

THE FIFTEEN MYSTERIES

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Rosary

BY BISHOP
FULTON J. SHEEN





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THE MEDITATIONS ON The Fifteen Mysteries of the Rosary

By BISHOP FULTON J. SHEEN

National Director, The Society for the Propagation of the Faith



COVER PAINTING BY E. JOSEPH DREANY

ILLUSTRATED BY MARY ZIMMER

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The Meaning of the Rosary

By BISHOP FULTON J. SHEEN

*National Director, The Society for the
Propagation of the Faith*

Dou have sometimes heard a radio program in which a voice spoke, while at the same time music was playing in the background. When we say the Rosary, something like that occurs. Our lips say the Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory Be to the Father, but our mind, thinking about the life of our Lord, creates a soundless background symphony of thoughts.

The Rosary is psychologically one of the greatest of prayers, because it draws all our scattered human energies, mind, lips, and fingertips, into a single, unifying purpose. To those who find prayer difficult, the rhythmic movement of the fingers induces spiritual thoughts.

To those who are used to mental prayer, the spiritual gains a new dimension when it spills over into the body and comes out on the tips of the fingers.

Ours is not an age in which the heavenly therapy of prayer-by-beads is generally used. One of the reasons why people today are so frequently worried and fearful is that they keep their minds too busy and their fingers too idle, or else tap a jerking syncopation to the noises of a nervous world. The Rosary, by contrast, gathers together our dispersed forces and fixes our minds on holy, simple thoughts, while the fingers, too, are drawn into the magnetic field of worship. Because it focuses the whole man towards a single, uplifting purpose, the Rosary can be the greatest of all therapies for troubled modern men.

A faint suspicion of this fact has begun to penetrate into some hospitals. Nervous and combat-fatigued patients are taught to knit or weave, to relax their nervous tension. The disadvantage of this treatment is that it is only partial; the patient's mind is not involved. But

in the Rosary, all faculties, mind, will, imagination, memory, desires, hopes and muscles, are directed to the Divine.

There is seemingly much repetition in the Rosary; but actually this is no more wearying or monotonous than a man's telling a woman "I love you" for the 20th time. Since there is a new moment in time to be redeemed by love, his words may be the same, but the meaning of each avowal is slightly different. So, in the Rosary, we say over and over to God, "I love You. I love You. And I love You."

The beads carry the burden of the prayers, while the decades record the 15 scenes played out in the great drama of our Redemption. Bead by bead, decade by decade, the soul climbs from one Mystery to the next, to that "Love we fall short of in all love, that Beauty that leaves all other beauty pain."

We need these Mysteries to engage our thoughts. We are not sufficiently spiritual to apprehend God as He is Himself. Our natures are too weak to stand the shock of such sublimity. The sun is so rich in varied brightness that

it must be shot through a prism before our weak eyes can see the glory of its seven colors. So, too, the life of our divine Saviour abounds in beauties that our frail human hearts cannot see unless filtered first through the prism of a prayer such as the Rosary, which breaks them up into the 15 separate Mysteries.

The Mysteries fall naturally into three groups, which are also the three divisions of every ideal Christian life: joy, suffering and glory.

The
Joyful
Mysteries



THE ANNUNCIATION

The Joyful Mysteries

1

THE ANNUNCIATION

IN THE ANNUNCIATION, the birth of the Son of God in the flesh is made to hinge on the consent of a woman, as the fall of man in the garden of Paradise hinged on the consent of a man.

God in His power might have assumed a human nature by force, as the hand of a man lays hold of a rose. But He willed not to invade His great gift of freedom without a creature's free response. Through the angel who salutes Mary in words that have become the first part of the Hail Mary, "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee," Mary is asked if she will give God a man!

Mary learning that she will conceive without

human love, but with the overshadowing of divine Love, consents, and a new humanity begins, with Mary as the new Eve, and Christ the new Adam.

The Annunciation is the Mystery of the joy of freedom. Our free will is the only thing in the world that is our own. God can take away anything else, our health, wealth, power, but God will never force us to love Him or to obey Him. The charm of Yes lies in the possibility that one might have said No.

Mary has taught us to say *Fiat* to God. "Be it done to me according to Thy word." But God Himself has taught us that, since He would not invade the freedom of a woman, then a man should never do so.

