

THE ROSARY AND ITS MYSTERIES.

(October)

Not only is the Rosary in itself one of the most beautiful and truly Catholic forms of prayer, but ~~ix~~ it is a prayer which the Church insistently recommends to her faithful in our time.

Cistercians- have sometimes inclined to set aside the rosary in their prayer life, asserting that there is "already too much vocal prayer". There may certainly be cases in which vocal prayer should be kept at an absolute minimum. But ~~we~~ we do not ~~need~~ need to think that the average religious will find the rosary too great a burden or too much of a complication in our life, first of all since we have now abandoned the Little Office, and secondly because it is always perfectly easy to recite the Rosary, at least in part, while we walk out to work, or as we go from place to place in community.

The Spiritual Directory tells us that it is a time honored custom of the Order for the monks to walk out to work saying their beads, ~~in the fields~~ as they go in line to the fields. Indeed, one of the best times to say the rosary, in our life, is when we are walking outdoors, ~~either on the way to work, or during our lecture~~.

Unless ~~aperson~~ ^a monk or novice has a special reason for not saying the rosary, he should not be afraid to keep up the practice which he undoubtedly had in the world, but with a great freedom of spirit. No one should feel himself obliged to say the rosary each day, or bind himself strictly to say it at any time.

If one were to have made a vow to say the Rosary, before entering the monastery, the vow would be suspended from the moment of temporary profession, and such vows can and should be dispensed during the time of postulancy and novitiate. It is not ~~right that one should~~ usually right that one should undertake to learn and carry out the obligations of the monastic life with other obligations still binding one. However, ~~each case~~ each case should be judged in the light of its own peculiar circumstances. All this being noted, it is still to be recommended that one say the Rosary when it is possible, with a spirit of freedom and out of love, ~~and not~~ but one should not scruple to set it aside when the duties of our monastic life make it difficult to say the beads with devotion. It is better that a monk or novice should not find himself hurriedly rattling off his private prayers in bed at night in order to fulfil a self-imposed obligation. If you have not ~~finished~~ finished the beads by bed-time Our Lady will be more pleased if you simply make an act of love and trust, and offer to God all ~~her merits~~ the merit of her love in the fifteen mysteries, ~~and~~ Then go to bed for this is the will of God. In doing this you are in fact uniting yourself more perfectly with Our Lady's obedience, ~~and~~ humility and abandonment to the Father's will.

The special value of the Rosary.

There is no need to take a defensive and apologetic attitude toward the Rosary. Most of the "difficulties" and "objections" to it are simply imaginary and ~~in~~ they vanish when one says the Rosary properly.

The matter of repeating prayers, more or less mechanically, for instance. No one is expected to think of each word of each Hail Mary. That would in fact spoil the whole thing. Each vocal prayer we say as we tell the beads is like ~~in~~ the refrain of a song. When we hum a tune, or sing it, returning over and over to the same refrain, we are not fixing our minds with intense concentration on the words, we are just singing. No great amount of thought is required. A song is not something you think about, but something that you sing. In order to understand this simple and obvious truth, which is so evident to common sense it should be enough to think of the singing we did with our friends and family outside, just for the enjoyment of it. We never had any problem of distraction then, and we did not have to try to "fix our minds" on what we were singing.

The song "Thanks" & "Hail Mary" it self.

with intense concentration

The repetition of the prayers in the Rosary is calming, peaceful, it lulls our minds, it creates an atmosphere, it attunes us to Our Lady's presence, it surrounds us with an aura of ~~love~~ ^{love} in which our hearts spontaneously open themselves to ~~her~~ the grace which she obtains for us by her ~~intercession~~ ^{motherly} intercession.

~~The Rosary is essentially very simple.~~ While we are reciting the words, we gaze very simply, and lovingly, at the various mysteries. We do not have to meditate on them in a complicated fashion. We know them well, and we simply return to their familiarity with love and become absorbed in them again. This is possible because the mysteries are at once ~~mysteries and~~ mysterious and familiar. Their depth is inexhaustible, yet ~~it attracts and holds~~ they attract and hold us.

What is the power of the mysteries? This power lies in the fact that they bring us into contact with loved Persons Who love us: and the Person of Jesus is Divine

The Rosary then means the presence of Mary to our minds and hearts, and the Presence of Jesus ~~in the mysteries~~ through and with her. This in itself is ~~again~~ the greatest mystery of all, and we should not trouble ourselves trying to analyze and explain to our minds how this takes place. The simplicity of Catholic faith grasps without doubt the reality which our words find such trouble in expressing. That Jesus is present to us in Mary and she is present to us in Him, and as we reflect on the mysteries of the Rosary and meditate simply on these mysteries devoutly recite the prayers, the grace of God is flowing into our hearts and the mysteries produce their effect in our lives.

