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Two versions of the download are available: short and long. The short version contains just the rosary pages. The long version contains both the rosary and all the encyclical text. Please only download the short version if that's all you need.

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Rosary Introduction

The rosary (from Latin *rosarium*, "rose garden") is a religious exercise where a defined number of prayers are recited and a string of beads (a chaplet, often called a rosary) is used to keep count.



Eastern Christian monks started the Christian practice in the third century. The modern Roman Catholic rosary's origin is most often associated with St. Dominic, founder of the Dominican order in the early 13th century. According to the Encyclopedia Britannica, "it reached its definitive form in the 15th century through the preaching of the Dominican Alan de la Roche and his associates, who organized Rosary Confraternities at Douai in France and at Cologne. In 1520 Pope Leo X gave the rosary official approbation." In October of 2002 Pope John Paul II added an optional group of mysteries (Mysteries of the Light) to the Rosary (see [Rosarium Virginis Mariae](#)).

But, what makes the rosary special? The Blessed Mary herself gave us the reasons (as given to St. Dominic and Blessed Alan). Here are the fifteen promises of Mary to Christians who recite the rosary.

- Whoever shall faithfully serve me by the recitation of the rosary, shall receive signal graces.
- I promise my special protection and the greatest graces to all those who shall recite the rosary.
- The rosary shall be a powerful armor against hell, it will destroy vice, decrease sin, and defeat heresies.
- It will cause virtue and good works to flourish; it will obtain for souls the abundant mercy of God; it will withdraw the heart of men from the love of the world and its vanities, and will lift them to the desire of eternal things. Oh, that souls would sanctify themselves by this means.
- The soul which recommend itself to me by the recitation of the rosary, shall not perish.
- Whoever shall recite the rosary devoutly, applying himself to the consideration of its sacred mysteries shall never be conquered by misfortune. God will not chastise him in His justice, he shall not by an unprovided death; if he be just he shall remain in the grace of God, and become worthy of eternal life.
- Whoever shall have a true devotion for the rosary shall not die without the sacraments of the Church.
- Those who are faithful to recite the rosary shall have during their life and



at their death the light of God and the plenitude of His graces; at the moment of death they shall participate in the merits of the saints in paradise.

- I shall deliver from purgatory those who have been devoted to the rosary.
- The faithful children of the rosary shall merit a high degree of glory in heaven.
- You shall obtain all you ask of me by the recitation of the rosary.
- All those who propagate the holy rosary shall be aided by me in their necessities.
- I have obtained from my Divine Son that all the advocates of the rosary shall have for intercessors the entire celestial court during their life and at the hour of death.
- All who recite the rosary are my son, and brothers of my only son Jesus Christ.
- Devotion of my rosary is a great sign of predestination.

If that does not convince you, here are a few more reasons to say a daily rosary.

- Our Lady has 117 titles. She selected this title at Fatima: "I am the Lady of the Rosary."
- St. Francis de Sales said the greatest method of praying is: Pray the Rosary.
- St. Thomas Aquinas preached 40 straight days in Rome Italy on just the Hail Mary.
- St. John Vianney, patron of priests, was seldom seen without a rosary in his hand.
- "The rosary is the scourge of the devil" -- Pope Adrian VI
- "The rosary is a treasure of graces" -- Pope Paul V
- Padra Pio the stigmatic priest said: "The Rosary is the weapon"
- Several popes wrote [encyclicals](#) on the rosary.
- Pope John XXIII spoke 38 times about our Lady and the Rosary. He prayed 15 decades daily.
- St. Louis Marie Grignion de Montfort wrote: "The rosary is the most powerful weapon to touch the Heart of Jesus, Our Redeemer, who so loves His Mother."



Finally, the prayer **Memorare** says it all...

Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary that never was it known that anyone who fled to Your protection, implored Your help, or sought Your intercession was left unaided. Inspired with this confidence, we fly to you, O Virgin of virgins, our Mother. To You we come; before You we stand, sinful and sorrowful. O Mother of the Word Incarnate, despise not our petitions, but in Your mercy, hear and answer us. Amen.

Convinced? Then pray along with me...

Pray the Rosary

Note: The rosary section of this web site is available for download as a PDF file. You must have the free Adobe PDF reader in order to use the download. (The Mysteries of the Light are on the Web site but not yet in the download.)

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Download the Adobe PDF reader

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Rosary Start



The following assumes a standard set of beads (chaplet) is used to count during the recital of the rosary. The chaplet consists of a Cross, a single bead, a set of three beads, a single bead and then a connector to which is attached five ten-bead sets each divided by a single bead.

On this and following pages simply proceed down the page and then to the next using the navigation arrows to the left or the map above. Check boxes are provided for your convenience should you care to chart progress.

The Sign of the Cross: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. (Said while making the sign of the Cross by moving the right hand from the forehead to the chest, to the left shoulder, then to the right shoulder.)

Apostle's Creed: I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell. On the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

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.



Hail Mary (3 times): 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.

Glory to the Father (Prayer of Praise): Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever. Amen.

This completes the common opening portion of the rosary. The prayers that follow are usually dedicated to one of sets of mysteries. The mysteries follow the general pattern of the life of Christ. Start with the hidden life of Christ in the Joyful Mysteries, the public ministry of Christ in the Mysteries of Light, the sufferings of Christ's passion in the Sorrowful Mysteries, and the triumph of Christ's Resurrection in the Glorious Mysteries. Select from below and proceed.

Joyful Mysteries

Often said on Monday and Saturday, the Joyful Mysteries include: The Annunciation, The Visitation, The Birth of Our Lord, The Presentation of Our Lord, and The Finding of Our Lord in the Temple.

Mysteries of Light

An optional set of mysteries added to the Rosary by Pope John Paul II on 16 October 2002. Often said on Thursday, the Mysteries of Light include: Christ's Baptism in the Jordan River, Christ's First Miracle at Cana, Christ Preaching, The Transfiguration, and Institution of the Eucharist at the Last Supper.

Glorious Mysteries

Often said on Wednesday and Sunday the Glorious Mysteries include: The Resurrection, The Ascension, The Coming of the Holy Spirit, The Assumption of our Blessed Mother into Heaven, and The Coronation of our Blessed Mother.

Sorrowful Mysteries

Often said on Tuesday and Friday the Sorrowful Mysteries include: The Agony in the Garden, The Scourging at the Pillar, The Crowning with Thorns, The Carrying of the Cross, and The Crucifixion and Death of Our Lord.

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First Joyful Mystery



The Annunciation to Mary (Humility)

Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father, and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." *Luke 1:30-33*

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.

Hail Mary (10 times): 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.



Glory to the Father (Prayer of Praise): Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever. Amen.

O My Jesus (Requested by the Blessed Virgin Mary at Fatima): O my Jesus, forgive us our sins, save us from the fires of hell, lead all souls to Heaven, especially those who have the most need of your mercy. Amen.

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Second Joyful Mystery



The Visitation of Mary (Love of Neighbor)

When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the infant leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth, filled with the holy Spirit, cried out in a loud voice and said, "Most blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb." *Luke 1:41-42*

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.

Hail Mary (10 times): 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.



Glory to the Father (Prayer of Praise): Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever. Amen.

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Third Joyful Mystery



The Nativity of Our Lord (Spirit of Poverty)

The angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all people. For today, in the city of David a savior has been born for you who is Messiah and Lord" *Luke 2:10-11*

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.

Hail Mary (10 times): 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.



Glory to the Father (Prayer of Praise): Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever. Amen.

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Fourth Joyful Mystery



The Presentation of the Child Jesus in the Temple

(Obedience to God's Will)

"Now, Master, you may let your servant go in peace, according to your word, for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you prepared in sight of all the peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and glory for your people Israel." *Luke 2:29-32*

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.

Hail Mary (10 times): 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.



Glory to the Father (Prayer of Praise): Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever. Amen.

O My Jesus (Requested by the Blessed Virgin Mary at Fatima): O my Jesus, forgive us our sins, save us from the fires of hell, lead all souls to Heaven, especially those who have the most need of your mercy. Amen.

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Fifth Joyful Mystery



The Finding of Our Lord in the Temple (Fidelity to Vocation, Joy in finding Jesus)

When his parents saw him, they were astonished, and his mother said to him, "Son, why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been looking for you with great anxiety." And he said to them, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" But they did not understand what he said to them. He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them; and his mother kept all these things in her heart. And Jesus advanced [in] wisdom and age and favor before God and man. *Luke 2:48-52*

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.



Hail Mary (10 times): 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.

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First Mystery of Light



Christ's Baptism in the Jordan River

(Christ becomes sin for our sake)

After Jesus was baptized, he came directly out of the water. Suddenly the sky opened and he saw the Spirit of God descend like a dove and hover over him. With that, a voice from the heavens said, "This is my beloved Son. My favor rests on him." *Mathew 3:16-17*

For our sakes God made him who did not know sin, to be sin, so that in him we might become the very holiness of God. *2 Corinthians 5:21*

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.

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Second Mystery of Light



Christ's First Miracle at Cana (Open hearts to faith)

Jesus performed this first of his signs at Cana in Galilee. Thus did he reveal his glory, and his disciples believed in him. *John 2:11*

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.

Hail Mary (10 times): 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.



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Third Mystery of Light



Christ Preaching

(Christ proclaims the Kingdom of God and forgiveness of sin)

After John's arrest, Jesus appeared in Galilee proclaiming the good news of God: "This is the time for fulfillment. The reign of God is at hand! Reform your lives and believe in the gospel!" *Mark 1:12-13*

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.

Hail Mary (10 times): 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.



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Fourth Mystery of Light



The Transfiguration

(God commands the Apostles and us to "listen to him")

Then from the cloud came a voice which said, "This is my Son, my Chosen One. Listen to him." *Luke 9:35*

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.

Hail Mary (10 times): 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.



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Fifth Mystery of Light



Institution of the Eucharist at the Last Supper

(Christ offers his body and blood for the love of humanity)

Before the feast of Passover, Jesus realized that the hour had come for him to pass from this world to the Father. He had loved his own in this world, and would show his love for them to the end. *John 13:1*

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.

Hail Mary (10 times): 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.



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First Glorious Mystery



The Resurrection (Faith)

Jesus rises from the dead. He said to them, "Do not be amazed! You seek Jesus of Nazareth, the crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Behold, the place where they laid him. But go and tell his disciples and Peter, 'He is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him, as he told you.'" *Mark 16:6-8*

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.

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Second Glorious Mystery



The Ascension of Our Lord (Hope)

While they were looking intently at the sky as he was going, suddenly two men dressed in white garments stood beside them. They said, "Men of Galilee, why are you standing there looking at the sky? This Jesus who has been taken up from you into heaven will return in the same way as you have seen him going into heaven." Acts 1:10-11

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.

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Third Glorious Mystery



The Descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles

(Wisdom, Love of God, Zeal, Fortitude)

When the time for Pentecost was fulfilled, they were all in one place together. And suddenly there came from the sky a noise like a strong driving wind, and it filled the entire house in which they were. Then there appeared to them tongues as of fire, which parted and came to rest on each one of them. *Acts 2:1-4*

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Fourth Glorious Mystery



The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary into Heaven

(Eternal Happiness, Grace of a Happy Death)

As an apple tree among the trees of the woods, so is my lover among men. I delight to rest in his shadow, and his fruit is sweet to my mouth. He brings me into the banquet hall and his emblem over me is love. Strengthen me with raisin cakes, refresh me with apples, for I am faint with love. His left hand is under my head and his right arm embraces me. *Song of Songs 2:3-6*

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.

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Fifth Glorious Mystery



The Coronation of Our Lady as Queen of Heaven and Earth

(Devotion to Mary and Final Perseverance, Trust in Mary's Intercession)

And Mary said, "My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my savior. For he has looked upon his handmaid's lowliness; behold, from now on will all ages call me blessed." *Luke 1:46-48*

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.

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First Sorrowful Mystery



The Agony in the Garden (Spirit of Prayer, Sorrow for Sin)

Then he said to them, "My soul is sorrowful even to death. Remain here and keep watch with me." He advanced a little and fell prostrate in prayer, saying, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet, not as I will, but as you will." *Matthew 26:38-39*

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.

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Second Sorrowful Mystery



The Scourging at the Pillar (Modesty and Purity)

Then Pilate took Jesus and had him scourged. *John 19:1*

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.

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Third Sorrowful Mystery



The Crowning with Thorns (Courage)

The soldiers led him away inside the palace, that is, the praetorium, and assembled the whole cohort. They clothed him in purple and, weaving a crown of thorns, placed it on him. *Mark 15:16-17*

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.

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Fourth Sorrowful Mystery



The Carrying of the Cross (Patience in Suffering)

[A]nd carrying the cross himself he went out to what is called the Place of the Skull, in Hebrew, Golgotha. *John 19:18*

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.

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Fifth Sorrowful Mystery



The Crucifixion and Death of Our Lord on the Cross

(Self-denial, Perseverance)

After this, aware that everything was now finished, in order that the scripture might be fulfilled, Jesus said, "I thirst." There was a vessel filled with common wine. So they put a sponge soaked in wine on a sprig of hyssop and put it up to his mouth. When Jesus had taken the wine, he said, "It is finished." And bowing his head, he handed over the spirit. *John 19:28-30*

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.

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Closing Prayers



When finished with the main portion of the rosary, it is customary to meditate and offer a closing prayer.



Prayer After The Rosary: 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 of 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. Amen.

V. May the divine assistance remain always with us.

R. And may the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.

Hail, Holy Queen: Hail, holy Queen, Mother of mercy, our life, our sweetness, and our hope. To thee we cry, poor banished children of Eve; to thee we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this valley of tears. Turn then, O most gracious Advocate, thy 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. Pray for us, O holy Mother of God. That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Close with...

The Sign of the Cross: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. (Said while making the sign of the Cross by moving the right hand from the forehead to the chest, to the left shoulder, then to the right shoulder.)

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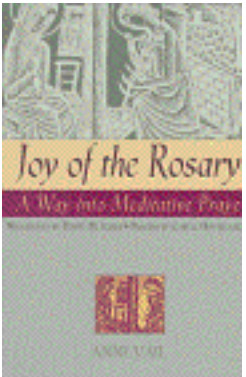
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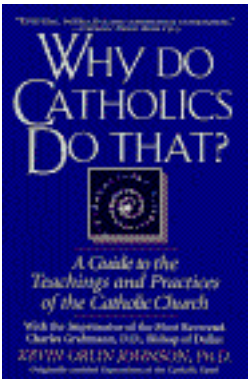
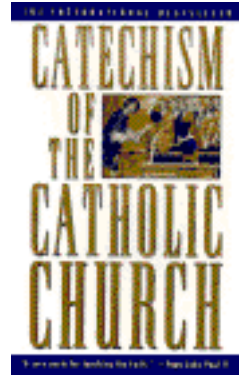
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More Information

Through a special arrangement with Amazon.com we can offer you books on the Rosary and the Catholic faith at a substantial discount. You may find one or more of the following of interest...

	<p>Rosary: Mysteries, Meditations, and the Telling of the Beads</p> <p>Kevin Orlin Johnson Paperback - 350 pages (June 13, 1997)</p>
	<p>Joy of the Rosary: A Way into Meditative Prayer</p> <p>Caryll Houselander, Anne Rosary Vail Paperback - 128 pages (June 1998)</p>
(No cover art available)	<p>The Rosary of Our Lady Romano</p> <p>Guardini, H. Von Schuecking (Translator) Hardcover - 149 pages (December 1994)</p>
(No cover art available)	<p>ABC's of the Rosary for Children</p> <p>Francine M. O Connor, Kathryn Boswell, Francine M. O'Connor Paperback (August 1986)</p>

	<p>Why Do Catholics Do That?: A Guide to the Teachings and Practices of the Catholic Church</p> <p>Kevin Orlin Johnson Paperback (November 1995)</p>
	<p>Catechism of the Catholic Church</p> <p>U.S. Catholic Church Paperback (May 1995)</p>

Rosary Beads

Finding a rosary is fairly straightforward. Any Catholic Church, religious bookstore, or religious shrine will likely have a source for the beads that make up the chaplet. I have a small selection of chaplets in different forms. As a curiosity I've created a [page where these are pictured](#). If you have chaplets of a different form and care to show them to others please send a picture and description with permission to publish.

Related Links

Several inquiries about cross-linking to other sites has led to the creation of a new [related links page](#).

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Rosary Beads

Even the "standard" rosary chaplet comes in multiple forms. The forms I have appear here...

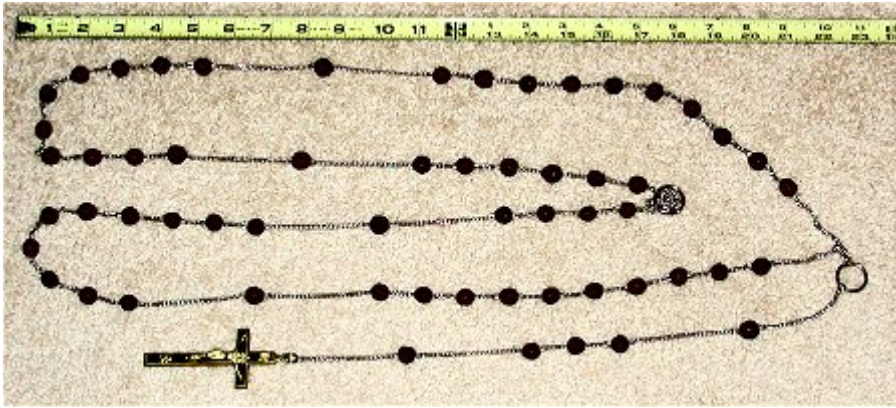
- Lourdes Chaplet.** This is a "simple" chaplet in that it has standard black beads on a plain metal chain. What makes it special, however, is that it comes from Lourdes. Note the detail in the connector. And, on the back of the connector, is a small vial of water from Lourdes.



- Finger Chaplet.** This is my most-used chaplet. It's small enough to put in with coins in a case so I carry it around with me all the time. It's basically a ring with ten small bumps and one larger bump for the cross and Our Father counters. Engraved into the ring are small icons which represent the various mysteries; to serve as a reminder. Some people have a wrist version of this type of chaplet. They wear it as a bracelet and it has ten small beads and one larger bead or a cross. To use these just keep going around the proper number of times.



- Large Chaplet.** I don't use this chaplet but do keep it on the bookshelf. My cousin is a nun and this is the chaplet that she used to wear around her as a belt when her order was still wearing habits. It's some five feet long; in the picture the measuring tape is set to two feet so you can get an idea of its size. The beads are wood.



Other Unique Chaplets

If you have a rosary chaplet that is unique in some way and want to share it with others please send me a picture of it, a description of what makes it unique, and a note with permission to publish the picture and description and saying if you want your name, just initials, or no identifier in the text. You can send this via E-mail (see the [contact page](#) please). Please don't send simple variations on the above themes (e.g., different colors, bead shapes, etc.); only really unique chaplets will be considered. Thank you.

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Related Links

Below are various links; some traded, some just links I've found useful in research about the rosary.



Still Working On This

Trading Links

If you wish to trade links please drop me a line (please use the [contact form](#)). I like to research all links before trading. If you wish to link to this site please use one of the following and please copy any graphic to your site so bandwidth use gets proper credit ☺ . In all cases, please link to: <http://tomsdomain.com/rosary/>

- Text link: Tom's Domain Rosary
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Image details: 80Wx20H

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Encyclicals

A number of popes have written encyclicals on the rosary and its meaning to Catholics and the world at large. These are the major encyclicals I've been able to find the full text of and an abbreviated version of *Consueverunt Romani*, an encyclical of Pope Saint Pius V written 17 September 1569. There are even earlier references I've also not been able to locate. If found I'll add them. Note that while not an encyclical, I have also included Pope John Paul II's Apostolic Letter *Rosarium Virginis Mariae* because of its profound effect on the saying of the Rosary.



Pope Saint Pius V

Consueverunt Romani

[On the Rosary]
(September 17, 1569)

Supremi Apostolatus Officio

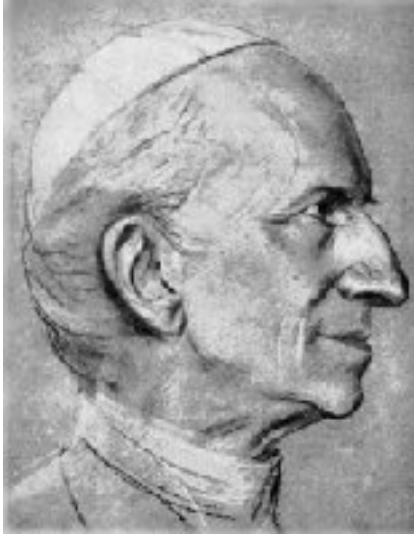
[On Devotion of the Rosary]
(September 1, 1883)

Superiore Anno

[On the Recitation of Rosary]
(August 30, 1884)

Quod Auctoritate

[Proclaiming An Extraordinary Jubilee]
(December 22, 1885)



Pope Leo XIII

Vi E Ben Noto

[On the Rosary and Public Life]
(September 20, 1887)

Quamquam Pluries

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Pope Pius XI

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[On the Rosary]
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Ingruentium Malorum

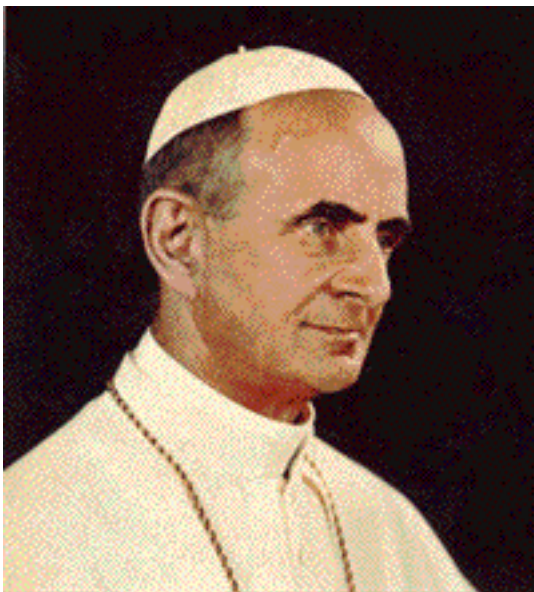
[On Reciting the Rosary]
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Pope John XXIII

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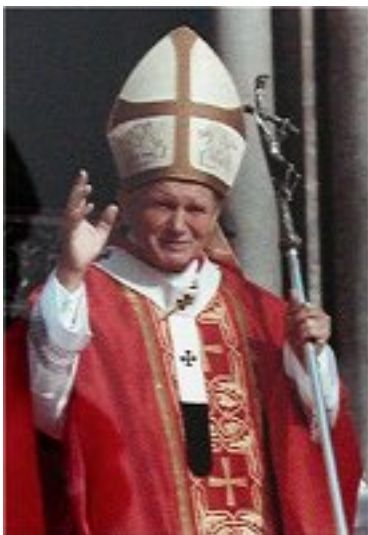
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Consueverunt Romani

On the Rosary

Encyclical of Pope Saint Pius V

17 September 1569

The Roman Pontiffs, and the other Holy Fathers, our predecessors, when they were pressed in upon by temporal or spiritual wars, or troubled by other trials, in order that they might more easily escape from these, and having achieved tranquillity, might quietly and fervently be free to devote themselves to God, were wont to implore the divine assistance, through supplications or Litanies to call forth the support of the saints, and with David to lift up their eyes unto the Mountains, trusting with firm hope that thence would they receive aid.

1. Prompted by their example, and, as is piously believed, by the Holy Ghost, the inspired Blessed founder of the Order of Friars Preachers, (whose institutes and rule we ourselves expressly professed when we were in minor orders), in circumstances similar to those in which we now find ourselves, when parts of France and of Italy were unhappily troubled by the heresy of the Albigenses, which blinded so many of the worldly that they were raging most savagely against the priests of the Lord and the clergy, raised his eyes up unto heaven, unto that mountain of the Glorious Virgin Mary, loving Mother of God. For she by her seed has crushed the head of the twisted serpent, and has alone destroyed all heresies, and by the blessed fruit of her womb has saved a world condemned by the fall of our first parent. From her, without human hand, was that stone cut, which, struck by wood, poured forth the abundantly flowing waters of graces. And so Dominic looked to that simple way of praying and beseeching God, accessible to all and wholly pious, which is called the Rosary, or Psalter of the Blessed Virgin Mary, in which the same most Blessed Virgin is venerated by the angelic greeting repeated one hundred and fifty times, that is, according to the number of the Davidic Psalter, and by the Lord's Prayer with each decade. Interposed with these prayers are certain meditations showing forth the entire life of Our Lord Jesus Christ, thus completing the method of prayer devised by the by the Fathers of the Holy Roman Church. This same method St. Dominic propagated, and it was, spread by the ??? Friars of Blessed Dominic, namely, of the aforementioned Order, and accepted by not a few of the people. Christ's faithful, inflamed by these prayers, began immediately to be changed into new men. The darkness of heresy began to be dispelled, and the light of the Catholic Faith to be revealed. Sodalties for this form of prayer began to be instituted in many places by the Friars of the same Order, legitimately deputed to this work by their Superiors, and confreres began to be enrolled together.

2. Following the example of our predecessors, seeing that the Church militant, which God has placed in our hands, in these our times is tossed this way and that by so many heresies, and is grievously troubled and afflicted by so many wars, and by the deprave morals of men, we also raise our eyes, weeping but full of hope, unto that same mountain, whence every aid comes forth, and we encourage and admonish each member of Christ's faithful to do likewise in the Lord.

[Pius goes on to confirm the indults, indulgences, etc., which his predecessors had granted to those who pray the Rosary, and to explicate several of these indulgences.]

Given at Rome at St. Peter's, under the Fisherman's ring, 17 September 1569, in the fourth year of our Pontificate.

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Supremi Apostolatus Officio

On Devotion Of The Rosary

Encyclical of Pope Leo XIII

September 1, 1883

To all the Patriarchs, Primates, Archbishops and Bishops of the Catholic World in the Grace and Communion of the Apostolic See.

Venerable Brethren, Health and the Apostolic Benediction.

The supreme Apostolic office which we discharge and the exceedingly difficult condition of these times, daily warn and almost compel Us to watch carefully over the integrity of the Church, the more that the calamities from which she suffers are greater. While, therefore, we endeavor in every way to preserve the rights of the Church and to obviate or repel present or contingent dangers, We constantly seek for help from Heaven--the sole means of effecting anything--that our labors and our care may obtain their wished for object. We deem that there could be no surer and more efficacious means to this end than by religion and piety to obtain the favor of the great Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, the guardian of our peace and the minister to us of heavenly grace, who is placed on the highest summit of power and glory in Heaven, in order that she may bestow the help of her patronage on men who through so many labors and dangers are striving to reach that eternal city. Now that the anniversary, therefore, of manifold and exceedingly great favors obtained by a Christian people through the devotion of the Rosary is at hand, We desire that that same devotion should be offered by the whole Catholic world with the greatest earnestness to the Blessed Virgin, that by her intercession her Divine Son may be appeased and softened in the evils which afflict us. And therefore We determined, Venerable Brethren, to despatch to you these letters in order that, informed of Our designs, your authority and zeal might excite the piety of your people to conform themselves to them.

2. It has always been the habit of Catholics in danger and in troublous times to fly for refuge to Mary, and to seek for peace in her maternal goodness; showing that the Catholic Church has always, and with justice, put all her hope and trust in the Mother of God. And truly the Immaculate Virgin, chosen to be the Mother of God and thereby associated with Him in the work of man's salvation, has a favor and power with her Son greater than any human or angelic creature has ever obtained, or ever can gain. And, as it is her greatest pleasure to grant her help and comfort to those who seek her, it cannot be doubted that she would deign, and even be anxious, to receive the aspirations of the universal Church.

3. This devotion, so great and so confident, to the august Queen of Heaven, has never shone forth with such brilliancy as when the militant Church of God has seemed to be endangered by the violence of heresy spread abroad, or by an intolerable moral corruption, or by the attacks of powerful enemies. Ancient and modern history and the more sacred annals of the Church bear witness to public and private supplications addressed to the Mother of God, to the help she has granted in return, and to the peace and tranquillity which she had obtained from God. Hence her illustrious titles of helper, consoler, mighty in war, victorious, and peace-giver. And amongst these is specially to be commemorated that familiar title derived from the Rosary by which the signal benefits she has gained for the whole of Christendom have been solemnly perpetuated. There is none among you, venerable brethren, who will not remember how great trouble and grief God's Holy Church suffered from the Albigensian heretics, who sprung from the sect of the later Manicheans, and who filled the South of France and other portions of the Latin world with their pernicious errors, and carrying everywhere the terror of their arms, strove far and wide to rule by massacre and ruin. Our merciful God, as you know, raised up against these most direful enemies a most holy man, the illustrious parent and founder of the Dominican Order. Great in the integrity of his doctrine, in his example of virtue, and by his apostolic labors, he proceeded undauntedly to attack the enemies of the Catholic Church, not by force of arms, but trusting wholly to that devotion which he was the first to institute under the name of the Holy Rosary, which was disseminated through the length and breadth of the earth by him and his pupils. Guided, in fact, by divine inspiration and grace, he foresaw that this devotion, like a most powerful warlike weapon, would be the means of putting the enemy to flight, and of confounding their audacity and mad impiety. Such was indeed its result. Thanks to this new method of prayer--when adopted and properly carried out as instituted by the Holy Father St. Dominic--piety, faith, and union began to return, and the projects and devices of the heretics to fall to pieces. Many wanderers also returned to the way of salvation, and the wrath of the impious was restrained by the arms of those Catholics who had determined to repel their violence.

4. The efficacy and power of this devotion was also wondrously exhibited in the sixteenth century, when the vast forces of the Turks threatened to impose on nearly the whole of Europe the yoke of superstition and barbarism. At that time the Supreme Pontiff, St. Pius V., after rousing the sentiment of a common defense among all the Christian princes, strove, above all, with the greatest zeal, to obtain for Christendom the favor of the most powerful Mother of God. So noble an example offered to heaven and earth in those times rallied around him all the minds and hearts of the age. And thus Christ's faithful warriors, prepared to sacrifice their life and blood for the salvation of their faith and their country, proceeded undauntedly to meet their foe near the Gulf of Corinth, while those who were unable to take part formed a pious band of supplicants, who called on Mary, and unitedly saluted her again and again in the words of the Rosary, imploring her to grant the victory to their companions engaged in battle. Our Sovereign Lady did grant her aid; for in the naval battle by the Echinades Islands, the Christian fleet gained a magnificent victory, with no great loss to itself, in which the enemy were routed with great slaughter. And it was to preserve the memory of this great boon thus granted, that the same Most Holy Pontiff desired that a feast in honor of Our Lady of Victories should celebrate the anniversary of so memorable a struggle, the feast which Gregory XIII. dedicated under the title of "The Holy Rosary." Similarly, important successes were in the last century gained over the Turks at Temeswar, in Pannonia, and at Corfu; and in both cases these engagements coincided with feasts of the Blessed Virgin and with the conclusion of public devotions of the Rosary. And this led our predecessor, Clement XI., in his gratitude, to decree that the Blessed Mother of God should every year be especially honored in her Rosary by the whole Church.

5. Since, therefore, it is clearly evident that this form of prayer is particularly pleasing to the Blessed Virgin, and that it is especially suitable as a means of defense for the Church and all Christians, it is in no way wonderful that several others of Our Predecessors have made it their aim to favor and increase its spread by their high recommendations. Thus Urban IV. testified that "every day the Rosary obtained fresh boon for Christianity." Sixtus IV. declared that this method of prayer "redounded to the honor of God and the Blessed Virgin, and was well suited to obviate impending dangers;" Leo X. that "it was instituted to oppose pernicious heresiarchs and heresies;" while Julius III. called it "the glory of the Church." So also St. Pius V., that "with the spread of this devotion the meditations of the faithful have begun to be more inflamed, their prayers more fervent, and they have suddenly become different men; the darkness of heresy has been dissipated, and the light of Catholic faith has broken forth again." Lastly Gregory XIII. in his turn pronounced that "the Rosary had been instituted by St. Dominic to appease the anger of God and to implore the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary."

6. Moved by these thoughts and by the examples of Our Predecessors, We have deemed it most opportune for similar reasons to institute solemn prayers and to endeavor by adopting those addressed to the Blessed Virgin in the recital of the Rosary to obtain from her son Jesus Christ a similar aid against present dangers. You have before your eyes, Venerable Brethren, the trials to which the Church is daily exposed; Christian piety, public morality, nay, even faith itself, the supreme good and beginning of all the other virtues, all are daily menaced with the greatest perils.

7. Nor are you only spectators of the difficulty of the situation, but your charity, like Ours, is keenly wounded; for it is one of the most painful and grievous sights to see so many souls, redeemed by the blood of Christ, snatched from salvation by the whirlwind of an age of error, precipitated into the abyss of eternal death. Our need of divine help is as great today as when the great Dominic introduced the use of the Rosary of Mary as a balm for the wounds of his contemporaries.

8. That great saint indeed, divinely enlightened, perceived that no remedy would be more adapted to the evils of his time than that men should return to Christ, who "is the way, the truth, and the life," by frequent meditation on the salvation obtained for Us by Him, and should seek the intercession with God of that Virgin, to whom it is given to destroy all heresies. He therefore so composed the Rosary as to recall the mysteries of our salvation in succession, and the subject of meditation is mingled and, as it were, interlaced with the Angelic salutation and with the prayer addressed to God, the Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ. We, who seek a remedy for similar evils, do not doubt therefore that the prayer introduced by that most blessed man with so much advantage to the Catholic world, will have the greatest effect in removing the calamities of our times also. Not only do We earnestly exhort all Christians to give themselves to the recital of the pious devotion of the Rosary publicly, or privately in their own house and family, and that unceasingly, but we also desire that the whole of the month of October in this year should be consecrated to the Holy Queen of the Rosary. We decree and order that in the whole Catholic world, during this year, the devotion of the Rosary shall be solemnly celebrated by special and splendid services. From the first day of next October, therefore, until the second day of the November following, in every parish and, if the ecclesiastical authority deem it opportune and of use, in every chapel dedicated to the Blessed Virgin--let five decades of the Rosary be recited with the addition of the Litany of Loreto. We desire that the people should frequent these pious exercises; and We will that either Mass shall be said at the altar, or that the Blessed Sacrament shall be exposed to the adoration of the faithful, Benediction being afterwards given with the Sacred Host to the pious congregation. We highly approve of the confraternities of the Holy

Rosary of the Blessed Virgin going in procession, following ancient custom, through the town, as a public demonstration of their devotion. And in those places where this is not possible, let it be replaced by more assiduous visits to the churches, and let the fervor of piety display itself by a still greater diligence in the exercise of the Christian virtues.

9. In favor of those who shall do as We have above laid down, We are pleased to open the heavenly treasure-house of the Church that they may find therein at once encouragements and rewards for their piety. We therefore grant to all those who, in the prescribed space of time, shall have taken part in the public recital of the Rosary and the Litanies, and shall have prayed for Our intention, seven years and seven times forty days of indulgence, obtainable each time. We will that those also shall share in these favors who are hindered by a lawful cause from joining in these public prayers of which We have spoken, provided that they shall have practiced those devotions in private and shall have prayed to God for Our intention. We remit all punishment and penalties for sins committed, in the form of a Pontifical indulgence, to all who, in the prescribed time, either publicly in the churches or privately at home (when hindered from the former by lawful cause) shall have at least twice practiced these pious exercises; and who shall have, after due confession, approached the holy table. We further grant a plenary indulgence to those who, either on the feast of the Blessed Virgin of the Rosary or within its octave, after having similarly purified their souls by a salutary confession, shall have approached the table of Christ and prayed in some church according to Our intention to God and the Blessed Virgin for the necessities of the Church.

10. And you, Venerable Brethren,--the more you have at heart the honor of Mary, and the welfare of human society, the more diligently apply yourselves to nourish the piety of the people towards the great Virgin, and to increase their confidence in her. We believe it to be part of the designs of Providence that, in these times of trial for the Church, the ancient devotion to the august Virgin should live and flourish amid the greatest part of the Christian world. May now the Christian nations, excited by Our exhortations, and inflamed by your appeals, seek the protection of Mary with an ardor growing greater day by day; let them cling more and more to the practice of the Rosary, to that devotion which our ancestors were in the habit of practicing, not only as an ever-ready remedy for their misfortunes, but as a whole badge of Christian piety. The heavenly Patroness of the human race will receive with joy these prayers and supplications, and will easily obtain that the good shall grow in virtue, and that the erring should return to salvation and repent; and that God who is the avenger of crime, moved to mercy and pity may deliver Christendom and civil society from all dangers, and restore to them peace so much desired.

11. Encouraged by this hope, We beseech God Himself, with the most earnest desire of Our heart, through her in whom he has placed the fullness of all good, to grant you. Venerable Brethren, every gift of heavenly blessing. As an augury and pledge of which, We lovingly impart to you, to your clergy, and to the people entrusted to your care, the Apostolic Benediction.

Given in Rome, at St. Peter's, the 1st of September, 1883, in the sixth year of Our Pontificate.

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Superiore Anno

On The Recitation Of The Rosary

Encyclical of Pope Leo XIII

August 30, 1884

To All Our Venerable Brethren the Patriarchs, Primates, Archbishops, and Bishops of the Catholic World in the Grace and Communion of the Apostolic See.

Venerable Brethren, Health and Apostolic Benediction.

Last year, as each of you is aware, We decreed by an Encyclical Letter that, to win the help of Heaven for the Church in her trials, the great Mother of God should be honored by the means of the most holy Rosary during the whole of the month of October. In this We followed both Our own impulse and the example of Our predecessors, who in times of difficulty were wont to have recourse with increased fervor to the Blessed Virgin, and to seek her aid with special prayers. That wish of Ours has been complied with, with such a willingness and unanimity that it is more than ever apparent how real is the religion and how great is the fervor of the Christian peoples, and how great is the trust everywhere placed in the heavenly patronage of the Virgin Mary. For Us, weighed down with the burden of such and so great trials and evils, We confess that the sight of such intensity of open piety and faith has been a great consolation, and even gives Us new courage for the facing, if that be the wish of God, of still greater trials. Indeed, from the spirit of prayer which is poured out over the house of David and the dwellers in Jerusalem, we have a confident hope that God will at length let Himself be touched and have pity upon the state of His Church, and give ear to the prayers coming to Him through her whom He has chosen to be the dispenser of all heavenly graces.

2. For these reasons, therefore, with the same causes in existence which impelled Us last year, as We have said, to rouse the piety of all, We have deemed it Our duty to exhort again this year the people of Christendom to persevere in that method and formula of prayer known as the Rosary of Mary, and thereby to merit the powerful patronage of the great Mother of God. In as much as the enemies of Christianity are so stubborn in their aims, its defenders must be equally staunch, especially as the heavenly help and the benefits which are bestowed on us by God are the more usually the fruits of our perseverance. It is good to recall to memory the example of that illustrious widow, Judith--a type of the Blessed Virgin--who curbed the ill-judged impatience of the Jews when they attempted to fix, according to their own judgment, the day appointed by God for the deliverance of His city. The example should also be borne in mind of the Apostles,

who awaited the supreme gift promised unto them of the Paraclete, and persevered unanimously in prayer with Mary the Mother of Jesus. For it is indeed, an arduous and exceeding weighty matter that is now in hand: it is to humiliate an old and most subtle enemy in the spread-out array of his power; to win back the freedom of the Church and of her Head; to preserve and secure the fortifications within which should rest in peace the safety and weal of human society. Care must be taken, therefore, that, in these times of mourning for the Church, the most holy devotion of the Rosary of Mary be assiduously and piously observed, the more so that this method of prayer being so arranged as to recall in turn all the mysteries of our salvation, is eminently fitted to foster the spirit of piety.

3. With respect to Italy, it is now most necessary to implore the intercession of the most powerful Virgin through the medium of the Rosary, since a misfortune, and not an imaginary one, is threatening--nay, rather is among us. The Asiatic cholera, having, under God's will, crossed the boundary within which nature seemed to have confined it, has spread through the crowded shores of a French port, and thence to the neighboring districts of Italian soil.--To Mary, therefore, we must fly--to her whom rightly and justly the Church entitles the dispenser of saving, aiding, and protecting gifts--that she, graciously hearkening to our prayers, may grant us the help they besought, and drive far from us the unclean plague.

4. We have therefore resolved that in this coming month of October, in which the sacred devotions to Our Virgin Lady of the Rosary are solemnized throughout the Catholic world, all the devotions shall again be observed which were commanded by Us this time last year.--We therefore decree and make order that from the 1st of October to the 2nd of November following in all the parish churches (*curialibus templis*), in all public churches dedicated to the Mother of God, or in such as are appointed by the Ordinary, five decades at least of the Rosary be recited, together with the Litany. If in the morning, the Holy Sacrifice will take place during these prayers; if in the evening, the Blessed Sacrament will be exposed for the adoration of the faithful; after which those present will receive the customary Benediction. We desire that, wherever it be lawful, the local confraternity of the Rosary should make a solemn procession through the streets as a public manifestation of religious devotion.

5. That the heavenly treasures of the Church may be thrown open to all, We hereby renew every Indulgence granted by Us last year. To all those, therefore, who shall have assisted on the prescribed days at the public recital of the Rosary, and have prayed for Our intentions--to all those also who from legitimate causes shall have been compelled to do so in private--We grant for each occasion an Indulgence of seven years and seven times forty days. To those who, in the prescribed space of time shall have performed these devotions at least ten times--either publicly in the churches or from just causes in the privacy of their homes--and shall have expiated their sins by confession and have received Communion at the altar, We grant from the treasury of the Church a Plenary Indulgence. We also grant this full forgiveness of sins and plenary remission of punishment to all those who, either on the feast day itself of Our Blessed Lady of the Rosary, or on any day within the subsequent eight days, shall have washed the stains from their souls and have holily partaken of the Divine banquet, and shall have also prayed in any church to God and His most holy Mother for Our intentions. As We desire also to consult the interests of those who live in country districts, and are hindered, especially in the month of October, by their agricultural labors, We permit all We have above decreed, and also the holy Indulgences gainable in the month of October, to be postponed to the following months of November or December, according to the prudent decision of the Ordinaries.

6. We doubt not, Venerable Brethren, that rich and abundant fruits will be the result of these efforts, especially if God, by the bestowal of His heavenly graces, bring an added increase to the fields planted by Us and watered by your zeal. We are certain that the faithful of Christendom will hearken to the utterance of Our Apostolic authority with the same fervor of faith and piety of which they gave most ample evidence last year. May our Heavenly Patroness, invoked by us through the Rosary, graciously be with us and obtain that, all disagreements of opinion being removed and Christianity restored throughout the world, we may obtain from God the wished for peace in the Church.--In pledge of that boon, to you, your clergy, and the flock entrusted to your care, We lovingly bestow the Apostolic Benediction.

Given in Rome, at St. Peter's, the 30th of August, 1884, in the Seventh Year of Our Pontificate.

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Quod Auctoritate

Proclaiming An Extraordinary Jubilee

Encyclical of Pope Leo XIII

December 22, 1885

To Our Venerable Brethren the Patriarchs, Primates, Archbishops, Bishops, and other Local Ordinaries, in the Grace and Communion of the Apostolic See.

Venerable Brethren, Health and Apostolic Benediction.