2

THE VISITATION

THE GOSPEL tells us, "In the days that followed, Mary rose up and went with all haste to



THE VISITATION

a city of Judea, in the hill country, where Zachary dwelt; and there entering in she gave Elizabeth greeting. No sooner had Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, than the child leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth herself was filled with the Holy Ghost; so that she cried out with a loud voice, "Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb" (Luke 1:39-42).

The first miracle worked by our Lord on earth was performed while He was still in His Mother's womb. He stirred the unborn John and brought consciousness of His presence to Elizabeth, the cousin of His Mother. Thus, long before Cana, our Lord shows that it is through His Mother that He works His unseen wonders in the heart and through her that He is brought into the souls of men.

The joy of the second Joyful Mystery is that of the Old Testament meeting the New, and of the young maiden greeting the old woman, as Mary burst into the most revolutionary song that was ever sung, the *Magnificat*, foretelling

the day when the mighty would be unseated from their thrones, and the poor would be exalted.

Yet at that moment, when Elizabeth is the first to call her the Mother of God, even before our Lord is born, Mary answers in her song that her greatness is due to Him, and that she was chosen because she was lowly. It may very well be that Mary was chosen to be the Mother of God after she had in her vow renounced the honor. Though greater than Elizabeth, she visits her in her hour of need. Only as we become little do we ever become great in the eyes of God.

3

THE NATIVITY

ALL LOVE TENDS to become like that which it loves. God loved man; therefore, He became man. Thanks to His human nature, He could

take on our woes and our sorrows, and feel the effects of sin as if they were His very own.

But all this was conditioned upon Mary's giving Him a human nature. Without her He would never have had eyes to see the multitude hungry in the desert, or ears to hear the pleading of the lame man of Jericho, or hands to caress children, or feet to seek the lost sheep.

For nine months, her own body was the natural Eucharist, in which God shared communion with human life, thus preparing for that greater Eucharist, when human life would commune with the Divine.

Mary's joy was to form Christ in her own body; her joy now is to form Christ in our souls. In this Mystery, we pray to become pregnant with the Christ spirit, giving Him new lips with which He may speak of His Father, new hands with which He may feed the poor, and a new heart with which He may love everyone, even enemies.



THE NATIVITY

4

THE PRESENTATION

EVERY CHILD is an arrow shot out of the bow of its mother, but its target is God. Children have come through mothers, but they do not belong to them. Mary acknowledges this claim of divinity on her Child by presenting Him back again to God, as she offers the temple of His Body in the temple made by hands.

Mary here anticipated the joy of every mother who brings her child to the baptismal font, where God may claim His own. But in the case of Mary, the Child was claimed for sacrifice, as the aged Simeon said that He was a sign to be contradicted, for the cross is the contradiction.

Mary was even told that a sword her own soul would pierce. That would happen when her Son on the cross would have His heart pierced with a lance. Through His Body and her soul would go that one stroke of the sword.



THE PRESENTATION

She was the only mother who ever brought a life into the world to die.

It is not so much our presents that God wants from us, as it is our presence, as we offer our life to Him.

5

THE FINDING OF OUR LORD
IN THE TEMPLE

THERE ARE two kinds of souls in the world; those who hide from God and those from whom God hides. But when God hides, He hides in order that He might be sought the more, as if to draw out a deeper love.

During the three days when the divine Child was lost, the Blessed Mother became the mother of sinners. The essence of sin is the loss of God, and Mary lost God, not spiritually, but physically. During those three days, she came to know something of the solitariness of the sinner, the loneliness of the guilty, and the

