of the Finding of the Child Jesus in the Temple, come down into my soul and truly convert me.

THE FIVE SORROWFUL MYSTERIES

1. THE AGONY IN THE GARDEN - Jesus prays in the Garden of Olives. The thought of His coming sufferings and of our sins causes Him to sweat blood.

Grace of Our Lord's Agony, come down into my soul and make me truly contrite and perfectly obedient to Thy Will.

2. THE SCOURGING AT THE PILLAR - Jesus is stripped, bound to a pillar, and scourged until His body is covered with wounds and blood.

Grace of Our Lord's scourging, come down into my soul and make me mortified.

3. THE CROWNING WITH THORNS - A crown of thorns is pressed into the head of Jesus. His eyes fill with tears and blood. He is mocked and spat upon.

Grace of the mystery of Our Lord's crowning with thorns, come down into my soul and make me despise the world.

4. THE CARRYING OF THE CROSS - Jesus carries His heavy cross to Calvary. Mary makes the stations of the cross with her suffering Son.

Grace of the mystery of the carrying of the Cross, come down into my soul and make me truly patient.

5. THE CRUCIFIXION - Nailed to the cross, Jesus, after three hours of agony, dies in the presence of His Mother.

Grace of the mystery of the Death and Passion of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, come down into my soul and make me truly holy.

THE FIVE GLORIOUS MYSTERIES

1. THE RESURRECTION - Victorious over death, Jesus rises from the grave glorious and immortal, on Easter Sunday. He reopens the gates of heaven.

Grace of the Resurrection, come down into my soul and make me really faithful.

2. THE ASCENSION - Forty days after His Resurrection, Jesus ascends in the presence of His Mother and His disciples, into Heaven.

Grace of the mystery of the Ascension of Our Lord, come down into my soul and make me ready for Heaven.

3. THE DESCENT OF THE HOLY GHOST - Ten days after the Ascension, the Holy Ghost descends in tongues of fire upon Mary and the disciples.

Grace of Pentecost, come down into my soul and make me truly wise in the eyes of Almighty God.

4. THE ASSUMPTION OF MARY INTO HEAVEN - The Apostles go to but find that the throne of her Queen to Heaven, immaculate Conception of Mary, come and make me truly glori

MARY AS QUEEN OF HEAVEN - The Mother joy of all the angels, crowned Queen of Heaven. Grace of the Joyful Mysteries come down into our souls and make them really holy.
Strength Through Diversity

1. Ground & Center of Being
This prayer/song should be one which outlines basic beliefs about your Self, the World around you, your Sources of Energy, and your relationships to these powers in your life.

2. Invocation
This prayer/song addresses a Being or Source of Energy directly. It may be a call for strength or a song of praise, but it focuses on Sources of Energy and your relationships to those Beings.

3. Immanence
"We’re All in This Together"
A short prayer/song which can easily be repeated. The theme of this prayer/song reflects life experiences and emotions that keep us connected to each other.

4. Transcendence
“How to Keep On Keeping On”
Another short prayer/song which can serve as an inspiration. Something that tells us how to survive in spite of all the troubles which come our way.

5. The Circlet
As the circlet begins choose a major racial/cultural/geographic identity group. Say your Invocation on the odd bead while visualizing a Lesbian of that particular group. Say thirteen prayer/songs of Immanence, one on each succeeding bead. Visualize a woman of the group you chose on each bead. These women are meant to be of all ages and sexual preferences. At the end of the trece visualize another Lesbian and say your prayer/song of Transcendence. Because Lesbians are often the most invisible women it is important that we remember them and the ability we all have to celebrate and honor our relationships with other women.

On the next odd bead choose another major racial/cultural/geographic identity group. Say an Invocation and repeat the above process for each of the four trees. By the time a circlet is completed women representing races and cultures of the entire

This rosary is an experimental women’s rosary designed to make us aware of each other as individuals and to enable us to make a space in our lives where we can draw on our differences as a source of strength.

The meditation begins on the charm and tall which leads into the circlet. These beads are meant to call to mind the power and diversity of the World around us as well as the images of women’s strength left to us by our artists. Each bead of the circlet is meant to call to mind an individual woman. The four different sections represent four major racial/cultural/geographic identity groups. The odd beads between the trees* represent Lesbians who may be found anywhere and everywhere with in these larger groups. Repetitive prayer/songs are sung for each bead. The prayers and visualizations are meant to spin a meditative circle; a space where we can build our own strengths. From this space we can join our struggles with renewed energy.

Prayer/songs for each bead may be chosen by personal preference, although the following pattern can be a guide in choosing prayer/songs. What is important is that the visualizations of individual women reflect our diversity and that the prayer songs reflect our strengths. This rosary is designed as a spiritual tool, one which every woman may fit to her own hand and her own voice.

1. A Sign
A movement of the hands which carries meaning, for example: a favorite word or phrase in American Sign Language; hugging yourself; whatever will put you in a place to begin meditation.

* Spanish for thirteens
planet will have been visualized. Even though this may be difficult at first it is important to see how many different women you can remember from your neighborhood, your work, your play, or even movies, T.V., and photographs. In this way the rosary can make us more aware of each other and our strengths.

Creation myths of many cultures, like the Hopi Emergence story, tell of four colors of people put on the earth. These four peoples are represented in the four colors of Indian corn. One way to organize the treeces by racial/cultural/geographic identity groups is the following:

YELLOW: Chinese, Japanese, Indonesian, Korean, Mongolian; Asia, Pacific Islands and Australia.