That which We, by the Apostolic authority, have more than once decreed, that an extraordinary year of Jubilee should be kept throughout the whole Christian world, and the treasures of heavenly gifts, the dispensation of which is in Our power, should be thrown open to the faithful--that with the favor of God We have determined to decree for the ensuing year. The advantages of this step will not escape you, Venerable Brethren, who are so familiar with the spirit of the age and the temper of the time, but there is a special reason now which makes Our decision seem more than usually opportune. In view of the fact that in Our recent Encyclical Letter We pointed out how important it is that the States should conform as closely as possible to truth and the Christian ideal, it will easily be understood how fitting it is that We should now use every effort to excite men, or to lead them back to the practice of Christian virtues. For a State is what the lives of the people make it: and just as the excellence of a ship or a house is dependent upon the good quality and the right adjustment of its component parts, so, unless the individual citizens lead good lives, the State cannot keep in the path of virtue, and without offending. Civil government and those things which constitute the public life of a country come into existence and perish by the act of men; and men almost always succeed in stamping the image of their opinions and their lives upon their public institutions. In order therefore that Our teaching may sink into men's minds, and what is the great thing, actually govern their daily lives, an attempt must be made to bring them to think and act like Christians, not less in public than in private.

2. And in this matter effort is the more needful because perils everywhere abound. The great virtues of our forefathers have in large measure disappeared; the most violent passions have claimed a freer indulgence; the madness of opinion which knows no restraint, or at least no effective restraint, every day extends further; of those whose principles are sound there are many who, through a misplaced timidity, are frightened, and have not the courage even to speak out their opinions boldly, far less to translate them into deeds; everywhere the worst examples are affecting public morals; wicked societies which We ourselves have denounced before now,

skilled in all evil arts, are doing their best to lead the people astray, and as far as they are able, to withdraw them from God, their duty, and Christianity.

3. Amid these many and pressing evils, which are the more serious because they are already of long duration, nothing must be left undone by Us which can afford any hope of relief. With this purpose, and in this hope, We proclaim a sacred Jubilee to all those who have their salvation at heart, and need to be reminded and exhorted to raise their thoughts, now busied with worldly matters, to the contemplation of heavenly things. And this with a gain not merely to the individuals themselves, but to the whole future well-being of the commonwealth, because in proportion as individual citizens advance along the path of perfection, there is a corresponding increase in the general rectitude and probity, in the public life and morals of the nation.

4. But you will observe, Venerable Brethren, that success will largely depend upon your industry and zeal, as it will be needful to prepare the people properly and carefully if they are to reap the fruits which are to be placed before them. We commit it to your judgment and prudence to place this matter in the hands of priests whom you may select, that by discourses fitted to the capacity of the crowd they may instruct them, and above all exhort them to that penance which, according to St. Augustine, consists in "the daily chastisement of the good and the faithful followers of Christ in which we strike our breasts, saying 'forgive us our sins.'" [Ep. 108] With good reason We mention here in the first place that part of penance which consists of the voluntary punishment of the body. You know the temper of the times--how many there are who love to live delicately and shrink from whatever requires manhood and generosity; who, when ailments come, discover in them sufficient reasons for not obeying the salutary laws of the Church, thinking the burden laid upon them more than they can bear, when they are told to abstain from certain kinds of food or to fast during a few days in the year. It is not to be wondered at if, weakened by these habits of indulgence, they gradually give themselves up body and soul to the more imperious passions. It is therefore necessary to recall to the paths of moderation those who have fallen or who are likely to fall through this sort of effeminacy. Therefore those who speak to the people should lay it down persistently and clearly that according not only to the law of the Gospel, but even to the dictates of natural reason, a man is bound to govern himself and keep his passions under strict control, and moreover, that sin cannot be expiated except by penance. That the virtue of which We have spoken may be durable, it will be prudent to put it in some sort under the safeguard and protection of a stable institution; you know well, venerable brothers, to what We allude; We mean that you should continue each one in his own diocese to protect and propagate the Third Order, called the Secular Order, of the Franciscan Friars. To keep up the spirit of penance in the Christian multitude nothing is more effectual than the example and the grace of the Patriarch Francis of Assisi, who combined with the greatest innocence of life so much zeal for mortification that the image of Jesus Christ crucified was not less visible in his life and conduct than in the signs which were supernaturally impressed upon him. The laws of his Order, which We have modified for the times, are as light to bear as they are effectual for the practice of Christian virtue.

5. In the second place, as every hope of safety lies in the protection and succor of our Heavenly Father in the midst of so great private and public necessities, We would earnestly desire to see confidence united with the revival of an assiduous zeal in prayer. In every great crisis of Christendom, and every time the Church was afflicted by evils within or dangers without, our forefathers, with their eyes lifted to Heaven in supplication, taught us how and when we should seek for the light of our souls, for the strength of virtue, and for help suited to the need. For deeply engraved upon men's minds were these precepts of Jesus Christ: "Ask and it shall be

given you;" [Mt vii, 7] "We ought always to pray and not to faint." [Lk xviii, 1] And with this teaching the word of the Apostle corresponds: "Pray without ceasing;" [1 Th v, 17] "I desire, therefore, first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all men." [1 Tim ii, 1] Upon which subject St. John Chrysostom has left us this saying, not less true than ingenious, in the form of a comparison: "Even as man, who comes into the light of day naked and wanting all things, has been endowed by nature with hands to procure for himself all the necessities of life; so in supernatural things, seeing that of himself he can do nothing, he has received from God the faculty of prayer, that he may use it wisely for the obtaining of all that is needful to his salvation."

6. From all this, Venerable Brethren, each one of you may gather how agreeable to Us and how commendable is the zeal with which at Our suggestion you have spread the devotion to the Most Holy Rosary, especially in these last years. Nor can We pass over the popular piety which has almost everywhere been excited by this method of prayer. Now you must watch with the greatest care that this devotion be practiced with even greater and greater fervor, and that it be persevered in without failing. And if We insist upon this exhortation, as We have already done several times, not one of you will be surprised, for you understand how important it is that this habit of the Rosary of Mary should flourish among Christians. And you are perfectly aware that this is a part and a beautiful form of that spirit of prayer of which we speak, and that it is at once admirably suited to our times, easy to practice, and fruitful in results. But as the first and the chief fruit of the Jubilee must be, as We have already pointed out, amendment of life and progress in virtue, We deem especially necessary the avoidance of that evil which We have not neglected to point out in Our past Encyclicals. We allude to those internal, and, as it were, domestic dissensions among some of ourselves; dissensions of which it is hardly possible to say how much they break or relax the bonds of charity, to the great detriment of souls. If We recall this to you once more, Venerable Brethren, who are the guardians of ecclesiastical discipline and of mutual charity, it is that We desire to see your watchfulness and your authority always directed to the prevention of so great an evil. By your warnings, your exhortations, your reproaches, urge all "to keep the unity of spirit in the bond of peace," induce the authors of the dissensions, if such there be, to return to their duty by the consideration which they should ever keep in mind that the only-begotten Son of God, even at the approach of His last torments, asked nothing more urgently of His Father than the mutual love of those who believed, or should believe, in Him, "that they may all be one, even as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us." [Jn xvii, 21]

7. Relying, therefore, on the mercy of the omnipotent God, and the authority of the Blessed Apostles St. Peter and St. Paul, and making use of that power of binding and loosing which our Lord has given to Us, though unworthy of it, We grant under the form of a General Jubilee a plenary indulgence to all the faithful of both sexes upon this condition and subject to this obligation, that during the coming year of 1886 they perform the things mentioned below.

8. The citizens and inhabitants of Rome must pay two visits to the Lateran, the Vatican, and the Liberian Basilicas, and pray there for some time to God according to Our intentions for the well-being and the exaltation of the Church, for the rooting out of all heresy, and for the conversion of all who are in error, and in accordance with Our intentions pour out prayers to God that concord may reign among Christian princes, and that peace and unity may be the lot of all the faithful. They must also fast for two days, only using the food usually allowed in times of penance, in addition to the forty days of Lent and other days set aside by the Church as fast days. They must also, after having properly confessed their sins, receive Holy Communion, and, in accordance

with the advice of their confessor, give an alms, each according to his means, to the furthering of some work likely to promote the propagation and increase of the Catholic Church. Each may choose the object he prefers; but We think it well especially to name two, towards which assistance may be given with the greatest advantage; and of these each is an object which in many places is in need of help and aid, and fruitful in advantage, not less for the State than for the Church, We mean the Primary schools for boys and the Seminaries for the Clergy.

9. Those who reside outside Rome, in whatever part of the world they may live, must pay two visits at prescribed intervals to three churches to be appointed by you, Venerable Brethren, your Vicars or Officials, on your or their command, by those who have the charge of souls; or three visits if there are only two churches, or six visits if there is only one; and also must comply with all the conditions already laid down above. This indulgence may be applied by way of suffrage to the souls who have departed this life joined in charity with God. We give you power to reduce the number of the visits according to your judgment to certain churches in the case of chapters, congregations, as well secular as regular, communities, confraternities, universities, and colleges where the visits are made in procession.

10. Sailors and travelers may obtain the indulgence upon their return home, or their arrival at some fixed station, by visiting six times the principal church, or the parish church of the district, and complying with the other conditions which We have already laid down. In the case of regulars of either sex, and even in the case of persons belonging to enclosed orders, and also in the case of all others, whether ecclesiastical or lay, who are prevented either because they are in prison, or through infirmity, or any other good reason, from fulfilling the above conditions, or some of them, the confessor has power to commute for other pious works, and also has power to dispense from Communion children who have not yet made their First Communion. Moreover, We grant to all and each of the faithful, both lay and ecclesiastic, secular and regular, of whatever order and institute, and even of those which ought to be specially named, that they should choose for the purpose of the Jubilee any approved confessor they like; nuns, novices, and other women living in the cloister may avail themselves of this power provided the confessor chosen is approved for nuns. To confessors upon this occasion, and while the time of this Jubilee lasts, We grant all the faculties which were granted by Our Letters Apostolic of February 15th, 1879, beginning with the words *Pontifices maximi*; always excepting the things which were excepted in those Letters.

11. Finally let all do their best to gain the graces of heaven during this time by a special devotion to the great Mother of God. For We wish this Jubilee to be placed under the patronage of the Most Holy Rosary of the Virgin; and with her assistance We are confident that there will be many whose souls, set free by the cleansing away of the stains of sin, will be renewed by faith and piety and justice, not only to the hope of eternal salvation, but also as an earnest of a more peaceful time.

12. As a pledge of heavenly graces and a witness to Our fatherly goodwill towards you, We give from the bottom of Our heart the Apostolic Benediction to you and your Clergy, and the whole people committed to your care and watchfulness.

Given in Rome, at St. Peter's, on the twenty-second day of December, in the year 1885, the eighth of Our Pontificate.

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Vi E Ben Noto

On The Rosary And Public Life

Encyclical of Pope Leo XIII

September 20, 1887

To the Bishops of Italy.

Venerable Brethren,

You know how We place amid present dangers Our confidence in the Glorious Virgin of the Holy Rosary, for the safety and prosperity of Christendom and the peace and tranquillity of the Church. Mindful that in moments of great trial, pastors and people have ever had recourse with entire confidence to the august Mother of God, in whose hands are all graces, certain too, that devotion to Our Lady of the Rosary is most opportune for the needs of these times, We have desired to revive everywhere this devotion, and to spread it far and wide among the faithful of the world. Oftentimes already We, in recommending the pious practice of devoting October to honoring Our Lady, have pointed out Our reasons and hope for so doing, and the forms to be observed; and the entire Church, docile to Our desires, has ever replied by special manifestations of devotion; and now is making ready to pay to Mary, during a whole month, a daily tribute of the devotion so dear to it. In such pious rivalry Italy has not been behind-hand, for devotion to Our Lady is deeply and widely rooted in this land; and We doubt not that this year too, Italy will set a glorious example of love for the august Mother of God, and will give Us fresh reasons for consolation and hope. Nevertheless We cannot do less than address to you, Venerable Brethren, a few words of exhortation, so that with particular and renewed zeal the month dedicated to the Most Holy Virgin of the Rosary may be sanctified in every diocese of Italy.

2. It is easy to imagine what reasons We have for doing this. Since God called Us to govern His Church on earth, We have sought to use every possible means that We deemed suitable, for the sanctification of souls and the extension of the reign of Jesus Christ. We have excepted from Our daily solicitude no nation and no people, mindful that Our Redeemer shed His precious blood on the Cross and opened the reign of grace and of glory for all. None, however, can be surprised that We showed special care for the Italian people, for Our Divine Master Jesus Christ chose, from out all the world, Italy to be the seat of His Vicar on earth, and in His providential designs appointed Rome to be the capital of the Catholic world. On this account the Italian people is called upon to live close to the Father of the whole Christian family, and to share in a special way in his sorrows and his glory. Unfortunately We find in Italy much to sadden Our souls. Faith and

Christian morals, the precious inheritance bequeathed by Our ancestors, and in all past times the glory of Our country and of Italy's great ones, are being attacked artfully and in covert ways, or even openly, with cynicism that is revolting, by a handful of men who seek to rob others of that faith and morality they have themselves lost. In this more especially is seen the work of the sects, and of those who are more or less their willing tools. Above all, in this city of Rome, where Christ's Vicar has his See are their efforts concentrated and their diabolical designs displayed with ferocious obstinacy.

3. We need not tell you, Venerable Brethren, with what bitterness Our soul is filled at seeing the danger there is for the salvation of so many of Our beloved children. And Our sorrow is greater because We find it impossible to oppose such great evil with that salutary efficacy We would desire and that We have the right to use, for you know, Venerable Brethren, and all the world knows, the state to which we are reduced. On this account We feel a still greater desire to call upon the Mother of God and to ask her help. Let all good Italians pray for their misguided brethren, for their common Father the Roman Pontiff, that God, in His infinite mercy, may hear and answer the prayers of a father and his sons. And Our most lively and sure hope is placed in the Queen of the Rosary, who has shown herself, since she has been invoked by that title, so ready to help the Church and Christian peoples in their necessities. Already have We recorded these glories and the great triumphs won over the Albigenses and other powerful enemies, glories and triumphs which have not only profited the Church, afflicted and persecuted, but also the temporal welfare of peoples and nations. Why in this hour of need should We not behold again such marvels of the power and goodness of the august Virgin, for the good of the Church and its Head, and of the whole Christian world, if the faithful only revive, on their part, the magnificent examples of piety given by their forefathers, under similar circumstances? And to make this most powerful Queen more and more propitious, We would honor her more and more in the invocation of the Rosary, and increase this devotion. And to this end We have made a double of the second class for all the Church of the Feast of the Rosary. And for the same purpose We ardently desire the Catholics of Italy, with lively faith, especially during this month of October, to invoke this august Virgin and to do loving violence to her mother's heart, and to pray to her for the triumph of the Church and the Apostolic See, for the liberty of the Vicar of Jesus Christ on earth, and for peace and public prosperity. And, since the effects of such prayers will be proportionate to the dispositions of those offering them, We ardently exhort you, venerable brethren, devote all your care and zeal to kindle among those committed to your charge a strong, living and active faith, and to call on all to return by penance to grace and to the faithful fulfillment of; all their duties. Among such duties, considering the state of the times, must be reckoned as paramount an open and sincere profession of the faith and teaching of Jesus Christ, casting aside all human respect, and considering before all things the interest of religion and the salvation of souls. It cannot be concealed that, although thanks to the mercy of God religious feeling is strong and widely spread among Italians, nevertheless by the evil influence of men and the times religious indifference is on the increase, and hence there is lessening of that respect and filial love for the Church which was the glory of our ancestors and in which they placed their highest ambition. Let it be your work, venerable brethren, to revive this Christian feeling among your people, an interest in the Catholic cause, a confidence in Our Lady's help, and a spirit of prayer. It is certain that the august Queen, invoked thus well by her man sons, would deign to hear their prayer, console Us in Our sorrow, and crown Our efforts for the Church and for Italy, by granting better times to both. With these desires, We bestow on you venerable brethren, and the clergy and people committed to your care, the Apostolic Benediction as a promise of graces and favors of the highest kind from heaven.

Given at the Vatican this 20th day of September 1887.

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Quamquam Pluries

On Devotion To St. Joseph

Encyclical of Pope Leo XIII

August 15, 1889

To Our Venerable Brethren the Patriarchs, Primates, Archbishops, and other Ordinaries, in Peace and Union With Holy See.

Although We have already many times ordered special prayers to be offered up in the whole world, that the interests of Catholicism might be insistently recommended to God, none will deem it matter for surprise that We consider the present moment an opportune one for again inculcating the same duty. During periods of stress and trial--chiefly when every lawlessness of act seems permitted to the powers of darkness--it has been the custom in the Church to plead with special fervor and perseverance to God, her author and protector, by recourse to the intercession of the saints--and chiefly of the Blessed Virgin, Mother of God--whose patronage has ever been the most efficacious. The fruit of these pious prayers and of the confidence reposed in the Divine goodness, has always, sooner or later, been made apparent. Now, Venerable Brethren, you know the times in which we live; they are scarcely less deplorable for the Christian religion than the worst days, which in time past were most full of misery to the Church. We see faith, the root of all the Christian virtues, lessening in many souls; we see charity growing cold; the young generation daily growing in depravity of morals and views; the Church of Jesus Christ attacked on every side by open force or by craft; a relentless war waged against the Sovereign Pontiff; and the very foundations of religion undermined with a boldness which waxes daily in intensity. These things are, indeed, so much a matter of notoriety that it is needless for Us to expatiate on the depths to which society has sunk in these days, or on the designs which now agitate the minds of men. In circumstances so unhappy and troublous, human remedies are insufficient, and it becomes necessary, as a sole resource, to beg for assistance from the Divine power.

2. This is the reason why We have considered it necessary to turn to the Christian people and urge them to implore, with increased zeal and constancy, the aid of Almighty God. At this proximity of the month of October, which We have already consecrated to the Virgin Mary, under the title of Our Lady of the Rosary, We earnestly exhort the faithful to perform the exercises of this month with, if possible, even more piety and constancy than heretofore. We know that there is sure help in the maternal goodness of the Virgin, and We are very certain that We shall never vainly place Our trust in her. If, on innumerable occasions, she has displayed her power in aid of the Christian world, why should We doubt that she will now renew the assistance of her power

and favor, if humble and constant prayers are offered up on all sides to her? Nay, We rather believe that her intervention will be the more marvelous as she has permitted Us to pray to her, for so long a time, with special appeals. But We entertain another object, which, according to your wont, Venerable Brethren, you will advance with fervor. That God may be more favorable to Our prayers, and that He may come with bounty and promptitude to the aid of His Church, We judge it of deep utility for the Christian people, continually to invoke with great piety and trust, together with the Virgin-Mother of God, her chaste Spouse, the Blessed Joseph; and We regard it as most certain that this will be most pleasing to the Virgin herself. On the subject of this devotion, of which We speak publicly for the first time to-day, We know without doubt that not only is the people inclined to it, but that it is already established, and is advancing to full growth. We have seen the devotion to St. Joseph, which in past times the Roman Pontiffs have developed and gradually increased, grow into greater proportions in Our time, particularly after Pius IX., of happy memory, Our predecessor, proclaimed, yielding to the request of a large number of bishops, this holy patriarch the patron of the Catholic Church. And as, moreover, it is of high importance that the devotion to St. Joseph should engraft itself upon the daily pious practices of Catholics, We desire that the Christian people should be urged to it above all by Our words and authority.

3. The special motives for which St. Joseph has been proclaimed Patron of the Church, and from which the Church looks for singular benefit from his patronage and protection, are that Joseph was the spouse of Mary and that he was reputed the Father of Jesus Christ. From these sources have sprung his dignity, his holiness, his glory. In truth, the dignity of the Mother of God is so lofty that naught created can rank above it. But as Joseph has been united to the Blessed Virgin by the ties of marriage, it may not be doubted that he approached nearer than any to the eminent dignity by which the Mother of God surpasses so nobly all created natures. For marriage is the most intimate of all unions which from its essence imparts a community of gifts between those that by it are joined together. Thus in giving Joseph the Blessed Virgin as spouse, God appointed him to be not only her life's companion, the witness of her maidenhood, the protector of her honor, but also, by virtue of the conjugal tie, a participator in her sublime dignity. And Joseph shines among all mankind by the most august dignity, since by divine will, he was the guardian of the Son of God and reputed as His father among men. Hence it came about that the Word of God was humbly subject to Joseph, that He obeyed him, and that He rendered to him all those offices that children are bound to render to their parents. From this two-fold dignity flowed the obligation which nature lays upon the head of families, so that Joseph became the guardian, the administrator, and the legal defender of the divine house whose chief he was. And during the whole course of his life he fulfilled those charges and those duties. He set himself to protect with a mighty love and a daily solicitude his spouse and the Divine Infant; regularly by his work he earned what was necessary for the one and the other for nourishment and clothing; he guarded from death the Child threatened by a monarch's jealousy, and found for Him a refuge; in the miseries of the journey and in the bitternesses of exile he was ever the companion, the assistance, and the upholder of the Virgin and of Jesus. Now the divine house which Joseph ruled with the authority of a father, contained within its limits the scarce-born Church. From the same fact that the most holy Virgin is the mother of Jesus Christ is she the mother of all Christians whom she bore on Mount Calvary amid the supreme throes of the Redemption; Jesus Christ is, in a manner, the first-born of Christians, who by the adoption and Redemption are his brothers. And for such reasons the Blessed Patriarch looks upon the multitude of Christians who make up the Church as confided specially to his trust--this limitless family spread over the earth, over which, because he is the spouse of Mary and the Father of Jesus Christ he holds, as it were, a paternal authority. It is, then, natural and worthy that as the Blessed Joseph ministered to all the needs of the family at Nazareth and girt it about with his protection, he should now cover with

the cloak of his heavenly patronage and defend the Church of Jesus Christ.

4. You well understand, Venerable Brethren that these considerations are confirmed by the opinion held by a large number of the Fathers, to which the sacred liturgy gives its sanction, that the Joseph of ancient times, son of the patriarch Jacob, was the type of St. Joseph, and the former by his glory prefigured the greatness of the future guardian of the Holy Family. And in truth, beyond the fact that the same name--a point the significance of which has never been denied--was given to each, you well know the points of likeness that exist between them; namely, that the first Joseph won the favor and especial goodwill of his master, and that through Joseph's administration his household came to prosperity and wealth; that (still more important) he presided over the kingdom with great power, and, in a time when the harvests failed, he provided for all the needs of the Egyptians with so much wisdom that the King decreed to him the title "Savior of the world." Thus it is that We may prefigure the new in the old patriarch. And as the first caused the prosperity of his master's domestic interests and at the same time rendered great services to the whole kingdom, so the second, destined to be the guardian of the Christian religion, should be regarded as the protector and defender of the Church, which is truly the house of the Lord and the kingdom of God on earth. These are the reasons why men of every rank and country should fly to the trust and guard of the blessed Joseph. Fathers of families find in Joseph the best personification of paternal solicitude and vigilance; spouses a perfect example of love, of peace, and of conjugal fidelity; virgins at the same time find in him the model and protector of virginal integrity. The noble of birth will learn of Joseph how to guard their dignity even in misfortune; the rich will understand, by his lessons, what are the goods most to be desired and won at the price of their labor. As to workmen, artisans, and persons of lesser degree, their recourse to Joseph is a special right, and his example is for their particular imitation. For Joseph, of royal blood, united by marriage to the greatest and holiest of women, reputed the father of the Son of God, passed his life in labor, and won by the toil of the artisan the needful support of his family. It is, then, true that the condition of the lowly has nothing shameful in it, and the work of the laborer is not only not dishonoring, but can, if virtue be joined to it, be singularly ennobled. Joseph, content with his slight possessions, bore the trials consequent on a fortune so slender, with greatness of soul, in imitation of his Son, who having put on the form of a slave, being the Lord of life, subjected himself of his own free-will to the spoliation and loss of everything.

5. Through these considerations, the poor and those who live by the labor of their hands should be of good heart and learn to be just. If they win the right of emerging from poverty and obtaining a better rank by lawful means, reason and justice uphold them in changing the order established, in the first instance, for them by the Providence of God. But recourse to force and struggles by seditious paths to obtain such ends are madnesses which only aggravate the evil which they aim to suppress. Let the poor, then, if they would be wise, trust not to the promises of seditious men, but rather to the example and patronage of the Blessed Joseph, and to the maternal charity of the Church, which each day takes an increasing compassion on their lot.

6. This is the reason why--trusting much to your zeal and episcopal authority, Venerable Brethren, and not doubting that the good and pious faithful will run beyond the mere letter of the law--We prescribe that during the whole month of October, at the recitation of the Rosary, for which We have already legislated, a prayer to St. Joseph be added, the formula of which will be sent with this letter, and that this custom should be repeated every year. To those who recite this prayer, We grant for each time an indulgence of seven years and seven Lents. It is a salutary practice and very praiseworthy, already established in some countries, to consecrate the month of March to the honor of the holy Patriarch by daily exercises of piety. Where this custom cannot be easily established, it is at least desirable, that before the feast-day, in the principal church of

each parish, a "triduo" of prayer be celebrated. In those lands where the 19th of March--the Feast of St. Joseph--is not a Festival of Obligation, We exhort the faithful to sanctify it as far as possible by private pious practices, in honor of their heavenly patron, as though it were a day of Obligation.

7. And in token of heavenly favors, and in witness of Our good-will, We grant most lovingly in the Lord, to you, Venerable Brethren, to your clergy and to your people, the Apostolic blessing.

Given from the Vatican, August 15th, 1889, the 11th year of Our Pontificate.

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Octobri Mense

On The Rosary

Encyclical of Pope Leo XIII

September 22, 1891

To Our Venerable Brethren the Patriarchs, Primates, Archbishops, Bishops, and other Ordinaries having Grace and Communion with the Apostolic See.

Venerable Brethren, Greeting and Apostolic Benediction.

At the coming of the month of October, dedicated and consecrated as it is to the Blessed Virgin of the Rosary, we recall with satisfaction the instant exhortations which in preceding years We addressed to you, venerable brethren, desiring, as We did, that the faithful, urged by your authority and by your zeal, should redouble their piety towards the august Mother of God, the mighty helper of Christians, and should pray to her throughout the month, invoking her by that most holy rite of the Rosary which the Church, especially in the passage of difficult times, has ever used for the accomplishment of all desires. This year once again do We publish Our wishes, once again do We encourage you by the same exhortations. We are persuaded to this in love for the Church, whose sufferings, far from mitigating, increase daily in number and in gravity. Universal and well-known are the evils we deplore: war made upon the sacred dogmas which the Church holds and transmits; derision cast upon the integrity of that Christian morality which she has in keeping; enmity declared, with the impudence of audacity and with criminal malice, against the very Christ, as though the Divine work of Redemption itself were to be destroyed from its foundation--that work which, indeed, no adverse power shall ever utterly abolish or destroy.

2. No new events are these in the career of the Church militant. Jesus foretold them to His disciples. That she may teach men the truth and may guide them to eternal salvation, she must enter upon a daily war; and throughout the course of ages she has fought, even to martyrdom, rejoicing and glorifying herself in nothing more than in the occasion of signing her cause with her Founder's blood, the sure and certain pledge of the victory whereof she holds the promise. Nevertheless we must not conceal the profound sadness with which this necessity of constant war afflicts the righteous. It is indeed a cause of great sorrow that so many should be deterred and led astray by error and enmity to God; that so many should be indifferent to all forms of religion, and should finally become estranged from faith; that so many Catholics should be such in name only, and should pay to religion no honor or worship. And still sadder and more beset

with anxieties grows the soul at the thought of the fruitful source of most manifold evils existing in the organization of States that allow no place to the Church, and that oppose her championship of holy virtue. This is truly a terrible manifestation of the just vengeance of God, Who allows blindness of soul to darken upon the nations that forsake Him. These are evils that cry aloud, that cry of themselves with a daily increasing voice. It is absolutely necessary that the Catholic voice should also call to God with unwearied instance, "without ceasing;" [Thes 5.17] that the Faithful should pray not only in their own homes, but in public, gathered together under the sacred roof; that they should beseech urgently the all-foreseeing God to deliver the Church from evil men [2 Thes 3.2] and to bring back the troubled nations to good sense and reason, by the light and love of Christ.

3. Wonderful and beyond hope or belief is this. The world goes on its laborious way, proud of its riches, of its power, of its arms, of its genius; the Church goes onward along the course of ages with an even step, trusting in God only, to Whom, day and night, she lifts her eyes and her suppliant hands. Even though in her prudence she neglects not the human aid which Providence and the times afford her, not in these does she put her trust, which rests in prayer, in supplication, in the invocation of God. Thus it is that she renews her vital breath; the diligence of her prayer has caused her, in her aloofness from worldly things and in her continual union with the Divine will, to live the tranquil and peaceful life of Our very Lord Jesus Christ; being herself the image of Christ, Whose happy and perpetual joy was hardly marred by the horror of the torments He endured for us. This important doctrine of Christian wisdom has been ever believed and practiced by Christians worthy of the name. Their prayers rise to God eagerly and more frequently when the cunning and the violence of the perverse afflict the Church and her supreme Pastor. Of this the faithful of the Church in the East gave an example that should be offered to the imitation of posterity. Peter, Vicar of Jesus Christ, and first Pontiff of the Church, had been cast into prison, loaded with chains by the guilty Herod, and left for certain death. None could carry him help or snatch him from the peril. But there was the certain help that fervent prayer wins from God. The Church, as the sacred story tells us, made prayer without ceasing to God for him; [Acts 12.5] and the greater was the fear of a misfortune, the greater was the fervor of all who prayed to God. After the granting of their desires the miracle stood revealed; and Christians still celebrate with a joyous gratitude the marvel of the deliverance of Peter. Christ has given us a still more memorable instance, a Divine instance, so that the Church might be formed not upon his precepts only, but upon His example also. During His whole life He had given Himself to frequent and fervent prayer, and in the supreme hours in the Garden of Gethsemane, when His soul was filled with bitterness and sorrow unto death, He prayed to His Father and prayed repeatedly. [Lk 22.44] It was not for Himself that He prayed thus, for He feared nothing and needed nothing, being God; He prayed for us, for His Church, whose prayers and future tears He already then accepted with joy, to give them back in mercies.

4. But since the salvation of our race was accomplished by the mystery of the Cross, and since the Church, dispenser of that salvation after the triumph of Christ, was founded upon earth and instituted, Providence established a new order for a new people. The consideration of the Divine counsels is united to the great sentiment of religion. The Eternal Son of God, about to take upon Him our nature for the saving and ennobling of man, and about to consummate thus a mystical union between Himself and all mankind, did not accomplish His design without adding there the free consent of the elect Mother, who represented in some sort all human kind, according to the illustrious and just opinion of St. Thomas, who says that the Annunciation was effected with the consent of the Virgin standing in the place of humanity. [III. q. xxx, a. 1] With equal truth may it be also affirmed that, by the will of God, Mary is the intermediary through whom is distributed unto us this immense treasure of mercies gathered by God, for mercy and truth were created by

Jesus Christ. [Jn 1.17] Thus as no man goeth to the Father but by the Son, so no man goeth to Christ but by His Mother. How great are the goodness and mercy revealed in this design of God! What a correspondence with the frailty of man! We believe in the infinite goodness of the Most High, and we rejoice in it; we believe also in His justice and we fear it. We adore the beloved Savior, lavish of His blood and of His life; we dread the inexorable Judge. Thus do those whose actions have disturbed their consciences need an intercessor mighty in favor with God, merciful enough not to reject the cause of the desperate, merciful enough to lift up again towards hope in the divine mercy the afflicted and the broken down. Mary is this glorious intermediary; she is the mighty Mother of the Almighty; but-- what is still sweeter--she is gentle, extreme in tenderness, of a limitless loving-kindness. As such God gave her to us. Having chosen her for the Mother of His only begotten Son, He taught her all a mother's feeling that breathes nothing but pardon and love. Such Christ desired she should be, for He consented to be subject to Mary and to obey her as a son a mother. Such He proclaimed her from the cross when he entrusted to her care and love the whole of the race of man in the person of His disciple John. Such, finally, she proves herself by her courage in gathering in the heritage of the enormous labors of her Son, and in accepting the charge of her maternal duties towards us all.

5. The design of this most dear mercy, realized by God in Mary and confirmed by the testament of Christ, was comprehended at the beginning, and accepted with the utmost joy by the Holy Apostles and the earliest believers. It was the counsel and teaching of the venerable Fathers of the Church. All the nations of the Christian age received it with one mind; and even when literature and tradition are silent there is a voice that breaks from every Christian breast and speaks with all eloquence. No other reason is needed that that of a Divine faith which, by a powerful and most pleasant impulse, persuades us towards Mary. Nothing is more natural, nothing more desirable than to seek a refuge in the protection and in the loyalty of her to whom we may confess our designs and our actions, our innocence and our repentance, our torments and our joys, our prayers and our desires--all our affairs. All men, moreover, are filled with the hope and confidence that petitions which might be received with less favor from the lips of unworthy men, God will accept when they are recommended by the most Holy Mother, and will grant with all favors. The truth and the sweetness of these thoughts bring to the soul an unspeakable comfort; but they inspire all the more compassion for those who, being without Divine faith, honor not Mary and have her not for their mother; for those also who, holding Christian faith, dare to accuse of excess the devotion to Mary, thereby sorely wounding filial piety.

6. This storm of evils, in the midst of which the Church struggles so strenuously, reveals to all her pious children the holy duty whereto they are bound to pray to God with instance, and the manner in which they may give to their prayers the greater power. Faithful to the religious example of our fathers, let us have recourse to Mary, our holy Sovereign. Let us entreat, let us beseech, with one heart, Mary, the Mother of Jesus Christ, our Mother. "Show thyself to be a mother; cause our prayers to be accepted by Him Who, born for us, consented to be thy Son." [Ex sacr. liturg.]

7. Now, among the several rites and manners of paying honor to the Blessed Mary, some are to be preferred, inasmuch as we know them to be most powerful and most pleasing to our Mother; and for this reason we specially mention by name and recommend the Rosary. The common language has given the name of corona to this manner of prayer, which recalls to our minds the great mysteries of Jesus and Mary united in joys, sorrows, and triumphs. The contemplation of these august mysteries, contemplated in their order, affords to faithful souls a wonderful

confirmation of faith, protection against the disease of error, and increase of the strength of the soul. The soul and memory of him who thus prays, enlightened by faith, are drawn towards these mysteries by the sweetest devotion, are absorbed therein and are surprised before the work of the Redemption of mankind, achieved at such a price and by events so great. The soul is filled with gratitude and love before these proofs of Divine love; its hope becomes enlarged and its desire is increased for those things which Christ has prepared for such as have united themselves to Him in imitation of His example and in participation in His sufferings. The prayer is composed of words proceeding from God Himself, from the Archangel Gabriel, and from the Church; full of praise and of high desires; and it is renewed and continued in an order at once fixed and various; its fruits are ever new and sweet.

8. Moreover, we may well believe that the Queen of Heaven herself has granted an especial efficacy to this mode of supplication, for it was by her command and counsel that the devotion was begun and spread abroad by the holy Patriarch Dominic as a most potent weapon against the enemies of the faith at an epoch not, indeed, unlike our own, of great danger to our holy religion. The heresy of the Albigenses had in effect, one while covertly, another while openly, overrun many countries, and this most vile offspring of the Manicheans, whose deadly errors it reproduced, were the cause in stirring up against the Church the most bitter animosity and a virulent persecution. There seemed to be no human hope of opposing this fanatical and most pernicious sect when timely succor came from on high through the instrument of Mary's Rosary. Thus under the favor of the powerful Virgin, the glorious vanquisher of all heresies, the forces of the wicked were destroyed and dispersed, and faith issued forth unharmed and more shining than before. All manner of similar instances are widely recorded, and both ancient and modern history furnish remarkable proofs of nations saved from perils and winning benedictions therefrom. There is another signal argument in favor of this devotion, inasmuch as from the very moment of its institution it was immediately encouraged and put into most frequent practice by all classes of society. In truth, the piety of the Christian people honors, by many titles and in multiform ways, the Divine Mother, who, alone most admirable among all creatures, shines resplendent in unspeakable glory. But this title of the Rosary, this mode of prayer which seems to contain, as it were, a final pledge of affection, and to sum up in itself the honor due to Our Lady, has always been highly cherished and widely used in private and in public, in homes and in families, in the meetings of confraternities, at the dedication of shrines, and in solemn processions; for there has seemed to be no better means of conducting sacred solemnities, or of obtaining protection and favors.

9. Nor may we permit to pass unnoticed the especial Providence of God displayed in this devotion; for through the lapse of time religious fervor has sometimes seemed to diminish in certain nations, and even this pious method of prayer has fallen into disuse; but piety and devotion have again flourished and become vigorous in a most marvelous manner, when, either through the grave situation of the commonwealth or through some pressing public necessity, general recourse has been had--more to this than to even other means of obtaining help--to the Rosary, whereby it has been restored to its place of honor on the altars. But there is no need to seek for examples of this power in a past age, since we have in the present a signal instance of it. In these times--so troublous (as we have said before) for the Church, and so heartrending for ourselves--set as We are by the Divine will at the helm, it is still given Us to note with admiration the great zeal and fervor with which Mary's Rosary is honored and recited in every place and nation of the Catholic world. And this circumstance, which assuredly is to be attributed to the Divine action and direction upon men, rather than to the wisdom and efforts of individuals, strengthens and consoles Our heart, filling Us with great hope for the ultimate and most glorious triumph of the Church under the auspices of Mary.

10. But there are some who, whilst they honestly agree with what We have said, yet because their hopes--especially as regard the peace and tranquillity of the Church--have not yet been fulfilled, nay, rather because troubles seem to augment, have ceased to pray with diligence and fervor, in a fit of discouragement. Let these look into themselves and labor that the prayers they address to God may be made in a proper spirit, according to the precept of our Lord Jesus Christ. And if there be such, let them reflect how unworthy and how wrong it is to wish to assign to Almighty God the time and the manner of giving His assistance, since He owes nothing to us, and when He hearkens to our supplications and crowns our merits, He only crowns His own innumerable benefits; [S. August. Epi CXCV al 106 Sixtum, c. v., n 19] and when He complies least with our wishes it is as a good father towards his children, having pity on their childishness and consulting their advantage. But as regards the prayers which we join to the suffrages of the heavenly citizens, and offer humbly to God to obtain His mercy for the Church, they are always favorably received and heard, and either obtain for the Church great and imperishable benefits, or their influence is temporarily withheld for a time of greater need. In truth, to these supplications is added an immense weight and grace--the prayers and merits of Christ Our Lord, Who has loved the Church and has delivered Himself up for her to sanctify her . . . so that He should be glorified in her. [Eph 5.25-27] He is her Sovereign Head, holy, innocent, always living to make intercession for us, on whose prayers and supplication we can always by divine authority rely. As for what concerns the exterior and temporal prosperity of the Church, it is evident that she has to cope with most malicious and powerful adversaries. Too often has she suffered at their hands the abolition of her rights, the diminution and oppression of her liberties, scorn and affronts to her authority, and every conceivable outrage. And if in their wickedness her enemies have not accomplished all the injury they had resolved upon and striven to do, they nevertheless seem to go on unchecked. But, despite them the Church, amidst all these conflicts, will always stand out and increase in greatness and glory. Nor can human reason rightly understand why evil, apparently so dominant, should yet be so restricted as regards its results; whilst the Church, driven into straits, comes forth glorious and triumphant. And she ever remains more steadfast in virtue because she draws men to the acquisition of the ultimate good. And since this is her mission, her prayers must have much power to effect the end and purpose of God's providential and merciful designs towards men. Thus, when men pray with and through the Church, they at length obtain what Almighty God has designed from all eternity to bestow upon mankind. [S. Th. II-II, q LXXXIII, a. 2, ex S. G. reg. M] The subtlety of the human intelligence fails now to grasp the high designs of Providence; but the time will come when, through the goodness of God, causes and effects will be made clear, and the marvelous power and utility of prayer will be shown forth. Then it will be seen how many in the midst of a corrupt age have kept themselves pure and inviolate from all concupiscence of the flesh and the spirit, working out their sanctification in the fear of God; [2 Cor 7.1] how others, when exposed to the danger of temptation, have without delay restrained themselves gaining new strength for virtue from the peril itself; how others, having fallen, have been seized with the ardent desire to be restored to the embraces of a compassionate God.

Therefore, with these reflections before them, We beseech all again and again not to yield to the deceits of the old enemy, nor for any cause whatsoever to cease from the duty of prayer. Let their prayers be persevering, let them pray without intermission; let their first care be to supplicate for the sovereign good--the eternal salvation of the whole world, and the safety of the Church. Then they may ask from God other benefits for the use and comfort of life, returning thanks always, whether their desires are granted or refused, as to a most indulgent father. Finally, may they converse with God with the greatest piety and devotion according to the example of the Saints, and that of our Most Holy Master and Redeemer, with great cries and

tears. [Heb 5.7]

11. Our fatherly solicitude urges Us to implore of God, the Giver of all good gifts, not merely the spirit of prayer, but also that of holy penance for all the sons of the Church. And whilst We make this most earnest supplication, We exhort all and each one to the practice with equal fervor of both these virtues combined. Thus prayer fortifies the soul, makes it strong for noble endeavors, leads it up to divine things: penance enables us to overcome ourselves, especially our bodies--most inveterate enemies of reason and the evangelical law. And it is very clear that these virtues unite well with each other, assist each other mutually, and have the same object, namely, to detach man born for heaven from perishable objects, and to raise him up to heavenly commerce with God. On the other hand, the mind that is excited by passions and enervated by pleasure is insensible to the delights of heavenly things, and makes cold and neglectful prayers quite unworthy of being accepted by God. We have before Our eyes examples of the penance of holy men whose prayers and supplications were consequently most pleasing to God, and even obtained miracles. They governed and kept assiduously in subjection their minds and hearts and wills. They accepted with the greatest joy and humility the doctrines of Christ and the teachings of His Church. Their unique desire was to advance in the science of God; nor had their actions any other object than the increase of His glory. They restrained most severely their passions, treated their bodies rudely and harshly, abstaining from even permitted pleasures through love of virtue. And therefore most deservedly could they have said with the Apostle Paul, our conversation is in Heaven: [Phil. 3.20] hence the potent efficacy of their prayers in appeasing and in supplicating the Divine Majesty. It is clear that not every one is obliged or able to attain to these heights; nevertheless, each one should correct his life and morals in his own measure in satisfaction to the Divine justice: for it is to those who have endured voluntary sufferings in this life that the reward of virtue is vouchsafed. Moreover, when in the mystical body of Christ, which is the Church, all the members are united and flourish, it results, according to St. Paul, that the joy or pain of one member is shared by all the rest, so that if one of the brethren in Christ is suffering in mind or body the others come to his help and succor him as far as in them lies. The members are solicitous in regard of each other, and if one member suffer all the members suffer in sympathy, and if one member rejoice all the others rejoice also. But you are the body of Christ, members of one body. [I Cor 12 25-27] But in this illustration of charity, following the example of Christ, Who in the immensity of His love gave up His life to redeem us from sin, paying Himself the penalties incurred by others, in this is the great bond of perfection by which the faithful are closely united with the heavenly citizens and with God. Above all, acts of holy penance are so numerous and varied and extend over such a wide range, that each one may exercise them frequently with a cheerful and ready will without serious or painful effort.