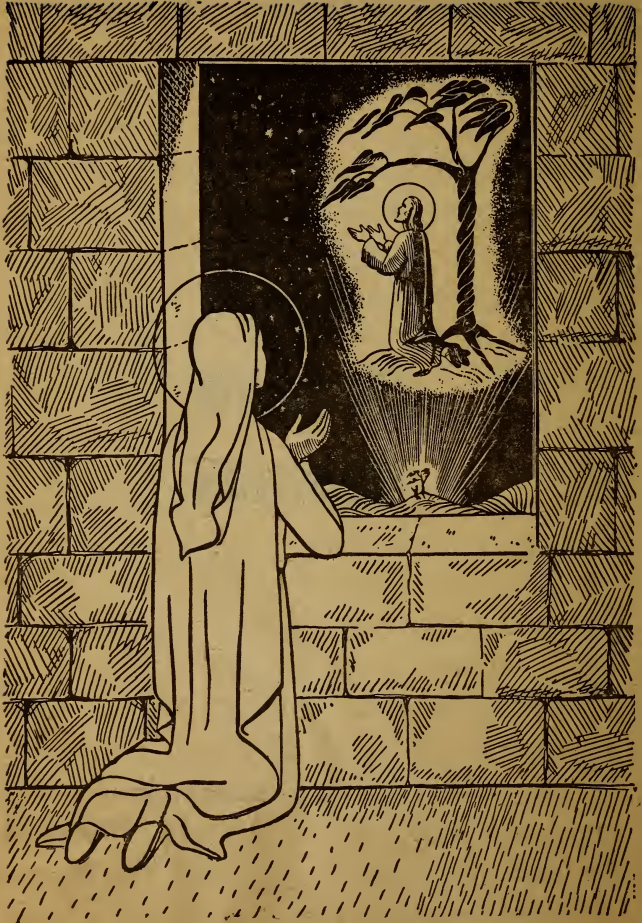


THE FINDING OF OUR LORD
IN THE TEMPLE

aloneness of the frustrated. Her divine Son, 21 years later, would feel it for Himself on the cross, when He would ask why God had abandoned Him.

Let no sinner ever despair of Divine mercy, because Mary understands the tortures of the heart, but above all, because she knows where to find Christ. She also knows how to bring the sinner to her Divine Son. As the Madonna of the Empty Arms, she awaits your embrace.

The
Sorrowful
Mysteries



THE AGONY IN THE GARDEN

The Sorrowful Mysteries

1

THE AGONY IN THE GARDEN

AS A KIND PERSON in the face of pain seeks to relieve the sufferings of his friend, so does moral kindness in the face of evil take on the punishment which evil deserves. Every mother would willingly, if she could, bear the aches of her child. A father will pay the debts of his wayward son as if they were his own. Our Lord, though guilty of no sin, nevertheless in His agony in the garden permitted Himself to feel the inner effects of sin, as on the cross He experienced also the external effects of sin. These internal effects were sadness, fear, and a sense

of loneliness. "I looked for one that would grieve together with Me, and I found none."

He permits His head to feel blasphemies as if His lips had pronounced them; His hands to feel the sins of theft, as if He had stolen; His body to sense the guilt of defilement, as if it were the cause. Innocence knows sin better than the guilty, because the guilty are already part of it.

Sin is in the blood. The drunkard, the libertine, the tyrant have registered sin not only in their souls, but in their brains, the cells of their body, and the very expressions of their faces. If, therefore, sin is in the blood, to atone for it, blood must be poured out. Our Lord never intended that any other blood than His own should be shed in expiation for sins. Because men have not invoked the blood of Christ for their sins, they are now at war shedding one another's blood.

The agony in the garden is not a triumph of the plans and the schemes of betrayers and enemies, but is permitted by divine decree. "This

is your hour," our Lord said to His enemies. Evil has its hour, but God has His day!

2

THE SCOURGING AT THE PILLAR

SEVEN CENTURIES BEFORE, it had been foretold that our Lord would be so wounded for our sins that we would have "thought Him, as it were, a leper, and as one struck by God and afflicted." The time has come for the fulfillment of that prophecy. Omnipotence is bound to a pillar in the hour of His death, as He was bound in swaddling clothes in the very hour of His birth.

The scourging at the pillar must have been terrible, because whenever our Lord foretold His passion, He always made particular reference to His scourging, as if to emphasize the outrage of His suffering. St. Peter, after the Resurrection, recalling how he stood in the outer court listening to the fall of thongs upon