BLACK: Afro-American, Afro-Caribbean, Semitic, and Aborigine; Africa and Australia.

RED: “The People”, Native Americans, Indians, Chicanas, Latinas; North, Central, and South America.

WHITE: Celtic, Aryan, Nordic, Hispanic, Slavic, and Semitic; Europe and Western Asia.

Creating any groups like these is bound to cause some problems and each woman must choose for herself a way to organize the four treeces in a way that makes sense to her. The important thing to remember is to include as many different women as possible in the visualizations.

7. Directing the Energy

This last prayer/song closes the circlet and ends the meditation. It may point out ways which we can use our strengths in the World. It is designed to bring us out of the meditation in a way which gives us the strength to keep on loving and fighting for a world where we can all live and die with dignity.

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Strengthen Through Diversity

A Sampler of Prayers

EVERY WOMAN should experiment with the songs or prayers which feel best to her. The following selection of prayers and songs are some which have been tried.

Find your own.
Create your own.

2. GROUND & CENTER OF BEING

RE-EMBRACING A CREED
Sunshine Goldstream

I connect through Demeter, the Mother, fruitful one
Crateus of Heaven and Earth
And Persephone the Daughter, Maiden
Who is conceived in the Wisdom of the Old One
Born of our virgin love
Travelling deep into the void
She receives, renews the dead
Without growing weary;
The third month ascends from the dark chasm
And runs into waiting arms,
Dancing and hugging and laughing;
From there the crocuses purple and white
Spring to life.
I connect through the Seductive Goddess
The wholly bliss of womon love,
The communion of the spinning ones,
The wildness of our coming,
The insurrection of the body
And life recycling.

TESTIMONY
Ferron 1980

There's godlike
And warlike
And strong
Like only some show
And there's sadlike
And madlike

And had
Like we know
But by my life be I spirit
And by my heart be I woman
And by my eyes be I open
And by hands be I whole

3. INVOCATION

WAXING, FULL AND WANE MOON SONGS
Susan Roberts 1977

Virgin, Huntress, Lover, Moon
Shine your light on me
Virgin, Huntress, Lover, Moon
Shine your light on me
Fill me with your womon spirit
Fill me with your energy
Touch me with your crescent brightness
Moon shine down on me

Mother, Goddess, Woman, Moon
Shine your light on me
Mother, Goddess, Woman, Moon
Shine your light on me
Fill me with your womon spirit
Fill me with your energy
Touch me with your full light brightness
Moon shine down on me

Wise One, Healer, Dreamer, Moon
Shine your light on me
Wise One, Healer, Dreamer, Moon
Shine your light on me
Fill me with your womon spirit
Fill me with your energy
Touch me with your crescent brightness
Moon shine down on me

YEMAYA, SISTER OF THE FISHES
Carolyn Brandy 1979

Yemaya, ocean mother,
In the beginning, you gave birth to the heavens,
To all the gods and goddesses,
Sister of the fishes.

YEMAYA
Rock me, soothe me.

You're the storm of my anger.
Bring me home again.
Deep ocean of love.
4. IMMANENCE

a round
in Budapest

We all come from the Goddess
And to her we shall return
Like a drop of rain
Flowing to the ocean

a chorus
Sirani Avedis

She is a warrior in a great revolution
Disabled at the patriarchy’s hand
But you don’t need an athlete
To make an Amazon
And you don’t need legs
To take a stand

5. TRANSCENDENCE

Serenity Prayer
Alcoholics Anonymous

Goddess grant me the serenity to accept
the things I cannot change,
Courage to change the things I can,
And wisdom to know the difference.

CHANGING
Kay Gardner 1974

Changing, changing
Ever changing
Like the river and its flow
Changing, changing
Life is changing
Giving time to grow

7. DIRECTING THE ENERGY

The Rock Will Wear Away
Meg Christian/Holly Near 1976

Sixteen-year old virgin
Springtime takes her to the park
Where the moon shines down like the future calling her
out of the dark
But her nightmare finds her freedom
And leaves her lying wounded, worn from invasion
Light as a feather floating by
Landing, then covered with soot

Waiting now, watching now for rain
To wash clean her pain

CHORUS
Can we be like drops of water falling on the stone
Splashing, breaching, dispersing in air
Weaker than the stone by far
But be aware that as time goes by
The rock will wear away
And the water comes again

Thirty-year old mother
Autumn finds her pregnant once more
And the leaves like gold and copper reminding her
that she is poor
And her children often are hungry
And she hungered too, for knowledge, time, and choices

Eighty-year old poet
Winter keeps her home and alone
Where she freezes and darkness keeps her from
writing her final wisdom
But she lights her last red candle
And as it is melting, tilting it, writing now

SISTERS TAKE CARE OF SISTERS
Naomi Littlebear 1977

If you can see me beside you and look at where I’m coming from
You will recognize a sister right away.
And if you look a little longer you will see me getting stronger
And you will know that I’ve been with you all along.

Why should any woman feel lonely when she is surrounded by friends?
Reaching out through the darkness from a place
where we all have been.
Sisters take care of sisters. Don’t leave any woman behind.
Sisters take care of sisters. We need every sister we find.
I know we need time from each other, for we all work for different things.
But somewhere a woman is crying to be brought out from her anger and pain.
Sisters take care of sisters. Don’t leave any woman behind.
Sisters take care of sisters. We need every sister we find.
If you can see me beside you and look at where I’m coming from
You will recognize a sister right away.
And if you stay a little longer you will see me getting stronger.
And you will know that I’ve been with you all along.
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ADDENDUM