12. And now, venerable brethren, your remarkable and exalted piety towards the Most Holy Mother of God, and your charity and solicitude for the Christian flock, are full of abundant promise: Our heart is full of desire for those wondrous fruits which, on many occasions, the devotion of Catholic people to Mary has brought forth; already We enjoy them deeply and abundantly in anticipation. At your exhortation and under your direction, therefore, the faithful, especially during this ensuing month, will assemble around the solemn altars of this august Queen and most benign Mother, and weave and offer to her, like devoted children, the mystic garland so pleasing to her of the Rosary. All the privileges and indulgences We have herein before conceded are confirmed and ratified. [Cf. ep. encycl. "[Supremi Apostolatus officio](#)" (September 1, 1893); ep. encycl. "[Supriore anno](#)" (August 30, 1884); decree S. R. C. "Inter plurimos" (August 20, 1885); ep. encycl. "[Quamquam pluries](#)" (August 15, 1889)]

13. How grateful and magnificent a spectacle to see in the cities, and towns, and villages, on land and sea--wherever the Catholic faith has penetrated--many hundreds of thousands of pious people uniting their praises and prayers with one voice and heart at every moment of the day, saluting Mary, invoking Mary, hoping everything through Mary. Through her may all the faithful strive to obtain from her Divine Son that the nations plunged in error may return to the Christian teaching and precepts, in which is the foundation of the public safety and the source of peace and true happiness. Through her may they steadfastly endeavor for that most desirable of all blessings, the restoration of the liberty of our Mother, the Church, and the tranquil possession of her rights--rights which have no other object than the careful direction of men's dearest interests, from the exercise of which individuals and nations have never suffered injury, but have derived, in all time, numerous and most precious benefits.

14. And for you, venerable brethren, through the intercession of the Queen of the Most Holy Rosary, We pray Almighty God to grant you heavenly gifts, and greater and more abundant strength, and aid to accomplish the charge of your pastoral office. As a pledge of which We most lovingly bestow upon you and upon the clergy and people committed to your care, the Apostolic Benediction.

Given at Rome, St. Peter's, the 22nd day of September, 1891, in the fourteenth year of Our Pontificate.

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Magnae Dei Matris

On The Rosary

Encyclical of Pope Leo XIII

September 8, 1892

To Our Venerable Brethren, the Patriarchs, Primates, Archbishops, and other Ordinaries in Peace and Communion with the Apostolic See.

As often as the occasion arises to stimulate and intensify the love and veneration of the Christian people for Mary, the great Mother of God, We are filled with wondrous satisfaction and joy, as by a subject which is not only of prime importance in itself and profitable in countless ways, but which also perfectly accords with the inmost sentiments of Our heart. For the holy reverence for Mary which We experienced from Our tenderest years, has grown greater and has taken firmer hold of Our soul with Our advancing age.

2. As time went on, it became more and more evident how deserving of love and honor was she whom God Himself was the first to love, and loved so much more than any other that, after elevating her high above all the rest of His creation and adorning her with His richest gifts, He made her His Mother. The many and splendid proofs of her bounty and beneficence toward us, which We remember with deep gratitude and which move Us to tears, still further encourage and strongly inflame Our filial reverence for her. Throughout the many dreadful events of every kind which the times have brought to pass, always with her have We sought refuge, always to her have We lifted up pleading and confident eyes. And in all the hopes and fears, the joys and sorrows, that We confided to her, the thought was constantly before Us to ask her to assist Us at all times as Our gracious Mother and to obtain this greatest of favors: that We might be able, in return, to show her the heart of a most devoted son.

3. When, then, it came to pass in the secret design of God's providence that We were chosen to fill this Chair of St. Peter and to take the place of the Person of Christ Himself in the Church, worried by the enormous burden of the office and finding no ground for reliance upon Our own strength, We hastened with fervent zeal to implore the divine aid through the maternal intercession of the ever blessed Virgin. Never has Our hope, We are happy to acknowledge, at any time of Our life but more especially since We began to exercise the Supreme Apostolate, failed in the course of events to bear fruit or bring Us comfort. Thus encouraged, Our hope today mounts more confidently than ever to beseech many more and even greater blessings through her favor and mediation, which will profit alike the salvation of Christ's flock and the happy

increase of His Church's glory.

4. It is, therefore, a fitting and opportune time, Venerable Brethren, for Us to induce all Our children--exhorting them through you--to plan on celebrating the coming month of October, consecrated to our Lady as the august Queen of the Rosary, with the fervent and wholehearted devotion which the necessities weighing upon Us demand.

5. It is only too plain how many and of what nature are the corrupting agencies by which the wickedness of the world deceitfully strives to weaken and completely uproot from souls their Christian faith and the respect for God's law on which faith is fed and depends for its effectiveness. Already the fields cultivated by our Lord are everywhere turning into a wilderness abounding in ignorance of the Faith, in error and vice, as though blown upon by some hideous pest. And to add to the anguish of this thought, so far from putting a check on such insolent and destructive depravity, or imposing the punishment deserved, they who can and should correct matters seem in many cases, by their indifference or open connivance, to increase the spirit of evil.

6. We have good reason to deplore the public institutions in which the teaching of the sciences and arts is purposely so organized that the name of God is passed over in silence or visited with vituperation; to deplore the license--growing more shameless by the day--of the press in publishing whatever it pleases, and the license of speech in addressing any kind of insult to Christ our God and His Church. And We deplore no less the consequent laxity and apathy in the practice of the Catholic religion which if not quite open apostasy from the Faith, is certainly going to prove an easy road to it, since it is a manner of life having nothing in common with faith. Nobody who ponders this disorder and the surrender of the most fundamental principles will be astonished if afflicted nations everywhere are groaning under the heavy hand of God's vengeance and stand anxious and trembling in fear of worse calamities.

7. Now, to appease the might of an outraged God and to bring that health of soul so needed by those who are sorely afflicted, there is nothing better than devout and persevering prayer, provided it be joined with a love for and practice of Christian life. And both of these, the spirit of prayer and the practice of Christian life, are best attained through the devotion of the Rosary of Mary.

8. The well-known origin of the Rosary, illustrated in celebrated monuments of which we have made frequent mention, bears witness to its remarkable efficacy. For, in the days when the Albigensian sect, posing as the champion of pure faith and morals, but in reality introducing the worst kind of anarchy and corruption, brought many a nation to its utter ruin, the Church fought against it and the other infamous factions associated with it, not with troops and arms, but chiefly with the power of the most holy Rosary, the devotion which the Mother of God taught to our Father Dominic in order that he might propagate it. By this means the Church triumphed magnificently over every obstacle and provided for the salvation of her children not only in that trial but in others like it afterward, always with the same glorious success. For this reason, now, when human affairs have taken the course which We deplore, bringing affection to the Church and ruin to the State, all of us have the duty to unite our voice in prayer, with like devotion, to the holy Mother of God, beseeching her that we too may rejoice, as we ardently desire, in experiencing the same power of her Rosary.

9. When we have recourse to Mary in prayer, we are having recourse to the Mother of mercy, who is so well disposed toward us that, whatever the necessity that presses upon us especially in attaining eternal life, she is instantly at our side of her own accord, even though she has not been invoked. She dispenses grace with a generous hand from that treasure with which from the beginning she was divinely endowed in fullest abundance that she might be worthy to be the Mother of God. By the fullness of grace which confers on her the most illustrious of her many titles, the Blessed Virgin is infinitely superior to all the hierarchies of men and angels, the one creature who is closest of all to Christ. "It is a great thing in any saint to have grace sufficient for the salvation of many souls; but to have enough to suffice for the salvation of everybody in the world. is the greatest of all; and this is found in Christ and in the Blessed Virgin." [St. Thomas Aquinas, Super Salut. Ang.]

10. It is impossible to say how pleasing and gratifying to her it is when we greet her with the Angelic Salutation, "full of grace"; and in repeating it, fashion these words of praise into ritual crowns for her. For every time we say them, we recall the memory of her exalted dignity and of the Redemption of the human race which God began through her. We likewise bring to mind the divine and everlasting bond which links her with the joys and sorrows, the humiliations and triumphs of Christ in directing and helping mankind to eternal life.

11. It pleased Christ to take upon Himself the Son of Man, and to become thereby our Brother, in order that His mercy to us might be shown most openly; for "it behooved him in all things to be made like unto his brethren that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest before God." [Hebr. 2: 17] Likewise because Mary was chosen to be the Mother of Christ, our Lord and our Brother, the unique prerogative was given her above all other mothers to show her mercy to us and to pour it out upon us. Besides, as we are indebted to Christ for sharing in some way with us the right, which is peculiarly His own, of calling God our Father and possessing Him as such, we are in like manner indebted to Him for His loving generosity in sharing with us the right to call Mary our Mother and to cherish her as such.

12. While nature itself made the name of mother the sweetest of all names and has made motherhood the very model of tender and solicitous love, no tongue is eloquent enough to put in words what every devout soul feels, namely how intense is the flame of affectionate and active charity which glows in Mary, in her who is truly our mother not in a human way but through Christ. Nobody knows and comprehends so well as she everything that concerns us: what helps we need in life; what dangers, public or private, threaten our welfare; what difficulties and evils surround us; above all, how fierce is the fight we wage with ruthless enemies of our salvation. In these and in all other troubles of life her power is most far-reaching. Her desire to use it is most ardent to bring consolation, strength, and help of every kind to children who are dear to her.

13. Accordingly, let us approach Mary confidently, wholeheartedly beseeching her by the bonds of her motherhood which unite her so closely to Jesus and at the same time to us. Let us with deepest devotion invoke her constant aid in the prayer which she herself has indicated and which is most acceptable to her. Then with good reason shall we rest with an easy and joyous mind under the protection of the best of mothers.

14. To this commendation of the Rosary which follows from the very nature of the prayer, We may add that the Rosary offers an easy way to present the chief mysteries of the Christian religion and to impress them upon the mind; and this commendation is one of the most beautiful of all. For it is mainly by faith that a man sets out on the straight and sure path to God and

learns to revere in mind and heart His supreme majesty, His sovereignty over the whole of creation, His unsounded power, wisdom, and providence. For he who comes to God must believe that God exists and is a rewarder to those who seek Him. Moreover, because God's eternal Son assumed our humanity and shone before us as the Way, the Truth, and the Life, our faith must include the lofty mysteries of the august Trinity of divine Persons and of the Father's only-begotten Son made Man: "This is eternal life: that they may know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." [Jn. 17:3]

15. God gave us a most precious blessing when He gave us faith. By this gift we are not only raised above the level of human things, to contemplate and share in the divine nature, but are also furnished with the means of meriting the rewards of heaven; and therefore the hope is encouraged and strengthened that we shall one day look upon God, not in the shadowy images of His creatures, but in the fullest light, and shall enjoy Him forever as the Supreme Goodness. But the Christian is kept so busy by the various affairs of life and wanders so easily into matters of little importance, that unless he be helped with frequent reminders, the truths which are of first importance and necessity are little by little forgotten; and then faith begins to grow weak and may even perish.

16. To ward off these exceedingly great dangers of ignorance from her children, the Church, which never relaxes her vigilant and diligent care, has been in the habit of looking for the staunchest support of faith in the Rosary of Mary. And indeed in the Rosary, along with the most beautiful and efficacious prayer arranged in an orderly pattern, the chief mysteries of our religion follow one another, as they are brought before our mind for contemplation: first of all the mysteries in which the Word was made flesh and Mary, the inviolate Virgin and Mother, performed her maternal duties for Him with a holy joy; there come then the sorrows, the agony and death of the suffering Christ, the price at which the salvation of our race was accomplished; then follow the mysteries full of His glory; His triumph over death, the Ascension into heaven, the sending of the Holy Spirit, the resplendent brightness of Mary received among the stars, and finally the everlasting glory of all the saints in heaven united with the glory of the Mother and her Son.

17. This uninterrupted sequence of wonderful events the Rosary frequently and perseveringly recalls to the minds of the faithful and presents almost as though they were unfolding before our eyes; and this, flooding the souls of those who devoutly recite it with a sweetness of piety that never grows weary, impresses and stirs them as though they were listening to the very voice of the Blessed Mother explaining the mysteries and conversing with them at length about their salvation.

18. It will not, then, seem too much to say that in places, families, and nations in which the Rosary of Mary retains its ancient honor, the loss of faith through ignorance and vicious error need not be feared.

19. There is still another and not lesser advantage which the Church earnestly seeks for her children from the Rosary, and that is the faithful regulation of their lives and their conduct in keeping with the rules and precepts of their holy religion. For if, as we all know from Holy Scripture, "faith without works is dead." [James 2:20] --because faith draws its life from charity and charity flowers forth in a profusion of holy actions--then the Christian will gain nothing for eternal life from his faith unless his life be ordered in accordance with what faith prescribes. "What shall it profit, my brethren, if a man say he hath faith, but hath not works? Shall faith be

able to save him?" [James 2:14] A man of this sort will incur a much heavier rebuke from Christ the Judge than those who are, unfortunately, ignorant of Christian faith and its teaching: they, unlike the former, who believes one thing and practices another, have some excuse or at least are less blameworthy, because they lack the light of the Gospel.

20. In order therefore that the faith we profess may the better bring forth a harvest of fruits in keeping with its nature, while the mind is dwelling on mysteries of the Rosary the heart is wonderfully enkindled by them to make virtuous resolutions. What an example we have set before us! This shines forth everywhere in our Lord's work of salvation. Almighty God, in the excess of His love for us, takes upon Himself the form of lowly man. He dwells in our midst as one of the multitude, converses with us as a friend, instructs and teaches the way of justice to individuals and to multitudes. In His discourse He is the teacher unexcelled; in the authority of His teaching He is God. To all He shows Himself a doer of good; He relieves the sick of the ills of their bodies and, with paternal compassion, heals the most serious sickness of their souls. Those above all whom sorrow troubles or whom the weight of worry crushes, He comforts with the gentle invitation: "Come to me, all you that labor, and are burdened, and I will refresh you." [Mt. 11:28] Then into us, at rest in His embrace, He breathes that mystic fire which He has brought to all men, and benignly imbues us with the meekness and humility of His own heart, with the hope that, by the practice of these virtues, we may share the true and solid peace of which He is the Author: "Learn of me, because I am meek, and humble of heart; and you shall find rest to your souls." [Mt. 11:29] For Himself, in return for that light of heavenly wisdom and that stupendous abundance of blessings which only He could merit for mankind, He suffers the hatred of men and their most atrocious insults; and, nailed to the cross, He pours out His blood and yields up His soul, holding it to be the highest glory to beget life in men by His death.

21. It would be utterly impossible for anyone to meditate on and attentively consider these most precious memorials of our loving Redeemer and not have a heart on fire with gratitude to Him. Such is the power of a faith sincerely practiced that, through the light it brings to man's mind and the vigor with which it moves his heart, he will straightway set out in the footsteps of Christ and follow them through every obstacle, making his own a protestation worthy of a St. Paul: "Who then shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation? or distress? or famine? or nakedness? or danger? or persecution? or the sword?" [Rom. 8:35] "I live, now not I; but Christ liveth in me." [Gal. 2:20]

22. But lest we be dismayed by the consciousness of our native weakness and grow faint when confronted with the unattainable example which Christ, who is Man and at the same time God, has given, along with mysteries which portray Him, we have before our eyes for contemplation the mysteries of His most holy Mother.

23. She was born, it is true, of the royal family of David, but she fell heir to none of the wealth and grandeur of her ancestors. She passed her life in obscurity, in a humble town, in a home humbler still, the more content with her retirement and the poverty of her home because they left her freer to lift up her heart to God and to cling to Him closely as the supreme Goodness for which her heart yearned.

24. The Lord is with her whom He has filled with His grace and made blessed. She is designated by the heavenly messenger sent to her as the Virgin from whom, by the power of the Holy Ghost, the expected Savior of nations is to come forth clothed in our humanity. The more she wonders at the sublime dignity and gives thanks to the power and mercy of God, the more does

she, conscious of no merit in herself, grow in humility, promptly proclaiming and consecrating herself the handmaid of God even while she becomes His Mother.

25. Her sacred promise was as sacredly kept with a joyous heart; henceforth she leads a life in perpetual union with her son Jesus, sharing with Him His joys and sorrows. It is thus that she will reach a height of glory granted to no other creature, whether human or angelic, because no one will receive a reward for virtue to be compared with hers; it is thus that the crown of the kingdoms of heaven and of earth will await her because she will be the invincible Queen of Martyrs. It is thus that she will be seated in the heavenly city of God by the side of her Son, crowned for all eternity, because she will drink with Him the cup overflowing with sorrow faithfully through all her life, most faithfully on Calvary.

26. In Mary we see how a truly good and provident God has established for us a most suitable example of every virtue. As we look upon her and think about her we are not cast down as though stricken by the overpowering splendor of God's power; but, on the contrary, attracted by the closeness of the common nature we share with her, we strive with greater confidence to imitate her. If we, with her powerful help, should dedicate ourselves wholly and entirely to the undertaking, we can portray at least an outline of such great virtue and sanctity, and reproducing that perfect conformity of our lives to all God's designs which she possessed in so marvelous a degree, we shall follow her into heaven.

27. Undaunted and full of courage, let us go on with the pilgrimage we have undertaken even though the way be rough and full of obstacle Amid the vexation and toil let us not cease to hold out suppliant hands to Mary with the words of the Church: "To thee do we send up our sigh mourning and weeping in this valley of tears; turn then, most gracious advocate, thine eyes of mercy toward us. . . Keep our lives all spotless, make our ways secure, till we find in Jesus joys that will endure." [Sacred Liturgy]

28. Although she was never subject to the frailty and perversity of our nature, Mary we knows its condition and is the best and most solicitous of mothers. How willingly will she hasten to our aid when we need her; with what love will she refresh us, and with what strength sustain us. For those of us who follow the journey hallowed by the blood of Christ and by the tears of Mary, our entrance into their company and the enjoyment of their most blessed glory will be certain and easy.

29. Therefore the Rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary, combining in a convenient and practical form an unexcelled form of prayer, an instrument well adapted to preserve the faith and an illustrious example of perfect virtue, should be often in the hands of the true Christian and be devoutly recited and meditated upon. We address this commendation especially to the Confraternity of the Holy Family which We recently praised and approved. Since the mystery of the hidden life which Christ our Lord long led within the walls of the house in Nazareth is the reason for the existence of this association, that its members may constantly conform themselves to Christian life on the model of the Holy Family established by God Himself, its intimate connection with the Rosary is plain.

30. Especially is this so in the joyful mysteries, which end with the one in which Jesus, after manifesting His wisdom in the temple, came with Mary and Joseph to Nazareth and was subject to them, preparing, as it were, for the other mysteries which are more closely connected with the

instruction and the Redemption of mankind. From this all the members may understand that it is their duty to be devotees of the Rosary themselves and to be diligent in propagating devotion to it among others.

31. For Our part, We confirm and ratify the grants of sacred indulgences made in years past in favor of the faithful who spend the month of October in the manner We have prescribed. Because of your authority and zeal, Venerable Brethren, We know that the Catholic people will be fired with devotion and holy emulation in venerating through the Rosary, the Blessed Virgin, Help of Christians.

32. And now let Us bring Our exhortation to a close in the way it began, proclaiming once more and even more openly the devotion we cherish toward the great Mother of God, a devotion both mindful of past blessings and full of joyous hope. We ask the prayers of the Christian people in devout supplication before her altars on behalf of the Church, tormented by such adverse and turbulent times, and on behalf of Ourselves as well. Advanced in age, worn out with labors, fettered by distressingly difficult events with no human help to rely upon, We must yet carry on the government of the Church. Our hope in Mary, powerful and benign Mother, is daily more confirmed and more sweetly consoling. To her intercession We attribute the many and remarkable gifts We have obtained from God; with thanks still more profuse do we attribute the fact that it has been given Us to reach the fiftieth anniversary of Our episcopal consecration.

33. It is, indeed, a great comfort to us, looking back over the long years of Our pastoral charge, troubled as they have been by daily worry, that We are still engaged in ruling the whole Christian flock. During that time We have had, as happens in men's lives and as the mysteries of Christ and Mary illustrate, reasons for joy mixed with reasons for many and bitter sorrows, as well as occasions to glory in gains won for Christ. All of this We, with a mind submissive to God and with a grateful heart, have tried to turn to the good and the honor of the Church. And now--for the rest of Our life will run a course not unlike the past--should new joys come to gladden Our heart, or sorrow to threaten Us, or honors to glory in, We, steadfast in the same heart and mind, yearning only for the heavenly glory which God confers, say with David: "Blessed be the name of the Lord"; [Ps. 112:2] Not to us, but to thy name give glory." [Ps. 113:1]

34. From Our devoted children, whose filial and affectionate concern for us We know burns bright, We look for heartfelt thanks to God, prayers, and holy aspirations, rather than for congratulations and honors. It will be a special joy to Us if they ask for Us this grace, that all the strength and life that remain to Us, all the authority and grace with which We are invested, may profit the Church, and in the first place bring back into her fold her enemies and those who have wandered from the right way, to whom our voice has this long time been appealing for reconciliation.

35. Upon all of Our dearly beloved children may there flow, from the happiness and joy of Our coming Jubilee, God granting, gifts of justice, peace, prosperity, holiness, and all good things. This, with paternal love, We beg God; this do We exhort in the words of His Holy Scriptures: "Hear me. . . and bud forth as the rose planted by the brooks of waters: Give ye a sweet odor as frankincense. . . Send forth flowers, as the lily, and yield a smell, and bring forth leaves in grace and praise with canticles and bless the Lord in his works. Magnify his name, and give glory to him with the voice of your lips, and with the canticles of your mouths. and with harps. . . With the whole heart and mouth praise ye him, and bless the name of the Lord." [Ecclus. 39:17-20, 41]

36. If these plans, so ardently desired, be scoffed at by the wicked who blaspheme that of which they are ignorant, may God mercifully spare them. But that He may give Our hopes His propitious aid through the prayers of the Queen of the Most Holy Rosary, take as a token of divine favor and at the same time as a pledge of Our affection, Venerable Brethren, the Apostolic Benediction, which We, lovingly in the Lord, bestow on each of you, on your clergy, and on your people.

Given at Rome, at St. Peter's, the eighth of September, 1892, in the fifteenth year of Our Pontificate.

Pope Saint Pius V: [Consueverunt Romani](#)

Pope Leo XIII: [Supremi Apostolatus Officio](#) | [Superiore Anno](#) | [Quod Auctoritate](#) | [Vi E Ben Noto](#) | [Quamquam Pluries](#) | [Octobri Mense](#) | [Magnae Dei Matris](#) | [Laetitiae Sanctae](#) | [Iucunda Semper Expectatione](#) | [Adiutricem Populi](#) | [Fidentem Piumque Animum](#) | [Augustissimae Virginis Mariae](#) | [Diuturni Temporis](#)

Pope Benedict XV: [Fausto Appetente Die](#)

Pope Pius XI: [Ingrevescentibus Malis](#)

Pope Pius XII: [Ingruentium Malorum](#)

Pope John XXIII: [Grata Recordatio](#)

Pope Paul VI: [Christi Matri](#) | [Marialis Cultus](#)

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Laetittiae Sanctae

Commending Devotion To The Rosary

Encyclical of Pope Leo XIII

September 8, 1893

To Our Venerable Brethren the Patriarchs, Primates, Archbishops, Bishops, and other Ordinaries, having Peace and Communion with the Apostolic See.

Venerable Brethren, Greeting and Apostolic Benediction.

The sacred joy which it has been given to Us to feel in attaining the fiftieth anniversary of Our Episcopal Consecration has been deepened by the knowledge that it was shared by the people of the whole Catholic world, and that as a father in the midst of his children We have been consoled by the touching testimonies of their loyalty and love. We gratefully accept it and record it as a fresh proof of God's special providence, and one which is markedly full of bounty to Ourselves, and of blessing to the Church.

2. At the same time We love to offer Our thanks for this signal benefit to the august Mother of God, whose powerful intercession We feel to have been exercised in Our behalf. For hers is the loving kindness which, during the length of years and the vicissitudes of life, has never failed Us, and which day by day seems to draw nearer to Us than ever, filling Our soul with gladness, and strengthening Us with a confidence of which the surety is higher than the things of time. It is as if the voice of the heavenly Queen made itself heard to Us, at one moment graciously consoling Us in the midst of trials; at another guiding Us by her counsel in directing the great work of the salvation of souls; at another, urging Us to admonish the Christian people to advance in piety and in the practice of every virtue. For Us it is once more a joy as well as a duty to respond to her inspirations. Amongst the happy results which have already rewarded Our exhortations which were due to her prompting, We have to reckon the remarkable impulse given to the Devotion of the Most Holy Rosary. This awakening has made itself felt in the increased number of Confraternities instituted for the purpose, the voluminous literature of pious and learned works written upon the subject, and the manifold tributes which Christian art has not failed to bring to its service. And now, as if for yet another time, listening to the voice of the same zealous Mother, who calls upon Us to "cry out and cease not," We rejoice once more to address you, Venerable Brethren, upon the subject of the Rosary, standing as We do upon the eve of that month of October which, by the award of special Indulgences, We have deemed it well to dedicate to this most popular devotion. Our appeal to you, however, will not be directed so much to add any

further recommendation of a method of prayer so praiseworthy in itself, nor yet to press upon the faithful the necessity of practicing it still more fervently, but rather to point out how we may draw from this devotion certain advantages which are especially valuable and needful at the present day.

3. For We are convinced that the Rosary, if devoutly used, is bound to benefit not only the individual but society at large. No one will do Us the injustice to deny that in the discharge of the duties of the Supreme Apostolate We have labored--as, God helping, We shall ever continue to labor--to promote the civil prosperity of mankind. Repeatedly have We admonished those who are invested with sovereign power that they should neither make nor execute laws except in conformity with the equity of the Divine mind. On the other hand, we have constantly besought citizens who were conspicuous by genius, industry, family, or fortune, to join together in common counsel and action to safeguard and to promote whatever would tend to the strength and well-being of the community. Only too many causes are at work, in the present condition of things, to loosen the bonds of public order, and to withdraw the people from sound principles of life and conduct.

4. There are three influences which appear to Us to have the chief place in effecting this downgrade movement of society. These are--first, the distaste for a simple and laborious life; secondly, repugnance to suffering of any kind; thirdly, the forgetfulness of the future life.

5. We deplore--and those who judge of all things merely by the light and according to the standard of nature join with Us in deploring--that society is threatened with a serious danger in the growing contempt of those homely duties and virtues which make up the beauty of humble life. To this cause we may trace in the home, the readiness of children to withdraw themselves from the natural obligation of obedience to the parents, and their impatience of any form of treatment which is not of the indulgent and effeminate kind. In the workman, it evinces itself in a tendency to desert his trade, to shrink from toil, to become discontented with his lot, to fix his gaze on things that are above him, and to look forward with unthinking hopefulness to some future equalization of property. We may observe the same temper permeating the masses in the eagerness to exchange the life of the rural districts for the excitements and pleasures of the town. Thus the equilibrium between the classes of the community is being destroyed, everything becomes unsettled, men's minds become a prey to jealousy and heart-burnings, rights are openly trampled under foot, and, finally, the people, betrayed in their expectations, attack public order, and place themselves in conflict with those who are charged to maintain it.

6. For evils such as these let us seek a remedy in the Rosary, which consists in a fixed order of prayer combined with devout meditation on the life of Christ and His Blessed Mother. Here, if the joyful mysteries be but clearly brought home to the minds of the people, an object lesson of the chief virtues is placed before their eyes. Each one will thus be able to see for himself how easy, how abundant, how sweetly attractive are the lessons to be found therein for the leading of an honest life. Let us take our stand in front of that earthly and divine home of holiness, the House of Nazareth. How much we have to learn from the daily life which was led within its walls! What an all-perfect model of domestic society! Here we behold simplicity and purity of conduct, perfect agreement and unbroken harmony, mutual respect and love--not of the false and fleeting kind--but that which finds both its life and its charm in devotedness of service. Here is the patient industry which provides what is required for food and raiment; which does so "in the sweat of the brow," which is contented with little, and which seeks rather to diminish the number of its wants than to multiply the sources of its wealth. Better than all, we find there that supreme peace of

mind and gladness of soul which never fail to accompany the possession of a tranquil conscience. These are precious examples of goodness, of modesty, of humility, of hard-working endurance, of kindness to others, of diligence in the small duties of daily life, and of other virtues, and once they have made their influence felt they gradually take root in the soul, and in course of time fail not to bring about a happy change of mind and conduct. Then will each one begin to feel his work to be no longer lowly and irksome, but grateful and lightsome, and clothed with a certain joyousness by his sense of duty in discharging it conscientiously. Then will gentler manners everywhere prevail; home-life will be loved and esteemed, and the relations of man with man will be loved and esteemed, and the relations of man with man will be hallowed by a larger infusion of respect and charity. And if this betterment should go forth from the individual to the family and to the communities, and thence to the people at large so that human life should be lifted up to this standard, no one will fail to feel how great and lasting indeed would be the gain which would be achieved for society.

7. A second evil, one which is specially pernicious, and one which, owing to the increasing mischief which it works among souls, we can never sufficiently deplore, is to be found in repugnance to suffering and eagerness to escape whatever is hard or painful to endure. The greater number are thus robbed of that peace and freedom of mind which remains the reward of those who do what is right undismayed by the perils or troubles to be met with in doing so. Rather do they dream of a chimeric civilization in which all that is unpleasant shall be removed, and all that is pleasant shall be supplied. By this passionate and unbridled desire of living a life of pleasure, the minds of men are weakened, and if they do not entirely succumb, they become demoralized and miserably cower and sink under the hardships of the battle of life.

8. In such a contest example is everything, and a powerful means of renewing our courage will undoubtedly be found in the Holy Rosary, if from our earliest years our minds have been trained to dwell upon the sorrowful mysteries of Our Lord's life, and to drink in their meaning by sweet and silent meditation. In them we shall learn how Christ, "the Author and Finisher of Our faith," began "to do and teach," in order that we might see written in His example all the lessons that He Himself had taught us for the bearing of our burden of labor-- and sorrow, and mark how the sufferings which were hardest to bear were those which He embraced with the greatest measure of generosity and good will. We behold Him overwhelmed with sadness, so that drops of blood ooze like sweat from His veins. We see Him bound like a malefactor, subjected to the judgment of the unrighteous, laden with insults, covered with shame, assailed with false accusations, torn with scourges, crowned with thorns, nailed to the cross, accounted unworthy to live, and condemned by the voice of the multitude as deserving of death. Here, too, we contemplate the grief of the most Holy Mother, whose soul was not merely wounded but "pierced" by the sword of sorrow, so that she might be named and become in truth "the Mother of Sorrows." Witnessing these examples of fortitude, not with sight but by faith, who is there who will not feel his heart grow warm with the desire of imitating them?

9. Then, be it that the "earth is accursed" and brings forth "thistles and thorns,"--be it that the soul is saddened with grief and the body with sickness; even so, there will be no evil which the envy of man or the rage of devils can invent, nor calamity which can fall upon the individual or the community, over which we shall not triumph by the patience of suffering. For this reason it has been truly said that "it belongs to the Christian to do and to endure great things," for he who deserves to be called a Christian must not shrink from following in the footsteps of Christ. But by this patience, We do not mean that empty stoicism in the enduring of pain which was the ideal of some of the philosophers of old, but rather do We mean that patience which is learned from the

example of Him, who "having joy set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame" (Heb. xvi., 2). It is the patience which is obtained by the help of His grace; which shirks not a trial because it is painful, but which accepts it and esteems it as a gain, however hard it may be to undergo. The Catholic Church has always had, and happily still has, multitudes of men and women, in every rank and condition of life, who are glorious disciples of this teaching, and who, following faithfully in the path of Christ, suffer injury and hardship for the cause of virtue and religion. They re-echo, not with their lips, but with their life, the words of St. Thomas: "Let us also go, that we may die with him" (John xi., 16).

10. May such types of admirable constancy be more and more splendidly multiplied in our midst to the weal of society and to the glory and edification of the Church of God!

11. The third evil for which a remedy is needed is one which is chiefly characteristic of the times in which we live. Men in former ages, although they loved the world, and loved it far too well, did not usually aggravate their sinful attachment to the things of earth by a contempt of the things of heaven. Even the right-thinking portion of the pagan world recognized that this life was not a home but a dwelling-place, not our destination, but a stage in the journey. But men of our day, albeit they have had the advantages of Christian instruction, pursue the false goods of this world in such wise that the thought of their true Fatherland of enduring happiness is not only set aside, but, to their shame be it said, banished and entirely erased from their memory, notwithstanding the warning of St. Paul, "We have not here a lasting city, but we seek one which is to come" (Heb. xiii., 4).

12. When We seek out the causes of this forgetfulness, We are met in the first place by the fact that many allow themselves to believe that the thought of a future life goes in some way to sap the love of our country, and thus militates against the prosperity of the commonwealth. No illusion could be more foolish or hateful. Our future hope is not of a kind which so monopolizes the minds of men as to withdraw their attention from the interests of this life. Christ commands us, it is true, to seek the Kingdom of God, and in the first place, but not in such a manner as to neglect all things else. For, the use of the goods of the present life, and the righteous enjoyment which they furnish, may serve both to strengthen virtue and to reward it. The splendor and beauty of our earthly habitation, by which human society is ennobled, may mirror the splendor and beauty of our dwelling which is above. Therein we see nothing that is not worthy of the reason of man and of the wisdom of God. For the same God who is the Author of Nature is the Author of Grace, and He willed not that one should collide or conflict with the other, but that they should act in friendly alliance, so that under the leadership of both we may the more easily arrive at that immortal happiness for which we mortal men were created.

13. But men of carnal mind, who love nothing but themselves, allow their thoughts to grovel upon things of earth until they are unable to lift them to that which is higher. For, far from using the goods of time as a help towards securing those which are eternal, they lose sight altogether of the world which is to come, and sink to the lowest depths of degradation. We may doubt if God could inflict upon man a more terrible punishment than to allow him to waste his whole life in the pursuit of earthly pleasures, and in forgetfulness of the happiness which alone lasts for ever.

14. It is from this danger that they will be happily rescued, who, in the pious practice of the Rosary, are wont, by frequent and fervent prayer, to keep before their minds the glorious mysteries. These mysteries are the means by which in the soul of a Christian a most clear light is

shed upon the good things, hidden to sense, but visible to faith, "which God has prepared for those who love Him." From them we learn that death is not an annihilation which ends all things, but merely a migration and passage from life to life. By them we are taught that the path to Heaven lies open to all men, and as we behold Christ ascending thither, we recall the sweet words of His promise, "I go to prepare a place for you." By them we are reminded that a time will come when "God will wipe away every tear from our eyes," and that "neither mourning, nor crying, nor sorrow, shall be any more," and that "We shall be always with the Lord," and "like to the Lord, for we shall see Him as He is," and "drink of the torrent of His delight," as "fellow-citizens of the saints," in the blessed companionship of our glorious Queen and Mother. Dwelling upon such a prospect, our hearts are kindled with desire, and we exclaim, in the words of a great saint, "How vile grows the earth when I look up to heaven!" Then, too, shall we feel the solace of the assurance "that which is at present momentary and light of our tribulation worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory" (2 Cor. iv., 17).

15. Here alone we discover the true relation between time and eternity, between our life on earth and our life in heaven; and it is thus alone that are formed strong and noble characters. When such characters can be counted in large numbers, the dignity and well-being of society are assured. All that is beautiful, good, and true will flourish in the measure of its conformity to Him who is of all beauty, goodness, and truth the first Principle and the Eternal Source.

16. These considerations will explain what We have already laid down concerning the fruitful advantages which are to be derived from the use of the Rosary, and the healing power which this devotion possesses for the evils of the age and the fatal sores of society. These advantages, as we may readily conceive, will be secured in a higher and fuller measure by those who band themselves together in the sacred Confraternity of the Rosary, and who are thus more than others united by a special and brotherly bond of devotion to the Most Holy Virgin. In this Confraternity, approved by the Roman Pontiffs, and enriched by them with indulgences and privileges, they possess their own rule and government, hold their meetings at stated times, and are provided with ample means of leading a holy life and of laboring for the good of the community. They are, are so to speak, the battalions who fight the battle of Christ, armed with His Sacred Mysteries, and under the banner and guidance of the Heavenly Queen. How faithfully her intercession is exercised in response to their prayers, processions, and solemnities is written in the whole experience of the Church not less than in the splendor of the victory of Lepanto.

17. It is, therefore, to be desired that renewed zeal should be called forth in the founding, enlarging, and directing of these confraternities, and that not only by the sons of St. Dominic, to whom by virtue of their Order a leading part in this Apostolate belongs, but by all who are charged with the care of souls, and notable in those places in which the Confraternity has not yet been canonically established. We have it especially at heart that those who are engaged in the sacred field of the missions, whether in carrying the Gospel to barbarous nations abroad, or in spreading it amongst the Christian nations at home, should look upon this work as especially their own. If they will make it the subject of their preaching, We cannot doubt that there will be large numbers of the faithful of Christ who will readily enroll themselves in the Confraternity, and who will earnestly endeavor to avail themselves of those spiritual advantages of which We have spoken, and in which consist the very meaning and motive of the Rosary. From the Confraternities, the rest of the faithful will receive the example of greater esteem and reverence for the practice of the Rosary, and they will be thus encouraged to reap from it, as We heartily desire that they may, the same abundant fruits for their souls' salvation.

18. This then is the hope, which, amid the manifold evils which beset society, brightens, consoles, and supports Us. May Mary, the Mother of God and of men, herself the authoress and teacher of the Rosary, procure for Us its happy fulfillment. It will be your part, Venerable Brethren, to provide that by your efforts Our words and Our wishes may go forth on their mission of good for the prosperity of families and the peace of peoples.

19. And as a pledge of the Divine favor, and of Our own affection, We lovingly bestow upon you, your clergy, and your people, the Apostolic Benediction.

Given at St. Peter's, Rome, this 8th day of September, in the year of Our Lord 1893, and the 16th of Our Pontificate.

Pope Saint Pius V: [Consueverunt Romani](#)

Pope Leo XIII: [Supremi Apostolatus Officio](#) | [Superiore Anno](#) | [Quod Auctoritate](#) | [Vi E Ben Noto](#) | [Quamquam Pluries](#) | [Octobri Mense](#) | [Magnae Dei Matris](#) | [Laetittiae Sanctae](#) | [Iucunda Semper Expectatione](#) | [Adiutricem Populi](#) | [Fidentem Piumque Animum](#) | [Augustissimae Virginis Mariae](#) | [Diuturni Temporis](#)

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Lucunda Semper Expectatione

On The Rosary

Encyclical of Pope Leo XIII

September 8, 1894

To the Patriarchs, Primates, Archbishops, Bishops, and other Ordinaries in Peace and Communion with the Apostolic See.

Venerable Brethren, Greeting and Apostolic Benediction.

It is always with joyful expectation and inspired hope that We look forward to the return of the month of October. At Our exhortation and by Our express order this month has been consecrated to the Blessed Virgin, during which for some years now the devotion of her Rosary has been practiced by Catholic nations throughout the world with sedulous earnestness. Our reasons for making this exhortation We have made known more than once. For as the disastrous condition of the Church and of Society proved to Us the extreme necessity for signal aid from God, it was manifest to Us that that aid should be sought through the intercession of His Mother, and by the express means of the Rosary, which Christians have ever found to be of marvelous avail. This indeed has been well proved since the very institution of the devotion, both in the vindication of Holy Faith against the furious attacks of heresy, and in restoring to honor the virtues, which by reason of the Age's corruption, required to be rekindled and sustained. And this same proof was continued in all succeeding ages, by a never failing series of private and public benefits, whereof the illustrious remembrance is everywhere perpetuated and immortalized by monuments and existing institutions. Likewise in Our age, afflicted with that tempest of various evils, it is a joy to Our soul to relate the beneficent influence of the Rosary. Notwithstanding all this, you yourselves, Venerable Brethren, behold with your own eyes the persistence--nay, the increase--of the reasons for renewing again this year Our summons to the Faithful to turn with increased ardor in prayer to Mary, the Queen of Heaven. Besides, the more We fix Our thoughts upon the character of the Rosary, the clearer its excellence and power appear to Us. Hence, while Our wish increases that it may flourish, Our hope grows also that through Our recommendation it may come to be more greatly prized, its holy use become more extended and flourish abundantly. But We shall not now return to the various instructions which in past years We have given upon this subject. We shall take instead the opportunity of pointing out the particular ruling and designs of Providence which ordains that the Rosary should have new power to instill confidence into the hearts of those who pray, and new influence to move the compassionate heart of Our Mother to comfort and succor Us with the utmost bounty.

2. The recourse we have to Mary in prayer follows upon the office she continuously fills by the side of the throne of God as Mediatrix of Divine grace; being by worthiness and by merit most acceptable to Him, and, therefore, surpassing in power all the angels and saints in Heaven. Now, this merciful office of hers, perhaps, appears in no other form of prayer so manifestly as it does in the Rosary. For in the Rosary all the part that Mary took as our co-Redemptrix comes to us, as it were, set forth, and in such wise as though the facts were even then taking place; and this with much profit to our piety, whether in the contemplation of the succeeding sacred mysteries, or in the prayers which we speak and repeat with the lips. First come the Joyful Mysteries. The Eternal Son of God stoops to mankind, putting on its nature; but with the assent of Mary, who conceives Him by the Holy Ghost. Then St. John the Baptist, by a singular privilege, is sanctified in his mother's womb and favored with special graces that he might prepare the way of the Lord; and this comes to pass by the greeting of Mary who had been inspired to visit her cousin. At last the expected of nations comes to light, Christ the Savior. The Virgin bears Him. And when the Shepherds and the wise men, first-fruits of the Christian faith, come with longing to His cradle, they find there the young Child, with Mary, His Mother. Then, that He might before men offer Himself as a victim to His Heavenly Father, He desires to be taken to the Temple; and by the hands of Mary He is there presented to the Lord. It is Mary who, in the mysterious losing of her Son, seeks Him sorrowing, and finds Him again with joy. And the same truth is told again in the sorrowful mysteries.

3. In the Garden of Gethsemane, where Jesus is in an agony; in the judgment-hall, where He is scourged, crowned with thorns, condemned to death, not there do we find Mary. But she knew beforehand all these agonies; she knew and saw them. When she professed herself the handmaid of the Lord for the mother's office, and when, at the foot of the altar, she offered up her whole self with her Child Jesus--then and thereafter she took her part in the laborious expiation made by her Son for the sins of the world. It is certain, therefore, that she suffered in the very depths of her soul with His most bitter sufferings and with His torments. Moreover, it was before the eyes of Mary that was to be finished the Divine Sacrifice for which she had borne and brought up the Victim. As we contemplate Him in the last and most piteous of those Mysteries, there stood by the Cross of Jesus His Mother, who, in a miracle of charity, so that she might receive us as her sons, offered generously to Divine Justice her own Son, and died in her heart with Him, stabbed with the sword of sorrow.

4. Thence the Rosary takes us on to the Glorious Mysteries, wherein likewise is revealed the mediation of the great Virgin, still more abundant in fruitfulness. She rejoices in heart over the glory of her Son triumphant over death, and follows Him with a mother's love in His Ascension to His eternal kingdom; but, though worthy of Heaven, she abides a while on earth, so that the infant Church may be directed and comforted by her "who penetrated, beyond all belief, into the deep secrets of Divine wisdom" (St. Bernard). Nevertheless, for the fulfillment of the task of human redemption there remains still the coming of the Holy Ghost, promised by Christ. And behold, Mary is in the room, and there, praying with the Apostles and entreating for them with sobs and tears, she hastens for the Church the coming of the Spirit, the Comforter, the supreme gift of Christ, the treasure that will never fail. And later, without measure and without end will she be able to plead our cause, passing upon a day to the life immortal. Therefore we behold her taken up from this valley of tears into the heavenly Jerusalem, amid choirs of Angels. And we honor her, glorified above all the Saints, crowned with stars by her Divine Son and seated at His side the sovereign Queen of the universe.