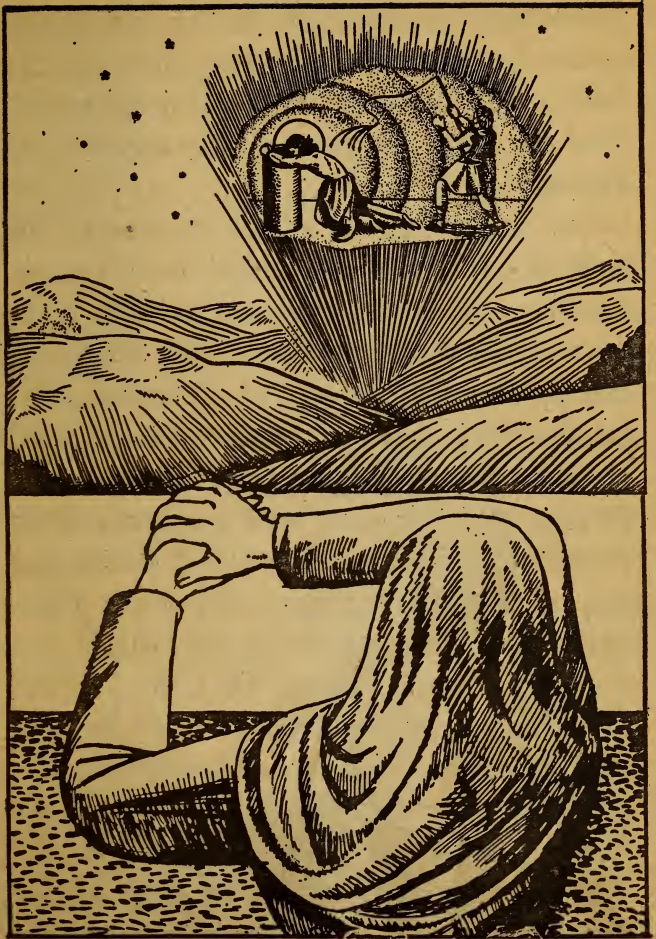
His flesh, and yet heard our Lord not complain, wrote: "Who when He was reviled, did not revile; when He suffered, did not threaten."

The scourging is an act of reparation for the excessive cult of the body. "The body is for the Lord." In expiation for self-indulgence, His body, as the second Ark of the Covenant, is disclosed to profane eyes, as the Spouse of souls now becomes the plaything of mockers. How many strokes He received, no one knows. The prophet foretold that He would be so scourged that the bones of His body would be numbered. We are saved by other stars and stripes than those on the flag; namely, by the stars and stripes of Christ, by whose stars we are illumined—by whose stripes we are healed.

3

THE CROWNING WITH THORNS

AS THE SCOURGING was the reparation for the sins of the flesh, so the crowning with



THE SCOURGING AT THE PILLAR

thorns was the atonement for the sins of the mind—for the atheists who wish there were no God, for the doubters whose evil lives becloud their thinking, for the egotists, centered on themselves.

The soldiers cursed as the thorns pricked their fingers. Then they cursed the Lord, as they drove the crown of thorns into His head, as a mockery of a royal diadem. Into His hands they placed a reed, the symbol of His kingdom, presumed to be false and unstable like the reed. His flesh, already hanging from Him like purple rags, is now covered with a purple robe to ridicule His claim to kingship of hearts and nations. Blindfolding Him, they struck Him, asking Him to prophesy, or tell who it was that delivered the blow. They then bowed down before Him in mock reverence, spitting in His face, that all the subsequent Mindszentys, Stepinacs, and martyrs of the world might have courage in their hour of martyrdom.

In this Mystery is verified the truth of our Saviour's warning: "If the world hates you, be sure that it hated Me before it learned to hate



THE CROWNING WITH THORNS

you. If you belonged to the world, the world would know you for its own and love you; it is because you do not belong to the world, because I have singled you out from the midst of the world, that the world hates you." He who expects to preserve His faith without being mocked by the world is either weak in it, or else not so bold in goodness as to draw upon himself the mocking insults of another purple robe and a torturing circle of thorns.

4

THE CARRYING OF THE CROSS

ANY CROSS would be easy to bear if we could only tailor it to fit ourselves. Our Lord's cross was not made by Him, but for Him. Crosses and burdens are thrust upon us. Our acceptance makes them personal. Our Lord even said that there would be at least seven



THE CARRYING OF THE CROSS

crosses a week: "Take up your cross daily and follow Me."

Crosses are of two kinds: pure ones, which come from the outside, such as pain, persecution, and ridicule; and inner, or impure crosses, which come as the result of our sins, such as sadness, despair, and unhappiness. These latter crosses can be avoided. They are made by contradicting the will of God. The vertical bar of the cross stands for God's will; the horizontal bar stands for our wills. When one crosses the other, we have the cross.

Our Lord never promised that we would be without a cross; He only promised that we would never be overcome by one. St. Peter so loved the cross that when the time came for his execution he asked to be crucified upside down.


May He who was found guilty of no other crime than that of the excess of love make us hate the load of sin that made His cross. The whole cross borne in union with His will and following in His footsteps is easier to bear than the splinters against which we rebel.