Hence the rosary has a very special value because of its simplicity, its efficacy, its dogmatic character, and in a word because of the fact that it takes us directly to Jesus, the Word Incarnate.

The reason why Our Lady wants us to recite the Rosary is that it is one of the most effective means of uniting ourselves to Jesus, and because above all it is one of the most universal ways of doing so. After Holy Mass and the sacraments, there is no more effective way for the average Christian to unite himself to Jesus than by the devout use of the Rosary.

The Rosary + Contemplation

Fr Garrigou Lagrange points out rightly that to say the rosary well is to dispose oneself to contemplative prayer and ~~prepare the way for~~ to learn how to approach God in simple contemplation. This is true if our recitation of the Rosary becomes more and more simple and, at the same time, more deeply affective.

to most difficulties about the rosary: it

That is the clue: ~~the rosary~~ is above all, in actual fact, an affective form of prayer.

This means that intellectual considerations and formal thoughts are secondary. ~~Once one has learned to say the Rosary well~~ they remain in the background, giving place to affections. These in turn are very simple and "global"-- the Rosary does not demand of us that we invent and formulate verbal acts of love or any other such acts: the vocal prayers prescribed themselves suffice, and we "experience" each Hail Mary so to speak as the breathing of our love, as the rhythmic beating of the heart of love: indeed, in our affection of love, as we say the Rosary, the vocal prayers tend to become the united heart-beat of our hearts, the Immaculate Heart of Mary and the Sacred Heart of Jesus, living and beating in unison. This is the true purpose of the rhythmic character of this prayer. ~~Rhythm~~ The quasi-physical character of the rhythm set up by repetition therefore has ~~its~~ ^{is} importance and value.

Nevertheless, as we procede with our affections and our simple contemplation of the various mysteries, our intellects ~~xx~~ are indeed nourished but in a much higher way, with the truths of faith.

The atmosphere of affectivity and love with which we penetrate the mysteries actually perfects our intelligence in a higher and more supernatural way than would be possible by mere intellectual consideration, because as St Thomas points out, in the things of God our love reaches to the intimate ~~reality~~ reality which remains obscure to our intelligence. Hence, he says, Melior est ~~amor~~ amor Dei quam cognitio (in the present life) Summa, I, Q. 82 a. 3. Why is this? Because, St Thomas says: Finis vitae contemplativae habet esse in ~~intellectu~~ affectu... Haec est ultima perfectio contemplativae vitae, ut non solum divina veritas videatur sed etiam ut ametur. II II, Q 180.a 7 adl

If we can properly grasp this, we can see indeed what a wonderful form of prayer the Rosary is. Many souls who find themselves no longer able to "think about" the mysteries, and start straining their heads to do so or to say the words with meticulous care, run the risk of creating a complete disgust for the rosary in their hearts and abandoning it altogether.

If one ~~cannot~~ has loyally meditated on the mysteries for a certain time, and then finds he can no longer do so effectively, in an intellectual way, this may well be because the time has come to taste the real fruits of the Rosary devotion. If one has not been careless about the prayer, if one had a growing love of Our Lady and Jesus, a growing need for their presence, united with a kind of dissatisfaction with too much thinking and talking, but a kind of need to be saying the prayers quietly and rhythmically in a solitary and peaceful atmosphere-- then one is ready to taste the fruits of the Rosary.

These fruits are communicated to us in obscurity and love. We must not expect to see clearly what we are getting, we must rather desire simply to give our hearts in a simple and uncomplicated way to the contemplation of the mysteries. We are content with the bare simplicity of the rosary, content with the quiet sequence of Aves, content with the bare presence of the mysteries, aware too of a secret and hidden spring of love welling up in our hearts.

At such a time, we are truly and perfectly united to Mary in these mysteries, and we receive obscurely, in the mystery of faith, the fruit of her merits and love. We receive in our hearts and increase of virtue and charity, and we are more closely united to Jesus in a way we cannot understand, Of course we also gain abundant graces for souls and for the whole Church of God, as well as for ourselves.

Meditation on the Mysteries

Before we reach this stage of simplicity, or when we withdraw from it ~~from~~ for some reason or other, we need to be aware of the character of our meditation on the mysteries.

~~We will~~ ^{should} never feel it beneath us to return to simple and formal meditation when we have to. This too will always be quite simple.

It will consist first of all in seeing in a very simple and general way the mystery that takes place, with the eyes of the imagination. It will consist in seeing, with the eyes of the heart, the virtues and dispositions of Mary and of Jesus in the mystery before us. It will consist above all in a firm faith in the dogma revealed there-- in general the joyful mysteries deal with the dogma of the Incarnation, the Sorrowful ones with the mystery of the Redemption, the Glorious mysteries with the dogma of eternal life, the application of the fruits of the Cross, our life and vocation to glory in Jesus Christ.