5. If in all this series of Mysteries, Venerable Brethren, are developed the counsels of God in

regard to us--"counsels of wisdom and of tenderness" (St. Bernard)--not less apparent is the greatness of the benefits for which we are debtors to the Virgin Mother. No man can meditate upon these without feeling a new awakening in his heart of confidence that he will certainly obtain through Mary the fullness of the mercies of God. And to this end vocal prayer chimes well with the Mysteries. First, as is meet and right, comes the Lord's Prayer, addressed to Our Father in Heaven: and having, with the elect petitions dictated by Our Divine Master, called upon the Father, from the throne of His Majesty we turn our prayerful voices to Mary. Thus is confirmed that law of merciful meditation of which We have spoken, and which St. Bernardine of Siena thus expresses: "Every grace granted to man has three degrees in order; for by God it is communicated to Christ, from Christ it passes to the Virgin, and from the Virgin it descends to us." And we, by the very form of the Rosary, do linger longest, and, as it were, by preference upon the last and lowest of these steps, repeating by decades the Angelic Salutation, so that with greater confidence we may thence attain to the higher degrees--that is, may rise, by means of Christ, to the Divine Father. For if thus we again and again greet Mary, it is precisely that our failing and defective prayers may be strengthened with the necessary confidence; as though we pledged her to pray for us, and as it were in our name, to God.

6. Nor can our prayers fail to ascend to Him as a sweet savor, commended by the prayers of the Virgin. And He it is who, all-benign, invites her: "Let thy voice sound in My ears, for thy voice is sweet." For this cause do we repeatedly celebrate those glorious titles of her ministry as Mediatrix. Her do we greet who found favor with God, and who was in a signal manner filled with grace by Him so that the superabundance thereof might overflow upon all men; her, united with the Lord by the most intimate of all conjunction; her who was blessed among women, and who "alone took away the curse and bore the blessing" (St. Thomas)--that fruit of her womb, that happy fruit, in which all the nations of the earth are blessed. Her do we invoke, finally, as Mother of God; and in virtue of a dignity so sublime what graces from her may we not promise to ourselves, sinners, in life and in the agonies of the end?

7. A soul that shall devoutly repeat these prayers, that shall ponder with faith these mysteries, will, without doubt, be filled with wonder at the Divine purposes in this great Virgin and in the work of the restoration of mankind. Doubtless, this soul, moved by the warmth of love for her and of confidence, will desire to take refuge upon her breast, as was the sweet feeling of St. Bernard: "Remember, O most pious Virgin Mary, that never was it heard that any who fled to thy protection, called upon thy help, and sought thy intercession, was left forsaken." But the fruits of the Rosary appear likewise, and with equal greatness, in the turning with mercy of the heart of the Mother of God towards us. How sweet a happiness must it be for her to see us all intent upon the task of weaving crowns for her of righteous prayers and lovely praises! And if, indeed, by those prayers we desire to render to God the glory which is His due; if we protest that we seek nothing whatsoever except the fulfillment in us of His holy will; if we magnify His goodness and graciousness; if we call Him Our Father; if we, being most unworthy, yet entreat of Him His best blessings--Oh, how shall Mary in all these things rejoice! How shall she magnify the Lord! There is no language so fit to lead us to the majesty of God as the language of the Lord's Prayer. Furthermore, to each of these things for which we pray, things that are righteous and are ordered, and are in harmony with Christian faith, hope, and charity, is added a special joy for the Blessed Virgin. With our voices she seems to hear also the voice of her Divine Son, Who with His own mouth taught us this prayer, and by His own authority commanded it, saying: "You shall pray thus." And seeing how we observe that command, saying our Rosary, she will bend towards us with the more loving solicitude; and the mystical crowns we offer her will be to her welcome, and to us fruitful of graces. And of this generosity of Mary to our supplications we have no slight pledge in the very nature of a practice that has the power to help us in praying well. In many

ways, indeed, is man apt, by his frailty, to allow his thoughts to wander from God and to let his purpose go astray. But the Rosary, if rightly considered, will be found to have in itself special virtues, whether for producing and continuing a state of recollection, or for touching the conscience for its healing, or for lifting up the soul. As all men know, it is composed of two parts, distinct but inseparable--the meditation of the Mysteries and the recitation of the prayers. It is thus a kind of prayer that requires not only some raising of the soul to God, but also a particular and explicit attention, so that by reflection upon the things to be contemplated, impulses and resolutions may follow for the reformation and sanctification of life.

8. Those same things are, in fact, the most important and the most admirable of Christianity, the things through which the world was renewed and filled with the fruits of truth, justice, and peace. And it is remarkable how well adapted to every kind of mind, however unskilled, is the manner in which these things are proposed to us in the Rosary. They are proposed less as truths or doctrines to be speculated upon than as present facts to be seen and perceived. Thus presented, with the circumstances of place, time, and persons, these Mysteries produce the most living effect; and this without the slightest effort of imagination; for they are treated as things learnt and engraven in the heart from infancy. Thus, hardly is a Mystery named but the pious soul goes through it with ease of thought and quickness of feeling, and gathers therefrom, by the gift of Mary, abundance of the food of Heaven. And yet another title of joy and of acceptance in her eyes do our crowns of prayer acquire. For every time that we look once more with devotional remembrance upon these Mysteries we give her a sign of the gratitude of our hearts; we prove to her that we cannot often enough call to mind the blessings of her unwearied charity in the work of our salvation. At such recollections, practiced by us with the frequency of love in her presence, who may express, who may even conceive, what ever-new joys overflow her ever-blessed soul, and what tender affections arise therein, of mercy and of a mother's love! Besides these recollections, moreover, as the sacred Mysteries pass by they cause our prayers to be transformed into impulses of entreaty that have an indescribable power over the heart of Mary. Yes, we fly to thee, we miserable children of Eve, O holy Mother of God. To thee we lift our prayers, for thou art the Mediatrix, powerful at once and pitiful, of our salvation. Oh, by the sweetness of the joys that came to thee from thy Son Jesus, by thy participation in His ineffable sorrows, by the splendors of His glory shining in thee, we instantly beseech thee, listen, be pitiful, hear us, unworthy though we be!

9. Thus the excellence of the Rosary; considered under the double aspect We have here set forth, will convince you, Venerable Brethren, of the reasons We have for an incessant eagerness to commend and to promote it. At the present day--and on this We have already touched--there is a signal necessity of special help from Heaven, particularly manifest in the many tribulations suffered by the Church as to her liberties and her rights, as also in the perils whereby the prosperity and peace of Christian society are fundamentally threatened. So it is that it belongs to Our office to assert once again that We place the best of Our hopes in the holy Rosary, inasmuch as more than any other means it can impetrate from God the succor which We need. It is Our ardent wish that this devotion shall be restored to the place of honor; in the city and in the village, in the family and in the workshop, in the noble's house and in the peasant's; that it should be to all a dear devotion and a noble sign of their faith; that it may be a sure way to the gaining of the favor of pardon. To this end it is indispensable that zeal should be redoubled, while impiety daily redoubles its efforts and labors to move the justice of God and to provoke, for the general ruin, His terrible vengeance. Amongst so many causes of grief to all good men, and to Ourselves, not the least is this, that in the very midst of Catholic nations there exist persons who are ever ready to rejoice in that which insults and outrages our august religion; and that they themselves, with incredible effrontery and with all publicity, seize every opportunity of teaching

the multitude to hold reverend things in contempt and of persuading them from their old confidence in the intercession of the Blessed Virgin. During the last months the very person of Our Divine Redeemer has not been spared. Such a depth of shameless indignity has been reached that Jesus Christ Himself has been dragged upon the stage of a theater often contaminated with corruptions, and has been represented there discrowned of that Divinity upon which rests the whole work of human salvation. And the last touch of shame was added in an attempt to rescue from the execration of ages the guilty name of him who was the very sign of perfidy, the betrayer of Christ. At the consummation of such excesses in the cities of Italy there arose a general cry of indignation, and energetic protest against the violation and trampling under foot of the inviolable rights of religion, and this in a nation that has for its greatest and most righteous boast that it is Catholic. The Bishops rose at once, on fire with holy zeal. And first they made their vigorous appeal to those whose sacred duty it is to safeguard the decorum of the religion of the country. Next, they informed their people of the gravity of the scandal, and exhorted them to special acts of reparation towards our most loving Savior exposed to such slanders.

10. We have pleasure, however, in rendering praise to the free and fruitful faith manifested by men of good will; and this has brought Us comfort in the bitterness inflicted upon the very quick of Our heart. And having regard to the duties of Our supreme ministry, We take this occasion to lift up Our voice and to unite Our complaints and protests to those of the Bishops and of their people, authenticated by Our Apostolic authority. And with a like ardor to that wherewith we condemned this sacrilegious offense, do We preach faith to all Catholics, and particularly to the Italians. Let them with jealous care guard this inestimable inheritance received from their fathers, let them defend it with courage, let them not cease from magnifying it with good actions of which their faith is the inspiring motive. This is a motive the more for the enkindling, in private and in common prayer, throughout the coming month of October, of a holy emulation in celebrating and honoring the Mother of God, the mighty succorer of the Christian people, the most glorious Queen of Heaven. For Our own part, We confirm with all Our heart the favors and indulgences We have already awarded upon this point.

11. Now may God, "Who in His most merciful Providence gave us this Mediatrix." and "decreed that all good should come to us by the hands of Mary" (St. Bernard), receive propitiously our common prayers and fulfill our common hopes. May you receive a pledge thereof in the Apostolic Benediction which We give to you, to your clergy, and to your people, with all affection in Our Lord.

Given in Rome at St. Peter's, on September 8, 1894, in the seventeenth year of our Pontificate.

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Adiutricem Populi

On the Rosary

Encyclical of Pope Leo XIII

September 5, 1895

To Our Venerable Brethren the Patriarchs, Primates, Archbishops, Bishops, and other Ordinaries in Peace and Communion with the Apostolic See.

The mightiest helper of the Christian people, and the most merciful, is the Virgin Mother of God. How fitting it is to accord her honors ever increasing in splendor, and call upon her aid with a confidence daily growing more ardent. The abundant blessings, infinitely varied and constantly multiplying, which flow from her all over the whole world for the common benefit of mankind, add fresh motives for invoking and honoring her.

2. For such magnanimous favors, Catholics on their part have not failed to return to her the tender devotion of grateful hearts; because, if ever there was a time when love and veneration of the Blessed Virgin were awakened to new life and inflaming every class of society, it is in these days so bitterly anti-religious. The clearest evidence of this fact lies in the sodalities which have everywhere been restored and multiplied under her patronage; in the magnificent temples erected to her august name; in the pilgrimages undertaken by throngs of devout souls to her most venerated shrines; in the congresses whose deliberations are devoted to the increase of her glory; in other things of a like nature which are praiseworthy in themselves and augur well for the future.

3. It is specially deserving of notice, and it gives Us the greatest pleasure to recall, that of all the forms of devotion to the Blessed Virgin, that most excellent method of prayer, Mary's Rosary, is establishing itself most widely in popular esteem and practice. This, We repeat, is a source of great joy to Us. If We have spent so large a share of our activities, in promoting the Rosary devotion, We can easily see with what benevolence the Queen of Heaven has come to Our aid when We prayed to her; and We express the confident conviction that she will continue to stand at Our side to lighten the burdens and the afflictions which the days to come will bring.

4. It is mainly to expand the kingdom of Christ that We look to the Rosary for the most effective help. On many occasions We have declared that the object which at the present time engrosses Our most earnest attention, is the reconciliation to the Church of nations which have become separated from her. We recognize, at the same time, that the realization of Our hopes must be

sought chiefly in prayer and supplication addressed to almighty God. This conviction We again affirmed not long ago, when We recommended that special prayers be offered for this intention to the Holy Ghost during the solemnities of Pentecost; a recommendation that was adopted everywhere with the greatest good will.

5. But in view of the importance and the difficulty of such an undertaking, and the necessity of perseverance in the practice of any virtue, it is well to recall the Apostle's apt counsel: "Be instant in prayer" [Col. 4:2]--counsel all the more to the point because an auspicious beginning of the enterprise will supply the best inducement to perseverance in prayer. Next October, therefore, if you and your people devoutly spend the whole month with Us in praying assiduously to the Virgin Mother of God through her Rosary and the other customary devotions, nothing could do more to further this project or be more pleasing to Us. We have the best reasons for entrusting Our plans and Our aspirations to her protection and the highest hopes of seeing them realized.

6. The mystery of Christ's immense love for us is revealed with dazzling brilliance in the fact that the dying Saviour bequeathed His Mother to His disciple John in the memorable testament: "Behold thy son." Now in John, as the Church has constantly taught, Christ designated the whole human race, and in the first rank are they who are joined with Him by faith. It is in this sense that St. Anselm of Canterbury says: "What dignity, O Virgin, could be more highly prized than to be the Mother of those to whom Christ deigned to be Father and Brother!" [St. Anselm, Orat, 47] With a generous heart Mary undertook and discharged the duties of her high but laborious office, the beginnings of which were consecrated in the Cenacle. With wonderful care she nurtured the first Christians by her holy example, her authoritative counsel, her sweet consolation, her fruitful prayers. She was, in very truth, the Mother of the Church, the Teacher and Queen of the Apostles, to whom, besides, she confided no small part of the divine mysteries which she kept in her heart.

7. It is impossible to measure the power and scope of her offices since the day she was taken up to that height of heavenly glory in the company of her Son, to which the dignity and luster of her merits entitle her. From her heavenly abode she began, by God's decree, to watch over the Church, to assist and befriend us as our Mother; so that she who was so intimately associated with the mystery of human salvation is just as closely associated with the distribution of the graces which for all time will flow from the Redemption.

8. The power thus put into her hands is all but unlimited. How unerringly right, then, are Christian souls when they turn to Mary for help as though impelled by an instinct of nature, confidently sharing with her their future hopes and past achievements, their sorrows and joys, commending themselves like children to the care of a bountiful mother. How rightly, too, has every nation and every liturgy without exception acclaimed her great renown, which has grown greater with the voice of each succeeding century. Among her many other titles we find her hailed as "our Lady, our Mediatrix," [St. Bernard, Serm. II in Adv.] "the Reparatrix of the whole world," [St. Tharasius, Orat. in Praesentatione] "the Dispenser of all heavenly gifts." [On Off. Graec., 8 Dec]

9. Since faith is the foundation, the source, of the gifts of God by which man is raised above the order of nature and is endowed with the dispositions requisite for life eternal, we are in justice bound to recognize the hidden influence of Mary in obtaining the gift of faith and its salutary cultivation--of Mary who brought the "author of faith" [Hebr. 12:1] into this world and who,

because of her own great faith, was called "blessed." "O Virgin most holy, none abounds in the knowledge of God except through thee; none, O Mother of God, attains salvation except through thee; none receives a gift from the throne of mercy except through thee." [St. Germ. Constantinop., Orat. 11, in Dortnitione B.M.V.]

10. It is no exaggeration to say that it is due chiefly to her leadership and help that the wisdom and teachings of the Gospel spread so rapidly to all the nations of the world in spite of the most obstinate difficulties and most cruel persecutions, and brought everywhere in their train a new reign of justice and peace. This it was that stirred the soul of St. Cyril of Alexandria to the following prayerful address to the Blessed Virgin: "Through you the Apostles have preached salvation to the nations. . . through you the priceless Cross is everywhere honored and venerated; through you the demons have been put to rout and mankind has been summoned back to Heaven; through you every misguided creature held in the thrall of idols is led to recognize the truth; through you have the faithful been brought to the laver of holy Baptism and churches been founded among every people." [St. Cyril Alex., Homil. contra Nestor]

11. Nay she has even, as this same Doctor claims, upheld and given strength to the "sceptre of the orthodox faith." [Ibid] It has been her unremitting concern to see to it that the Catholic Faith stands firmly lodged in the midst of the people, there to thrive in its fertile and undivided unity. Many and well known are the proofs of her solicitude, manifested from time to time even in a miraculous manner. In the times and places in which, to the Church's grief, faith languished in lethargic indifference or was tormented by the baneful scourge of heresy, our great and gracious Lady in her kindness was ever ready with her aid and comfort.

12. Under her inspiration, strong with her might, great men were raised up-illustrious for their sanctity no less than for their apostolic spirit-to beat off the attacks of wicked adversaries and to lead souls back into the virtuous ways of Christian life, firing them with a consuming love of the things of God. One such man, an army in himself, was Dominic Guzman. Putting all his trust in our Lady's Rosary, he set himself fearlessly to the accomplishment of both these tasks with happy results.

13. No one will fail to remark how much the merits of the venerable Fathers and Doctors of the Church, who spent their lives in the defense and explanation of the Catholic Faith, redound to the Virgin Mother of God. For from her, the Seat of Divine Wisdom, as they themselves gratefully tell us, a strong current of the most sublime wisdom has coursed through their writings. And they were quick to acknowledge that not by themselves but by her have iniquitous errors been overcome. Finally, princes as well as Pontiffs, the guardians and defenders of the faith-the former by waging holy wars, the latter by the solemn decrees which they have issued- have not hesitated to call upon the name of the Mother of our God, and have found her answer powerful and propitious.

14. Hence it is that the Church and the Fathers have given expression to their joy in Mary in words whose beauty equals their truth: "Hail, voice of the Apostles forever eloquent, solid foundation of the faith, unshakable prop of the Church." [Ex hymno Graecorum] "Hail, thou through whom we have been enrolled as citizens of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church." [St. John Damasc., in Annuntiatione Deigenitricis, n. 9.] "Hail, thou fountain springing forth by God's design, whose rivers flowing over in pure and unsullied waves of orthodoxy put to flight the hosts of error." [St. German. Constantinop., Orat. in Praesentatione B.M.V.] "Rejoice, because thou alone hast destroyed all the heresies in the world." [In Officio B.M.V.]

15. The unexampled part which the Virgin most admirably played and still plays in the progress, the battles, and the triumphs of the Catholic Faith, makes it evident what God has planned for her to do. It should fill the hearts of all good people with a firm hope of obtaining those things which are now the object of our common desire. Trust Mary, implore her aid.

16. That the one self same profession of faith may unite the minds of Christian nations in peace and harmony, that the one and only bond of perfect charity may gather their hearts within its embrace-such is our prayerful hope! And may Mary, by her powerful help, bring this ardently desired gift into our possession! And remembering that her only begotten Son prayed so earnestly to His heavenly Father for the closest union among the nations whom He has called by the one Baptism to the one inheritance of salvation bought for an infinite price, will she not, for that reason, see to it that all in His marvelous light will strive as with one mind for unity? And will it not be her wish to employ her goodness and providence to console the Spouse of Christ, the Church, through her long-sustained efforts in this enterprise, as well as to bring to full perfection the boon of unity among the members of the Christian family, which is the illustrious fruit of her motherhood?

17. A token that the fulfillment of these hopes may soon be a reality is to be seen in the conviction and the confidence which warms the hearts of the devout. Mary will be the happy bond to draw together, with strong yet gentle constraint, all who love Christ, no matter where they may be, to form a nation of brothers yielding obedience to the Vicar of Christ on earth, the Roman Pontiff, their common Father.

18. Here our mind, almost of its own accord, looks back through the annals of the Church to the illustrious examples of her ancient unity, and dwells with affectionate regard on the memory of the great Council of Ephesus. The absolute unity of faith, the participation in identical worship, which in those days linked East with West, manifested itself in the Council with a strength unparalleled, and shone beyond it with a radiant beauty when, after the Fathers had emphasized the dogma that the Blessed Virgin is the Mother of God, the news of their procedure-spread abroad from the exultant populace of that most devout of cities-filled all Christendom with transports of universal joy.

19. Every motive which bolsters and increases confidence in the power of our mighty and kindhearted Virgin Mother to obtain the things we ask for, should act as a powerful incentive generating in us that fiery zeal to pray to her-a zeal We would incite in every Catholic heart. Let each one weigh for himself, moreover, how fitting is this practice and how fruitful to himself; and how acceptable and pleasing to the Blessed Virgin it is bound to be. For, possessing as they do unity of faith, Catholics thus make clear not only that they value this precious gift at its true worth, but also that they intend to hold to it with jealous tenacity. No better way is afforded of proving a fraternal feeling toward their separated brethren than to aid them by every means within their power to recover this, the greatest of all gifts.

20. Such brotherly affection, truly Christian and practiced as long as the Church can remember, has traditionally sought a special efficacy from the Mother of God, since she has been the foremost promoter of peace and unity. St. Germain of Constantinople addresses this prayer to her: "Be mindful of Christians who are thy servants; commend the prayers of all; help all to realize their hopes; strengthen the faith; keep the Church in unity." [Orat. hist. in Dormitione Deiparae] And to this day the Greeks beseech her in this manner: "O Virgin most pure, whose

privilege it is to approach thy Son without fear of rebuff! Beseech Him, O Virgin most holy, to grant peace to the world and to breathe into the churches of Christendom one mind and one heart; and we shall all magnify thee." [Men., 5 maii, Theotokion]

21. There is another special reason why Mary will be favorably disposed to grant our united prayers in behalf of the nations cut off from communion with the Church: namely, the prodigious things they have done for her honor in the past, especially in the East. To them is due much of the credit for propagating and increasing devotion to her. From them have come some of the best-remembered heralds and champions of her dignity, who have wielded a mighty influence by their authority or by their writings-eulogists famed for the ardor and the charm of their eloquence; "empresses well beloved of God," [St. Cyril Alex., *De fide, Ad Pulcheriam*] who imitated the Virgin most pure in the example of their lives, and paid honor to her with lavish generosity; temples and basilicas built to her glory with regal splendor.

22. And We may here add a detail not foreign to Our subject and reflecting further glory upon the Mother of God. It is common knowledge that, under the changing fortunes of time, great numbers of venerable images of our Lady have been brought from the East to the West, most of them finding their way to Italy and to Rome.

23. Our forebears received them with deepest respect and venerated them with magnificent honors; and their descendants, emulating their piety, continue to cherish these images as highly sacred treasures. It is a delight for the mind to discover in this fact the approval and the favor of a mother wholly devoted to her children. For it seems to indicate that these images have been left in our midst as witness of the ages when the entire Christian family was held together by ties of absolute unity, and as so many precious pledges of our common inheritance. The very sight of them must needs invite souls, as though the Virgin herself were bidding them, to keep in devout remembrance those whom the Catholic Church calls with loving care back to the peace and the gladness which they formerly enjoyed, within her embrace.

24. And so, in Mary, God has given us the most zealous guardian of Christian unity. There are, of course, more ways than one to win her protection by prayer, but as for Us, We think that the best and most effective way to her favor lies in the Rosary. We have elsewhere brought it to the attention of the devout Christian and not least among the advantages of the Rosary is the ready and easy means it puts in his hands to nurture his faith, and to keep him from ignorance of his religion and the danger of error.

25. The very origin of the Rosary makes that plain. When such faith is exercised by vocally repeating the Our Father and Hail Mary of the Rosary prayers, or better still in the contemplation of the mysteries, it is evident how close we are brought to Mary. For every time we devoutly say the Rosary in supplication before her, we are once more brought face to face with the marvel of our salvation; we watch the mysteries of our Redemption as though they were unfolding before our eyes; and as one follows another, Mary stands revealed at once as God's Mother and our Mother.

26. The sublimity of that double dignity, the fruits of her twofold ministry, appear in vivid light when in devout meditation we think of Mary's share in the joyful, the sorrowful, the glorious mysteries of her Son. The heart is inflamed by these reflections with a feeling of grateful love toward her and, esteeming everything beneath her as so much worthless chaff, strives with

manful purpose to prove worthy of such a Mother and the gifts she bestows. Meditation on the mysteries of the Rosary, often repeated in the spirit of faith, cannot help but please her and move her, the fondest of mothers, to show mercy to her children.

27. For that reason We say that the Rosary is by far the best prayer by which to plead before her the cause of our separated brethren. To grant a favorable hearing belongs properly to her office of spiritual Mother. For Mary has not brought forth-nor could she-those who are of Christ except in the one same Faith and in the one same love; for "Can Christ be divided?" [I Cor. 1:13] All must live the life of Christ in an organic unity in order to "bring forth fruit to God" [Rom. 7:4] in the one same body. Every one of the multitudes, therefore, whom the mischief of calamitous events has stolen away from that unity, must be born again to Christ of that same Mother whom God has endowed with a never failing fertility to bring forth a holy people. And this Mary, for her part, longs to do. Adorned by us with garlands of her favorite prayer, she will obtain by her entreaties help in abundance from the Spirit that quickeneth. God grant that they refuse not to comply with the burning desire of their merciful Mother but, on the contrary, give ear, like men of good will, with a proper regard for their eternal salvation, to the voice, gently persuasive, which calls to them: "My little children, of whom I am in labor again, until Christ be formed in you." [Gal. 4:19]

28. Knowing what power our Lady's Rosary possesses, not a few of Our Predecessors took special care to spread the devotion throughout the countries of the East-in particular Eugene IV in the Constitution "Advesperascente" issued in 1439, and later Innocent XII and Clement XI. By their authority, privileges of wide extent were granted to the Order of Preachers in favor of this project. The hoped-for results were forthcoming, thanks to the energetic activity of the brethren of that Order, result to which many a bright record bears witness, although time and adversity have since raised great obstacles in the way of further progress. Yet even today the same zeal for the Rosary devotion which We cited at the beginning of this Letter still fills the hearts of great numbers in those lands-a fact which, We trust, will be as useful in the realization of Our hopes as it was in raising them.

29. Along with this hope, there is the joyful fact, of equal importance to the East and the West, and in keeping with the longing We have expressed: namely the plan, Venerable Brethren, which took form at the celebrated Eucharistic Congress held in Jerusalem, to build a shrine in honor of the Queen of the Most Holy Rosary at Patras in Achaia, not far from places where at one time Christianity, under her patronage, shone brilliantly. For, as We have with great pleasure learned from the committee which was organized with Our approval to advance the project and take charge of the work, most of you have already sent in contributions collected for this purpose and have promised to continue your help until the project has been completed.

30. On the strength of this it has been decided to begin work on a scale proportioned to the size of the undertaking, and We have granted permission for the laying of the first stone of the shrine at an early date with solemn ceremonies. The temple will stand as a monument of ever lasting thanksgiving erected in the name of the Christian people to their heavenly Helper and Mother. There she will be invoked unceasingly in the Greek and the Latin rites that, ever more propitious, she will continue to heap new favors upon the ancient blessings.

31. And now, Venerable Brethren, Our exhortation returns to the point from which it began. Well may all, shepherds and flocks alike, fly with fullest confidence to the protection of the great Virgin, especially next month. Let them not fail to call upon her name, with one voice beseeching

her as God's Mother, publicly and in private, by praise, by prayer, by the ardor of their desire: "Show thyself our Mother." May her motherly compassion keep her whole family safe from every danger, lead them in the path of genuine prosperity, above all establish them in holy unity. She looks upon Catholics of every nation with a kindly eye. Where the bond of charity joins them together she makes them more ready, more and more determined, to uphold the honor of religion which, at the same time, brings upon the state the greatest blessings. May she look with utmost compassion upon those great and illustrious nations which are cut off from the Church and upon the noble souls who have not forgotten their Christian duty.

32. May she aspire in them most salutary desires, foster their holy aspirations, and bring them to happy completion. In the East, may that widespread devotion to her which the dissident nations profess, as well as the countless glorious acts of their ancestors in her honor, effectively aid them. In the West, may the memory of her beneficent patronage stand its dissidents in good stead; with surpassing kindness she has, through many ages, manifested her approval of, and has rewarded, the admirable devotion shown her among every class.

33. May the peoples of the East and West, and all the others wherever they may be, profit by the suppliant voice of Catholics united in prayer, and by our voice which will cry to Our last breath: <Show thyself a Mother.>

Given at Rome, at St. Peter's, the fifth day of September, in the eighteenth year of Our Pontificate.

Pope Saint Pius V: [Consueverunt Romani](#)

Pope Leo XIII: [Supremi Apostolatus Officio](#) | [Superiore Anno](#) | [Quod Auctoritate](#) | [Vi E Ben Noto](#) | [Quamquam Pluries](#) | [Octobri Mense](#) | [Magnae Dei Matris](#) | [Laetitiae Sanctae](#) | [Iucunda Semper Expectatione](#) | [Adiutricem Populi](#) | [Fidentem Piumque Animum](#) | [Augustissimae Virginis Mariae](#) | [Diuturni Temporis](#)

Pope Benedict XV: [Fausto Appetente Die](#)

Pope Pius XI: [Ingrevescentibus Malis](#)

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Fidentem Piumque Animum

On the Rosary

Encyclical of Pope Leo XIII

September 20, 1896

To Our Venerable Brethren, The Patriarchs, Primates, Bishops, and other Local Ordinaries
Enjoying Peace and Communion with the Apostolic See.

Venerable Brethren, Health and the Apostolic Blessing.

We have already had the opportunity on several occasions during Our Pontificate of bearing public testimony to that confidence and devotion towards the Blessed Virgin which We imbibed in Our tenderest years, and have endeavoured to cherish and develop all our life long. For, having fallen upon times of calamity for Christendom and perils for the nations, We have realised how prudent it is to warmly recommend this means of safe-guarding happiness and peace which God has most mercifully granted to Mankind in His August Mother, and which hath ever been celebrated in the annals of the Church. The manifold zeal of Christian people has responded to Our desires and exhortations, most particularly in exciting a devotion to the Rosary; and a plentiful harvest of excellent fruits has not been wanting. Still we can never be satisfied with celebrating the Divine Mother, who is in truth <worthy of all praise>, and in urging love and affection towards her who is also the mother of mankind, who is <full of mercy, full of grace>. Yea, Our soul, wearied with the cares of the Apostolate, the nearer it feels the time of Our departure to be at hand, with the more earnest confidence looks up to her from whom, as from a blessed dawn, arose the Day of happiness and joy that was never to set. It is pleasant to us to remember, Venerable Brethren, that We have in other letters issued from time to time extolled the devotion of the Rosary; for it is in many ways most pleasing to her in whose honour it is employed, and most advantageous to those who properly use it. But it is equally pleasant to be able now to insist upon and confirm the same fact. Herein we have an excellent opportunity to paternally exhort men's minds and hearts to an increase of religion, and to stimulate within them the hope of eternal reward.

2. The form of prayer We refer to has obtained the special name of "Rosary," as though it represented by its arrangement the sweetness of roses and the charm of a garland. This is most fitting for a method of venerating the Virgin, who is rightly styled the <Mystical Rose> of Paradise, and who, as Queen of the universe, shines therein with a crown of stars. So that by its very name it appears to foreshadow and be an augury of the joys and garlands of Heaven

offered by her to those who are devoted to her. This appears clearly if we consider the nature of the Rosary of Our Lady. There is no duty which Christ and His Apostles more emphatically urged by both precept and example than that of prayer and supplication to Almighty God. The Fathers and Doctors in subsequent times have taught that this is a matter of such grave necessity, that if men neglect it they hope in vain for eternal salvation. Every one who prays finds the door open to impetration, both from the very nature of prayer and from the promises of Christ. And we all know that prayer derives its chief efficacy from two principal circumstances: perseverance, and the union of many for one end. The former is signified in those invitations of Christ so full of goodness: <ask, seek, knock> (Matt. vii., 7), just as a kind father desires to indulge the wishes of his children, but who also requires to be continually asked by them and as it were wearied by their prayers, in order to attach their hearts more closely to himself. The second condition Our Lord has born witness to more than once: <If two of you shall consent upon earth concerning anything whatsoever they shall ask, it shall be done to them by My Father who is in heaven. For where there are two or three gathered in My name, there am I in the midst of them> (Matt. xviii. 19, 20). Hence that pregnant saying of Tertullian: <Let us gather into an assembly and congregation that we may, as it were, make up a band and solicit God (Apologet. c. xxxix): such violence

is pleasing to God>; and the memorable words of Aquinas: <It is impossible that the prayers of many should not be heard, if one prayer is made up as it were out of many supplications.> (In Evang. Matt. c. xvii). Both of these qualities are conspicuous in the Rosary. For, to be brief, by repeating the same prayers we strenuously implore from Our Heavenly Father the Kingdom of His grace and glory; we again and again beseech the Virgin Mother to aid us sinners by her prayers, both during our whole life and especially at that last moment which is the stepping-stone to eternity. The formula of the Rosary, too, is excellently adapted to prayer in common, so that it has been styled, not without reason, "The Psalter of Mary." And that old custom of our forefathers ought to be preserved or else restored, according to which Christian families, whether in town or country, were religiously wont at close of day, when their labours were at an end, to assemble before a figure of Our Lady and alternately recite the Rosary. She, delighted at this faithful and unanimous homage, was ever near them like a loving mother surrounded by her children, distributing to them the blessings of domestic peace, the foretaste of the peace of heaven. Considering the efficacy of public prayer, We, among other decrees which we have from time to time issued concerning the Rosary, have spoken thus: "It is Our desire that in the principal church of each diocese it should be recited every day, and in parish churches on every feast-day (Apostolic Letter <Salutaris Ille>, 24th December, 1883). <Let this be constantly and devoutly carried out. We also see with joy the custom extended on other solemn occasions of public devotion and in pilgrimages to venerated shrines, the growing frequency of which is to be commended. This association of prayer and praise to Mary is both delightful and salutary for souls. We ourselves have most strongly experienced this--and Our heart rejoices to recall it - when at certain times in Our Pontificate We have been present in the Vatican basilica, surrounded by great crowds of all classes, who united with Us in mind, voice, and hope, earnestly invoked by the mysteries and prayers of the Rosary, her who is the most powerful patroness of the Catholic name.>

3. And who could think or say that the confidence so strongly felt in the patronage and protection of the Blessed Virgin is excessive? Undoubtedly the name and attributes of the absolute Mediator belong to no other than to Christ, for being one person, and yet both man and God, He restored the human race to the favour of the Heavenly Father: <One Mediator of God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a redemption for all> (1 Tim. ii. 5, 6). And yet, as the Angelic Doctor teaches, <there is no reason why certain others should not be called in a certain way

mediators between God and man, that is to say, in so far as they cooperate by predisposing and ministering in the union of man with God> (Summa, p. 111., q. xxvi., articles 1, 2). Such are the angels and saints, the prophets and priests of both Testaments; but especially has the Blessed Virgin a claim to the glory of this title. For no single individual can even be imagined who has ever contributed or ever will contribute so much towards reconciling man with God. She offered to mankind. hastening to eternal ruin, a Saviour, at that moment when she received the announcement of the mystery of peace brought to this earth by the Angel, with that admirable act of consent <in the name of the whole human race> (Summa. p. III., q. xxx., art. 1). She it is <from whom is born Jesus>; she is therefore truly His mother, and for this reason a worthy and acceptable "Mediatrix to the Mediator." As the various mysteries present themselves one after the other in the formula of the Rosary for the meditation and contemplation of men's minds, they also elucidate what we owe to Mary for our reconciliation and salvation. No one can fail to be sweetly affected when considering her who appeared in the house of Elizabeth as the minister of the divine gifts, and who presented her Son to the Shepherds, to the kings, and to Simeon. Moreover, one must remember that the Blood of Christ shed for our sake and those members in which He offers to His Father the wounds He received, <the price of our liberty>, are no other than the flesh and blood of the virgin, <since the flesh of Jesus is the flesh of Mary, and however much it was exalted in the glory of His resurrection, nevertheless the nature of His flesh derived from Mary remained and still remains the same> (<de Assumpt. B. V. M., c. v.>, among the <Opera S. Aug>).

4. Yet another excellent fruit follows from the Rosary, exceedingly opportune to the character of our times. This we have referred to elsewhere. It is that, whilst the virtue of Divine Faith is daily exposed to so many dangers and attacks, the Christian may here derive nourishment and strength for his faith. Holy writ calls Christ the <Author and finisher of faith> (Heb. vii. 2), the <Author>, because He taught men many things which they had to believe, especially about Himself in whom <dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead> (Colos. ii., 9), and also because He mercifully gives the power of believing by the grace and, as it were, the function of the Holy Ghost; the Finisher, because in Heaven, where He will change the habit of faith into the splendour of glory, He openly discloses to them those things which they have seen in this mortal life as through a veil. Now Christ stands forth clearly in the Rosary. We behold in meditation His life, whether His hidden life in joy, or His public life in excessive toil and sufferings unto death, or His glorious life from His triumphant resurrection to His eternal enthronement at the right hand of the Father. And since faith, to be full and sufficient, must display itself, - for with the heart we believe unto justice, but <with the mouth confession is made unto salvation> (Rom. x., 10), - so have we also in the Rosary an excellent means unto this, for by those vocal prayers with which it is intermingled, we are enabled to express and profess our faith in God, our most watchful Father; in the future life, the forgiveness of sins; in the mysteries of the august Trinity, the Incarnation of the Word, the Divine Maternity, and others. All know the value and merit of faith. For faith is just like a most precious gem, producing now the blossoms of all virtue by which we are pleasing to God, and hereafter to bring forth fruits that will last for ever: <for to know Thee is perfect justice, and to know Thy justice and Thy power is the root of immortality> (Wisdom xv., 3). It is here the place to add a remark respecting the duties of those virtues which faith rightly postulates. Among them is the virtue of penance, and one part of this is abstinence, which for more reasons than one is necessary and salutary. It is true the Church is growing more indulgent towards her children in this matter, but they must understand they are bound to take all care to make up for this maternal indulgence by other good works. We rejoice for this reason also to propose particularly the use of the rosary, which is capable of producing worthy fruits of penance, especially by the remembrance of the sufferings of Christ and His Mother.

5. To those therefore who are striving after supreme happiness this means of the Rosary has been most providentially offered, and it is one unsurpassed for facility and convenience. For any person, even moderately instructed in his religion can make use of it with fruit, and the time it occupies cannot delay any man's business. Sacred history abounds with striking and evident examples. It is well known that there have been many persons occupied in most weighty functions or absorbed in laborious cares who have never omitted for a single day this pious practice. Combined with this advantage is that inward sentiment of devotion which attracts minds to the Rosary, so that they love it as the intimate companion and faithful protector of life; and in their last agony they embrace and hold fast to it as the dear pledge of the <unfading Crown of glory>. Such a pledge is greatly enhanced by the benefits of <sacred indulgences>, if properly employed; for the devotion of the Rosary has been richly endowed with such indulgences by both our Predecessors and Ourselves. These favours will certainly prove most efficacious to both the dying and the departed, being bestowed as it were by the hands of the merciful Virgin, in order that they may the sooner enjoy the eternal peace and light they have desired.

6. These considerations, Venerable Brethren, move us incessantly to extol and recommend to Catholic peoples this excellent and most salutary form of devotion. Yet another very urgent reason, of which we have often spoken both in Letters and Allocutions, encourages us to do this. For that earnest desire, which We have learnt from the Divine Heart of Jesus, of fostering the work of reconciliation among those who are separated from Us daily urges Us more pressingly to action; and we are convinced that this most excellent Re-union cannot be better prepared and strengthened than by the power of prayer. The example of Christ is before us, for in order that His disciples <might be one> in faith and charity, he poured forth prayer and supplication to His Father. And concerning the efficacious prayer of His most holy Mother for the same end, there is a striking testimony in the Acts of the Apostles. Therein is described the first assembly of the Disciples, expecting with earnest hope and prayer the promised fullness of the Holy Spirit. And the presence of Mary united with them in prayer is specially indicated: <All these were persevering with one mind in prayer with Mary the Mother of Jesus> (Acts i., 14). Wherefore as the nascent church rightly joined itself in prayer with her as the patroness and most excellent custodian of Unity, so in these times is it most opportune to do the same all over the Catholic World, particularly during the whole month of October, which we have long ago decreed to be dedicated and consecrated, by the solemn devotion of the Rosary, to the Divine Mother, in order to implore her for the afflicted Church. Let then the zeal for this prayer everywhere be re-kindled, particularly for the end of Holy Unity. Nothing will be more agreeable and acceptable to Mary; for, as she is most closely united with Christ she especially wishes and desires that they who have received the same Baptism with Him may be united with Him and with one another in the same faith and perfect charity. So may the sublime mysteries of this same faith by means of the Rosary devotion be more deeply impressed in men's minds, with the happy result that "we may imitate what they contain and obtain what they promise."

7. Meanwhile, as a pledge of the Divine Favours and Our affection, We most lovingly impart to You, your clergy and People, the Apostolic Benediction.

Given at St. Peter's in Rome, September 20, 1896, in the 19th year of Our Pontificate.

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Augustissimae Virginis Mariae

On The Confraternity Of The Holy Rosary

Encyclical of Pope Leo XIII

September 12, 1897

To Our Venerable Brethren, The Patriarchs, Primates, Archbishops, Bishops, and other Local Ordinaries having Peace and Communion with the Apostolic See.

Venerable Brethren, Health and the Apostolic Blessing.

Whoever considers the height of dignity and glory to which God has raised the Most August Virgin Mary, will easily perceive how important it is, both for public and for private benefit, that devotion to her should be assiduously practised, and daily promoted more and more.

Mary's Place in the Incarnation and Redemption

2. God predestined her from all eternity to be the Mother of the Incarnate Word, and for that reason so highly distinguished her among all His most beautiful works in the triple order of nature, grace and glory, that the Church justly applies to her these words: "I came out of the mouth of the Most High, the first-born before all creatures" (Ecclus. xxiv., 5). And when, in the first ages, the parents of mankind fell into sin, involving their posterity in the same ruin, she was set up as a pledge of the restoration of peace and salvation. The Only-begotten Son of God ever paid to His Most Holy Mother indubitable marks of honour. During His private life on earth He associated her with Himself in each of His first two miracles: the miracle of grace, when, at the salutation of Mary, the infant leaped in the womb of Elizabeth; the miracle of nature, when He turned water into wine at the marriage-feast of Cana. And, at the supreme moment of His public life, when sealing the New Testament in His precious Blood, He committed her to his beloved Apostle in those sweet words, "Behold, thy Mother!" John xix., 27).

3. We, therefore, who, though unworthy, hold the place of Vicar of Christ upon earth, shall never cease to promote the glory of so great a Mother, as long as life endures. And since, as old age draws on apace, We feel that life cannot now last much longer, We are constrained to repeat to each and all of our beloved children in Christ those last words of His upon the Cross, left to us as a testament, "Behold, thy Mother!" Greatly rewarded indeed shall We be, if Our exhortations succeed in making even one of the faithful hold nothing dearer than devotion to Mary; so that

those words which St. John wrote about himself may be applied to each, "the disciple took her to his own" [Ibid.].

4. As the month of October again approaches, Venerable Brethren, We would not willingly leave you without Our letters this year, also once more urging you with all possible earnestness to strive by the recitation of the Rosary to aid both yourselves individually, and the Church in her need. This form of prayer appears, under the guidance of Divine Providence, to have been wonderfully developed at the close of the century, for the purpose of stimulating the lagging piety of the faithful. This is witnessed by the splendid churches and much-frequented sanctuaries of the Mother of God. To this Divine Mother we have offered the flowers of the month of May; to her we would have also fruit-bearing October dedicated with especial tenderness of devotion. It is fitting that both parts of the year should be consecrated to her who said: "My flowers are the fruit of honour and riches" (Ecclus. xxiv., 23).

5. The natural tendency of man to association has never been stronger, or more earnestly and generally followed, than in our own age. This is not at all to be reprehended, unless when so excellent a natural tendency is perverted to evil purposes, and wicked men, banding together in various forms of societies, conspire "against the Lord and against His Christ" (Ps ii., 2). It is, however, most gratifying to observe that pious associations are becoming more and more popular among Catholics also. They are frequently formed; indeed, all Catholics are so closely drawn together and united by the bonds of charity, as members of one household, that they both may be and are truly styled brethren. But if the charity of Christ be absent, none may glory in the name and fellowship of brethren. So wrote Tertullian long ago in pungent words: "We are your brethren by right of a common mother, nature, yet are ye less than men, because unnatural brothers. How much more justly are they called and esteemed as brethren who acknowledge one and the same Father, God; who have drunk in one and the same spirit of charity; who have been borne from one and the same womb of ignorance into the one light of truth?" [Apolog. c. xxxix.]