THE CRUCIFIXION

5

THE CRUCIFIXION

UR LORD spent 30 years of His life obeying, three years teaching, three hours redeeming! But how did He redeem? Suppose a golden chalice is stolen from an altar and beaten into a large ash tray. Before that gold can be returned to the altar, it must be thrown into a fire, where the dross is burned away; then the chalice must be recast, and finally blessed and restored to its holy use.

Sinful man is like that chalice which was delivered over to profane uses. He lost his God-like resemblance and his high destiny as a child of God. So our blessed Lord took unto Himself a human nature, making it stand for all of us, plunged it into the fires of Calvary to have the dross of sin burned and purged away. Then, by rising from the dead, He became the new head of the new humanity, according to which we are all to be patterned.

The cross reveals that unless there is a Good Friday in our lives, there will never be an Easter Sunday. Unless there is a crown of thorns, there will never be the halo of light. Unless there is the scourged body, there will never be a glorified one. Death to the lower self is the condition of resurrection to the higher self.

The world says to us, as it said to Him on the cross: "Come down, and we will believe!" But if He had come down, He never would have saved us. It is human to come down; it is divine to hang there. A broken heart, O Saviour of the world, is love's best cradle! Smite my own, as Moses did the rock, that Thy love may enter in!

The
Glorious
Mysteries




THE RESURRECTION

The Glorious Mysteries

1

THE RESURRECTION

UR BLESSED LORD compared Himself to a seed, saying that unless the seed fell to the ground and died, it would not spring forth to life. He now by the power of God rises with the flowers of springtime in the newness of life, and gives to the earth the only serious wound it ever received—the irreparable wound of an empty grave.

The birth of the Son of God in the form of man was announced to a Virgin; the first announcement of His Resurrection was made to a repentant sinner, Magdalen, that none of us would be without hope. Thomas the Apostle

would not believe until he had put his hand into His side, and his fingers into our Lord's hands. Thus do we know that our Lord kept not His wounds but His scars as proof of His love: "With these was I wounded in the house of those who love Me."

The Resurrection begins to affect our lives the day of Baptism. When baptized, we are plunged into the waters as if "buried in the sepulcher to sin and death; emerging from the waters clothed with grace as the principle of Divine Love, we are like the Christ rising from the tomb in the glory of the Resurrection."


Though we are risen in spirit with Christ, so that "our conversation is in heaven," our bodies will not share that glory until our own final resurrection. In the meantime our body must be crucified with Christ's that we may rise with Christ.

On the road to Emmaus on Easter Sunday, our Lord said to His disciples, "Was it not to be expected that the Christ should undergo these sufferings, and enter so into His glory?"

But if that be the law of Innocence, then how shall we, the guilty, hope to escape from it?

2

THE ASCENSION

UR BLESSED LORD did not ascend to heaven immediately after the Resurrection but remained on earth for 40 days, speaking to the Apostles about the Kingdom of God. It was during these days that He gave the details of His Church, which He said would have its visible manifestation on Pentecost.

“And so the Lord Jesus, when He had finished speaking to them, was taken up to heaven, and is seated now at the right hand of God.” “Seated” is a figurative expression of eternal repose, which He has merited by His victory over sin. “At the right hand” is a symbol of His power of eternal intercession before His heavenly Father on our behalf.

The Ascension of Christ is the assurance of our own ascension into heaven after the Last Judgment. Not yet ascended in body, we nevertheless enjoy the ascension of our minds in union with Him. We find our true home in heaven. It is to heaven that we look expectantly for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ to save us; He will form this humbled body of ours anew, modeling it into the image of His glorified body, so effective is His power to make all things obey Him.

O heavenly Magnet, in each Communion draw our body and blood to Thy own, that already following Thee in heart, we may later ascend with Thee in the flesh!

3

THE DESCENT OF THE HOLY
GHOST UPON THE APOSTLES

MANY HAVE WISHED that Our Blessed Lord had remained on earth, that we might have



THE ASCENSION

heard His voice, seen His compassionate eyes, and brought our children to be blessed by His hands. But He said, "I can say truly that it is better for you I should go away; He who is to befriend you will not come to you unless I do go, but if only I make my way there, I will send Him to you."