When we see, in this simple fashion, the content of the mysteries, then we will go out to Mary and Jesus with the desire of love and reverence, seeking spiritual communion with them in this mystery.

In the mysteries of the Rosary, Mary "comes to us" mystically and affectively, calling us to come forth and be united to the Incarnate Word in the darkness of faith and the sweetness of obscure love. Ecce Sponsus venit, exite obviam ei.

How do we "go forth" to meet the grace of God that is offered to us with the "coming" of Our Lady in the mysteries of the Rosary?

In general we can say it is above all a matter of uniting ourselves to her experience of joy, sorrow, and glory, in each one of the mysteries.

~~There are~~ Each one of the joyful mysteries represents to us, in a simple and general way, an aspect of joy, a "kind of joy" that Mary experienced in the mystery of the Incarnation. Our meditation of each mystery should not be a mere dry consideration of the fact. We should "go out" -- leave our own ~~own~~ present disposition, whatever it may be, our occupation with natural things, our preoccupation with things and persons around us, and "enter in" to the particular mode of joy which Mary brings us in each mystery.

For instance, in the Annunciation there is a special kind of joy from the fact that Mary is chosen, from among all women, to be the Mother of God. She is the one who is full of grace, by the ineffable election of the Triune God, and prepared to ~~receive~~ clothe the humanity of the Word with her pure flesh. She it is too, who replies, with infinitely pure joy, "Be it done into me according to Thy word."

In the Visitation there is another ~~joy~~ kind of joy, another aspect of the joy of the Incarnation-- the fact that human hearts can be united in a specially pure ~~and~~ charity in the Mystery of Christ. When Mary greeted Elizabeth they were able to share, in advance, the joy of ~~the~~ communicating and receiving the news of salvation, the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In meditating on this mystery we taste the joy of Mary at the fact that the presence of the Savior is made known to another through her for the first time and as a result unites her in a special and indissoluble union of charity with Elizabeth and John.

In the Nativity, we share the joy of Christmas, the joy of Mary that the Divine Child is brought into the world and manifested to the shepherds: the special joy that the Light of God shines forth in the hearts of all who love this Divine Infant, for this mystery is a mystery of light in darkness.

Again, another modality of joy (mixed with sorrow) when Simeon takes the Child into his arms, and praises God for the fulfilment of all His promises to Israel, and the coming of a Savior to the Gentiles. Mary rejoiced then in the salvation of the whole world by the Cross, ~~the~~ and united herself with all the prophets and patriarchs, all the saints of the Old Law, rejoicing in Simeon-- rejoicing too that the Old Law is now fulfilled and transfigured in Christ.

Finally, the special joy (after sorrow) of finding Jesus with the doctors in the temple, a special sorrowful joy of Mary in her anticipated sacrifice of the pleasure of an intimate life alone with Jesus in order that the world may receive His word and his presence.

Throughout the sorrowful mysteries too, we see special aspects of Mary's sorrow and suffering of soul as Co-Redeemer of the human Race. In the Agony of the Garden we share her ~~vision~~ understanding of the great weight of sorrow that descended upon Jesus as He laid aside His divine power to take on Himself all the weakness and misery and sin of the whole human race, with all ~~its~~ the mental and moral suffering which these bring with them. In the scourging, we feel with her the wanton ~~brutality~~ brutality of sensual men, as it poured itself out against the Son of God. In the crowning with thorns, it is the refined barbarity of human pride, in the carrying of the Cross, the relentless implacable hatred of good which is the essence of sin, and the infinite meekness and patience of God's love bearing this

~~xxxx~~ for those who persecute and reject Him. ~~xxxx~~ As Jesus dies on the Cross we unite ourselves with the utter fulness of sorrow and sacrifice -- the total consummation of ~~xxxx~~ Mary's sacrifice with that of Jesus, and we remember that this is the moment when she receives us as her sons. Finally, as Jesus is taken down from the Cross and laid in the arms of His Virgin Mother we enter into perhaps what is the most inexplicable of all the mysteries, the silence, the "sabbath" that followed the Crucifixion, the silence and darkness of Mary's heart ~~xxxx~~ when the Word of God is silent in death and the Light of the world has been extinguished.

The glorious mysteries then bring us different ~~xxxx~~ modes of glory-- something much more than joy: Mary's experience of the new life, the new creation initiated by the ~~xxxx~~ Resurrection, her rejoicing with Jesus in His Ascension, her immense joy with the coming of the Holy Ghost, and finally her own Assumption and Coronation in heaven.