6. There are many reasons for Catholics joining useful associations of this kind. We include in these clubs, popular savings-banks, recreative classes, associations for the care of youth, sodalities, and many other organizations for excellent purposes. All these, though from their name, constitution, and special ends, apparently of modern invention, are in reality of great antiquity. Traces of societies of this kind are to be found even in the earliest ages of Christianity. In later ages they were legally approved, distinguished by special emblems, enriched with privileges, associated with divine worship in the Churches, or devoted to works of spiritual or corporal mercy, and at different epochs known under different names. Their numbers increased to such an extent, especially in Italy, that no city or town, nay scarcely any parish, was without one or more of them.

7. We do not hesitate to assign a pre-eminent place among these societies to that known as the Society of the Holy Rosary. If we regard its origin, we find it distinguished by its antiquity, for St. Dominic himself is said to have been its founder. If we estimate its privileges, we see it enriched with a vast number of them granted by the munificence of our predecessors. The form of the association, its very soul, is the Rosary of Our Lady, of the excellence of which We have elsewhere spoken at length. Still the virtue and efficacy of the Rosary appear all the greater when considered as the special office of the Sodality which bears its name. Everyone knows how necessary prayer is for all men; not that God's decrees can be changed, but, as St. Gregory says, "that men by asking may merit to receive what Almighty God hath decreed from eternity to

grant them" [Dialog., lib. i., c. 8]. And St. Augustine says, "He who knoweth how to pray aright, knoweth how to live aright" [In Ps. cxviii]. But prayers acquire their greatest efficacy in obtaining God's assistance when offered publicly, by large numbers, constantly, and unanimously, so as to form as it were a single chorus of supplication; as those words of the Acts of the Apostles clearly declare wherein the disciples of Christ, awaiting the coming of the Holy Ghost, are said to have been "persevering with one mind in prayer" (Acts i., 14). Those who practice this manner of prayer will never fail to obtain certain fruit. Such is certainly the case with members of the Rosary Sodality. Just as by the recitation of the Divine Office, priests offer a public, constant, and most efficacious supplication; so the supplication offered by the members of this Sodality in the recitation of the Rosary, or "Psalter of Our Lady," as it has been styled by some of the Popes, is also in a way public, constant, and universal.

8. Since, as We have said, public prayers are much more excellent and more efficacious than private ones, so ecclesiastical writers have given to the Rosary Sodality the title of "the army of prayer, enrolled by St. Dominic, under the banner of the Mother of God,"--of her, whom sacred literature and the history of the Church salute as the conqueror of the Evil One and of all errors. The Rosary unites together all who join the Sodality in a common bond of paternal or military comradeship; so that a mighty host is thereby formed, duly marshalled and arrayed, to repel the assaults of the enemy, both from within and without. Wherefore may the members of this pious society take to themselves the words of St. Cyprian: "Our prayer is public and in common; and when we pray, we pray not for one, but for the whole people, for we, the entire people, are one" [De Orat. Domin.]. The history of the Church bears testimony to the power and efficacy of this form of prayer, recording as it does the rout of the Turkish forces at the naval battle of Lepanto, and the victories gained over the same in the last century at Temesvar in Hungary and in the island of Corfu. Our predecessor, Gregory XIII., in order to perpetuate the memory of the first-named victory, established the feast of Our Lady of Victories, which later on Clement XI. distinguished by the title of Rosary Sunday and commanded to be celebrated throughout the universal Church.

9. From the fact that this warfare of prayer is "enrolled under the name of the Mother of God," fresh efficacy and fresh honour are thereby added to it. Hence the frequent repetition in the Rosary of the "Hail Mary" after each "Our Father." So far from this derogating in any way from the honour due to God, as though it indicated that we placed greater confidence in Mary's patronage than in God's power, it is rather this which especially moves God, and wins His mercy for us. We are taught by the Catholic faith that we may pray not only to God himself, but also to the Blessed in heaven [Conc. Trid. Sess. xxv.], though in different manner; because we ask from God as from the Source of all good, but from the Saints as from intercessors. "Prayer," says St. Thomas, "is offered to a person in two ways--one as though to be granted by himself; another, as to be obtained through him. In the first way we pray to God alone, because all our prayers ought to be directed to obtaining grace and glory, which God alone gives, according to those words of Psalm Ixxxiii., 12, "The Lord will give grace and glory." But in the second way we pray to holy angels and men, not that God may learn our petition through them, but that by their prayers and merits our prayers may be efficacious. Wherefore, it is said in the Apocalypse (viii., 4): "The smoke of the incense of the prayers of the Saints ascended up before God from the hand of the angel" [Summa Theol. 2a 2ae, q. Ixxxiii. a. iv.]. Now, of all the blessed in heaven, who can compare with the august Mother of God in obtaining grace? Who seeth more clearly in the Eternal Word what troubles oppress us, what are our needs? Who is allowed more power in moving God? Who can compare with her in maternal affection? We do not pray to the Blessed in the same way as to God; for we ask the Holy Trinity to have mercy on us, but we ask all the Saints to pray for us [Ibid.]. Yet our manner of praying to the Blessed Virgin has something in

common with our worship of God, so that the Church even addresses to her the words with which we pray to God: "Have mercy on sinners." The members of the Rosary Sodality, therefore, do exceedingly well in weaving together, as in a crown, so many salutations and prayers to Mary. For, so great is her dignity, so great her favour before God, that whosoever in his need will not have recourse to her is trying to fly without wings.

10. We must not omit to mention another excellence of this Sodality. As often as, in reciting the Rosary, we meditate upon the mysteries of our Redemption, so often do we in a manner emulate the sacred duties once committed to the Angelic hosts. The Angels revealed each of these mysteries in its due time; they played a great part in them; they were constantly present at them, with countenances indicative now of joy, now of sorrow, now of triumphant exultation. Gabriel was sent to announce the Incarnation of the Eternal Word to the Virgin. In the cave of Bethlehem, Angels sang the glory of the new-born Saviour. The Angel gave Joseph command to fly with the Child into Egypt. An Angel consoled, with his loving words, Jesus in His bloody sweat in the garden. Angels announced His resurrection, after He had triumphed over death, to the women. Angels carried Him up into Heaven; and foretold His second coming, surrounded by Angelic hosts, unto whom He will associate the souls of the elect, and carry them aloft with Him to the heavenly choirs, "above whom the Holy Mother of God is exalted." To those, therefore, who make use of the pious prayers of the Rosary in this Sodality, may be well applied the words with which St. Paul addressed the new Christians: "You are come to Mount Sion, and to the city of the living God, the Heavenly Jerusalem, and to the company of many thousands of Angels" (Heb. xii., 22). What more divine, what more delightful, than to meditate and pray with the Angels? With what confidence may we not hope that those who on earth have united with the Angels in this ministry will one day enjoy their blessed company in Heaven?

11. For these reasons the Roman Pontiffs have ever given the highest praise to this Sodality of Our Lady. Innocent VIII. calls it "a most devout confraternity" [Splendor Paternae Glorae, Feb. 26, 1491.] Pius V declares that by its virtue "Christians began suddenly to be transformed into other men, the darkness of heresy to be dispelled, and the light of Catholic faith to shine forth" [Consueverunt Romani Pontifices], September 17, 1569). Sixtus V, noting how fruitful for religion this Sodality was, professed himself most devoted to it. Many others, too, enriched it with numerous and very special indulgences, or took it under their particular patronage, enrolling themselves in it and giving it many testimonies of their goodwill.

12. We also, Venerable Brethren, moved by the example of Our predecessors, earnestly exhort and conjure you, as We have so often done, to devote special care to this sacred warfare, so that by your efforts fresh forces may be daily enrolled on every side. Through you and those of your clergy who have care of souls, let the people know and duly appreciate the efficacy of this Sodality and its usefulness for man's salvation. This We beg all the more earnestly as of late that beautiful devotion to our Blessed Mother, called "the living Rosary," has once more become popular. We have gladly blessed this devotion, and We earnestly desire that you would sedulously and strenuously encourage its growth. We cherish the strongest hope that these prayers and praises, rising incessantly from the lips and hearts of so great a multitude, will be most efficacious. Alternately rising by night and by day, throughout the different countries of the earth, they combine a harmony of vocal prayer with meditation upon the divine mysteries. In ages long past this perennial stream of praise and prayer was foretold in those inspired words with which Ozias in his song addressed Judith: "Blessed art thou, O daughter, by the Lord, the Most High God, above all women upon the earth ... because He hath so magnified thy name this day that thy praise shall not depart out of the mouth of man." And all the people of Israel

acclaimed him in these words: "So be it, so be it!" (Judith xiii., 23, 24, 26).

13. Meanwhile, as a pledge of heavenly blessings, and a testimony of Our paternal affection, We lovingly impart to You, in the name of the Lord, Venerable Brethren, and to all the clergy and people committed to your faithful care, the Apostolic Benediction.

Given at St. Peter's, in Rome, on the 12th day of September, 1897, in the 20th year of Our Pontificate.

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Diuturni Temporis

On The Rosary

Encyclical of Pope Leo XIII

September 5, 1898

To Our Venerable Brethren, the Patriarchs, Primates, Archbishops, Bishops, and other Local Ordinaries having Peace and Communion with the Apostolic See.

Venerable Brethren, Health and Apostolic Benediction.

Looking back over the long space of time, which by God's Will We have passed in the Supreme Pontificate, We cannot but acknowledge that, in spite of Our demerits, We have enjoyed the most singular protection of Divine Providence. This We believe must be attributed principally to the united, and therefore most efficacious, prayers, which, as of old for St. Peter, so now also for Ourselves, are constantly being poured forth by the Universal Church. Wherefore We first of all give profound thanks to God, the Giver of all good things, and we shall continue as long as life lasts to cherish in mind and heart gratitude for each and every favour. And next, there comes to Our mind the sweet remembrance of the motherly protection of the august Queen of Heaven; and this memory likewise We shall cherish and preserve inviolate, ever thanking her and proclaiming her benefits. From her, as from an abundant spring, are derived the streams of heavenly graces. "In her hand are the treasures of the mercies of the Lord" (St. John-Damascene, Sermon I. on the Nativity of the blessed Virgin). "God wisheth her to be the beginning of all good things" (St. Irenaeus, Contra Valen., J. iii., cap. 33). In the love of this tender mother, which We have constantly striven to cherish and to grow in day by day, We confidently hope that We may end Our life.

2. We have long desired to secure the welfare of the human race in an increase of devotion to the Blessed Virgin, as in a powerful citadel, and We have never ceased to encourage the constant use of the Rosary among Christians, by publishing every year since September 1, 1883, an Encyclical Letter on this subject, besides frequently issuing Decrees, as is well known. And now, since God in His merciful Providence has this year again allowed Us to see the approach of the month of October, which We have already consecrated to our Heavenly Queen under the title of the Rosary, We would not refrain from again addressing you; but summarizing in a few words all that we have hitherto done for the promotion of his form of prayer, We will crown our work by yet a new document, in which Our earnest desire and zeal for this form of devotion to Mary may appear still more clearly, and the fervour of the faithful may be stimulated to the devout and

constant use of this pious practice.

3. Impelled, therefore, by a constant desire that Christians should ever be convinced of the efficacy and dignity of the Rosary of Our Lady, We first of all pointed out that the origin of this form of prayer is divine rather than human, showing it to be an admirable garland woven from the Angelic Salutation, together with the Lord's Prayer, joined to meditation, and that this form of prayer was most powerful and particularly efficacious for attaining eternal life. For besides the special excellence of the prayers, it affords a powerful protection to faith and conspicuous models of virtue in the mysteries proposed for contemplation. We showed also how easy the devotion is and how suited to the people, offering an absolutely perfect model of domestic life in meditation on the Holy Family at Nazareth, and that therefore Christendom had never failed to experience its salutary effects.

4. For these reasons We have ever repeatedly encouraged the recitation of the Holy Rosary, and have endeavoured to increase its dignity by a more solemn cult, following in this the footsteps of our predecessors. Pope Sixtus V., of happy memory, approved the ancient custom of reciting the Rosary; Gregory XIII dedicated a day under this title, which Clement VIII. afterwards inscribed in the martyrology, and Clement XI extended to the Universal Church. Benedict XIII inserted the feast in the Roman Breviary, and We, ourselves, in perpetual testimony of Our affection for this devotion commanded that the solemnity with its office should be celebrated in the Universal Church as a double of the second class, consecrating to this devotion the entire month of October. Finally we ordered the addition to the Litany of Loreto of the invocation "Queen of the most Holy Rosary," as an augury of victory in our present warfare.

5. It remains to be added that great value and utility accrue to the Rosary from the abundance of privileges and favours which adorn it, and more particularly from the rich treasures of indulgences attached to it. It is evident how greatly to the advantage of all who are solicitous for their eternal salvation is the obtaining of these benefits. For it is a question of obtaining either totally or partially a remission of the debt of temporal punishment which, even after guilt has been forgiven, must be paid either in this life or in the next. Vast indeed is the treasure won by the merits of Christ, His Mother and the Saints, to which our predecessor Clement VI. so aptly applied those words of the Book of Wisdom: "She is an infinite treasure to men: which they that use become the friends of God" (Wisdom vii., 14).

6. The Roman Pontiffs, making use of that supreme power granted them by God, have opened out the most abundant fountains of these graces to the members of the sodality of the Holy rosary and to those who recite the Rosary.

7. Wherefore, believing that the Crown of Mary will shine more brilliantly with these privileges and indulgences, as with an adornment of most precious gems, We have decided upon carrying out what We have long contemplated, namely, the publication of a "Constitution" concerning the rights, privileges and indulgences which are enjoyed by the members of the Rosary Sodality. This Our "Constitution" We intend to be a testimony of Our love to the most august Mother of God, and at the same time an encouragement to all the faithful and a reward of their piety, so that in the last hour of life they may be aided by her assistance and sweetly rest in her embrace. This blessing We heartily invoke from Almighty God through the Queen of the most Holy Rosary, and as an earnest and pledge of Divine Blessings, Venerable Brethren, to your clergy and to the people committed to your care, We gladly impart the Apostolic Benediction.

Given at St. Peter's, in Rome, on the 5th day of September, 1898, in the 21st year of Our Pontificate.

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Fausto Appetente Die

On St. Dominic

Encyclical of Pope Benedict XV

June 29, 1921

To the Patriarchs, Primates, Archbishops, Bishops, and other Ordinaries in Peace and Communion with the Apostolic See.

Venerable Brethren, Health and The Apostolic Benediction.

The seventh centenary approaches of the day when that light of holiness, Dominic, passed from these miseries to the seat of the Blessed. We for long have been most interested in his clients, especially since We assumed the government of the Church of Bologna, which with the greater devotion preserves his remains. We, therefore, are pleased to be able from this Apostolic See to exhort the Christian people to celebrate the memory of such a great man. In this We not only consult Our own piety but fulfil a duty of gratitude towards the father and lawgiver and towards the distinguished Order he founded.

2. This man of God and true Dominicus was fully given up to Holy Church, which had in him an invincible champion of the Faith. The Order of Preachers, too, founded by him, has ever been the stout defense of the Roman Church. And so not only did he strengthen the temple in his time, but he provided for the continuance of the defense. The words of Honorius III in approving the Order seem prophetic: ". . . looking to the brethren of thy Order as the future champions of the Faith and the true lights of the world."

3. Indeed, as all know, for the spread of God's kingdom Jesus Christ used no other weapon than the preaching of the Gospel, that is, the living voice of His heralds, who diffused everywhere the celestial doctrine. "Teach," he said, "all nations." "Preach the Gospel to every creature." Accordingly, from the preaching of the Apostles, and especially of St. Paul, it came to pass, that preaching being followed up with the doctrine and discipline of the Fathers and afterwards of the Doctors, men's minds were enlightened with the light of truth and conceived a love for all the virtues. Following the same lines in his work for the salvation of souls. Dominic proposed to himself and to all his followers "to hand to others what they had contemplated." For this reason, in addition to the duty of cultivating poverty, innocence of life, and religious discipline, he commanded his Order in a strict and solemn manner to be zealous in the study of Christian doctrine and the preaching of the truth.

4. In the Dominican preaching three qualities shine forth: great solidity of doctrine, the fullness of fidelity towards the Apostolic See, piety towards the Virgin Mother. For although Dominic felt himself mature for preaching, yet he did not undertake that office until he had worked hard in the Palentine Athenaeum of philosophy and theology. Long familiar with the Fathers, under their guidance and teaching, he first, as it were, received into his blood and marrow the riches of Sacred Scripture, and especially of Paul.
5. The value of this knowledge of Divine things not long after was to be seen in his disputations against the heretics. They were armed with all arts and fallacies to attack the dogmas of Faith; yet with wonderful success he confounded and refuted them. This appeared especially at Toulouse, the head and center of the heresies, where the most learned of the adversaries had come together. It is recorded that he, with his first companions, powerful in word and work, invincibly withstood the insolence of the heretics. Indeed, not only did he withstand their strength, but he so softened their spirits by his eloquence and charity that he recalled an immense number to the bosom of the Church. God Himself was ever at hand to aid him in his battle for the Faith. Thus, having accepted the challenge of the heretics that each should consign his book to the flames, his book alone remained untouched by the fire. Thus by the valor of Dominic Europe was freed from the danger of the Albigensian heresy.
6. With this quality of solid doctrine he ordered his children to be adorned. For, soon after the approbation of his Order by the Apostolic See and the confirmation of the noble title of Preachers, he arranged for houses to be founded as near as possible to the celebrated universities that his brethren might the more easily exercise themselves in every branch of culture, and get followers from the ranks of university students. Accordingly, the Dominican institute from the beginning was famed for its learning. Its special mission was always to care for the various wounds of error and to diffuse the light of the Christian Faith, seeing that nothing is such a hindrance to eternal salvation as the ignorance of the truth and perversity of doctrine. It was not strange, then, that the eyes and hearts of all should be turned towards this new apostolate which was based upon the Gospel and the teachings of the Fathers and commended by the abundance of all branches of knowledge.
7. The very wisdom of God seemed to speak through the Dominicans when there rose up among them such heralds and defenders of Christian wisdom as Hyacinth Polonus, Peter the Martyr, Vincent Ferrer, and such miracles of genius and erudition as Albert the Great, Raymond de Penafort, Thomas Aquinas, in whom especially, a follower of Dominic, God "deigned to enlighten his Church." This Order, therefore, always in honor as the teacher of truth, acquired new luster when the Church declared the teaching of Thomas to be her own and that Doctor, honored with the special praises of the Pontiffs, the master and patron of Catholic schools.
8. Joined to this zeal in retaining and defending the Faith there was in Dominic a supreme reverence for the Apostolic See. It is recorded that, prostrate at the feet of Innocent III, he vowed himself to the defense of the Roman Pontificate, and that the same predecessor of ours the following night saw him in vision sustain on his courageous shoulder the tottering pile of the Lateran Basilica. History tells, too, how when he was training his first followers to Christian perfection, Dominic thought of gathering from pious and devout lay people a certain sacred militia which would defend the rights of the Church and resist heresy with vigor. Hence arose the Third Order of the Dominicans which, spreading among lay people the institute of a more perfect life, was to be a truly great ornament and defense to the Church.

9. Handed down by their Father and Lawgiver, the heritage of such devotion to this See passed to the children. As often, therefore, as, through the infatuated minds of men, the Church had to suffer from popular movements or the tyranny of princes, this Apostolic See had in the Dominicans, the defenders of truth and justice, a most opportune help in the preservation and honor of its authority. Who does not know the glorious deeds in that connection of the Dominican Virgin, Catherine of Sienna? Urged by the charity of Jesus Christ she persuaded the Roman Pontiff, what no one else had been able to do, to return to his Roman See after an interval of seventy years. Afterwards, while the Western Church was torn by a dire schism, she kept a great number of Christians in loyal obedience to the legitimate Pontiff.

10. And, to pass over other things, We cannot but recall that four great Roman Pontiffs came from the Dominican ranks. Of these, the last, St. Pius V, won undying gratitude from Christianity and civil society. He joined together, after unceasing efforts, the arms of the Catholic princes, and under the patronage of the Virgin Mother of God, whom, therefore, he ordered to be saluted in future as Help to Christians, destroyed forever at Lepanto the power of the Turks.

11. In this is amply shown the third quality We have noted in Dominican preaching: a most zealous piety towards the Mother of God. It is said that the Pontiff knew by Divine revelation of the victory of Lepanto achieved at that very moment when through the Catholic world the pious sodalities of the Holy Rosary implored the aid of Mary in that formula initiated by the Founder of the Friar Preachers and diffused far and wide by his followers. Loving the Blessed Virgin as a Mother, confiding chiefly in her patronage, Dominic started his battle for the Faith. The Albigenses, among other dogmas, attacked both the Divine maternity and the virginity of Mary. He, attacked by them with every insult, defending to the utmost of his strength the sanctity of these dogmas, he invoked the help of the Virgin Mother herself, frequently using these words: "Make me worthy to praise thee, Sacred Virgin; give me strength against thine enemies." How pleased was the Heavenly Queen with her pious servant may be easily gathered from this, that she used his ministry to teach the Most Holy Rosary to the Church, the Spouse of her Son; that prayer which, being both vocal and mental, in the contemplation especially of the mysteries of religion, while the Lord's Prayer is fifteen times repeated together with as many decades of the Hail Mary, is most adapted to fostering widely piety and every virtue. Rightly, then, did Dominic order his followers, in preaching to the people, to inculcate frequently this manner of prayer, the utility of which he had experienced. He knew, on the one hand, Mary's authority with her Son to be such that whatever graces he confers on men she has their distribution and apportionment. On the other hand, he knew that she is of a nature so kind and merciful that, seeing that it is her custom to succor the miserable of her own accord, it is impossible she should refuse the petitions of those who pray to her. Accordingly the Church, which is wont to salute her "the Mother of Grace and the Mother of Mercy," has so found her always, but especially in answer to the Rosary. Wherefore the Roman Pontiffs have let pass no occasion of commending the Rosary and have enriched it with Apostolic Indulgences.

12. Now the Dominican institutes, as you yourself understand, Venerable Brethren, are not less opportune at present than in the time of their Founder. How many today, destitute of the bread of life, that is, celestial doctrine, are, as it were, in a state of starvation. How many, deceived by the appearance of truth, are turned away from the Faith by a variety of errors. That priests may minister fittingly to the necessities of all these by the Word of God, how zealous must they be for the salvation of others and how grounded in solid knowledge. How many, too, ungrateful and forgetful children of the Church, are turned away from the Vicar of Jesus Christ by ignorance of

facts or by a perverse will whom it is necessary to lead to the common bosom. For the healing of these and every other ill how much do we need the maternal patronage!

13. The Dominicans have, therefore, an almost boundless field in which to labor for the common welfare. Wherefore to all of them We wish that in these centenary celebrations they renew their devotion to the holy example of their founder, and make themselves daily more worthy of such a father. In this let a fitting lead be taken by his children of the First Order, and let them be ever more zealous in preaching the Divine Word, such as may give men a reverence for the successor of St. Peter and a devotion to the Virgin Mother, and may spread and defend the truth. But from the Dominican Tertiaries, too, the Church looks for much, if they study to conform themselves to the spirit of their patriarch, in the instruction of the rude and unskilled in Christian doctrine and morality. In this We hope they will be assiduous, as it is a matter of great consequence for the good of souls. Finally, We wish this to be a special care of the Dominicans-the spread and frequent use of the Rosary among Christian people. We make this exhortation in these troublous times, following our predecessor, Leo XIII, and should it bear fruit this centenary celebration will not have been in vain.

Meanwhile, as an augury of the Divine gifts and a proof of Our benevolence, We impart the Apostolic Blessing, Venerable Brethren, to you, your clergy, and your people.

Given at Rome, at St. Peter's, June 29, Feast of the Prince of the Apostles, 1921, the seventh year of Our Pontificate.

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Ingravescentibus Malis

On The Rosary

Encyclical of Pope Pius XI

September 29, 1937

To the Venerable Brethren, Patriarchs, Primates, Archbishops, Bishops, and other Ordinaries in Peace and Communion with the Holy See.

More than once have We asserted--and We recently repeated this in the Encyclical Letter Divini Redemptoris (Acta Ap. Sedis, 1937, Vol. XXIX, p. 65)--that there is no remedy for the ever-growing evils of our times except a return to Our Lord Jesus Christ and to His most holy precepts. Truly, only He "hath the words of eternal life" (Cf. John, vi, 69), and individuals and society can only fall into immediate and miserable ruin if they ignore the majesty of God and repudiate His Law.

2. However, anyone who studies with diligence the records of the Catholic Church will easily recognize that the true patronage of the Virgin Mother of God is linked with all the annals of the Christian name. When, in fact, errors everywhere diffused were bent upon rending the seamless robe of the Church and upon throwing the Catholic world into confusion, our fathers turned with confident soul to her "alone who destroys all heresies in the world" (Roman Breviary), and the victory won through her brought the return of tranquillity.

3. When the impious Mohammedan power, trusting in its powerful fleet and war-hardened armies, threatened the peoples of Europe with ruin and slavery, then--upon the suggestion of the Sovereign Pontiff--the protection of the heavenly Mother was fervently implored and the enemy was defeated and his ships sunk. Thus the Faithful of every age, both in public misfortune and in private need, turn in supplication to Mary, the benignant, so that she may come to their aid and grant help and remedy against sorrows of body and soul. And never was her most powerful aid hoped for in vain by those who besought it with pious and trustful prayer.

4. But also in our day, dangers no less grave than in the past beset civil and religious society. In fact, because the supreme and eternal authority of God, which commands and forbids, is despised and completely repudiated by men, the result is that the consciousness of Christian duty is weakened, and that faith becomes tepid in souls or entirely lost, and his afterward affects and ruins the very basis of human society.

5. Thus on the one hand are seen citizens intent on an atrocious struggle among themselves because some are provided with abundant riches and others must gain bread for themselves and their dear ones by the sweat of their brows. Indeed, as we all know, in some regions the evil had reached such a pitch that it seeks to destroy all private right of property, so that everything might be shared in common.

6. On the other hand, there are not lacking men who declare that they honor and exalt, above all, the power of the State. They say they must use every means to assure civil order and enforce authority, and pretend that only thus are they able totally to repulse the execrable theories of the Communists. However, they despise the light of evangelic wisdom and endeavor to revive the errors of the pagans and their way of life.

7. To this is added the clever and lamentable sect of those who, denying and hating God, declare themselves the enemies of the Eternal, and who insinuate themselves everywhere. They discredit and uproot all religious belief from souls. Finally, they trample on every human and Divine right. And while they cast scorn on the hope of heavenly reward, they incite men to seek, even by illicit means, false earthly happiness, and therefore drive them with brazen temerity to the dissolution of the social order, causing disorder, cruel rebellions and even the conflagration of civil war.

8. Nevertheless, Venerable Brethren, though such great and numerous evils hang over us, and others still greater are to be feared for the future, we must not lose heart nor let the confident hope that rests solely on God become fainter. He who "made the nations of the earth for health" (Cf. Wisdom i, 14) without doubt will not let those perish whom He has redeemed with His Precious Blood, nor will He abandon His Church. But rather, as We said in the beginning, shall We beseech God through the mediation of the Blessed Virgin, so acceptable to Him, since, to use the words of St. Bernard: "Such is the will of God, who has wished that we should have all things through Mary." (Sermon on the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary.)

9. Among the various supplications with which we successfully appeal to the Virgin Mother of God, the Holy Rosary without doubt occupies a special and distinct place. This prayer, which some call the Psalter of the Virgin or Breviary of the Gospel and of Christian life, was described and recommended by Our Predecessor of happy memory, Leo XIII, with these vigorous passages: "Very admirable is this crown interwoven with the angelic salutation which is interposed in the Sunday prayer, and unites with it the obligation of interior meditation. It is an excellent manner of prayer . . . and very useful for the attainment of immortal life" (Acta Leonis, 1898, Vol. XVIII, pp. 154, 155).

10. And this can well be deduced from the very flowers that form this mystic garland. What prayers in fact can be found more adaptable and holy? This first is that which our Divine Redeemer Himself pronounced when His disciples asked Him: "Lord, teach us to pray" (Luke xi, 1); a very holy supplication which both offers us the way--as far as it is possible for us--to render glory to God, and also takes into account all the necessities of our body and soul. How can the Eternal Father, when prayed to with the very words of His Son, refuse to come to our aid?

11. The other prayer is the Angelic Salutation, which begins with the eulogies of the Archangel Gabriel and of St. Elizabeth, and ends with that very pious supplication by which we beg the help of the Blessed Virgin now and at the hour of our death. To these invocations, said aloud, is added

the contemplation of the sacred mysteries, through which they place, as it were, under our eyes the joys, sorrows and triumphs of Jesus Christ and of His Mother, so that we receive relief and comfort in our sorrows. Following those most holy examples, we ascend to the happiness of the heavenly country by steps of ever higher virtue.

12. This practice of piety, Venerable Brethren, admirably diffused by St. Dominic, not without the heavenly suggestion and inspiration of the Virgin Mother of God, is without doubt easy for all, even for the ignorant and the simple. But those wander from the path of truth who consider this devotion merely an annoying formula repeated with monotonous singsong intonation, and refuse it as good only for children and silly women!

13. In this regard, it is to be noted that both piety and love, though always renewing the same words, do not always repeat the same thing but always express something new issuing from the intimate sentiment of devotion. And besides, this mode of prayer has the perfume of evangelical simplicity and requires humility of spirit; and, if we disdain humility, as the Divine Redeemer teaches, it will be impossible for us to enter the heavenly kingdom: "Amen, I say to you, unless you become as little children you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. xviii, 3).

14. Nevertheless, if men in our century, with its derisive pride, refuse the Holy Rosary, there is an innumerable multitude of holy men of every age and every condition who have always held it dear. They have recited it with great devotion, and in every moment they have used it as a powerful weapon to put the demons to flight, to preserve the integrity of life, to acquire virtue more easily, and in a word to attain real peace among men.

15. Nor are there lacking men famous as to doctrine and wisdom who, although intensely occupied in scientific study and researches, never even for a day fail to pray fervently on bended knee, before the image of the Virgin, in this most pious form. Thus kings and princes, however burdened with most urgent occupations and affairs, made it their duty to recite the Rosary.

16. This mystic crown, then, not only is found in and glides through the hands of the poor, but it also is honored by citizens of every social rank. And We do not wish here to pass over in silence the fact that the Blessed Virgin herself, even in our times, has solicitously recommended this manner of prayer, when she appeared and taught it to the innocent girl in the Grotto of Lourdes.

17. Therefore why should We not hope for every grace if We supplicate Our Heavenly Mother in this manner with due disposition and holiness? We desire very earnestly, Venerable Brethren, that the Holy Rosary should be recited in a special manner in the month of October and with increased devotion both in the churches and in homes.

18. And so much the more must it be done since the enemies of the Divine Name--that is, those who have rebelled against and denied and scorned the Eternal God--spread snares for the Catholic Faith and the liberty due to the Church, and finally rebel with insane efforts against divine and human rights, to send mankind to ruin and perdition. Through efficacious recourse to the Virgin Mother of God, they may be finally bent and led to penance and return to the straight path, trusting to the care and protection of Mary.

19. The Holy Virgin who once victoriously drove the terrible sect of the Albigenses from Christian countries, now suppliantly invoked by us, will turn aside the new errors, especially those of

Communism, which reminds us in many ways, in its motives and misdeeds, of the ancient ones.

20. And as in the times of the Crusades, in all Europe there was raised one voice of the people, one supplication; so today, in all the world, the cities, and even the smallest villages, united with courage and strength, with filial and constant insistence, the people seek to obtain from the great Mother of God the defeat of the enemies of Christian and human civilization, to the end that true peace may shine again over tired and erring men.

21. If, then, all will do this with due disposition, with great faith and with fervent piety, it is right to hope that as in the past, so in our day, the Blessed Virgin will obtain from her divine Son that the waves of the present tempests be calmed and that a brilliant victory crown this rivalry of Christians in prayer.

22. The Holy Rosary, besides, not only serves admirably to overcome the enemies of God and Religion, but is also a stimulus and spur to the practice of evangelic virtues which it injects and cultivates in our souls. Above all, it nourishes the Catholic Faith, which flourishes again by due meditation on the sacred mysteries, and raises minds to the truth revealed to us by God.

23. Every one can understand how salutary it is, especially in our times wherein sometimes a certain annoyance of the things of the spirit is felt even among the Faithful, and a dislike, as it were, for the Christian doctrine. Therefore, revive the hope of immortal welfare, while the triumph of Jesus Christ and of His Mother, meditated on by us in the last part of the Rosary, shows us Heaven open and invites us to the conquest of the Eternal Country.

24. Thus while an unbridled longing for the things of this earth has penetrated into the hearts of mortals and each one more ardently longs for the short-lived riches and ephemeral pleasures, all feel a fruitful call back to the heavenly treasures "where thieves do not break in and neither rust nor moth doth consume" (Matt. xii, 33), and to the wealth that will never perish.

25. And the charity which has been weakened and cooled in many, how can it fail to be rekindled into love in the souls of those who recall with a full heart the tortures and death of our Redeemer and the afflictions of His Sorrowful Mother? From this charity towards God, then, there cannot but rise a more intense love of one's neighbor if one dwells on the labors and sorrows that Our Lord suffered for all, reinstating the lost inheritance of the children of God.

26. Therefore see to it, Venerable Brethren, that such a fruitful practice shall be more diffused, more highly esteemed by all, and that common piety be increased. Through your work and that of the priests who help you in the care of souls, its praises and advantages shall be preached and repeated to the Faithful of every social class.

27. From it, the young will draw fresh energy with which to control the rebellious tendencies to evil and to preserve intact the stainless purity of the soul; also in it, the old will again find repose, relief and peace from their anxious cares. To those who devote themselves to Catholic Action may it be a spur to impel them to a more fervent and active work of apostolate; and to all those who suffer in any way, especially the dying, may it bring comfort and increase the hope of eternal happiness.

28. The fathers and mothers of families particularly must give an example to their children, especially when, at sunset, they gather together after the day's work, within the domestic walls, and recite the Holy Rosary on bended knees before the image of the Virgin, together fusing voice, faith and sentiment. This is a beautiful and salutary custom, from which certainly there cannot but be derived tranquillity and abundance of heavenly gifts for the household.

29. When very frequently We receive newly married couples in audience and address paternal words to them, We give them rosaries, We recommend these to them earnestly, and We exhort them, citing Our own example, not to let even one day pass without saying the Rosary, no matter how burdened they may be with many cares and labors.

30. For these reasons, Venerable Brethren, We have thought fit earnestly to exhort you, and through you, all the Faithful, to carry out this pious practice. Nor do We doubt that you, listening, with your usual response to Our paternal invitation will bring about abundant fruits once more.

31. And in addressing this Encyclical to you, another motive impels Us. We wish that, together with Us, Our many children in Jesus shall unite and render thanks to the Mother of God for the better health We have happily regained.

32. This grace, as We have had occasion to write (Cf. Letter to Cardinal E. Pacelli, Osservatore Romano, September 5, 1937), We attribute to the special intercession of the virgin of Lisieux, St. Therese of the Child Jesus. But We know, though, that everything comes to us from Almighty God through the hands of Our Lady.

33. And lastly, as there has been launched in the public press with rash insolence, a very grave injury to the Blessed Virgin, We cannot do less than profit by this occasion to offer, together with the Episcopate and the people of that nation which venerates Mary as "Queen of the Kingdom of Poland," and with the homage of our piety, due reparation to the august Queen, and denounce to the whole world this sacrilege committed with impunity, as a painful and unworthy thing.

34. Meanwhile, with a full heart We impart to you, Venerable Brethren, and to the flock entrusted to the care of each of you, the Apostolic Blessing as an augury of heavenly graces and in token to Our Paternal benevolence.

Given at Castel Gandolfo, near Rome, on the 29th day of the month of September, on the Feast of the Dedication of St. Michael the Archangel, in the year 1937, the sixteenth of Our Pontificate.

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Ingruentium Malorum

On Reciting The Rosary

Encyclical of Pope Pius XII

September 15, 1951

To Our Venerable Brethren, Patriarchs, Primates, Archbishops, Bishops, and other Ordinaries having Peace and Communion with the Apostolic See.

Venerable Brethren, Greetings and Apostolic Benediction.

Ever since We were raised, by the design of Divine Providence, to the supreme Chair of Peter, We have never ceased, in the face of approaching evils, to entrust to the most powerful protection of the Mother of God the destiny of the human family, and, to this end, as you know, We have from time to time written letters of exhortation.

2. You know, Venerable Brethren, with what zeal and with what 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, by 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 the faithful, We solemnly proclaimed the Assumption into Heaven of the Virgin Mary, body and soul.

3. 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.

4. You know well, Venerable Brethren, the calamitous conditions of our times. Fraternal harmony among nations, shattered for so long a time, has not yet been re-established everywhere. On the contrary, here and there, 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 storm of persecution, which in many parts of the world, has been unleashed against the Church, depriving it of its liberty, saddening it very cruelly with calumnies and miseries of all kinds, and making the blood of martyrs flow again and again.

5. 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, most wretchedly, the bond 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 children. Not even the age of innocence has been spared, for, alas, there are not lacking those who boldly dare to snatch 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 fear of even greater calamities.

6. However, consideration of a situation so pregnant with dangers must not depress your souls, Venerable Brethren. Instead, mindful of 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), fly with greater confidence to the Mother of God. There, the Christian people have always sought chief refuge in the hour of danger, because "she has been constituted the cause of salvation for the whole human race" (St. Irenaeus).

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

8. O Venerable Brethren, We desire that, this year, 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 most fruitful means, as is clearly suggested by the very origin of this practice, heavenly rather than human, and by its nature. What prayers are better adapted and more beautiful than the Lord's prayer and the angelic salutation, which are the flowers with which this mystical crown is formed? With meditation of the Sacred Mysteries added to the vocal prayers, there emerges another very great advantage, so that all, even the most simple and least educated, have in this a prompt and easy way to nourish and preserve their own faith.

9. And truly, from the frequent meditation on the Mysteries, the soul little by little and imperceptibly draws and absorbs the virtues they contain, and is wondrously enkindled with a longing for things immortal, and becomes strongly and easily impelled to follow the path which Christ Himself and His Mother have followed. The recitation 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 brings to bear a gentle compulsion on the motherly Heart of Mary.

10. Let it be your particular care, O Venerable Brethren, that the faithful, on the occasion of the coming month of October, should use this most fruitful form of prayer with the utmost possible zeal, and that it become always more esteemed and more diligently recited.

11. Through your efforts, the Christian people should be led to understand the dignity, the power, and the excellence of the Rosary.

12. 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 fashioned after the pattern of the Gospel.

13. To undertake such a difficult duty, We affirm that the custom of the family 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 praises in honor of the august 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 all more tightly in a sweet bond of love, with the most Holy Virgin, who, like a loving mother, in the circle of her children, will be there bestowing upon them an abundance of the gifts of concord and family peace.

14. Then the home of the Christian family, like that of Nazareth, will become an earthly abode of sanctity, and, so to speak, a sacred 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 efficacious school of Christian discipline and Christian virtue. 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 Christian 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 before the throne of God is the value of prayers said in common.

15. 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" (I Kings 17, 45-47)

16. For this reason, We earnestly desire, Venerable Brethren, that all the faithful, following your example and your exhortation 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 piety of all good people increase and become ever more vigorous. Let them strive to obtain from our most loving Mother, especially through this form of prayer, that better times may quickly return for the Church and society.

17. May the very powerful Mother of God, moved by the prayers of so many of her sons, obtain from her only Son--let us all beseech her-- that those who have miserably wandered from the path of truth and virtue may, with new fervor, find it again; that hatred and rivalry, which are the sources of discord and every kind of mishap, may be put aside, and that a true, just, and genuine peace may shine again upon individuals, families, peoples, and nations. And, finally, may she obtain that, after the rights of the Church have been secured in accord with justice, its

beneficent influence may penetrate without obstacle the hearts of men, the social classes, and the avenues of public life so as to join people among themselves in brotherhood and lead them to that prosperity which regulates, preserves, and coordinates the rights and duties of all without harming anyone and which daily makes for greater and greater mutual friendship and collaboration.

18. Venerable Brethren and beloved sons, while you entwine new flowers of supplication by reciting your Rosary, do not forget those who languish miserably in prison camps, jails, and concentration camps. 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.

19. Just as We love them with a special charity and embrace them with the love of a father, so must you, with a brotherly love which the Christian religion nourishes and enkindles, join with us 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, We firmly believe, will not fail to hasten the end of so much sorrow.

20. 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.

21. Feeling certain that Our sons throughout the world will respond willingly and generously to this Our invitation, We impart, from the fullness of Our heart and as an evidence of Our favor and an augury of heavenly graces, to each and every one of you, to the flock entrusted to each of you and particularly to those who, especially during the month of October, will devoutly recite the holy Rosary according to Our intentions, Our Apostolic Blessing.

Given in Rome, at 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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On The Rosary

Encyclical of Pope John XXIII

September 26, 1959

To the Venerable Brethren, the Patriarchs, Primates, Archbishops, Bishops, and other Local Ordinaries in Peace and Communion with the Apostolic See. Venerable Brethren, Greetings and Apostolic Benediction.

Among the pleasant recollections of Our younger days are the Encyclicals which Pope Leo XIII used to write to the whole Catholic world as the month of October drew near, in order to urge the faithful to devout recitation of Mary's rosary during that month in particular. [Cf. the following encyclical epistles in "Acta Leonis XIII," in the volumes indicated: [Supremi Apostolatus](#)," III, 280 ff.; "[Superiore anno](#)," IV, 123 ff., "[Quamquam pluries](#)," IX, 175 ff.; "[Octobri mense](#)," XI, 299 ff.; "[Magnae Dei Matris](#)," XII, 221 ff.; "[Laetitiae sanctae](#)," XIII, 283 ff.; "[Iucunda semper](#)," XIV, 30s ff., "[Adiutricem populi](#)," XV, 300 ff., "[Fidentem piumque](#)," XVI, 278 ff.; "[Augustissimae Virginis](#)," XVII, 285 ff; "[Diuturni temporis](#)," XVIII, 153 ff]

2. These Encyclicals had varied contents, but they were all very wise, vibrant with fresh inspiration, and directly relevant to the practice of the Christian life. In strong and persuasive terms they exhorted Catholics to pray to God in a spirit of faith through the intercession of Mary, His Virgin Mother, by reciting the holy rosary. For the rosary is a very commendable form of prayer and meditation. In saying it we weave a mystic garland of Ave Maria's, Pater Noster's, and Gloria Patri's. And as we recite these vocal prayers, we meditate upon the principal mysteries of our religion; the Incarnation of Jesus Christ and the Redemption of the human race are proposed, one event after another, for our consideration.

3. These pleasant memories of Our younger days have not faded or vanished as the years of Our life have passed. On the contrary, We want to declare in complete frankness and simplicity that the years have made Mary's rosary all the dearer to Us. We never fail to recite it each day in its entirety and We intend to recite it with particular devotion during the coming month.

4. During Our first year as pope--a year which is almost over--We have several times had occasion to urge the clergy and laity to public and private prayer. But today We make this same request with even greater emphasis and earnestness, for reasons which this Encyclical will set

out very briefly.

5. This coming October will mark the end of the first year since the saintly departure of Our predecessor, Pius XII, from this mortal life in which he had distinguished himself by so many glorious achievements.

6. Twenty days after his death, We, though all unworthy, were raised to the Sovereign Pontificate in accord with God's mysterious designs.

7. One pope bequeathed, as it were, to another pope, as a sacred legacy, the care of the whole Christian flock; with the same pastoral concern each of them declared his paternal love for all mankind.