If our Lord had remained on earth, He would have been only a symbol to be copied—not a life to be lived. By returning to His heavenly Father, He could then send both from the Father and Himself the Holy Spirit that would make Him live on earth in His new Body, which is the Church.

The human body is made up of millions of cells, and yet is one because vivified by one soul, presided over by a visible head, and governed by an invisible mind. So on Pentecost, the Apostles, who were like the cells of a body, became Christ's Mystical Body, because vivified by His Holy Spirit, governed by one visible head, Peter, and presided over by one invisible head, Christ in heaven. Our glorious Church is not



THE DESCENT OF THE HOLY GHOST
UPON THE APOSTLES

an organization, but an organism. As our Lord once thought, governed, and sanctified through a human body, which He took from the womb of His blessed Mother, so now He teaches, governs, and sanctifies through His Mystical Body, the Church, which He took from the womb of humanity overshadowed by His Holy Spirit.

Christ was infallible when He talked through a human body; He is still infallible when He teaches through a mystical Body. Christ sanctified when He forgave sins with human lips; He sanctifies still when He forgives sins through the power of His priests. Christ governed through His human Body, and He governs still. "He that heareth you, heareth Me."

As a drop of blood can live in the body, but cannot live apart from the body, so neither can any of us live the fullness of the Christ Life except in His Mystical Body, the Church.

4

THE ASSUMPTION

WHAT THE ASCENSION WAS to our Lord, that the Assumption is to our Lady. Certainly she, the new Garden of Paradise, in which grew the Lily of divine sinlessness and the red Rose of the Church, should not be delivered over and forgotten by the heavenly Gardener. She, in whose womb was celebrated the nuptials of eternity and time is more of eternity than time. If husband and wife in marriage are made two in one flesh, then shall not she, who is the new Eve of the new Adam, be also made two in one spirit with Him?

As Christ ascended into heaven to the unity of the divine nature, so Mary is assumed into heaven in the unity of Christ's human nature. Her mystical flight is the event to which our whole generation moves.

Our age of carnalities, which loves the "body beautiful," is lifted out of its despair by the

Assumption, to honor a body that is beautiful because it is a temple of God, a gate through which the Word of heaven passed to earth, a Tower of Ivory up which climbed divine Love to kiss upon the lips of His Mother a mystic rose.

To this daughter of the new Eve goes up our prayer:

The celestial traitress play
And all mankind to bliss betray;
With sacrosanct cajoleries
And starry treachery of your eyes,
Tempt us back to Paradise.



THE ASSUMPTION

5

THE CORONATION

Our Lady went into a strange country,
Our Lady, for she was ours
And had run on the little hills behind the houses
And pulled small flowers;
But she rose up and went into a strange country
With strange thrones and powers.

And there were giants in the land she walked in,
Tall as their toppling towns,
With heads so high in heaven, the constellations
Served them for crowns;
And their feet might have forded like a brook the
abysses
Where Babel drowns.

And moving in innocence and in accident,
She turned the face
That none has ever looked on without loving
On the Lords of Space;
And One hailed her with her name in our own
country
That is full of grace.



THE CORONATION

Our Lady went into a strange country
And they crowned her for a queen,
For she needed never to be stayed or questioned
But only seen;
And they were broken down under unbearable beauty
As we have been.

But ever she walked till away in the last high places
One great light shone
From the pillared throne of the king of all that
country
Who sat thereon;
And she cried aloud as she cried under the gibbet
For she saw her Son.

Our Lady wears a crown in a strange country,
The crown He gave,
But she has not forgotten to call to her old com-
panions,
To call and crave;
And to hear her calling a man might arise and
thunder
On the doors of the grave.

—REGINA ANGELORUM by G. K. CHESTERTON

Encyclical Letter
of Pope Pius XII
on the Rosary
—September 15, 1951

PIUS XII, Pope, Greets and Gives His Apostolic Blessing to the Venerable Brethren:

Since We were raised to the supreme Chair of Peter, by design of Divine Providence, seeing the advancing evils, We have never ceased to intrust to the most powerful protection of the Mother of God the fate of the human family, and, for this aim, as you know, several times We have written letters of exhortation.

It is known to you, Venerable Brethren, with what zeal and how much spontaneous and unanimous approval the Christian people everywhere have answered Our invitation.