8. These two events--the one full of sorrow, the other full of joy--attest clearly to the world that while all things human gradually decline and decay, the Roman Pontificate withstands the rush of centuries, even though the visible Heads of the Church must, one after another, leave this mortal exile as they complete the span of days which God in His providence has set for them.

9. But all Christians should turn their thoughts to the late Pope Pius XII and to his lowly successor, in whom Blessed Peter continues his eternal mission as supreme pastor, and they should address this prayer to God: "To preserve in holy religion the Pope, and all clerics in holy orders, we beg Thee hear us." [Litany of the Saints]

10. And now it is a pleasure also to recall that this same Predecessor of Ours urged all the faithful to pious recitation of the rosary during October in the Encyclical [Ingruentium malorum](#). [On September 15, 1951: AAS 43 (1951) 577 ff] We would like to repeat one admonition ["Ibid.," 578-579] from that Encyclical: "Turn in spirit with ever greater confidence to the Virgin Mother of God, the constant refuge of Christians in adversity, since she 'has been made a source of salvation for the human race.'" [St. Irenaeus, "Adv. haer." III, 22 Migne, PG VII, 959]

11. On October 11, 1959, We shall have the great pleasure of presenting mission crucifixes to a large group of Catholic missionaries who are about to leave their beloved homes and undertake the heavy responsibility of bringing the light of Christianity to distant people. [A precis of the talk given on this occasion appears in TPS, v. 6 (1959) 46] On the same day, in the afternoon, We are scheduled to visit the North American College on the Janiculum and there joyously celebrate with its superiors, faculty, and seminarians the completion of that college's first century. [A translation of the talk given on this occasion appears in TPS, v. 6 (1959), 37-42]

12. Although these two celebrations fall only by coincidence on the same day, they have the same meaning and importance: in all that she does the Catholic Church is motivated by heaven's inspiration and drawn on by the principles and precepts of eternal truth; all of her children contribute with a selfless and dynamic will to mutual respect, the fraternal union of mankind, and solid peace.

13. These young men present such a wonderful spectacle that We must be optimistic for the future. They have overcome many obstacles and inconveniences and given themselves to God that other men might gain Christ, [Cf. Phil. 3:8] whether in foreign lands as yet untouched by

the light of truth or in those immense, noisy, and busy cities in which the pace of daily activity, rapid as a whirlwind, sometimes makes souls wither and become content with earthly goods. From the lips of their elders, who have labored long in the same cause, comes the ardent prayer of the Prince of the Apostles: "Grant to thy servants to speak thy word with all boldness." [Cf. Acts 4:29]

14. We trust that the apostolic labors of these young men will be commended to the Virgin Mary in your devout prayers through the month of October.

15. There is another matter also which compels Us to ask that the Sacred College of Cardinals, you, Venerable Brethren, all priests and nuns, the sick and disabled, our innocent children, and all Christians address earnest and suppliant prayers to Jesus Christ and His most loving Mother. It is this: that those who, in great measure, hold the future of nations in their hands consider attentively the dangerous pass to which our age has come. Be these nations large or small, their legitimate rights and their inheritance of spiritual riches are sacred and must be safeguarded.

16. Therefore We pray God that their rulers may carefully weigh and consider the causes of dissension and endeavor in good faith to remove them. They must, above all, realize that war (God keep it from us!) can have only one result, vast ruins everywhere, and thus cannot be the object of anyone's reliance. They must adapt to the needs of men of today the laws which regulate the state and society and which bind together nations and classes of society. They must be mindful of the eternal laws which come from God and are the bases and pivots of all government. Finally, they must be ever aware that the individual souls of men are created by God and destined to possess and enjoy Him.

17. It must also be remarked that there are current today certain schools of thought and philosophy and certain attitudes toward the practical conduct of life which cannot possibly be reconciled with the teachings of Christianity. This impossibility We shall never cease from asserting in firm and unambiguous, though also calm terms. But God wishes the welfare of men and of nations! [Cf. Wisd. 1, 14]

18. And so We hope that men will set aside those sterile postulates and assumptions, hard as rock and just as inflexible, which rise from a way of thinking and acting that is infected with laicism and materialism, and that they will find a complete cure in that sound doctrine which experience makes more certain with every day that passes. We mean that doctrine which attests that God is the author of life and its laws, that He is guarantor of the rights and dignity of the human person. God then is "our refuge and our Redemption." [Sacred Liturgy]

19. Our thoughts turn to all the lands of this earth. We see all mankind striving for a better future; We see the awakening of a mysterious force, and this permits Us to hope that men will be drawn by a right conscience and a sense of duty to advance the real interests of human society. That this goal may be realized in the fullest sense--that is, with the triumph of the kingdom of truth, justice, peace, and charity--We exhort all Our children in Christ to be "of one heart and one soul" [Acts 4:32] and to pour out ardent prayers in October to our Queen in heaven and our loving Mother, reflecting upon the words of the Apostle: "In all things we suffer tribulation, but we are not distressed; we are sore pressed, but we are not destitute; we endure persecution, but we are not forsaken; we are cast down, but we do not perish; always bearing about in our body the dying of Jesus, so that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in our

bodily frame." [2 Cor. 4:8-10]

20. Before We conclude this Encyclical We also wish to ask you, Venerable Brethren, to recite Mary's rosary through the month of October with particular devotion, and to entreat the Virgin Mother of God in suppliant prayer, for another intention which is dear to Our heart: that the Roman Synod may bring many blessings and benefits upon this city; that the forthcoming Ecumenical Council, in which you will participate by your presence and your advice, will add wondrous growth to the universal Church; and that the renewed vigor of all the Christian virtues which We hope this Council will produce will also serve as an invitation and incentive to reunion for Our Brethren and children who are separated from this Apostolic See.

21. In this fond hope, We lovingly impart the Apostolic Blessing to each and every one of you, Venerable Brethren, to the flocks entrusted to your care, and to those individuals especially who will respond to Our entreaties in a devout and zealous spirit.

22. Given at Rome, in St. Peter's, on the 26th day of September, in the year 1959, the first of Our Pontificate.

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Christi Matri

On Praying the Rosary During the Month of October

Encyclical of Pope Paul VI

September 15, 1966

To Our Venerable Brothers the Patriarchs, Primates, Archbishops, Bishops and other Local Ordinaries in Peace and Communion with the Apostolic See.

Venerable Brothers, Health and Apostolic Benediction.

It is a solemn custom of the faithful during the month of October to weave the prayers of the Rosary into mystical garlands for the Mother of Christ. Following in the footsteps of Our predecessors, We heartily approve this, and We call upon all the sons of the church to offer special devotions to the Most Blessed Virgin this year. For the danger of a more serious and extensive calamity hangs over the human family and has increased, especially in parts of eastern Asia where a bloody and hard-fought war is raging. So We feel most urgently that We must once again do what We can to safeguard peace. We are also disturbed by what We know to be going on in other areas, such as the growing nuclear armaments race, the senseless nationalism, the racism, the obsession for revolution, the separations imposed upon citizens, the nefarious plots, the slaughter of innocent people. All of these can furnish material for the greatest calamity.

2. Like Our immediate predecessors, We seem to have received a special task from God in His providence to work patiently and constantly to preserve and strengthen peace. This task, as is evident, arises from the fact that We have been entrusted with the governing of the whole Church, which, as a "sign lifted up to the nations," [Cf. Is 11. 12] does not serve political ends but rather must bring the truth and grace of Jesus Christ, its divine Founder, to mankind.

3. Indeed, from the very beginning of Our apostolic ministry, We have omitted no effort to further the cause of peace in the world through prayers, entreaties and exhortations. As you well remember, last year We flew to North America to speak about the most desirable blessing of peace at the General Assembly of the United Nations, before a very distinguished audience representing almost every nation. [Cf. TPS XI, 47-57] We warned against allowing some to be inferior to others, and against allowing some to attack others. Instead, all should devote their efforts and zeal to the establishment of peace. Even afterwards, moved by apostolic concern, We did not stop urging those upon whom this great matter depends to ward off from mankind the frightful disaster that might result.

4. Now once again We raise Our voice "with a loud cry and with tears," [Heb 5.7] urgently beseeching those who rule over nations to do everything they can to see to it that the conflagration spreads no farther but rather is completely extinguished. We do not doubt that all men who want what is right and honorable--whatever their race, color, religion and social class--feel the same as We do.
5. Therefore, let all those responsible bring about the necessary conditions for the laying down of arms before the possibility of doing so is taken away by the pressure of events. Those in whose hands rests the safety of the human race should realize that in this day and age they have a very grave obligation in conscience. Mindful of their own nation, of the world, of God and history, let them examine their own consciences. Let them realize that in the future their names will be blessed if they wisely succeed in complying with this exhortation.
6. In the name of the Lord We cry out to them to stop. Men must come together and get down to sincere negotiations. Things must be settled now, even at the cost of some loss of inconvenience, for later they may have to be settled at the cost of immense harm and enormous slaughter that cannot even be imagined now. But this peace must be based on justice and freedom for mankind, and must take into account the rights of individuals and communities. Otherwise it will be fluid and unstable.
7. As We say all this with deep emotion and an anxious heart, it is only right for Us to do as Our supreme pastoral care urges, and ask for help from heaven. Peace, which "is such a great good that even among earthly, mortal things, there is nothing more pleasant to hear, nothing more ardently desired, and finally nothing better to be found," [St. Augustine, *The City of God*, 19. 11: PL 41. 637] has to be sought from Him who is the Prince of Peace. [Is 9. 6] But since the Church, in uncertain and anxious times, has been accustomed to have recourse to that most ready intercessor, her Mother Mary, We have good reason to direct Our own attention and yours, venerable brethren, and that of all the Christian faithful, to her. For as St. Irenaeus says, she "has become the cause of 180 salvation for the whole human race." [Adversus Haereses 3. 22: PG 7. 959]
8. Nothing seems more appropriate and valuable to Us than to have the prayers of the whole Christian family rise to the Mother of God, who is invoked as the Queen of Peace, begging her to pour forth abundant gifts of her maternal goodness in midst of so many great trials and hardships. We want constant and devout prayers to be offered to her whom We declared Mother of the Church, its spiritual parent, during the celebration of the Second Vatican Council, thereby winning the applause of the Fathers and of the Catholic world, and confirming a point of traditional doctrine. For the Mother of the Savior is, as St. Augustine teaches, "surely the mother of His members," [De Sanct. virg. 6: PL 40. 399] and St. Anselm, to mention only one other, agrees with him in these words: "What could ever be deemed more suitable than for you to be the mother of those whose father and brother Christ deigned to become?" [Or. 47: PL 158. 945] She was called "most truly the mother of the Church" by Our predecessor Leo XIII. [Encyc. Letter [Adjutricem populi christiani](#), Sept. 5, 1895: Acta Leon. 15, 1896, p. 302] Hence We have good reason to place our trust in her in the midst of this terrible disorder.
9. If evils increase, the devotion of the People of God should also increase. And so, venerable brothers, We want you to take the lead in urging and encouraging people to pray ardently to our

most merciful mother Mary by saying the Rosary during the month of October, as We have already indicated. This prayer is well-suited to the devotion of the People of God, most pleasing to the Mother of God and most effective in gaining heaven's blessings. The Second Vatican Council recommended use of the Rosary to all the sons of the Church, not in express words but in unmistakable fashion in this phrase: "Let them value highly the pious practices and exercises directed to the Blessed Virgin and approved over the centuries by the magisterium." [Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, no. 67 [cf. TPS X, 399]]

10. As the history of the Church makes clear, this very fruitful way of praying is not only efficacious in warding off evils and preventing calamities, but is also of great help in fostering Christian life. "It nourishes the Catholic faith which readily takes on new life from a timely commentary on the sacred mysteries, and it turns minds toward the truths that have been taught us by God." [Pius XI, Encyc. Letter [Ingravescentibus malis](#), Sept. 29, 1937: AAS 29 (1937), 378]

11. And so during the month of October, dedicated to Our Lady of the Rosary, prayers and petitions should be increased, so that through her intercession the dawn of true peace may shine forth to men. This means true religious peace too, for unfortunately, not everyone is allowed to profess his religion freely in this age. In particular, We want October 4th--the day on which, as We mentioned earlier, We went last year to the United Nations for the sake of peace--to be celebrated throughout the whole Catholic world this year as a Day of Prayer for Peace. It will be up to you, venerable brethren, in the light of your own commendable devotion and on the basis of the obvious importance of this matter, to prescribe sacred ceremonies in which priests, religious and the faithful--especially boys and girls in the flower of their innocence, and the sick and others who are suffering--can all ask the help of the Mother of God and of the Church.

12. On that day We Ourselves will go to St. Peter's Basilica, to the tomb of the Prince of the Apostles, to offer special prayers to the Virgin Mother of God, protector of Christians and mediator for peace. In this way heaven will be moved, in a sense, by the one voice of the Church resounding from all the continents on the earth. For as St. Augustine says, "Amid the various languages of men, the faith of the heart speaks one tongue." [Enarr. in Ps. 54. 11: PL 36. 636]

13. Look down with maternal clemency, Most Blessed Virgin, upon all your children. Consider the anxiety of bishops who fear that their flocks will be tormented by a terrible storm of evils. Heed the anguish of so many people, fathers and mothers of families who are uncertain about their future and beset by hardships and cares. Soothe the minds of those at war and inspire them with "thoughts of peace." Through your intercession, may God, the avenger of injuries, turn to mercy. May He give back to nations the tranquillity they seek and bring them to a lasting age of genuine prosperity.

14. With confidence that the exalted Mother of God will graciously hear Our humble prayer, We lovingly impart the apostolic blessing to you, venerable brethren, and to the clergy and people committed to your care.

Given at St. Peter's, Rome, on the 15th day of September, in the year 1966, the fourth of Our pontificate.

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Marialis Cultus

Apostolic Exhortation For The Right Ordering And Development Of Devotion To The Blessed Virgin Mary

Encyclical of Pope Paul VI

February 2, 1974

To All Bishops in Peace and Communion with the Apostolic See Venerable Brothers: Health and the Apostolic Blessing: From the moment when we were called to the See of Peter, we have constantly striven to enhance devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, not only with the intention of interpreting the sentiments of the Church and our own personal inclination but also because, as is well known, this devotion forms a very noble part of the whole sphere of that sacred worship in which there intermingle the highest expressions of wisdom and of religion[1] and which is therefore the primary task of the People of God.

1) Cf. Lactantius, *Divinae Institutiones* IV, 3, 6-10: CSEL 19, p. 279.

Precisely with a view to this task, we have always favored and encouraged the great work of liturgical reform promoted by the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council; and it has certainly come about not without a particular design of divine Providence that the first conciliar document which together with the venerable Fathers we approved and signed in Spiritu Sancto was the Constitution *Sacrosanctum concilium*. The purpose of this document was precisely to restore and enhance the liturgy and to make more fruitful the participation of the faithful in the sacred mysteries.[2] From that time onwards, many acts of our pontificate have been directed towards the improvement of divine worship, as is demonstrated by the fact that we have promulgated in these recent years numerous books of the Roman Rite, restored according to the principles and norms of the same Council. For this we profoundly thank the Lord, the giver of all good things, and we are grateful to the episcopal conferences and individual bishops who in various ways have collaborated with us in the preparation of these books.

2) Cf. II Vatican Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 1-3, 11, 21, 48: AAS 56 (1964), pp. 97-98, 102-103, 105-106, 113.

We contemplate with joy and gratitude the work so far accomplished and the first positive results of the liturgical renewal, destined as they are to increase as this renewal comes to be understood in its basic purposes and correctly applied. At the same time we do not cease with vigilant solicitude to concern ourselves with whatever can give orderly fulfillment to the renewal of the

worship with which the Church in spirit and truth (cf. Jn. 4:24) adores the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, "venerates with special love Mary the most holy Mother of God"[3] and honors with religious devotion the memory of the martyrs and the other saints.

3) II Vatican Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 103: AAS 56 (1964), p. 125.

The development, desired by us, of devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary is an indication of the Church's genuine piety. This devotion fits--as we have indicated above--into the only worship that is rightly called "Christian," because it takes its origin and effectiveness from Christ, finds its complete expression in Christ, and leads through Christ in the Spirit to the Father. In the sphere of worship this devotion necessarily reflects God's redemptive plan, in which a special form of veneration is appropriate to the singular place which Mary occupies in that plan.[4] Indeed every authentic development of Christian worship is necessarily followed by a fitting increase of veneration for the Mother of the Lord. Moreover, the history of piety shows how "the various forms of devotion towards the Mother of God that the Church has approved within the limits of wholesome and orthodox doctrine"[5] have developed in harmonious subordination to the worship of Christ, and have gravitated towards this worship as to their natural and necessary point of reference. The same is happening in our own time. The Church's reflection today on the mystery of Christ and on her own nature has led her to find at the root of the former and as a culmination of the latter the same figure of a woman: the Virgin Mary, the Mother of Christ and the Mother of the Church. And the increased knowledge of Mary's mission has become joyful veneration of her and adoring respect for the wise plan of God, who has placed within His family (the Church), as in every home, the figure of a Woman, who in a hidden manner and in a spirit of service watches over that family "and carefully looks after it until the glorious day of the Lord." [6]

4) Cf. II Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, 66: AAS 57 (1965), p. 65.5) Ibid.6) Votive Mass of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church, Preface.

In our time, the changes that have occurred in social behavior, people's sensibilities, manners of expression in art and letters and in the forms of social communication have also influenced the manifestations of religious sentiment. Certain practices of piety that not long ago seemed suitable for expressing the religious sentiment of individuals and of Christian communities seem today inadequate or unsuitable because they are linked with social and cultural patterns of the past. On the other hand, in many places people are seeking new ways of expressing the unchangeable relationship of creatures with their Creator, of children with their Father. In some people this may cause temporary confusion. But anyone who with trust in God reflects upon these phenomena discovers that many tendencies of modern piety (for example, the interiorization of religious sentiment) are meant to play their part in the development of Christian piety in general and devotion to the Blessed Virgin in particular. Thus our own time, faithfully attentive to tradition and to the progress of theology and the sciences, will make its contribution of praise to her whom, according to her own prophetic words, all generations will call blessed (cf. Lk. 1:48). We therefore judge it in keeping with our apostolic service, venerable Brothers, to deal, in a sort of dialogue, with a number of themes connected with the place that the Blessed Virgin occupies in the Church's worship. These themes have already been partly touched upon by the Second Vatican Council[7] and also by ourselves,[8] but it is useful to return to them in order to remove doubts and, especially, to help the development of that devotion to the Blessed Virgin which in the Church is motivated by the Word of God and practiced in the Spirit of Christ.

7) Cf. II Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution of the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, 66-67: AAS 57 (1965), pp. 65-66, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 103: AAS 56 (1964), p. 125.8) Apostolic Exhortation, *Signum Magnum*: AAS 59 (1967), pp. 465-475.

We therefore wish to dwell upon a number of questions concerning the relationship between the sacred liturgy and devotion to the Blessed Virgin (I), to offer considerations and directives suitable for favoring the development of that devotion (II) and finally to put forward a number of reflections intended to encourage the restoration, in a dynamic and more informed manner, of the recitation of the Rosary, the practice of which was so strongly recommended by our predecessors and is so widely diffused among the Christian people (III).¹ As we prepare to discuss the place which the Blessed Virgin Mary occupies in Christian worship, we must first turn our attention to the sacred liturgy. In addition to its rich doctrinal content, the liturgy has an incomparable pastoral effectiveness and a recognized exemplary value for the other forms of worship. We would have liked to take into consideration the various liturgies of the East and the West, but for the purpose of this document we shall dwell almost exclusively on the books of the Roman Rite. In fact, in accordance with the practical norms issued by the Second Vatican Council,[9] it is this Rite alone which has been the object of profound renewal. This is true also in regard to expressions of veneration for Mary. This Rite therefore deserves to be carefully considered and evaluated.

9) Cf. II Vatican Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 3: AAS 56 (I[964]), p. 98.

2. The reform of the Roman liturgy presupposed a careful restoration of its General Calendar. This Calendar is arranged in such a way as to give fitting prominence to the celebration on appropriate days of the work of salvation. It distributes throughout the year the whole mystery of Christ, from the Incarnation to the expectation of His return in glory,[10] and thus makes it possible in a more organic and closely-knit fashion to include the commemoration of Christ's Mother in the annual cycle of the mysteries of her Son.

10) Cf. II Vatican Council, *ibid.*, 102: AAS 56 (1964), p. 125.

3. For example, during Advent there are many liturgical references to Mary besides the Solemnity of December 8, which is a joint celebration of the Immaculate Conception of Mary, of the basic preparation (cf. Is. 11:1, 10) for the coming of the Savior and of the happy beginning of the Church without spot or wrinkle.[11] Such liturgical references are found especially on the days from December 17 to 24, and more particularly on the Sunday before Christmas, which recalls the ancient prophecies concerning the Virgin Mother and the Messiah[12] and includes readings from the Gospel concerning the imminent birth of Christ and His precursor.[13]

11) Cf. Roman Missal restored by Decree of the Sacred Ecumenical II Vatican Council, promulgated by authority of Pope Paul VI typical edition, MCMLXX, 8 December, Preface.12) Roman Missal, restored by Decree of the Sacred Ecumenical II Vatican Council promulgated by authority of Pope Paul VI, *Orio Lectionum Missae*. typical edition MCMLXIX, p. 8, First Reading (Year A: Is 7:10-14: "Behold a Virgin shall conceive"; Year B: 2 Sam 7:1-15: 8b-11. 16: "The throne of David shall be established for ever before the face of the Lord"; Year C: Mic 5:2-5a [Heb 1-4a]: "Out of you will be born for me the one who is to rule over Israel").13) *Ibid.*, p. 8,

Gospel (Year A: Mt 1:18-24: "Jesus is born of Mary who was espoused to Joseph. the son of David"; Year B: Lk 1:26-38: "You are to conceive and bear a son"; Year C: Lk 1:39-45: "Why should I be honoured with a visit from the Mother of my Lord?").

4. In this way the faithful, living in the liturgy the spirit of Advent, by thinking about the inexpressible love with which the Virgin Mother awaited her Son,[14] are invited to take her as a model and to prepare themselves to meet the Savior who is to come. They must be "vigilant in prayer and joyful in...praise." [15] We would also remark that the Advent liturgy, by linking the awaiting of the Messiah and the awaiting of the glorious return of Christ with the admirable commemoration of His Mother, presents a happy balance in worship. This balance can be taken as a norm for preventing any tendency (as has happened at times in certain forms of popular piety) to separate devotion to the Blessed Virgin from its necessary point of reference--Christ. It also ensures that this season, as liturgy experts have noted, should be considered as a time particularly suited to devotion to the Mother of the Lord. This is an orientation that we confirm and which we hope to see accepted and followed everywhere.

14) Cf. Roman Missal, Advent Preface, II. 15) Roman Missal, *ibid.*

5. The Christmas season is a prolonged commemoration of the divine, virginal and salvific motherhood of her whose "inviolable virginity brought the Savior into the world." [16] In fact, on the Solemnity of the Birth of Christ the Church both adores the Savior and venerates His glorious Mother. On the Epiphany, when she celebrates the universal call to salvation, the Church contemplates the Blessed Virgin, the true Seat of Wisdom and true Mother of the King, who presents to the Wise Men, for their adoration, the Redeemer of all peoples (cf. Mt. 2:11). On the Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph (the Sunday within the octave of Christmas) the Church meditates with profound reverence upon the holy life led in the house at Nazareth by Jesus, the Son of God and Son of Man, Mary His Mother, and Joseph the just man (cf. Mt. 1:19).

16) Roman Missal, Eucharistic Prayer I, Communicantes for Christmas and its octave.

In the revised ordering of the Christmas period it seems to us that the attention of all should be directed towards the restored Solemnity of Mary the holy Mother of God. This celebration, placed on January 1 in conformity with the ancient indication of the liturgy of the City of Rome, is meant to commemorate the part played by Mary in this mystery of salvation. It is meant also to exalt the singular dignity which this mystery brings to the "holy Mother...through whom we were found worthy to receive the Author of life." [17] It is likewise a fitting occasion for renewing adoration of the newborn Prince of Peace, for listening once more to the glad tidings of the angels (cf. Lk. 2:14), and for imploring from God, through the Queen of Peace, the supreme gift of peace. It is for this reason that, in the happy concurrence of the Octave of Christmas and the first day of the year, we have instituted the World Day of Peace, an occasion that is gaining increasing support and already bringing forth fruits of peace in the hearts of many.

17) Roman Missal, 1 January, Entry antiphon and Collect.

6. To the two solemnities already mentioned (the Immaculate Conception and the Divine Motherhood) should be added the ancient and venerable celebrations of March 25 and August 15. For the Solemnity of the Incarnation of the Word, in the Roman Calendar the ancient title--the

Annunciation of the Lord--has been deliberately restored, but the feast was and is a joint one of Christ and of the Blessed Virgin: of the Word, who becomes "Son of Mary" (Mk. 6:3), and of the Virgin, who becomes Mother of God. With regard to Christ, the East and the West, in the inexhaustible riches of their liturgies, celebrate this solemnity as the commemoration of the salvific "fiat" of the Incarnate Word, who, entering the world, said: "God, here I am! I am coming to obey Your will" (cf. Heb. 10:7; Ps. 39:8-9). They commemorate it as the beginning of the redemption and of the indissoluble and wedded union of the divine nature with human nature in the one Person of the Word. With regard to Mary, these liturgies celebrate it as a feast of the new Eve, the obedient and faithful virgin, who with her generous "fiat" (cf. Lk. 1:38) became through the working of the Spirit the Mother of God, but also the true Mother of the living, and, by receiving into her womb the one Mediator (cf. 1 Tm. 2:5), became the true Ark of the Covenant and true Temple of God. These liturgies celebrate it as a culminating moment in the salvific dialogue between God and man, and as a commemoration of the Blessed Virgin's free consent and cooperation in the plan of redemption. The solemnity of August 15 celebrates the glorious Assumption of Mary into heaven. It is a feast of her destiny of fullness and blessedness, of the glorification of her immaculate soul and of her virginal body, of her perfect configuration to the Risen Christ, a feast that sets before the eyes of the Church and of all mankind the image and the consoling proof of the fulfillment of their final hope, namely, that this full glorification is the destiny of all those whom Christ has made His brothers, having "flesh and blood in common with them" (Heb. 2:14; cf. Gal. 4:4). The Solemnity of the Assumption is prolonged in the celebration of the Queenship of the Blessed Virgin Mary, which occurs seven days later. On this occasion we contemplate her who, seated beside the King of ages, shines forth as Queen and intercedes as Mother.[18] These four solemnities, therefore, mark with the highest liturgical rank the main dogmatic truths concerning the handmaid of the Lord.

18) Cf. Roman Missal, 22 August, Collect.

7. After the solemnities just mentioned, particular consideration must be given to those celebrations that commemorate salvific events in which the Blessed Virgin was closely associated with her Son. Such are the feasts of the Nativity of Our Lady (September 8), "the hope of the entire world and the dawn of salvation"[19]; and the Visitation (May 31), in which the liturgy recalls the "Blessed Virgin Mary carrying her Son within her,"[20] and visiting Elizabeth to offer charitable assistance and to proclaim the mercy of God the Savior.[21] Then there is the commemoration of Our Lady of Sorrows (September 15), a fitting occasion for reliving a decisive moment in the history of salvation and for venerating, together with the Son "lifted up on the cross, His suffering Mother." [22]

19) Roman Missal, 8 September, Prayer after Communion .20) Roman Missal, 31 May, Collect.21) Cf. *ibid.*, Collect and Prayer over the gifts.22) Cf. Roman Missal, 15 September, Collect.

The feast of February 2, which has been given back its ancient name, the Presentation of the Lord, should also be considered as a joint commemoration of the Son and of the Mother, if we are fully to appreciate its rich content. It is the celebration of a mystery of salvation accomplished by Christ, a mystery with which the Blessed Virgin was intimately associated as the Mother of the Suffering Servant of Yahweh, as the one who performs a mission belonging to ancient Israel, and as the model for the new People of God, which is ever being tested in its faith and hope by suffering and persecution (cf. Lk. 2:21-35).8. The restored Roman Calendar gives particular prominence to the celebrations listed above, but it also includes other kinds of commemorations

connected with local devotions and which have acquired a wider popularity and interest (e.g., February 11, Our Lady of Lourdes; August 5, the Dedication of the Basilica of St. Mary Major). Then there are others, originally celebrated by particular religious families but which today, by reason of the popularity they have gained, can truly be considered ecclesial (e.g., July 16, Our Lady of Mount Carmel; October 7, Our Lady of the Rosary). There are still others which, apart from their apocryphal content, present lofty and exemplary values and carry on venerable traditions having their origin especially in the East (e.g., the Immaculate Heart of the Blessed Virgin, celebrated on the Saturday following the second Sunday after Pentecost).⁹ Nor must one forget that the General Roman Calendar does not include all celebrations in honor of the Blessed Virgin. Rather, it is for individual Calendars to include, with fidelity to liturgical norms but with sincere endorsement, the Marian feasts proper to the different local Churches. Lastly, it should be noted that frequent commemorations of the Blessed Virgin are possible through the use of the Saturday Masses of our Lady. This is an ancient and simple commemoration and one that is made very adaptable and varied by the flexibility of the modern Calendar and the number of formulas provided by the Missal.¹⁰ In this Apostolic Exhortation we do not intend to examine the whole content of the new Roman Missal. But by reason of the work of evaluation that we have undertaken to carry out in regard to the revised books of the Roman Rite,[23] we would like to mention some of the aspects and themes of the Missal. In the first place, we are pleased to note how the Eucharistic Prayers of the Missal, in admirable harmony with the Eastern liturgies,[24] contain a significant commemoration of the Blessed Virgin. For example, the ancient Roman Canon, which commemorates the Mother of the Lord in terms full of doctrine and devotional inspiration: "In union with the whole Church we honor Mary, the ever-virgin Mother of Jesus Christ our Lord and God." In a similar way the recent Eucharistic Prayer III expresses with intense supplication the desire of those praying to share with the Mother the inheritance of sons: "May he make us an everlasting gift to you [the Father] and enable us to share in the inheritance of your saints, with Mary, the Virgin Mother of God." This daily commemoration, by reason of its place at the heart of the divine Sacrifice, should be considered a particularly expressive form of the veneration that the Church pays to the "Blessed of the Most High" (cf. Lk. 1:28).

23) Cf. 1, p. 15. 24) From among the many anaphoras cf. the following which are held in special honour by the Eastern rites: Anaphora Marci Evangelistae: *Prex Eucharistica*, ed. A. Hanggi-I. Pahl, Fribourg, Editions Universitaires, 1968, p. 107; Anaphora Iacobi fratris Domini *graeca* *ibid.*, p. 257; Anaphora Iannis Chrysostomi, *ibid.*, p. 229.

11. As we examine the texts of the revised Missal we see how the great Marian themes of the Roman prayerbook have been accepted in perfect doctrinal continuity with the past. Thus, for example, we have the themes of Mary's Immaculate Conception and fullness of grace, the divine motherhood, the unblemished and fruitful virginity, the Temple of the Holy Spirit, Mary's cooperation in the work of her Son, her exemplary sanctity, merciful intercession, Assumption into heaven, maternal Queenship and many other themes. We also see how other themes, in a certain sense new ones, have been introduced in equally perfect harmony with the theological developments of the present day. Thus, for example, we have the theme of Mary and the Church, which has been inserted into the texts of the Missal in a variety of aspects, a variety that matches the many and varied relations that exist between the Mother of Christ and the Church. For example, in the celebration of the Immaculate Conception which texts recognize the beginning of the Church, the spotless Bride of Christ.[25] In the Assumption they recognize the beginning that has already been made and the image of what, for the whole Church, must still come to pass.[26] In the mystery of Mary's motherhood they confess that she is the Mother of the Head and of the members--the holy Mother of God and therefore the provident Mother of the Church.[27]

25) Cf. Roman Missal, 8 December, Preface. 26) Cf. Roman Missal, 15 August, Preface. 27) Cf. Roman Missal, 1 January, Prayer after Communion.

When the liturgy turns its gaze either to the primitive Church or to the Church of our own days it always finds Mary. In the primitive Church she is seen praying with the apostles[28]; in our own day she is actively present, and the Church desires to live the mystery of Christ with her: "Grant that your Church which with Mary shared Christ's passion may be worthy to share also in his resurrection." [29] She is also seen represented as a voice of praise in unison with which the Church wishes to give glory to God: "...with her [Mary] may we always praise you." [30] And since the liturgy is worship that requires a way of living consistent with it, it asks that devotion to the Blessed Virgin should become a concrete and deeply-felt love for the Church, as is wonderfully expressed in the prayer after Communion in the Mass of September 15: "...that as we recall the sufferings shared by the Blessed Virgin Mary, we may with the Church fulfill in ourselves what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ."

28) Cf. Roman Missal, Common of the Blessed Virgin Mary, 6, Paschaltide, Collect. 29) Roman Missal, 15 September, Collect. 30) Roman Missal, 31 May Collect. On the same lines is the Preface of the Blessed Virgin Mary, II: "We do well... in celebrating the memory of the Virgin Mary... to glorify your love for us in the words of her song of thanksgiving."

12. The Lectionary is one of the books of the Roman Rite that has greatly benefited from the post-conciliar reform, by reason both of its added texts and of the intrinsic value of these texts, which contain the ever-living and efficacious word of God (cf. Heb. 4:12). This rich collection of biblical texts has made it possible to arrange the whole history of salvation in an orderly three-year cycle and to set forth more completely the mystery of Christ. The logical consequence has been that the Lectionary contains a larger number of Old and New Testament readings concerning the Blessed Virgin. This numerical increase has not however been based on random choice: only those readings have been accepted which in different ways and degrees can be considered Marian, either from the evidence of their content or from the results of careful exegesis, supported by the teachings of the magisterium or by solid Tradition. It is also right to observe that these readings occur not only on feasts of the Blessed Virgin but are read on many other occasions, for example on certain Sundays during the liturgical year, [31] in the celebration of rites that deeply concern the Christian's sacramental life and the choices confronting him, [32] as also in the joyful or sad experiences of his life on earth. [33]

31) Cf. Lectionary, III Sunday of Advent (Year C: Zeph 3:14-18a); IV Sunday of Advent (cf. above footnote 12); Sunday within the octave of Christmas (Year A, Mt 2:13-15; 19-23; Year B: Lk 2:22-40; Year C: Lk 2:41-52) II Sunday after Christmas (Jn 1:1-18) VII Sunday after Easter (Year A: Acts 1:12-14); II Sunday of the Year C: Jn 1:1-12); X Sunday of the Year (Year B: Gen 3:9-15); XIV Sunday of the Year (Year B: Mk 6:1-6). 32) Cf. Lectionary, the catechumenate and baptism of adults the Lord's Prayer (Second Reading, 2, Gal 4:4-7); Christian initiation outside the Easter Vigil (Gospel, 7, Jn 1:1-5; 9-14; 16-18); Nuptial Mass (Gospel, 7, Jn 2:1-11); Consecration of Virgins and religious profession (First Reading 7, Is 61:9-11; Gospel, 6, Mk 3:31-35; Lk 1:26-38 [cf. Ordo Consecrationis Virginum, 130; Ordo professionis religiosae, Pars altera, 145]). 33) Cf. Lectionary, For refugees and exiles (Gospel, 1, Mt 2:13-15, 19-23); In thanksgiving (First Reading, 4, Zeph 3:14-15).

13. The Liturgy of the Hours, the revised book of the Office, also contains outstanding examples of devotion to the Mother of the Lord. These are to be found in the hymns--which include several masterpieces of universal literature, such as Dante's sublime prayer to the Blessed Virgin[34]--and in the antiphons that complete the daily Office. To these lyrical invocations there has been added the well-known prayer *Sub tuum praesidium*, venerable for its antiquity and admirable for its content. Other examples occur in the prayers of intercession at Lauds and Vespers, prayers which frequently express trusting recourse to the Mother of mercy. Finally there are selections from the vast treasury of writings on our Lady composed by authors of the first Christian centuries, of the Middle Ages and of modern times.

34) Cf. *La Divina Commedia*, Paradiso XXXIII, 1-9, cf. Liturgy of the Hours, remembrance of Our Lady on Saturdays, Office of Reading, Hymn.

14. The commemoration of the Blessed Virgin occurs often in the Missal, the Lectionary and the Liturgy of the Hours--the hinges of the liturgical prayer of the Roman Rite. In the other revised liturgical books also expressions of love and suppliant veneration addressed to the Theotokos are not lacking. Thus the Church invokes her, the Mother of grace, before immersing candidates in the saving waters of baptism[35]; the Church invokes her intercession for mothers who, full of gratitude for the gift of motherhood, come to church to express their joy[36]; the Church holds her up as a model to those who follow Christ by embracing the religious life[37] or who receive the Consecration of Virgins.[38] For these people the Church asks Mary's motherly assistance.[39] The Church prays fervently to Mary on behalf of her children who have come to the hour of their death.[40] The Church asks Mary's intercession for those who have closed their eyes to the light of this world and appeared before Christ, the eternal Light[41]; and the Church, through Mary's prayers, invokes comfort upon those who in sorrow mourn with faith the departure of their loved ones.[42]

35) *Ordo baptismi parvulorum*, 48: *Ordo initiationis christianae adultorum*, 214.36) Cf. *Rituale Romanum*, Tit. VII, cap. III, *De benedictione mulieris post partum*.37) Cf. *Ordo professionis religiosae*, Pars Prior, 57 and 67.38) Cf. *Ordo consecrationis virginum*, 16.39) Cf. *Ordo professionis religiosae*, Pars Prior, 62 and 142; Pars Altera, 67 and 158; *Ordo consecrationis virginum*, 18 and 20.40) Cf. *Ordo unctionis infirmorum eorumque pastoralis curae*, 143, 146, 147, 150.41) Cf. Roman Missal, Masses for the Dead, For dead brothers and sisters, relations and benefactors, Collect.42) Cf. *Ordo exsequiarum*, 226.

15. The examination of the revised liturgical books leads us to the comforting observation that the postconciliar renewal has, as was previously desired by the liturgical movement, properly considered the Blessed Virgin in the mystery of Christ, and, in harmony with tradition, has recognized the singular place that belongs to her in Christian worship as the holy Mother of God and the worthy Associate of the Redeemer. It could not have been otherwise. If one studies the history of Christian worship, in fact, one notes that both in the East and in the West the highest and purest expressions of devotion to the Blessed Virgin have sprung from the liturgy or have been incorporated into it. We wish to emphasize the fact that the veneration which the universal Church today accords to blessed Mary is a derivation from and an extension and unceasing increase of the devotion that the Church of every age has paid to her, with careful attention to truth and with an ever watchful nobility of expression. From perennial Tradition kept alive by reason of the uninterrupted presence of the Spirit and continual attention to the Word, the Church of our time draws motives, arguments and incentives for the veneration that she pays to the

Blessed Virgin. And the liturgy, which receives approval and strength from the magisterium, is a most lofty expression and an evident proof of this living Tradition.¹⁶ In accordance with some of the guidelines of the Council's teaching on Mary and the Church, we now wish to examine more closely a particular aspect of the relationship between Mary and the liturgy--namely, Mary as a model of the spiritual attitude with which the Church celebrates and lives the divine mysteries. That the Blessed Virgin is an exemplar in this field derives from the fact that she is recognized as a most excellent exemplar of the Church in the order of faith, charity and perfect union with Christ,^[43] that is, of that interior disposition with which the Church, the beloved spouse, closely associated with her Lord, invokes Christ and through Him worships the eternal Father.^[44]

43) Cf. II Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, 63: AAS 57 (1965), p. 64.44) Cf. II Vatican Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 7: AAS 56 (1964), pp. 100; 101.

17. Mary is the attentive Virgin, who receives the word of God with faith, that faith which in her case was the gateway and path to divine motherhood, for, as Saint Augustine realized, "Blessed Mary by believing conceived Him [Jesus] whom believing she brought forth."^[45] In fact, when she received from the angel the answer to her doubt (cf. Lk. 1:34-37), "full of faith, and conceiving Christ in her mind before conceiving Him in her womb, she said, 'I am the handmaid of the Lord, let what you have said be done to me' (Lk. 1:38)."^[46] It was faith that was for her the cause of blessedness and certainty in the fulfillment of the promise: "Blessed is she who believed that the promise made her by the Lord would be fulfilled" (Lk. 1:45). Similarly, it was faith with which she, who played a part in the Incarnation and was a unique witness to it, thinking back on the events of the infancy of Christ, meditated upon these events in her heart (cf. Lk. 2:19, 51). The Church also acts in this way, especially in the liturgy, when with faith she listens, accepts, proclaims and venerates the word of God, distributes it to the faithful as the bread of life^[47] and in the light of that word examines the signs of the times and interprets and lives the events of history.

45) *Sermo* 215, 4: PL 38, 1074.46) *Ibid.*47) Cf. II Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, *Dei Verbum*, 21: AAS 58 (1966), pp. 827-828.

18. Mary is also the Virgin in prayer. She appears as such in the visit to the mother of the precursor, when she pours out her soul in expressions glorifying God, and expressions of humility, faith and hope. This prayer is the Magnificat (cf. Lk. 1:46-55), Mary's prayer par excellence, the song of the messianic times in which there mingles the joy of the ancient and the new Israel. As St. Irenaeus seems to suggest, it is in Mary's canticle that there was heard once more the rejoicing of Abraham who foresaw the Messiah (cf. Jn. 8:56)^[48] and there rang out in prophetic anticipation the voice of the Church: "In her exultation Mary prophetically declared in the name of the Church: 'My soul proclaims the glory of the Lord...'"^[49] And in fact Mary's hymn has spread far and wide and has become the prayer of the whole Church in all ages.

48) Cf. *Adversus Haereses* IV, 7, 1: PG 7, 1, 990-991; S. Ch. 100, t. II, pp. 454-458.49) Cf. *Adversus Haereses* III, 10, 2: PG 7, 1, 873; S. Ch. 34, p. 164.

At Cana, Mary appears once more as the Virgin in prayer: when she tactfully told her Son of a temporal need, she also obtained an effect of grace, namely, that Jesus, in working the first of His "signs," confirmed His disciples' faith in Him (cf. Jn. 2:1-12). Likewise, the last description of Mary's life presents her as praying. The apostles "joined in continuous prayer, together with

several women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers" (Acts 1:14). We have here the prayerful presence of Mary in the early Church and in the Church throughout all ages, for, having been assumed into heaven, she has not abandoned her mission of intercession and salvation.[50] The title Virgin in prayer also fits the Church, which day by day presents to the Father the needs of her children, "praises the Lord unceasingly and intercedes for the salvation of the world." [51]

50) Cf. II Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, 62: AAS 57 (1965), p. 63.51) II Vatican Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 83: AAS 56 (1964), p. 121.

19. Mary is also the Virgin-Mother--she who "believing and obeying...brought forth on earth the Father's Son. This she did, not knowing man but overshadowed by the Holy Spirit." [52] This was a miraculous motherhood, set up by God as the type and exemplar of the fruitfulness of the Virgin-Church, which "becomes herself a mother.... For by her preaching and by baptism she brings forth to a new and immortal life children who are conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of God." [53] The ancient Fathers rightly taught that the Church prolongs in the sacrament of Baptism the virginal motherhood of Mary. Among such references we like to recall that of our illustrious predecessor, Saint Leo the Great, who in a Christmas homily says: "The origin which [Christ] took in the womb of the Virgin He has given to the baptismal font: He has given to water what He had given to His Mother--the power of the Most High and the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit (cf. Lk. 1:35), which was responsible for Mary's bringing forth the Savior, has the same effect, so that water may regenerate the believer." [54] If we wished to go to liturgical sources, we could quote the beautiful *Illatio* of the Mozarabic liturgy: "The former [Mary] carried Life in her womb; the latter [the Church] bears Life in the waters of baptism. In Mary's members Christ was formed; in the waters of the Church Christ is put on." [55]

52) II Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, 63: AAS 57 (1965), p. 64.53) Ibid., 64: AAS 57 (1965), p. 64.54) *Tractatus XXV* (In *Nativitate Domini*), 5: CCL 138, p. 123; S. Ch. 22 bis, p. 132; cf. also *Tractatus XXIX* (In *Nativitate Domini*), I: CCL *ibid.*, p. 147; S. Ch *ibid.*, p. 178; *Tractatus LXIII* (De *Passione Domini*) 6: CCL *ibid.*, p. 386; S. Ch. 74, p. 82.55) M. Ferotin, *Le Liber Mozarabicus Sacramentorum*", col. 56.