It has been magnificently testified many times by the great demonstration of faith and

love towards the august Queen of Heaven, and above all, that manifestation of universal joy which, last year, Our eyes had the pleasure to behold, when, in St. Peter's Square, surrounded by an immense multitude of believers, We solemnly proclaimed the Assumption into Heaven of the Virgin Mary.

The recollection of these things comes back pleasantly to Us and encourages Us to trust firmly in Divine Mercy.

However, at present, We do not lack reasons for profound sorrow which torment and sadden Our paternal heart.

You know well, Venerable Brethren, the sad conditions of our times. Fraternal union among nations, broken for such a long time, has not yet been re-established everywhere. Yet, everywhere we see souls upset by hatred and rivalry, while threats of new bloody conflicts still hover over the peoples. To this, one must add the violent form of persecution, which, for a long time, has been unleashed against the Church, saddening it very cruelly with calumnies and

miseries of all kinds, making the blood of martyrs flow again.

To what and to how many snares are the souls of so many of Our sons submitted in those areas to make them reject the Faith of their fathers, and to make them break, with the utmost disgrace, the tie of union which links them to this Apostolic See. Nor can We pass over in silence a new crime to which, with utmost sorrow, We want earnestly to draw not only your attention, but the attention of the clergy, of parents, and even of public authorities.

We refer to the iniquitous campaign that the impious lead everywhere to harm the shining souls of the children.

Not even the innocent age has been spared. On the contrary, audacious efforts are unfortunately made to snatch, with a gesture, from the mystical garden of the Church even the most beautiful flowers, which constitute the hope of religion and society. Considering this, one cannot be surprised if peoples groan under

the weight of the Divine punishment, and live under the nightmare of even greater calamities.

However, consideration of a situation so pregnant with dangers must not depress your souls, O Venerable Brethren. Instead, that Divine teaching: "Ask and it shall be given to you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you" (Luke 11:9) spontaneously raises your hearts with greater hope towards the Mother of God. There, the Christian people have always sought refuge in the hour of danger, because "she has been constituted the cause of salvation for the whole human race" (St. Irenaeus).

In the light of the above, we look forward with joyful expectation and revived hope to the coming month of October, during which the faithful flock in larger numbers to the churches to raise their supplications to Mary by means of the Holy Rosary.

O Venerable Brethren, We desire that this prayer should be offered with such greater fervor of heart as is demanded by the increased urgency of the need.

We well know the Rosary's powerful efficacy to obtain the maternal aid of the Virgin.

By no means is there only one way to pray to obtain this aid. However, We consider the Holy Rosary the most convenient and adequate means, as is clearly suggested by the very origin of this practice and of its nature, more divine than human. What prayers are more adapted and more beautiful than the Lord's prayer and the angelic salutation, which are the flowers with which this mystical crown is formed? Adding to the vocal prayers the meditation on the Sacred Mysteries, there emerges another very great advantage, that all, even the most simple and least educated, have in this a prompt and easy way to feed and keep their own faith.

And truly, from the frequent meditation on the Mysteries, the soul draws and imperceptibly absorbs the virtues they contain, and lights up with extraordinary hope of the immortal virtues, and becomes strongly and easily impelled to follow the path which Christ Himself and His Mother have followed. The reci-

tation of identical formulas, repeated so many times, rather than rendering the prayer sterile and boring, has on the contrary the admirable quality of infusing confidence in him who prays and makes a sweet compulsion toward the maternal heart of Mary.

Endeavor with particular care, O Venerable Brethren, that the Faithful, on the occasion of the coming month of October, should perform this rite with the utmost possible zeal, and that the Holy Rosary become always more esteemed and more diligently recited.

Through your effort, the Christian people should be led to understand the excellence, the value and the salutary efficacy of the Rosary.

But it is above all in the bosom of the family that We desire the custom of the Holy Rosary to be everywhere adopted, religiously preserved and ever more intensely practiced.

In vain is a remedy sought for the wavering fate of civil life if the family, the principle and foundation of the human community, is not brought back to the norms of the Gospel.

To undertake such a difficult duty, We affirm that the recitation of the Holy Rosary is a most efficacious means. What a sweet sight—most pleasing to God—when, at eventide, the Christian home resounds with the frequent repetition of the praises to honor the Queen of Heaven! Then the Rosary, recited in common, assembles before the image of the Virgin, in an admirable union of hearts, the parents and their children, who come back from their daily work.

It unites them piously with those absent and those dead.

It links them more tightly in a sweet bond of love, with the most Holy Virgin, who, like a loving mother, will come among her children bestowing upon them an abundance of the gifts of concord and family peace.

Then the home of the Christian family, like that of Nazareth, will become an earthly abode of sanctity, and a temple, where the Holy Rosary will not only be the particular prayer which every day rises to Heaven in an odor of sweetness, but will also form the most effica-

cious school of Christian life. This meditation on the Divine Mysteries of the Redemption will teach the adults to live, admiring daily the shining examples of Jesus and Mary, and to draw from these examples comfort in adversity, striving towards those heavenly treasures "where neither thief draws near, nor moth destroys" (Luke 12:33). This meditation will bring to the knowledge of the little ones the main truths of the Faith, making love for the Redeemer blossom almost spontaneously in their innocent hearts, while, seeing their parents kneeling before the majesty of God, they will learn from their very early years how great is the value of prayers said in common.

We do not hesitate to affirm again publicly that We put great confidence in the Holy Rosary for the healing of evils which afflict our times.

Not with force, not with arms, not with human power, but with Divine help obtained through the means of this prayer, strong like David with his sling, the Church undaunted

shall be able to confront the infernal enemy, repeating to him the words of the young shepherd: "Thou comest to me with a sword, and a spear, and with a shield; but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of Hosts, the God of armies . . . and all this assembly shall know that the Lord saveth not with sword and spear, for this is his battle, and he will deliver you into our hands" (1 Kings 17:45-47).

For this reason, We earnestly desire, Venerable Brethren, that all the faithful, following your example and your inspiration, should respond solicitously to Our paternal exhortation, uniting their hearts and their voices with the same ardor of charity. If the evils and the assaults of the wicked increase, so likewise must the zeal of all good people increase and become ever more vigorous. Let them strive to obtain from our most loving Mother, especially through the means of the Holy Rosary, that better times may quickly return for the Church and society.

The very powerful Mother of God, moved

by the prayers of so many of her sons, should obtain from her own Child—we all beseech her—that those who have been miserably led astray from the path of truth and virtue, should renewed in their souls find it again.

Grant us that finally hatred and rivalry, the sources of discord and every sort of mishap, should shine again upon individuals, families, peoples and nations.

Grant that finally after the rights of the Church are secured as is just, the beneficent influence deriving from her and penetrating without obstacle the hearts of men, social classes and the arteries of public life, may join people among themselves in brotherhood and lead them to prosperity which regulates, defends and co-ordinates the rights and duties of all and establishes itself ever more for mutual and common collaboration.

Venerable Brethren and beloved sons, while running your fingers over the beads of the Rosary, do not forget those who languish miserably in prison camps, jails and concentration

camp. There are among them, as you know, also bishops dismissed from their sees solely for having heroically defended the sacred rights of God and the Church. There are sons, fathers and mothers, wrested from their homes and compelled to lead unhappy lives far away in unknown lands and strange climates.

As we embrace them with that particular charity which derives from the Christian religion, unite your prayers before the altar of the Virgin Mother of God and recommend them to her motherly heart. She doubtlessly will, with exquisite sweetness, revive in their hearts the hope of eternal reward and will not fail to hasten the end of so much sorrow, as We firmly believe.

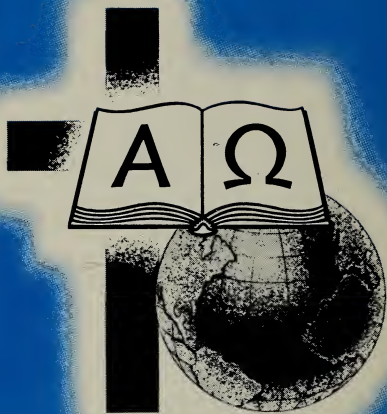
We do not doubt that you, O Venerable Brethren, with your usual burning zeal will bring to the knowledge of your clergy and people these Our paternal exhortations in a way which will appear most appropriate to you.

We feel certain that our sons throughout the world will respond earnestly to this Our invitation.

To all of you, to the flock entrusted to each of you and particularly to those who especially during the month of October will recite devoutly the Holy Rosary according to Our intentions, We impart from the fullness of Our heart the Apostolic Blessing.

Issued in Rome, near St. Peter's, the 15th day of September, the Feast of the Seven Sorrows of the Virgin Mary, in the year 1951, the 13th of Our Pontificate.





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