20. Mary is, finally, the Virgin presenting offerings. In the episode of the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple (cf. Lk. 2:22-35), the Church, guided by the Spirit, has detected, over and above the fulfillment of the laws regarding the offering of the firstborn (cf. Ex. 13:11-16) and the purification of the mother (cf. Lv. 12:6-8), a mystery of salvation related to the history of salvation. That is, she has noted the continuity of the fundamental offering that the Incarnate Word made to the Father when He entered the world (cf. Heb. 15:5-7). The Church has seen the universal nature of salvation proclaimed, for Simeon, greeting in the Child the light to enlighten the peoples and the glory of the people Israel (cf. Lk. 2:32), recognized in Him the Messiah, the Savior of all. The Church has understood the prophetic reference to the Passion of Christ: the fact that Simeon's words, which linked in one prophecy the Son as "the sign of contradiction" (Lk. 2:34) and the Mother, whose soul would be pierced by a sword (cf. Lk. 2:35), came true on Calvary. A mystery of salvation, therefore, that in its various aspects orients the episode of the Presentation in the Temple to the salvific event of the cross. But the Church herself, in particular from the Middle Ages onwards, has detected in the heart of the Virgin taking her Son to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord (cf. Lk. 2:22) a desire to make an offering, a desire that exceeds the ordinary meaning of the rite. A witness to this intuition is found in the loving prayer of Saint

Bernard: "Offer your Son, holy Virgin, and present to the Lord the blessed fruit of your womb. Offer for the reconciliation of us all the holy Victim which is pleasing to God." [56]

56) In Purificatione B. Mariae, Sermo III, 2: PL 183, 370; Sancti Bernardi Opera, ed. J. Leclercq-H. Rochais, vol. IV, Rome 1966, p. 342.

This union of the Mother and the Son in the work of redemption[57] reaches its climax on Calvary, where Christ "offered himself as the perfect sacrifice to God" (Heb. 9:14) and where Mary stood by the cross (cf. Jn. 19:25), "suffering grievously with her only-begotten Son. There she united herself with a maternal heart to His sacrifice, and lovingly consented to the immolation of this victim which she herself had brought forth"[58] and also was offering to the eternal Father.[59] To perpetuate down the centuries the Sacrifice of the Cross, the divine Savior instituted the Eucharistic Sacrifice, the memorial of His death and resurrection, and entrusted it to His spouse the Church, [60] which, especially on Sundays, calls the faithful together to celebrate the Passover of the Lord until He comes again. [61] This the Church does in union with the saints in heaven and in particular with the Blessed Virgin, [62] whose burning charity and unshakeable faith she imitates.

57) Cf. II Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, Lumen Gentium, 57: AAS 57 (1965), p. 61.58) Ibid., 58: AAS 57 (1965), p. 61.59) Cf. Pius XII, Encyclical Letter Mystici Corporis: AAS 35 (1943), p. 247.60) Cf. II Vatican Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, Sacrosanctum Concilium, 47: AAS 56 (1964), p. 113.61) Ibid., 102, 106: AAS 56 (1964), pp. 125, 126.62) "...deign to remember all who have been pleasing to you throughout the ages the holy Father, Patriarchs. Prophets. Apostles... and the holy and glorious Mother of God and all the saints... may they remember our misery and poverty, and together with us may they offer you this great and unbloody sacrifice": Anaphora Iacobi fratris Domini syriaca: Prex Eucharistica ed. A. Hanggi-l. Pahl, Fribourg, Editions Universitaires, 1968, p. 274.

21. Mary is not only an example for the whole Church in the exercise of divine worship but is also, clearly, a teacher of the spiritual life for individual Christians. The faithful at a very early date began to look to Mary and to imitate her in making their lives an act of worship of God and making their worship a commitment of their lives. As early as the fourth century, St. Ambrose, speaking to the people, expressed the hope that each of them would have the spirit of Mary in order to glorify God: "May the heart of Mary be in each Christian to proclaim the greatness of the Lord; may her spirit be in everyone to exult in God." [63] But Mary is above all the example of that worship that consists in making one's life an offering to God. This is an ancient and ever new doctrine that each individual can hear again by heeding the Church's teaching, but also by heeding the very voice of the Virgin as she, anticipating in herself the wonderful petition of the Lord's Prayer--"Your will be done" (Mt. 6:10)--replied to God's messenger: "I am the handmaid of the Lord. Let what you have said be done to me" (Lk. 1:38). And Mary's "yes" is for all Christians a lesson and example of obedience to the will of the Father, which is the way and means of one's own sanctification.

63) Expositio Evangelii secundum Lucam, 11, 26: CSEL 32, IV, p. 55; S. Ch. 45, pp. 83-84.

22. It is also important to note how the Church expresses in various effective attitudes of devotion the many relationships that bind her to Mary: in profound veneration, when she reflects

on the singular dignity of the Virgin who, through the action of the Holy Spirit, has become Mother of the Incarnate Word, in burning love, when she considers the spiritual motherhood of Mary towards all members of the Mystical Body; in trusting invocation, when she experiences the intercession of her advocate and helper[64]; in loving service, when she sees in the humble handmaid of the Lord the queen of mercy and the mother of grace; in zealous imitation, when she contemplates the holiness and virtues of her who is "full of grace" (Lk. 1:28); in profound wonder, when she sees in her, "as in a faultless model, that which she herself wholly desires and hopes to be"[65]; in attentive study, when she recognizes in the associate of the Redeemer, who already shares fully in the fruits of the Paschal Mystery, the prophetic fulfillment of her own future, until the day on which, when she has been purified of every spot and wrinkle (cf. Eph. 5:27), she will become like a bride arrayed for the bridegroom, Jesus Christ (cf. Rev. 21:2).

64) Cf. II Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, 62: AAS 57 (1965), p. 63. 65) II Vatican Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 103: AAS 56 (1964), p. 125.

23. Therefore, venerable Brothers, as we consider the piety that the liturgical Tradition of the universal Church and the renewed Roman Rite expresses towards the holy Mother of God, and as we remember that the liturgy through its pre-eminent value as worship constitutes the golden norm for Christian piety, and finally as we observe how the Church when she celebrates the sacred mysteries assumes an attitude of faith and love similar to that of the Virgin, we realize the rightness of the exhortation that the Second Vatican Council addresses to all the children of the Church, namely "that the cult, especially the liturgical cult, of the Blessed Virgin be generously fostered." [66] This is an exhortation that we would like to see accepted everywhere without reservation and put into zealous practice.

66) II Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, 67: AAS 57 (1965), pp. 65-66.

24. The Second Vatican Council also exhorts us to promote other forms of piety side by side with liturgical worship, especially those recommended by the magisterium. [67] However, as is well known, the piety of the faithful and their veneration of the Mother of God has taken on many forms according to circumstances of time and place the different sensibilities of peoples and their different cultural traditions. Hence it is that the forms in which this devotion is expressed, being subject to the ravages of time, show the need for a renewal that will permit them to substitute elements that are transient, to emphasize the elements that are ever new and to incorporate the doctrinal data obtained from theological reflection and the proposals of the Church's magisterium. This shows the need for episcopal conferences, local churches, religious families and communities of the faithful to promote a genuine creative activity and at the same time to proceed to a careful revision of expressions and exercises of piety directed towards the Blessed Virgin. We would like this revision to be respectful of wholesome tradition and open to the legitimate requests of the people of our time. It seems fitting therefore, venerable Brothers, to put forward some principles for action in this field.

67) Cf. *ibid.*

25. In the first place it is supremely fitting that exercises of piety directed towards the Virgin Mary should clearly express the Trinitarian and Christological note that is intrinsic and essential to them. Christian worship in fact is of itself worship offered to the Father and to the Son and to the

Holy Spirit, or, as the liturgy puts it, to the Father through Christ in the Spirit. From this point of view worship is rightly extended, though in a substantially different way, first and foremost and in a special manner, to the Mother of the Lord and then to the saints, in whom the Church proclaims the Paschal Mystery, for they have suffered with Christ and have been glorified with Him.[68] In the Virgin Mary everything is relative to Christ and dependent upon Him. It was with a view to Christ that God the Father from all eternity chose her to be the all-holy Mother and adorned her with gifts of the Spirit granted to no one else. Certainly genuine Christian piety has never failed to highlight the indissoluble link and essential relationship of the Virgin to the divine Savior.[69] Yet it seems to us particularly in conformity with the spiritual orientation of our time, which is dominated and absorbed by the "question of Christ,"[70] that in the expressions of devotion to the Virgin the Christological aspect should have particular prominence. It likewise seems to us fitting that these expressions of devotion should reflect God's plan, which laid down "with one single decree the origin of Mary and the Incarnation of the divine Wisdom." [71] This will without doubt contribute to making piety towards the Mother of Jesus more solid, and to making it an effective instrument for attaining to full "knowledge of the Son of God, until we become the perfect man, fully mature with the fullness of Christ himself" (Eph. 4:13). It will also contribute to increasing the worship due to Christ Himself, since, according to the perennial mind of the Church authoritatively repeated in our own day, [72] "what is given to the handmaid is referred to the Lord; thus what is given to the Mother redounds to the Son; ...and thus what is given as humble tribute to the Queen becomes honor rendered to the King." [73]

68) Cf. II Vatican Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 104: AAS 56 (1964), pp. 125-126. 69) Cf. II Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, 66: AAS 57 (1965), p. 65. 70) Cf. Paul VI, Talk of 24 April 1970, in the church of Our Lady of Bonaria in Cagliari: AAS 62 (1970), p. 300. 71) Pius IX, Apostolic Letter *Ineffabilis Deus*: Pii IX Pontificis Maximi Acta I, 1 Rome 1854, p. 599. Cf. also V. Sardi, *La solenne definizione del dogma dell'Immacolato concepimento di Maria Sanctissima. Atti e documenti...* Rome 1904-1905, vol. II, p. 302. 72) Cf. II Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, 66: AAS 57 (1965), p. 65. 73) S. Ildephonsus, *De virginitate perpetua sanctae Mariae*, chapter XII: PL 96, 108.

26. It seems to us useful to add to this mention of the Christological orientation of devotion to the Blessed Virgin a reminder of the fittingness of giving prominence in this devotion to one of the essential facts of the Faith: the Person and work of the Holy Spirit. Theological reflection and the liturgy have in fact noted how the sanctifying intervention of the Spirit in the Virgin of Nazareth was a culminating moment of the Spirit's action in the history of salvation. Thus, for example, some Fathers and writers of the Church attributed to the work of the Spirit the original holiness of Mary, who was as it were "fashioned by the Holy Spirit into a kind of new substance and new creature." [74] Reflecting on the Gospel texts-- "The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will cover you with his shadow" (Lk. 1:35) and "[Mary] was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit.... She has conceived what is in her by the Holy Spirit" (Mt. 1:18, 20)-- they saw in the Spirit's intervention an action that consecrated and made fruitful Mary's virginity [75] and transformed her into the "Abode of the King" or "Bridal Chamber of the Word," [76] the "Temple" or "Tabernacle of the Lord," [77] the "Ark of the Covenant" or "the Ark of Holiness," [78] titles rich in biblical echoes. Examining more deeply still the mystery of the Incarnation, they saw in the mysterious relationship between the Spirit and Mary an aspect redolent of marriage, poetically portrayed by Prudentius: "The unwed Virgin espoused the Spirit," [79] and they called her the "Temple of the Holy Spirit," [80] an expression that emphasizes the sacred character of the Virgin, now the permanent dwelling of the Spirit of God.

Delving deeply into the doctrine of the Paraclete, they saw that from Him as from a spring there flowed forth the fullness of grace (cf. Lk. 1:28) and the abundance of gifts that adorned her. Thus they attributed to the Spirit the faith, hope and charity that animated the Virgin's heart, the strength that sustained her acceptance of the will of God, and the vigor that upheld her in her suffering at the foot of the cross.[81] In Mary's prophetic canticle (cf. Lk. 1:46-55) they saw a special working of the Spirit who had spoken through the mouths of the prophets.[82] Considering, finally, the presence of the Mother of Jesus in the Upper Room, where the Spirit came down upon the infant Church (cf. Acts 1:12-14; 2:1-4), they enriched with new developments the ancient theme of Mary and the Church.[83] Above all they had recourse to the Virgin's intercession in order to obtain from the Spirit the capacity for engendering Christ in their own soul, as is attested to by Saint Ildephonsus in a prayer of supplication, amazing in its doctrine and prayerful power: "I beg you, holy Virgin, that I may have Jesus from the Holy Spirit, by whom you brought Jesus forth. May my soul receive Jesus through the Holy Spirit by whom your flesh conceived Jesus.... May I love Jesus in the Holy Spirit in whom you adore Jesus as Lord and gaze upon Him as your Son." [84]

74) Cf. II Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, 56: AAS 57 (1965), p. 60 and the authors mentioned in note 176 of the document. 75) Cf. St. Ambrose, *De Spiritu Sancto* II, 37-38; CSEL 79 pp. 100-101; Cassian, *De incarnatione Domini* II, chapter II: CSEL 17, pp. 247-249; St. Bede, *Homilia* I, 3: CCL 122, p. 18 and p. 20. 76) Cf. St. Ambrose, *De institutione virginis*, chapter XII, 79: PL 16 (ed. 1880), 339; *Epistula* 30, 3 and *Epistula* 42, 7: *ibid.*, 1107 and 1175 *Expositio evangelii secundum Lucam* X, 132 S. Ch. 52 p. 200; S. Proctus of Constantinople, *Oratio* I, 1 and *Oratio* V, 3: PG 65, 681 and 720; St. Basil of Seleucia, *Oratio* XXXIX, 3: PG 85, 433; St. Andrew of Crete, *Oratio* IV: PG 97, 868; St. Germanus of Constantinople, *Oratio* III, 15: PG 98, 305. 77) Cf. St. Jerome, *Adversus Iovinianum* I, 33: PL 23, 267; St. Ambrose, *Epistula* 63, 33: PL 16 (ed. 1880), 1249; *De institutione virginis*, chapter XVII, 105: *ibid.* 346; *De Spiritu Sancto* III, 79-80: CSEL 79, pp. 182-183; Sedulius, Hymn "A solis ortus cardine", verses 13-14: CSEL 10, p. 164; Hymnus *Acatistos*, Str. 23; ed. 1. B. Pitra, *Analecta Sacra* I, p. 261; St. Proctus of Constantinople, *Oratio* I, 3: PG 65, 648; *Oratio* II, 6: *Ibid.*, 700; St. Basil of Seleucia, *Oratio* IV, In *Nativitatem B. Mariae*: PG 97, 868; St. John Damascene, *Oratio* IV, 10: PG 96, 677. 78) Cf. Severus of Anthioch, *Homilia* 57; PO 8, pp. 357-358; Hesychius of Jerusalem, *Homilia de sancta Maria Deipara*, PG 93, 1464; Chrysippus of Jerusalem, *Oratio in sanctam Mariam Deiparam*, 2 PO 19, p. 338; St. Andrew of Crete, *Oratio* V: PG 97, 896; St. John Damascene, *Oratio* VI, 6: PG 96, 972. 79) *Liber Apotheosis*, verses 571-572: CCL 126, p. 97. 80) Cf. S. Isidore, *De ortu et obitu Patrum*, chapter LXVII, 111: PL 83, 148; St. Ildephonsus, *De virginitate perpetua sanctae Mariae*, chapter X: PL 96, 95; St. Bernard, In *Assumptione B. Virginis Mariae*: *Sermo* IV, 4: PL 183, 428; In *Nativitate B. Virginis Mariae*: II, *Oratio ad Deum Filium*: PL 145, 921; Antiphon "Beata Dei Genetrix Maria": *Corpus antiphonarium officii*, ed. R. J. Hesbert, Rome 1970, vol. IV, n. 6314, p. 80. 81) Cf. Paulus Diaconus, *Homilia* I, In *Assumptione B. Mariae Virginis*: PL 95, 1567; *De Assumptione sanctae Mariae Virginis*: *Paschasio Radherto trib.*, 31, 42, 57, 83: ed. A. Ripberger, in "Spicilegium Friburgense", 9, 1962, pp. 72, 76, 84, 96-97; Eadmer of Canterbury, *De excellentia Virginis Mariae*, chapters IV-V: PL 159, 562-567; St. Bernard, In *laudibus Virginis Matris*, *Homilia* IV, 3: *Sancti Bernardi Opera*, ed. J. Leclercq-H. Rochais, IV Rome 1966, pp. 49-50. 82) Cf. Origen, In *Lucam* *Homilia* VII, 3: PG 13, 1817; S. Ch. 87, p. 156; St. Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentarius in Aggacum prophetam*, chapter XIX: PG 71, 1060; St. Ambrose, *De fide* IV 9, 113-114: CSEL 78, pp. 197-198; *Expositio evangelii secundum Lucam* II,

23 and 27-28: CSEL 32, IV, pp. 53-54 and 55-56; Severianus Galbalensis, *In mundi creationem*, Oratio VI, 10: PG 56, 497-498; Antipater of Bostra, *Homilia in Sanctissimae Deiparae Annuntiationem*, 16: PG 85, 1785.83) Cf. Eadmer of Canterbury, *De excellentia Virginis Mariae*, chapter VII: PL 159, 571: St. Amedeus of Lausanne, *De Maria Virginea Matre*, *Homilia VII*: PL 188, 1337; S. Ch. 72, p. 184.84) *De virginitate perpetua sanctae mariae*, chapter XII: PL 96, 106.

27. It is sometimes said that many spiritual writings today do not sufficiently reflect the whole doctrine concerning the Holy Spirit. It is the task of specialists to verify and weigh the truth of this assertion, but it is our task to exhort everyone, especially those in the pastoral ministry and also theologians, to meditate more deeply on the working of the Holy Spirit in the history of salvation, and to ensure that Christian spiritual writings give due prominence to His life-giving action. Such a study will bring out in particular the hidden relationship between the Spirit of God and the Virgin of Nazareth, and show the influence they exert on the Church. From a more profound meditation on the truths of the Faith will flow a more vital piety.²⁸ It is also necessary that exercises of piety with which the faithful honor the Mother of the Lord should clearly show the place she occupies in the Church: "the highest place and the closest to us after Christ."^[85] The liturgical buildings of Byzantine rite, both in the architectural structure itself and in the use of images, show clearly Mary's place in the Church. On the central door of the iconostasis there is a representation of the Annunciation and in the apse an image of the glorious Theotokos. In this way one perceives how through the assent of the humble handmaid of the Lord mankind begins its return to God and sees in the glory of the all-holy Virgin the goal towards which it is journeying. The symbolism by which a church building demonstrates Mary's place in the mystery of the Church is full of significance and gives grounds for hoping that the different forms of devotion to the Blessed Virgin may everywhere be open to ecclesial perspectives.

85) II Vatican Council, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*, *Lumen Gentium*, 54: AAS 57 (1965), p. 59. Cf. Paulus VI, *Allocutio ad Patres Conciliares habita, altera exacta Concilii Oecumenici Vaticani Secundi Sessione*, 4 December 1963: AAS 56 (1964), p. 57.

The faithful will be able to appreciate more easily Mary's mission in the mystery of the Church and her preeminent place in the communion of saints if attention is drawn to the Second Vatican Council's references to the fundamental concepts of the nature of the Church as the Family of God, the People of God, the Kingdom of God and the Mystical Body of Christ.^[86] This will also bring the faithful to a deeper realization of the brotherhood which unites all of them as sons and daughters of the Virgin Mary, "who with a mother's love has cooperated in their rebirth and spiritual formation,"^[87] and as sons and daughters of the Church, since "we are born from the Church's womb we are nurtured by the Church's milk, we are given life by the Church's Spirit."^[88] They will also realize that both the Church and Mary collaborate to give birth to the Mystical Body of Christ since "both of them are the Mother of Christ, but neither brings forth the whole [body] independently of the other."^[89] Similarly the faithful will appreciate more clearly that the action of the Church in the world can be likened to an extension of Mary's concern. The active love she showed at Nazareth, in the house of Elizabeth, at Cana and on Golgotha--all salvific episodes having vast ecclesial importance--finds its extension in the Church's maternal concern that all men should come to knowledge of the truth (cf. 1 Tm. 2:4), in the Church's concern for people in lowly circumstances and for the poor and weak, and in her constant commitment to peace and social harmony, as well as in her untiring efforts to ensure that all men will share in the salvation which was merited for them by Christ's death. Thus love for the Church will become love for Mary, and vice versa, since the one cannot exist without the other, as St.

Chromatius of Aquileia observed with keen discernment: "The Church was united... in the Upper Room with Mary the Mother of Jesus and with His brethren. The Church therefore cannot be referred to as such unless it includes Mary the Mother of our Lord, together with His brethren." [90] In conclusion, therefore, we repeat that devotion to the Blessed Virgin must explicitly show its intrinsic and ecclesiological content: thus it will be enabled to revise its forms and texts in a fitting way.

86) Cf. II Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution of the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, 6, 7-8. 9-11: AAS 57 (1965), pp. 8-9, 9-12, 12-21.87) Ibid., 63: AAS 57 (1965), p. 64.88) St. Cyprian, *De Catholicae Ecclesiae unitate*, 5: CSEL 3, p. 214.89) Isaac de Stella, *Sermo LI, In Assumptione B. Mariae*: PL 194, 1863.90) *Sermo XXX*, 1: S. Ch. 164, p. 134.

29. The above considerations spring from an examination of the Virgin Mary's relationship with God--the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit--and with the Church. Following the path traced by conciliar teaching, [91] we wish to add some further guidelines from Scripture, liturgy, ecumenism and anthropology. These are to be borne in mind in any revision of exercises of piety or in the creation of new ones, in order to emphasize and accentuate the bond which unites us to her who is the Mother of Christ and our Mother in the communion of saints.

91) Cf. II Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, 66-69: AAS 57 (1965), pp. 65-67.

30. Today it is recognized as a general need of Christian piety that every form of worship should have a biblical imprint. The progress made in biblical studies, the increasing dissemination of the Sacred Scriptures, and above all the example of Tradition and the interior action of the Holy Spirit are tending to cause the modern Christian to use the Bible ever increasingly as the basic prayerbook, and to draw from it genuine inspiration and unsurpassable examples. Devotion to the Blessed Virgin cannot be exempt from this general orientation of Christian piety [92]; indeed it should draw inspiration in a special way from this orientation in order to gain new vigor and sure help. In its wonderful presentation of God's plan for man's salvation, the Bible is replete with the mystery of the Savior, and from Genesis to the Book of Revelation, also contains clear references to her who was the Mother and associate of the Savior. We would not, however, wish this biblical imprint to be merely a diligent use of texts and symbols skillfully selected from the Sacred Scriptures. More than this is necessary. What is needed is that texts of prayers and chants should draw their inspiration and their wording from the Bible, and above all that devotion to the Virgin should be imbued with the great themes of the Christian message. This will ensure that, as they venerate the Seat of Wisdom, the faithful in their turn will be enlightened by the divine word, and be inspired to live their lives in accordance with the precepts of Incarnate Wisdom.

92) Cf. II Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, *Dei Verbum*, 25: AAS 58 (1966), pp. 829-830.

31. We have already spoken of the veneration which the Church gives to the Mother of God in the celebration of the sacred liturgy. However, speaking of the other forms of devotion and of the criteria on which they should be based we wish to recall the norm laid down in the Constitution *Sacrosanctum concilium*. This document, while wholeheartedly approving of the practices of piety of the Christian people, goes on to say: "...it is necessary however that such devotions with consideration for the liturgical seasons should be so arranged as to be in harmony with the sacred

liturgy. They should somehow derive their inspiration from it, and because of its pre-eminence they should orient the Christian people towards it." [93] Although this is a wise and clear rule, its application is not an easy matter, especially in regard to Marian devotions, which are so varied in their formal expressions. What is needed on the part of the leaders of the local communities is effort, pastoral sensitivity and perseverance, while the faithful on their part must show a willingness to accept guidelines and ideas drawn from the true nature of Christian worship; this sometimes makes it necessary to change long-standing customs wherein the real nature of this Christian worship has become somewhat obscured.

93) Op cit., 13: AAS 50 (1964), p. 103.

In this context we wish to mention two attitudes which in pastoral practice could nullify the norm of the Second Vatican Council. In the first place there are certain persons concerned with the care of souls who scorn, a priori, devotions of piety which, in their correct forms, have been recommended by the magisterium, who leave them aside and in this way create a vacuum which they do not fill. They forget that the Council has said that devotions of piety should harmonize with the liturgy, not be suppressed. Secondly there are those who, without wholesome liturgical and pastoral criteria, mix practices of piety and liturgical acts in hybrid celebrations. It sometimes happens that novenas or similar practices of piety are inserted into the very celebration of the Eucharistic Sacrifice. This creates the danger that the Lord's Memorial Rite, instead of being the culmination of the meeting of the Christian community, becomes the occasion, as it were, for devotional practices. For those who act in this way we wish to recall the rule laid down by the Council prescribing that exercises of piety should be harmonized with the liturgy, not merged into it. Wise pastoral action should, on the one hand, point out and emphasize the proper nature of the liturgical acts, while on the other hand it should enhance the value of practices of piety in order to adapt them to the needs of individual communities in the Church and to make them valuable aids to the liturgy.³² Because of its ecclesial character, devotion to the Blessed Virgin reflects the preoccupations of the Church herself. Among these especially in our day is her anxiety for the re-establishment of Christian unity. In this way devotion to the Mother of the Lord is in accord with the deep desires and aims of the ecumenical movement, that is, it acquires an ecumenical aspect. This is so for a number of reasons. In the first place, in venerating with particular love the glorious Theotokos and in acclaiming her as the "Hope of Christians," [94] Catholics unite themselves with their brethren of the Orthodox Churches, in which devotion to the Blessed Virgin finds its expression in a beautiful lyricism and in solid doctrine. Catholics are also united with Anglicans, whose classical theologians have already drawn attention to the sound scriptural basis for devotion to the Mother of our Lord, while those of the present day increasingly underline the importance of Mary's place in the Christian life. Praising God with the very words of the Virgin (cf. Lk. 1:46-55), they are united, too, with their brethren in the Churches of the Reform, where love for the Sacred Scriptures flourishes.

94) Cf. *Officium magni canonis paracletici*, *Magnum Orologion*, Athens 1963, p. 558; passim in liturgical canons and prayers: cf. Sophronius Eustradiadou, *Theotokarion*, Chennevieres, sur Marne 1931, pp. 9, 19.

For Catholics, devotion to the Mother of Christ and Mother of Christians is also a natural and frequent opportunity for seeking her intercession with her Son in order to obtain the union of all the baptized within a single People of God. [95] Yet again, the ecumenical aspect of Marian devotion is shown in the Catholic Church's desire that, without in any way detracting from the unique character of this devotion, [96] every care should be taken to avoid any exaggeration which could mislead other Christian brethren about the true doctrine of the Catholic Church. [97]

Similarly, the Church desires that any manifestation of cult which is opposed to correct Catholic practice should be eliminated.

95) Cf. II Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, Lumen Gentium, 69: AAS 57 (1965), pp. 66-67.96) Cf. *ibid.*, 66: AAS 57 (1965), p. 65; Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, Sacrosanctum Concilium, 103: AAS 56 (1964), p. 125.97) Cf. II Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, Lumen Gentium, 67: AAS 57 (1965), pp. 65-66.

Finally, since it is natural that in true devotion to the Blessed Virgin "the Son should be duly known, loved and glorified...when the Mother is honored,"[98] such devotion is an approach to Christ, the source and center of ecclesiastical communion, in which all who openly confess that He is God and Lord, Savior and sole Mediator (cf. 1 Tm. 2:5) are called to be one, with one another, with Christ and with the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit.[99]

98) *Ibid.*, 66: AAS 57 (1965), p. 65.99) Cf. Paul VI, Address in the Vatican Basilica to the Fathers of the Council, 21 November 1964: AAS 56 (1964), p. 1017.

33. We realize that there exist important differences between the thought of many of our brethren in other Churches and ecclesial communities and the Catholic doctrine on "Mary's role in the work of salvation." [100] In consequence there are likewise differences of opinion on the devotion which should be shown to her. Nevertheless, since it is the same power of the Most High which overshadowed the Virgin of Nazareth (cf. Lk. 1:35) and which today is at work within the ecumenical movement and making it fruitful, we wish to express our confidence that devotion to the humble handmaid of the Lord, in whom the Almighty has done great things (cf. Lk. 1:49), will become, even if only slowly, not an obstacle but a path and a rallying point for the union of all who believe in Christ. We are glad to see that, in fact, a better understanding of Mary's place in the mystery of Christ and of the Church on the part also of our separated brethren is smoothing the path to union. Just as at Cana the Blessed Virgin's intervention resulted in Christ's performing His first miracle (cf. Jn. 2:1-12), so today her intercession can help to bring to realization the time when the disciples of Christ will again find full communion in faith. This hope of ours is strengthened by a remark of our predecessor Leo XIII, who wrote that the cause of Christian unity "properly pertains to the role of Mary's spiritual motherhood. For Mary did not and cannot engender those who belong to Christ, except in one faith and one love: for 'Is Christ divided?' (1 Cor. 1:13) We must all live together the life of Christ, so that in one and the same body 'we may bear fruit for God' (Rom. 7:4). [101]

100) Cf. II Vatican Council, Decree on Ecumenism, *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 20: AAS 57 (1965), p. 105.101) Encyclical Letter, *Adiutricem Populi*: ASS 28 (1895-1896), p. 135.

34. Devotion to the Blessed Virgin must also pay close attention to certain findings of the human sciences. This will help to eliminate one of the causes of the difficulties experienced in devotion to the Mother of the Lord, namely, the discrepancy existing between some aspects of this devotion and modern anthropological discoveries and the profound changes which have occurred in the psycho-sociological field in which modern man lives and works. The picture of the Blessed Virgin presented in a certain type of devotional literature cannot easily be reconciled with today's life-style, especially the way women live today. In the home, woman's equality and co-responsibility with man in the running of the family are being justly recognized by laws and the evolution of

customs. In the sphere of politics women have in many countries gained a position in public life equal to that of men. In the social field women are at work in a whole range of different employments, getting further away every day from the restricted surroundings of the home. In the cultural field new possibilities are opening up for women in scientific research and intellectual activities. In consequence of these phenomena some people are becoming disenchanted with devotion to the Blessed Virgin and finding it difficult to take as an example Mary of Nazareth because the horizons of her life, so they say, seem rather restricted in comparison with the vast spheres of activity open to mankind today. In this regard we exhort theologians, those responsible for the local Christian communities and the faithful themselves to examine these difficulties with due care. At the same time we wish to take the opportunity of offering our own contribution to their solution by making a few observations.³⁵ First, the Virgin Mary has always been proposed to the faithful by the Church as an example to be imitated, not precisely in the type of life she led, and much less for the socio-cultural background in which she lived and which today scarcely exists anywhere. She is held up as an example to the faithful rather for the way in which, in her own particular life, she fully and responsibly accepted the will of God (cf. Lk. 1:38), because she heard the word of God and acted on it, and because charity and a spirit of service were the driving force of her actions. She is worthy of imitation because she was the first and the most perfect of Christ's disciples. All of this has a permanent and universal exemplary value.³⁶ Secondly, we would like to point out that the difficulties alluded to above are closely related to certain aspects of the image of Mary found in popular writings. They are not connected with the Gospel image of Mary nor with the doctrinal data which have been made explicit through a slow and conscientious process of drawing from Revelation. It should be considered quite normal for succeeding generations of Christians in differing socio-cultural contexts to have expressed their sentiments about the Mother of Jesus in a way and manner which reflected their own age. In contemplating Mary and her mission these different generations of Christians, looking on her as the New Woman and perfect Christian, found in her as a virgin, wife and mother the outstanding type of womanhood and the pre-eminent exemplar of life lived in accordance with the Gospels and summing up the most characteristic situations in the life of a woman. When the Church considers the long history of Marian devotion she rejoices at the continuity of the element of cult which it shows, but she does not bind herself to any particular expression of an individual cultural epoch or to the particular anthropological ideas underlying such expressions. The Church understands that certain outward religious expressions, while perfectly valid in themselves, may be less suitable to men and women of different ages and cultures.³⁷ Finally, we wish to point out that our own time, no less than former times, is called upon to verify its knowledge of reality with the word of God, and, keeping to the matter at present under consideration, to compare its anthropological ideas and the problems springing therefrom with the figure of the Virgin Mary as presented by the Gospel. The reading of the divine Scriptures, carried out under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and with the discoveries of the human sciences and the different situations in the world today being taken into account, will help us to see how Mary can be considered a mirror of the expectations of the men and women of our time. Thus, the modern woman, anxious to participate with decision-making power in the affairs of the community, will contemplate with intimate joy Mary who, taken into dialogue with God, gives her active and responsible consent, [102] not to the solution of a contingent problem, but to that "event of world importance," as the Incarnation of the Word has been rightly called. [103] The modern woman will appreciate that Mary's choice of the state of virginity, which in God's plan prepared her for the mystery of the Incarnation, was not a rejection of any of the values of the married state but a courageous choice which she made in order to consecrate herself totally to the love of God. The modern woman will note with pleasant surprise that Mary of Nazareth, while completely devoted to the will of God, was far from being a timidly submissive woman or one whose piety was repellent to others; on the contrary, she was a woman who did not hesitate to proclaim that God vindicates the humble and the oppressed, and removes the powerful people of this world from

their privileged positions (cf. Lk. 1:51-53). The modern woman will recognize in Mary, who "stands out among the poor and humble of the Lord,"[104] a woman of strength, who experienced poverty and suffering, flight and exile (cf. Mt. 2:13-23). These are situations that cannot escape the attention of those who wish to support, with the Gospel spirit, the liberating energies of man and of society. And Mary will appear not as a Mother exclusively concerned with her own divine Son, but rather as a woman whose action helped to strengthen the apostolic community's faith in Christ (cf. Jn. 2:1-12), and whose maternal role was extended and became universal on Calvary.[105] These are but examples, but examples which show clearly that the figure of the Blessed Virgin does not disillusion any of the profound expectations of the men and women of our time but offers them the perfect model of the disciple of the Lord: the disciple who builds up the earthly and temporal city while being a diligent pilgrim towards the heavenly and eternal city; the disciple who works for that justice which sets free the oppressed and for that charity which assists the needy; but above all, the disciple who is the active witness of that love which builds up Christ in people's hearts.

102) Cf. II Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, 56: AAS 57 (1965), p. 60. 103) Cf. St. Peter Chrysologus, *Sermo CXLIII*: PL 52, 583. 104) II Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, 55: AAS 57 (1965), pp. 59-60. 105) Cf. Paul VI, Apostolic Constitution, *Signum Magnum*, I: AAS 59 (1967), pp. 467-468: Roman Missal, 15 September, Prayer over the gifts.

38. Having offered these directives, which are intended to favor the harmonious development of devotion to the Mother of the Lord, we consider it opportune to draw attention to certain attitudes of piety which are incorrect. The Second Vatican Council has already authoritatively denounced both the exaggeration of content and form which even falsifies doctrine and likewise the small-mindedness which obscures the figure and mission of Mary. The Council has also denounced certain devotional deviations, such as vain credulity, which substitutes reliance on merely external practices for serious commitment. Another deviation is sterile and ephemeral sentimentality, so alien to the spirit of the Gospel that demands persevering and practical action.[106] We reaffirm the Council's reprobation of such attitudes and practices. They are not in harmony with the Catholic Faith and therefore they must have no place in Catholic worship. Careful defense against these errors and deviations will render devotion to the Blessed Virgin more vigorous and more authentic. It will make this devotion solidly based, with the consequence that study of the sources of Revelation and attention to the documents of the magisterium will prevail over the exaggerated search for novelties or extraordinary phenomena. It will ensure that this devotion is objective in its historical setting, and for this reason everything that is obviously legendary or false must be eliminated. It will ensure that this devotion matches its doctrinal content--hence the necessity of avoiding a one-sided presentation of the figure of Mary, which by overstressing one element compromises the overall picture given by the Gospel. It will make this devotion clear in its motivation; hence every unworthy self-interest is to be carefully banned from the area of what is sacred.

106) Cf. Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, 67: AAS 57 (1965), pp. 65-66.

39. Finally, insofar as it may be necessary we would like to repeat that the ultimate purpose of devotion to the Blessed Virgin is to glorify God and to lead Christians to commit themselves to a life which is in absolute conformity with His will. When the children of the Church unite their voices with the voice of the unknown woman in the Gospel and glorify the Mother of Jesus by

saying to Him: "Blessed is the womb that bore you and the breasts that you sucked" (Lk. 11:27), they will be led to ponder the Divine Master's serious reply: "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!" (Lk. 11:28) While it is true that this reply is in itself lively praise of Mary, as various Fathers of the Church interpreted it[107] and the Second Vatican Council has confirmed,[108] it is also an admonition to us to live our lives in accordance with God's commandments. It is also an echo of other words of the Savior: "Not every one who says to me 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven" (Mt. 7:21); and again: "You are my friends if you do what I command you" (Jn. 15:14).

107) St. Augustine, *In Johannis Evangelium Tractatus* X, 3: CCL 36, pp. 101-102; *Epistula* 243, *Ad Laetum*, 9: CSEL 57, pp. 575-576; St. Bede, *In Lucae Evangelium expositio*, IV, XI, 28: CCL 120, p. 237; *Homilia* I, 4: CCL 122, pp. 26-27. 108) Cf. II Vatican Council, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, Lumen Gentium*, 58: AAS 57 (1965), p. 61.

40. We have indicated a number of principles which can help to give fresh vigor to devotion to the Mother of the Lord. It is now up to episcopal conferences, to those in charge of local communities and to the various religious congregations prudently to revise practices and exercises of piety in honor of the Blessed Virgin, and to encourage the creative impulse of those who through genuine religious inspiration or pastoral sensitivity wish to establish new forms of piety. For different reasons we nevertheless feel it is opportune to consider here two practices which are widespread in the West, and with which this Apostolic See has concerned itself on various occasions: the Angelus and the Rosary.⁴¹ What we have to say about the Angelus is meant to be only a simple but earnest exhortation to continue its traditional recitation wherever and whenever possible. The Angelus does not need to be revised, because of its simple structure, its biblical character, its historical origin which links it to the prayer for peace and safety, and its quasi-liturgical rhythm which sanctifies different moments during the day, and because it reminds us of the Paschal Mystery, in which recalling the Incarnation of the Son of God we pray that we may be led "through his passion and cross to the glory of his resurrection." [109] These factors ensure that the Angelus despite the passing of centuries retains an unaltered value and an intact freshness. It is true that certain customs traditionally linked with the recitation of the Angelus have disappeared or can continue only with difficulty in modern life. But these are marginal elements. The value of contemplation on the mystery of the Incarnation of the Word, of the greeting to the Virgin, and of recourse to her merciful intercession remains unchanged. And despite the changed conditions of the times, for the majority of people there remain unaltered the characteristic periods of the day--morning, noon and evening--which mark the periods of their activity and constitute an invitation to pause in prayer.

109) Roman Missal, IV Sunday of Advent, Collect. Similarly the Collect of 25 March, which may be used in place of the previous one in the recitation of the Angelus.

42. 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" [110]: the Rosary. To this our predecessors have devoted close attention and care. On many occasions they have recommended its frequent recitation, encouraged its diffusion, explained its nature, recognized its suitability for fostering contemplative prayer--prayer of both praise and petition--and recalled its intrinsic effectiveness for promoting Christian life and apostolic commitment.

110) Pius XII, Letter to the Archbishop of Manila, "Philippinas Insulas": AAS 38

(1946), p. 419.

We, too, from the first general audience of our pontificate on July 13, 1963, have shown our great esteem for the pious practice of the Rosary.[111] Since that time we have underlined its value on many different occasions, some ordinary, some grave. Thus, at a moment of anguish and uncertainty, we published the Letter *Christi Matri* (September 15, 1966), in order to obtain prayers to Our Lady of the Rosary and to implore from God the supreme benefit of peace.[112] We renewed this appeal in our Apostolic Exhortation *Recurrens mensis October* (October 7, 1969), in which we also commemorated the fourth centenary of the Apostolic Letter *Consueverunt Romani pontifices* of our predecessor Saint Pius V, who in that document explained and in a certain sense established the traditional form of the Rosary.[113]

111) Discourse to the participants in the III Dominican International Rosary Congress: *Insegnamenti di Paolo VI*, 1, (1963) pp. 463-464. 112) In AAS 58 (1966), pp. 745-749. 113) In AAS 61 (1969), pp. 649-654. 113) ?

43. Our assiduous and affectionate interest in the Rosary has led us to follow very attentively the numerous meetings which in recent years have been devoted to the pastoral role of the Rosary in the modern world, meetings arranged by associations and individuals profoundly attached to the Rosary and attended by bishops, priests, religious and lay people of proven experience and recognized ecclesial awareness. Among these people special mention should be made of the sons of Saint Dominic, by tradition the guardians and promoters of this very salutary practice. Parallel with such meetings has been the research work of historians, work aimed not at defining in a sort of archaeological fashion the primitive form of the Rosary but at uncovering the original inspiration and driving force behind it and its essential structure. The fundamental characteristics of the Rosary, its essential elements and their mutual relationship have all emerged more clearly from these congresses and from the research carried out. 44. Thus, for instance, the Gospel inspiration of the Rosary has appeared more clearly: the Rosary draws from the Gospel the presentation of the mysteries and its main formulas. As it moves from the angel's joyful greeting and the Virgin's pious assent, the Rosary takes its inspiration from the Gospel to suggest the attitude with which the faithful should recite it. In the harmonious succession of Hail Mary's the Rosary puts before us once more a fundamental mystery of the Gospel--the Incarnation of the Word, contemplated at the decisive moment of the Annunciation to Mary. The Rosary is thus a Gospel prayer, as pastors and scholars like to define it, more today perhaps than in the past. 45. It has also been more easily seen how the orderly and gradual unfolding of the Rosary reflects the very way in which the Word of God, mercifully entering into human affairs, brought about the Redemption. The Rosary considers in harmonious succession the principal salvific events accomplished in Christ, from His virginal conception and the mysteries of His childhood to the culminating moments of the Passover--the blessed passion and the glorious resurrection--and to the effects of this on the infant Church on the day of Pentecost, and on the Virgin Mary when at the end of her earthly life she was assumed body and soul into her heavenly home. It has also been observed that the division of the mysteries of the Rosary into three parts not only adheres strictly to the chronological order of the facts but above all reflects the plan of the original proclamation of the Faith and sets forth once more the mystery of Christ in the very way in which it is seen by Saint Paul in the celebrated "hymn" of the Letter to the Philippians--kenosis, death and exaltation (cf. 2:6-11). 46. As a Gospel prayer, centered on the mystery of the redemptive Incarnation, the Rosary is therefore a prayer with a clearly Christological orientation. Its most characteristic element, in fact, the litany-like succession of Hail Mary's, becomes in itself an unceasing praise of Christ, who is the ultimate object both of the angel's announcement and of the greeting of the mother of John the Baptist: "Blessed is the fruit of your womb" (Lk. 1:42). We

would go further and say that the succession of Hail Mary's constitutes the warp on which is woven the contemplation of the mysteries. The Jesus that each Hail Mary recalls is the same Jesus whom the succession of the mysteries proposes to us--now as the Son of God, now as the Son of the Virgin--at His birth in a stable at Bethlehem, at His presentation by His Mother in the Temple, as a youth full of zeal for His Father's affairs, as the Redeemer in agony in the garden, scourged and crowned with thorns, carrying the cross and dying on Calvary; risen from the dead and ascended to the glory of the Father to send forth the gift of the Spirit. As is well known, at one time there was a custom, still preserved in certain places, of adding to the name of Jesus in each Hail Mary a reference to the mystery being contemplated. And this was done precisely in order to help contemplation and to make the mind and the voice act in unison.⁴⁷ There has also been felt with greater urgency the need to point out once more the importance of a further essential element in the Rosary, in addition to the value of the elements of praise and petition, namely the element of contemplation. Without this the Rosary is a body without a soul, and its recitation is in danger of becoming a mechanical repetition of formulas and of going counter to the warning of Christ: "And in praying do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do; for they think that they will be heard for their many words" (Mt. 6:7). By its nature the recitation of the Rosary calls for a quiet rhythm and a lingering pace, helping the individual to meditate on the mysteries of the Lord's life as seen through the eyes of her who was closest to the Lord. In this way the unfathomable riches of these mysteries are unfolded.⁴⁸ Finally, as a result of modern reflection the relationships between the liturgy and the Rosary have been more clearly understood. On the one hand it has been emphasized that the Rosary is, as it were, a branch sprung from the ancient trunk of the Christian liturgy, the Psalter of the Blessed Virgin, whereby the humble were associated in the Church's hymn of praise and universal intercession. On the other hand it has been noted that this development occurred at a time--the last period of the Middle Ages--when the liturgical spirit was in decline and the faithful were turning from the liturgy towards a devotion to Christ's humanity and to the Blessed Virgin Mary, a devotion favoring a certain external sentiment of piety. Not many years ago some people began to express the desire to see the Rosary included among the rites of the liturgy, while other people, anxious to avoid repetition of former pastoral mistakes, unjustifiably disregarded the Rosary. Today the problem can easily be solved in the light of the principles of the Constitution Sacrosanctum concilium. Liturgical celebrations and the pious practice of the Rosary must be neither set in opposition to one another nor considered as being identical. [114] The more an expression of prayer preserves its own true nature and individual characteristics the more fruitful it becomes. Once the pre-eminent value of liturgical rites has been reaffirmed it will not be difficult to appreciate the fact that the Rosary is a practice of piety which easily harmonizes with the liturgy. In fact, like the liturgy, it is of a community nature, draws its inspiration from Sacred Scripture and is oriented towards the mystery of Christ. The commemoration in the liturgy and the contemplative remembrance proper to the Rosary, although existing on essentially different planes of reality, have as their object the same salvific events wrought by Christ. The former presents anew, under the veil of signs and operative in a hidden way, the great mysteries of our Redemption. The latter, by means of devout contemplation, recalls these same mysteries to the mind of the person praying and stimulates the will to draw from them the norms of living. Once this substantial difference has been established, it is not difficult to understand that the Rosary is an exercise of piety that draws its motivating force from the liturgy and leads naturally back to it, if practiced in conformity with its original inspiration. It does not, however, become part of the liturgy. In fact, meditation on the mysteries of the Rosary, by familiarizing the hearts and minds of the faithful with the mysteries of Christ, can be an excellent preparation for the celebration of those same mysteries in the liturgical action and can also become a continuing echo thereof. However, it is a mistake to recite the Rosary during the celebration of the liturgy, though unfortunately this practice still persists here and there.

114) Cf. 13: AAS 56 (1964), p. 103.

49. The Rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary, according to the tradition accepted by our predecessor St. Pius V and authoritatively taught by him, consists of various elements disposed in an organic fashion:

a) Contemplation in communion with Mary, of a series of mysteries of salvation, wisely distributed into three cycles. These mysteries express the joy of the messianic times, the salvific suffering of Christ and the glory of the Risen Lord which fills the Church. This contemplation by its very nature encourages practical reflection and provides stimulating norms for living. b) The Lord's Prayer, or Our Father, which by reason of its immense value is at the basis of Christian prayer and ennobles that prayer in its various expressions. c) The litany-like succession of the Hail Mary, which is made up of the angel's greeting to the Virgin (cf. Lk. 1:28), and of Elizabeth's greeting (cf. Lk. 1:42), followed by the ecclesial supplication, Holy Mary. The continued series of Hail Mary's is the special characteristic of the Rosary, and their number, in the full and typical number of one hundred and fifty, presents a certain analogy with the Psalter and is an element that goes back to the very origin of the exercise of piety. But this number, divided, according to a well-tried custom, into decades attached to the individual mysteries, is distributed in the three cycles already mentioned, thus giving rise to the Rosary of fifty Hail Mary's as we know it. This latter has entered into use as the normal measure of the pious exercise and as such has been adopted by popular piety and approved by papal authority, which also enriched it with numerous indulgences. d) The doxology Glory be to the Father which, in conformity with an orientation common to Christian piety, concludes the prayer with the glorifying of God who is one and three, from whom, through whom and in whom all things have their being (cf. Rom. 11:36).

50. These are the elements of the Rosary. Each has its own particular character which, wisely understood and appreciated, should be reflected in the recitation in order that the Rosary may express all its richness and variety. Thus the recitation will be grave and suppliant during the Lord's Prayer, lyrical and full of praise during the tranquil succession of Hail Mary's, contemplative in the recollected meditation on the mysteries and full of adoration during the doxology. This applies to all the ways in which the Rosary is usually recited: privately, in intimate recollection with the Lord; in community, in the family or in groups of the faithful gathered together to ensure the special presence of the Lord (cf. Mt. 18:20); or publicly, in assemblies to which the ecclesial community is invited. 51. In recent times certain exercises of piety have been created which take their inspiration from the Rosary. Among such exercises we wish to draw attention to and recommend those which insert into the ordinary celebration of the word of God some elements of the Rosary, such as meditation on the mysteries and litany-like repetition of the angel's greeting to Mary. In this way these elements gain in importance, since they are found in the context of Bible readings, illustrated with a homily, accompanied by silent pauses and emphasized with song. We are happy to know that such practices have helped to promote a more complete understanding of the spiritual riches of the Rosary itself and have served to restore esteem for its recitation among youth associations and movements. 52. We now desire, as a continuation of the thought of our predecessors, to recommend strongly the recitation of the family Rosary. The Second Vatican Council has pointed out how the family, the primary and vital cell of society, "shows itself to be the domestic sanctuary of the Church through the mutual affection of its members and the common prayer they offer to God." [115] The Christian family is thus seen to be a domestic Church [116] if its members, each according to his proper place and tasks, all together

promote justice, practice works of mercy, devote themselves to helping their brethren, take part in the apostolate of the wider local community and play their part in its liturgical worship. [117] This will be all the more true if together they offer up prayers to God. If this element of common prayer were missing, the family would lack its very character as a domestic Church. Thus there must logically follow a concrete effort to reinstate communal prayer in family life if there is to be a restoration of the theological concept of the family as the domestic Church.

115) Decree on the Lay Apostolate, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, II: AAS 58 (1966), p. 848. 116) Cf. II Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, 11: AAS 57 (1965), p. 16. 117) Cf. II Vatican Council, Decree on the Lay Apostolate, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 11: AAS 58 (1966), p. 848.

53. In accordance with the directives of the Council the *Institutio Generalis de Liturgia Horarum* rightly numbers the family among the groups in which the Divine Office can suitably be celebrated in community: "It is fitting...that the family, as a domestic sanctuary of the Church, should not only offer prayers to God in common, but also, according to circumstances, should recite parts of the Liturgy of the Hours, in order to be more intimately linked with the Church." [118] No avenue should be left unexplored to ensure that this clear and practical recommendation finds within Christian families growing and joyful acceptance.

118) *Op cit.*, 27.

54. But there is no doubt that, after the celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours, the high point which family prayer can reach, the Rosary should be considered as one of the best and most efficacious prayers in common that the Christian family is invited to recite. We like to think, and sincerely hope, that when the family gathering becomes a time of prayer, the Rosary is a frequent and favored manner of praying. We are well aware that the changed conditions of life today do not make family gatherings easy, and that even when such a gathering is possible many circumstances make it difficult to turn it into an occasion of prayer. There is no doubt of the difficulty. But it is characteristic of the Christian in his manner of life not to give in to circumstances but to overcome them, not to succumb but to make an effort. Families which want to live in full measure the vocation and spirituality proper to the Christian family must therefore devote all their energies to overcoming the pressures that hinder family gatherings and prayer in common. 55. In concluding these observations, which give proof of the concern and esteem which the Apostolic See has for the Rosary of the Blessed Virgin, we desire at the same time to recommend that this very worthy devotion should not be propagated in a way that is too one-sided or exclusive. The Rosary is an excellent prayer, but the faithful should feel serenely free in its regard. They should be drawn to its calm recitation by its intrinsic appeal. 56. Venerable Brothers, as we come to the end of this our Apostolic Exhortation we wish to sum up and emphasize the theological value of devotion to the Blessed Virgin and to recall briefly its pastoral effectiveness for renewing the Christian way of life. The Church's devotion to the Blessed Virgin is an intrinsic element of Christian worship. The honor which the Church has always and everywhere shown to the Mother of the Lord, from the blessing with which Elizabeth greeted Mary (cf. Lk. 1:42-45) right up to the expressions of praise and petition used today, is a very strong witness to the Church's norm of prayer and an invitation to become more deeply conscious of her norm of faith. And the converse is likewise true. The Church's norm of faith requires that her norm of prayer should everywhere blossom forth with regard to the Mother of Christ. Such devotion to the Blessed Virgin is firmly rooted in the revealed word and has solid dogmatic foundations. It is based on the singular dignity of Mary, "Mother of the Son of God, and therefore beloved daughter of the Father and Temple of the Holy Spirit--Mary, who, because of this extraordinary grace, is far

greater than any other creature on earth or in heaven." [119] This devotion takes into account the part she played at decisive moments in the history of the salvation which her Son accomplished, and her holiness, already full at her Immaculate Conception yet increasing all the time as she obeyed the will of the Father and accepted the path of suffering (cf. Lk. 2:34-35, 41-52; Jn. 19:25-27), growing constantly in faith, hope and charity. Devotion to Mary recalls too her mission and the special position she holds within the People of God, of which she is the preeminent member, a shining example and the loving Mother; it recalls her unceasing and efficacious intercession which, although she is assumed into heaven, draws her close to those who ask her help, including those who do not realize that they are her children. It recalls Mary's glory which ennoble the whole of mankind, as the outstanding phrase of Dante recalls: "You have so ennobled human nature that its very Creator did not disdain to share in it." [120] Mary, in fact, is one of our race, a true daughter of Eve--though free of that mother's sin--and truly our sister, who as a poor and humble woman fully shared our lot.

119) II Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, 53: AAS 57 (1965), pp. 58-59. 120) *La Divina Commedia*, *Paradiso XXXIII*, 4-6.

We would add further that devotion to the Blessed Virgin finds its ultimate justification in the unfathomable and free will of God who, being eternal and divine charity (cf. 1 Jn. 4:7-8, 16), accomplishes all things according to a loving design. He loved her and did great things for her (cf. Lk. 1:49). He loved her for His own sake, and He loved her for our sake, too; He gave her to Himself and He gave her also to us.⁵⁷ Christ is the only way to the Father (cf. Jn. 14:4-11), and the ultimate example to whom the disciple must conform his own conduct (cf. Jn. 13:15), to the extent of sharing Christ's sentiments (cf. Phil. 2:5), living His life and possessing His Spirit (cf. Gal. 2:20; Rom. 8:10-11). The Church has always taught this and nothing in pastoral activity should obscure this doctrine. But the Church, taught by the Holy Spirit and benefiting from centuries of experience, recognizes that devotion to the Blessed Virgin, subordinated to worship of the divine Savior and in connection with it, also has a great pastoral effectiveness and constitutes a force for renewing Christian living. It is easy to see the reason for this effectiveness. Mary's many-sided mission to the People of God is a supernatural reality which operates and bears fruit within the body of the Church. One finds cause for joy in considering the different aspects of this mission, and seeing how each of these aspects with its individual effectiveness is directed towards the same end, namely, producing in the children the spiritual characteristics of the first-born Son. The Virgin's maternal intercession, her exemplary holiness and the divine grace which is in her become for the human race a reason for divine hope. The Blessed Virgin's role as Mother leads the People of God to turn with filial confidence to her who is ever ready to listen with a mother's affection and efficacious assistance. [121] Thus the People of God have learned to call on her as the Consoler of the afflicted, the Health of the sick, and the Refuge of sinners, that they may find comfort in tribulation, relief in sickness and liberating strength in guilt. For she, who is free from sin, leads her children to combat sin with energy and resoluteness. [122] This liberation from sin and evil (cf. Mt. 6:13)--it must be repeated--is the necessary premise for any renewal of Christian living.

121) Cf. II Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, 60-63; AAS 57 (1965), pp. 62-64. 122) Cf. *ibid.*, 65: AAS 57 (1965), pp. 64-65.

The Blessed Virgin's exemplary holiness encourages the faithful to "raise their eyes to Mary who shines forth before the whole community of the elect as a model of the virtues." [123] It is a question of solid, evangelical virtues: faith and the docile acceptance of the Word of God (cf. Lk.

1:26-38, 1:45, 11:27-28, Jn. 2:5); generous obedience (cf. Lk. 1:38); genuine humility (cf. Lk. 1:48); solicitous charity (cf. Lk. 1:39-56); profound wisdom (cf. Lk. 1:29, 34; 2:19, 33:51); worship of God manifested in alacrity in the fulfillment of religious duties (cf. Lk. 2:21-41), in gratitude for gifts received (cf. Lk. 1:46-49), in her offering in the Temple (cf. Lk. 2:22-24) and in her prayer in the midst of the apostolic community (cf. Acts 1:12-14); her fortitude in exile (cf. Mt. 2:13-23) and in suffering (cf. Lk. 2:34-35, 49; Jn. 19:25); her poverty reflecting dignity and trust in God (cf. Lk. 1:48, 2:24); her attentive care for her Son, from His humble birth to the ignominy of the cross (cf. Lk. 2:1-7; Jn. 19:25-27); her delicate forethought (cf. Jn. 2:1-11); her virginal purity (cf. Mt. 1:18-25; Lk. 1:26-38); her strong and chaste married love. These virtues of the Mother will also adorn her children who steadfastly study her example in order to reflect it in their own lives. And this progress in virtue will appear as the consequence and the already mature fruit of that pastoral zeal which springs from devotion to the Blessed Virgin.

123) Ibid., 65: AAS 57 (1965), p. 64.

Devotion to the Mother of the Lord becomes for the faithful an opportunity for growing in divine grace, and this is the ultimate aim of all pastoral activity. For it is impossible to honor her who is "full of grace" (Lk. 1:28) without thereby honoring in oneself the state of grace, which is friendship with God, communion with Him and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. It is this divine grace which takes possession of the whole man and conforms him to the image of the Son of God (cf. Rom. 8:29; Col. 1:18). The Catholic Church, endowed with centuries of experience, recognizes in devotion to the Blessed Virgin a powerful aid for man as he strives for fulfillment. Mary, the New Woman, stands at the side of Christ, the New Man, within whose mystery the mystery of man^[124] alone finds true light; she is given to us as a pledge and guarantee that God's plan in Christ for the salvation of the whole man has already achieved realization in a creature: in her. Contemplated in the episodes of the Gospels and in the reality which she already possesses in the City of God, the Blessed Virgin Mary offers a calm vision and a reassuring word to modern man, torn as he often is between anguish and hope, defeated by the sense of his own limitations and assailed by limitless aspirations, troubled in his mind and divided in his heart, uncertain before the riddle of death, oppressed by loneliness while yearning for fellowship, a prey to boredom and disgust. She shows forth the victory of hope over anguish, of fellowship over solitude, of peace over anxiety, of joy and beauty over boredom and disgust, of eternal visions over earthly ones, of life over death.

124) Cf. II Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*, 22: AAS 58 (1966), pp. 1042-1044.

Let the very words that she spoke to the servants at the marriage feast of Cana, "Do whatever he tells you" (Jn. 2:5), be a seal on our Exhortation and a further reason in favor of the pastoral value of devotion to the Blessed Virgin as a means of leading men to Christ. Those words, which at first sight were limited to the desire to remedy an embarrassment at the feast, are seen in the context of Saint John's Gospel to re-echo the words used by the people of Israel to give approval to the Covenant at Sinai (cf. Ex. 19:8, 24:3, 7; Dt. 5:27) and to renew their commitments (cf. Jos. 24:24; Ezr. 10:12; Neh. 5:12). And they are words which harmonize wonderfully with those spoken by the Father at the theophany on Mount Tabor: "Listen to him" (Mt. 17:5).⁵⁸ Venerable Brothers, we have dealt at length with an integral element of Christian worship: devotion to the Mother of the Lord. This has been called for by the nature of the subject, one which in these recent years has been the object of study and revision and at times the cause of some perplexity. We are consoled to think that the work done by this Apostolic See and by yourselves in order to carry out the norms of the Council--particularly the liturgical reform--is a stepping-stone to an

ever more lively and adoring worship of God, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and to an increase of the Christian life of the faithful. We are filled with confidence when we note that the renewed Roman liturgy, also taken as a whole, is a splendid illustration of the Church's devotion to the Blessed Virgin. We are upheld by the hope that the directives issued in order to render this devotion ever more pure and vigorous will be applied with sincerity. We rejoice that the Lord has given us the opportunity of putting forward some points for reflection in order to renew and confirm esteem for the practice of the rosary. Comfort, confidence, hope and joy are the sentiments which we wish to transform into fervent praise and thanksgiving to the Lord as we unite our voice with that of the Blessed Virgin in accordance with the prayer of the Roman Liturgy. [125]

125) Cf. Roman Missal, 31 May, Collect.

Dear Brothers, while we express the hope that, thanks to your generous commitment, there will be among the clergy and among the people entrusted to your care a salutary increase of devotion to Mary with undoubted profit for the Church and for society, we cordially impart our special apostolic blessing to yourselves and to all the faithful people to whom you devote your pastoral zeal. Given in Rome, at Saint Peter's, on the second day of February, the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord, in the year 1974, the eleventh of our Pontificate.

Pope Saint Pius V: [Consueverunt Romani](#)

Pope Leo XIII: [Supremi Apostolatus Officio](#) | [Superiore Anno](#) | [Quod Auctoritate](#) | [Vi E Ben Noto](#) | [Quamquam Pluries](#) | [Octobri Mense](#) | [Magnae Dei Matris](#) | [Laetitiae Sanctae](#) | [Iucunda Semper Expectatione](#) | [Adiutricem Populi](#) | [Fidentem Piumque Animum](#) | [Augustissimae Virginis Mariae](#) | [Diuturni Temporis](#)

Pope Benedict XV: [Fausto Appetente Die](#)

Pope Pius XI: [Ingrevescentibus Malis](#)

Pope Pius XII: [Ingruentium Malorum](#)

Pope John XXIII: [Grata Recordatio](#)

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Redemptoris Mater

On The Blessed Virgin Mary In The Life Of The Pilgrim Church

Encyclical of Pope John Paul II

March 25, 1987

Venerable Brothers and dear Sons and Daughters,
Health and the Apostolic Blessing.

INTRODUCTION

1. The Mother of the Redeemer has a precise place in the plan of salvation, for "when the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!'" (Gal. 4:4-6)

With these words of the Apostle Paul, which the Second Vatican Council takes up at the beginning of its treatment of the Blessed Virgin Mary, (1) I too wish to begin my reflection on the role of Mary in the mystery of Christ and on her active and exemplary presence in the life of the Church. For they are words which celebrate together the love of the Father, the mission of the Son, the gift of the Spirit, the role of the woman from whom the Redeemer was born, and our own divine filiation, in the mystery of the "fullness of time." (2)

[1] Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 52 and the whole of Chapter VIII, entitled "The Role of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, in the Mystery of Christ and the Church."

[2] The expression "fullness of time" (*pleroma tou chronou*) is parallel with similar expressions of Judaism, both Biblical (cf. Gen. 29:21; 1 Sam. 7:12; Tob. 14:5) and extra-Biblical, and especially of the New Testament (cf. Mk. 1:15; Lk. 21:24; Jn. 7:8; Eph. 1:10). From the point of view of form, it means not only the conclusion of a chronological process but also and especially the coming to maturity or completion of a particularly important period, one directed towards the fulfillment of an expectation, a coming to completion which thus takes on an eschatological dimension. According to Gal. 4:4 and its context, it is the coming of the Son of God that reveals that time has, so to speak, reached its limit. That is to say, the period

marked by the promise made to Abraham and by the Law mediated by Moses has now reached its climax, in the sense that Christ fulfills the divine promise and supersedes the old law.

This "fullness" indicates the moment fixed from all eternity when the Father sent his Son "that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (Jn. 3:16). It denotes the blessed moment when the Word that "was with God...became flesh and dwelt among us" (Jn. 1:1, 14), and made himself our brother. It marks the moment when the Holy Spirit, who had already infused the fullness of grace into Mary of Nazareth, formed in her virginal womb the human nature of Christ. This "fullness" marks the moment when, with the entrance of the eternal into time, time itself is redeemed, and being filled with the mystery of Christ becomes definitively "salvation time." Finally, this "fullness" designates the hidden beginning of the Church's journey. In the liturgy the Church salutes Mary of Nazareth as the Church's own beginning, (3) for in the event of the Immaculate Conception the Church sees projected, and anticipated in her most noble member, the saving grace of Easter. And above all, in the Incarnation she encounters Christ and Mary indissolubly joined: he who is the Church's Lord and Head and she who, uttering the first fiat of the New Covenant, prefigures the Church's condition as spouse and mother.

[3] Cf. Roman Missal, Preface of 8 December, Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary; Saint Ambrose, *De Institutione Virginis*, XV, 93-94: PL 16, 342; Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 68.

2. Strengthened by the presence of Christ (cf. Mt. 28:20), the Church journeys through time towards the consummation of the ages and goes to meet the Lord who comes. But on this journey- and I wish to make this point straightaway-she proceeds along the path already trodden by the Virgin Mary, who "advanced in her pilgrimage of faith, and loyally persevered in her union with her Son unto the cross." (4)

[4] Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 58.

I take these very rich and evocative words from the Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, which in its concluding part offers a clear summary of the Church's doctrine on the Mother of Christ, whom she venerates as her beloved Mother and as her model in faith hope and charity.

Shortly after the Council, my great predecessor Paul VI decided to speak further of the Blessed Virgin. In the Encyclical Epistle *Christi Matri* and subsequently in the Apostolic Exhortations *Signum Magnum* and *Marialis Cultus* (5) he expounded the foundations and criteria of the special veneration which the Mother of Christ receives in the Church, as well as the various forms of Marian devotion- liturgical, popular and private-which respond to the spirit of faith.

[5] Pope Paul VI, Encyclical Epistle *Christi Matri* (15 September 1966): AAS 58 (1966) 745-749, Apostolic Exhortation *Signum Magnum* (13 May 1967): AAS 59 (1967) 465:475; Apostolic Exhortation *Marialis Cultus* (2 February 1974): AAS 66 (1974) 113-168.

3. The circumstance which now moves me to take up this subject once more is the prospect of

the year 2000, now drawing near, in which the Bimillennial Jubilee of the birth of Jesus Christ at the same time directs our gaze towards his Mother. In recent years, various opinions have been voiced suggesting that it would be fitting to precede that anniversary by a similar Jubilee in celebration of the birth of Mary.

In fact, even though it is not possible to establish an exact chronological point for identifying the date of Mary's birth, the Church has constantly been aware that Mary appeared on the horizon of salvation history before Christ. (6) It is a fact that when "the fullness of time" was definitively drawing near-the saving advent of Emmanuel- he who was from eternity destined to be his Mother already existed on earth. The fact that she "preceded" the coming of Christ is reflected every year in the liturgy of Advent. Therefore, if to that ancient historical expectation of the Savior we compare these years which are bringing us closer to the end of the second Millennium after Christ and to the beginning of the third, it becomes fully comprehensible that in this present period we wish to turn in a special way to her, the one who in the "night" of the Advent expectation began to shine like a true "Morning Star" (Stella Matutina). For just as this star, together with the "dawn," precedes the rising of the sun, so Mary from the time of her Immaculate Conception preceded the coming of the Savior, the rising of the "Sun of Justice" in the history of the human race. (7)

[6] The Old Testament foretold in many different ways the mystery of Mary: cf. Saint John Damascene, Hom. in Dormitionem 1, 8-9: S. Ch. 80, 103-107.

[7] Cf. Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II, VI/2 (1983) 225f.; Pope Pius IX, Apostolic Letter Ineffabilis Deus (8 December 1854): Pii IX P. M. Acta, pars I, 597-599.

Her presence in the midst of Israel-a presence so discreet as to pass almost unnoticed by the eyes of her contemporaries-shone very clearly before the Eternal One, who had associated this hidden "daughter of Sion" (cf. Zeph. 3:14; Zeph. 2:10) with the plan of salvation embracing the whole history of humanity. With good reason, then, at the end of this Millennium, we Christians who know that the providential plan of the Most Holy Trinity is the central reality of Revelation and of faith feel the need to emphasize the unique presence of the Mother of Christ in history, especially during these last years leading up to the year 2000.

4. The Second Vatican Council prepares us for this by presenting in its teaching the Mother of God in the mystery of Christ and of the Church. If it is true, as the Council itself proclaims, (8) that "only in the mystery of the Incarnate Word does the mystery of man take on light," then this principle must be applied in a very particular way to that exceptional "daughter of the human race," that extraordinary "woman" who became the Mother of Christ. Only in the mystery of Christ is her mystery fully made clear. Thus has the Church sought to interpret it from the very beginning: the mystery of the Incarnation has enabled her to penetrate and to make ever clearer the mystery of the Mother of the Incarnate Word. The Council of Ephesus (431) was of decisive importance in clarifying this, for during that Council, to the great joy of Christians, the truth of the divine motherhood of Mary was solemnly confirmed as a truth of the Church's faith. Mary is the Mother of God (= Theotókos), since by the power of the Holy Spirit she conceived in her virginal womb and brought into the world Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who is of one being with the Father. (9) "The Son of God...born of the Virgin Mary...has truly been made one of us," (10) has been made man. Thus, through the mystery of Christ, on the horizon of the Church's faith there shines in its fullness the mystery of his Mother. In turn, the dogma of the divine

motherhood of Mary was for the Council of Ephesus and is for the Church like a seal upon the dogma of the Incarnation, in which the Word truly assumes human nature into the unity of his person, without cancelling out that nature.

[8] Cf. Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, 22.

[9] Ecumenical Council of Ephesus, in *Conciliorum Oecumenicorum Decreta*, Bologna 1973, 41-44; 59-61: DS 250-264; cf. Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon, o. c. 84-87: DS 300-303.

[10] Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, 22.

5. The Second Vatican Council, by presenting Mary in the mystery of Christ, also finds the path to a deeper understanding of the mystery of the Church. Mary, as the Mother of Christ, is in a particular way united with the Church, "which the Lord established as his own body." (11) It is significant that the conciliar text places this truth about the Church as the Body of Christ (according to the teaching of the Pauline Letters) in close proximity to the truth that the Son of God "through the power of the Holy Spirit was born of the Virgin Mary." The reality of the Incarnation finds a sort of extension in the mystery of the Church-the Body of Christ. And one cannot think of the reality of the Incarnation without referring to Mary, the Mother of the Incarnate Word.

[11] Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 52.

In these reflections, however, I wish to consider primarily that "pilgrimage of faith" in which "the Blessed Virgin advanced," faithfully preserving her union with Christ. (12) In this way the "twofold bond" which unites the Mother of God with Christ and with the Church takes on historical significance. Nor is it just a question of the Virgin Mother's life-story, of her personal journey of faith and "the better part" which is hers in the mystery of salvation; it is also a question of the history of the whole People of God, of all those who take part in the same "pilgrimage of faith."

[12] Cf. *ibid.*, 58.

The Council expresses this when it states in another passage that Mary "has gone before," becoming "a model of the Church in the matter of faith, charity and perfect union with Christ." (13) This "going before" as a figure or model is in reference to the intimate mystery of the Church, as she actuates and accomplishes her own saving mission by uniting in herself-as Mary did-the qualities of mother and virgin. She is a virgin who "keeps whole and pure the fidelity she has pledged to her Spouse" and "becomes herself a mother," for "she brings forth to a new and immortal life children who are conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of God." (14)

[13] *Ibid.*, 63, cf. Saint Ambrose, *Expos. Evang. sec. Lucam*, II, 7: CSEL 32/4, 45; *De Institutione Virginis*, XIV, 88-89: PL 16, 341.

[14] Cf. Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 64.

6. All this is accomplished in a great historical process, comparable "to a journey." The pilgrimage of faith indicates the interior history, that is, the story of souls. But it is also the story of all human beings, subject here on earth to transitoriness, and part of the historical dimension. In the following reflections we wish to concentrate first of all on the present, which in itself is not yet history, but which nevertheless is constantly forming it, also in the sense of the history of salvation. Here there opens up a broad prospect, within which the Blessed Virgin Mary continues to "go before" the People of God. Her exceptional pilgrimage of faith represents a constant point of reference for the Church, for individuals and for communities, for peoples and nations and, in a sense, for all humanity. It is indeed difficult to encompass and measure its range.

The Council emphasizes that the Mother of God is already the eschatological fulfillment of the Church: "In the most holy Virgin the Church has already reached that perfection whereby she exists without spot or wrinkle (cf. Eph. 5:27)"; and at the same time the Council says that "the followers of Christ still strive to increase in holiness by conquering sin, and so they raise their eyes to Mary, who shines forth to the whole community of the elect as a model of the virtues." (15) The pilgrimage of faith no longer belongs to the Mother of the Son of God: glorified at the side of her Son in heaven, Mary has already crossed the threshold between faith and that vision which is "face to face" (1 Cor. 13:12). At the same time, however, in this eschatological fulfillment, Mary does not cease to be the "Star of the Sea" (Maris Stella) (16) for all those who are still on the journey of faith. If they lift their eyes to her from their earthly existence, they do so because "the Son whom she brought forth is he whom God placed as the first-born among many brethren (Rom. 8:29)," (17) and also because "in the birth and development" of these brothers and sisters "she cooperates with a maternal love." (18)

[15] Ibid., 65.

[16] "Take away this star of the sun which illuminates the world: where does the day go? Take away Mary, this star of the sea, of the great and boundless sea: what is left but a vast obscurity and the shadow of death and deepest darkness?": Saint Bernard, In Navitate B. Mariae Sermo-De aquaeductu, 6: S. Bernardi Opera, V, 1968, 279; cf. In laudibus Virginis Matris Homilia II, 17: ed. cit., IV, 1966, 34f.

[17] Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Lumen Gentium, 63.

[18] Ibid., 63.

PART I

Mary In The Mystery Of Christ

1. Full of Grace

7. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places" (Eph. 1:3). These words of the Letter to the Ephesians reveal the eternal design of God the Father, his plan of man's salvation in Christ. It is a universal plan, which concerns all men and women created in the image and likeness of God (cf. Gen. 1:26). Just as all are included in the creative work of God "in the beginning," so all are

eternally included in the divine plan of salvation, which is to be completely revealed, in the "fullness of time," with the final coming of Christ. In fact, the God who is the "Father of our Lord Jesus Christ"-these are the next words of the same Letter-"chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. He destined us in love to be his sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, which he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace" (Eph. 1:4-7).

The divine plan of salvation-which was fully revealed to us with the coming of Christ-is eternal. And according to the teaching contained in the Letter just quoted and in other Pauline Letters (cf. Col. 1:12-14; Rom. 3:24; Gal. 3:13; 2 Cor. 5:18-29), it is also eternally linked to Christ. It includes everyone, but it reserves a special place for the "woman" who is the Mother of him to whom the Father has entrusted the work of salvation. (19) As the Second Vatican Council says, "she is already prophetically foreshadowed in that promise made to our first parents after their fall into sin"-according to the Book of Genesis (cf. 3:15). "Likewise she is the Virgin who is to conceive and bear a son, whose name will be called Emmanuel"- according to the words of Isaiah (cf. 7:14). (20) In this way the Old Testament prepares that "fullness of time" when God "sent forth his Son, born of woman...so that we might receive adoption as sons." The coming into the world of the Son of God is an event recorded in the first chapters of the Gospels according to Luke and Matthew.

[19] Concerning the predestination of Mary, cf. Saint John Damascene, Hom. in Nativitatem, 7, 10: S. Ch. 80, 65; 73; Hom. in Dormitionem 1, 3: S. Ch. 80, 85: "For it is she, who, chosen from the ancient generations, by virtue of the predestination and benevolence of the God and Father who generated you (the Word of God) outside time without coming out of himself or suffering change, it is she who gave you birth, nourished of her flesh, in the last time...."

[20] Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Lumen Gentium, 55.

8. Mary is definitively introduced into the mystery of Christ through this event: the Annunciation by the angel. This takes place at Nazareth, within the concrete circumstances of the history of Israel, the people which first received God's promises. The divine messenger says to the Virgin: "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you" (Lk. 1:28). Mary "was greatly troubled at the saying, and considered in her mind what sort of greeting this might be" (Lk. 1:29): what could those extraordinary words mean, and in particular the expression "full of grace" (kecharitoméne). (21)

[21] In Patristic tradition there is a wide and varied interpretation of this expression: cf. Origen, In Lucam homiliae, VI, 7: S. Ch. 87, 148; Severianus of Gabala, In mundi creationem, Oratio VI, 10: PG 56, 497f.; Saint John Chrysostom (Pseudo), In Annunhationem Deiparae et contra Arium impium, PG 62, 765f.; Basil of Seleucia, Oratio 39, In Sanctissimae Deiparae Annuntiationem, 5: PG 85, 441-46; Antipater of Bosra, Hom. II, In Sanctissimae Deiparae Annuntiationem, 3-11: PG 85, 1777-1783; Saint Sophronius of Jerusalem, Oratio 11, In Sanctissimae Deiparae Annuntiationem, 17-19: PG 87/3, 3235-3240; Saint John Damascene Hom. in Dormitionem, 1, 70: S. Ch. 80, 96-101; Saint Jerome, Epistola 65, 9: PL 22, 628, Saint Ambrose, Expos. Evang. sec. Lucam, II, 9: CSEL 32/4, 45f.; Saint Augustine, Sermo 291, 4-6: PL 38, 131 8f.; Enchiridion, 36, 11: PL 40, 250; Saint Peter Chrysologus, Sermo 142: PL 52, 579f.; Sermo 143: PL 52, 583; Saint Fulgentius of

Ruspe, Epistola 17, VI 12: PL 65 458; Saint Bernard, In laudibus Virginis Matris, Homilia III, 2-3: S. Bernardi Opera, IV, 1966, 36-38.

If we wish to meditate together with Mary on these words, and especially on the expression "full of grace," we can find a significant echo in the very passage from the Letter to the Ephesians quoted above. And if after the announcement of the heavenly messenger the Virgin of Nazareth is also called "blessed among women" (cf. Lk. 1:42), it is because of that blessing with which "God the Father" has filled us "in the heavenly places, in Christ." It is a spiritual blessing which is meant for all people and which bears in itself fullness and universality ("every blessing"). It flows from that love which, in the Holy Spirit, unites the consubstantial Son to the Father. At the same time, it is a blessing poured out through Jesus Christ upon human history until the end: upon all people. This blessing, however, refers to Mary in a special and exceptional degree: for she was greeted by Elizabeth as "blessed among women."

The double greeting is due to the fact that in the soul of this "daughter of Sion" there is manifested, in a sense, all the "glory of grace," that grace which "the Father...has given us in his beloved Son." For the messenger greets Mary as "full of grace"; he calls her thus as if it were her real name. He does not call her by her proper earthly name: Miryam (= Mary), but by this new name: "full of grace." What does this name mean? Why does the archangel address the Virgin of Nazareth in this way?

In the language of the Bible "grace" means a special gift, which according to the New Testament has its source precisely in the Trinitarian life of God himself, God who is love (cf. 1 Jn. 4:8). The fruit of this love is "the election" of which the Letter to the Ephesians speaks. On the part of God, this election is the eternal desire to save man through a sharing in his own life (cf. 2 Pt. 1:4) in Christ: it is salvation through a sharing in supernatural life. The effect of this eternal gift, of this grace of man's election by God, is like a seed of holiness, or a spring which rises in the soul as a gift from God himself, who through grace gives life and holiness to those who are chosen. In this way there is fulfilled, that is to say there comes about, that "blessing" of man "with every spiritual blessing," that "being his adopted sons and daughters...in Christ," in him who is eternally the "beloved Son" of the Father.

When we read that the messenger addresses Mary as "full of grace," the Gospel context, which mingles revelations and ancient promises, enables us to understand that among all the "spiritual blessings in Christ" this is a special "blessing." In the mystery of Christ she is present even "before the creation of the world," as the one whom the Father "has chosen" as Mother of his Son in the Incarnation. And, what is more, together with the Father, the Son has chosen her, entrusting her eternally to the Spirit of holiness. In an entirely special and exceptional way Mary is united to Christ, and similarly she is eternally loved in this "beloved Son," this Son who is of one being with the Father, in whom is concentrated all the "glory of grace." At the same time, she is and remains perfectly open to this "gift from above" (cf. Jas. 1:17). As the Council teaches, Mary "stands out among the poor and humble of the Lord, who confidently await and receive salvation from him." (22)

[22] Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Lumen Gentium, 55.

9. If the greeting and the name "full of grace" say all this, in the context of the angel's announcement they refer first of all to the election of Mary as Mother of the Son of God. But at the same time the "fullness of grace" indicates all the supernatural munificence from which Mary

benefits by being chosen and destined to be the Mother of Christ. If this election is fundamental for the accomplishment of God's salvific designs for humanity, and if the eternal choice in Christ and the vocation to the dignity of adopted children is the destiny of everyone, then the election of Mary is wholly exceptional and unique. Hence also the singularity and uniqueness of her place in the mystery of Christ.

The divine messenger says to her: "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High" (Lk. 1:30-32). And when the Virgin, disturbed by that extraordinary greeting, asks: "How shall this be, since I have no husband?" she receives from the angel the confirmation and explanation of the preceding words. Gabriel says to her: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God" (Lk. 1:35).

The Annunciation, therefore, is the revelation of the mystery of the Incarnation at the very beginning of its fulfillment on earth. God's salvific giving of himself and his life, in some way to all creation but directly to man, reaches one of its high points in the mystery of the Incarnation. This is indeed a high point among all the gifts of grace conferred in the history of man and of the universe: Mary is "full of grace," because it is precisely in her that the Incarnation of the Word, the hypostatic union of the Son of God with human nature, is accomplished and fulfilled. As the Council says, Mary is "the Mother of the Son of God. As a result she is also the favorite daughter of the Father and the temple of the Holy Spirit. Because of this gift of sublime grace, she far surpasses all other creatures, both in heaven and on earth." (23)

[23] Ibid., 53.

10. The Letter to the Ephesians, speaking of the "glory of grace" that "God, the Father...has bestowed on us in his beloved Son," adds: "In him we have redemption through his blood" (Eph. 1:7). According to the belief formulated in solemn documents of the Church, this "glory of grace" is manifested in the Mother of God through the fact that she has been "redeemed in a more sublime manner." (24) By virtue of the richness of the grace of the beloved Son, by reason of the redemptive merits of him who willed to become her Son, Mary was preserved from the inheritance of original sin. (25) In this way, from the first moment of her conception- which is to say of her existence-she belonged to Christ, sharing in the salvific and sanctifying grace and in that love which has its beginning in the "Beloved," the Son of the Eternal Father, who through the Incarnation became her own Son. Consequently, through the power of the Holy Spirit, in the order of grace, which is a participation in the divine nature, Mary receives life from him to whom she herself, in the order of earthly generation, gave life as a mother. The liturgy does not hesitate to call her "mother of her Creator" (26) and to hail her with the words which Dante Alighieri places on the lips of St. Bernard: "daughter of your Son." (27) And since Mary receives this "new life" with a fullness corresponding to the Son's love for the Mother, and thus corresponding to the dignity of the divine motherhood, the angel at the Annunciation calls her "full of grace."

[24] Cf. Pope Pius XI, Apostolic Letter *Ineffabilis Deus* (8 December 1854): Pii IX P.M. Acta, pars I, 616; Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 53.

[25] Cf. Saint Germanus of Constantinople, In Annuntiationem SS. Deiparae Hom.: PG 98, 327f.; Saint Andrew of Crete, Canon in B. Mariae Natalem, 4. PG 97, 1321f., In Nativitatem B. Mariae, I: PG 97, 81 1f. Hom. in Dormitionem S. Mariae I: PG 97, 1067f.

[26] Liturgy of the Hours of 15 August, Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Hymn at First and Second Vespers; Saint Peter Damian, Carmina et preces, XLVII: PL 145, 934.

[27] Divina Commedia, Paradiso, XXXIII, 1; cf. Liturgy of the Hours, Memorial of the Blessed Virgin Mary on Saturday, Hymn II in the Office of Readings.

11. In the salvific design of the Most Holy Trinity, the mystery of the Incarnation constitutes the superabundant fulfillment of the promise made by God to man after original sin, after that first sin whose effects oppress the whole earthly history of man (cf. Gen. 3:15). And so, there comes into the world a Son, "the seed of the woman" who will crush the evil of sin in its very origins: "he will crush the head of the serpent." As we see from the words of the Protogospel, the victory of the woman's Son will not take place without a hard struggle, a struggle that is to extend through the whole of human history. The "enmity," foretold at the beginning, is confirmed in the Apocalypse (the book of the final events of the Church and the world), in which there recurs the sign of the "woman," this time "clothed with the sun" (Rev. 12:1).

Mary, Mother of the Incarnate Word, is placed at the very center of that enmity, that struggle which accompanies the history of humanity on earth and the history of salvation itself. In this central place, she who belongs to the "weak and poor of the Lord" bears in herself, like no other member of the human race, that "glory of grace" which the Father "has bestowed on us in his beloved Son," and this grace determines the extraordinary greatness and beauty of her whole being. Mary thus remains before God, and also before the whole of humanity, as the unchangeable and inviolable sign of God's election, spoken of in Paul's letter: "in Christ...he chose us...before the foundation of the world,...he destined us...to be his sons" (Eph. 1:4, 5). This election is more powerful than any experience of evil and sin, than all that "enmity" which marks the history of man. In this history Mary remains a sign of sure hope.

2. Blessed is she who believed

12. Immediately after the narration of the Annunciation, the Evangelist Luke guides us in the footsteps of the Virgin of Nazareth towards "a city of Judah" (Lk. 1:39). According to scholars this city would be the modern Ain Karim, situated in the mountains, not far from Jerusalem. Mary arrived there "in haste," to visit Elizabeth her kinswoman. The reason for her visit is also to be found in the fact that at the Annunciation Gabriel had made special mention of Elizabeth, who in her old age had conceived a son by her husband Zechariah, through the power of God: "your kins woman Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a Son; and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. For with God nothing will be impossible" (Lk. 1:36-37). The divine messenger had spoken of what had been accomplished in Elizabeth in order to answer Mary's question. "How shall this be, since I have no husband?" (Lk. 1:34) It is to come to pass precisely through the "power of the Most High," just as it happened in the case of Elizabeth, and even more so.

Moved by charity, therefore, Mary goes to the house of her kinswoman. When Mary enters, Elizabeth replies to her greeting and feels the child leap in her womb, and being "filled with the Holy Spirit" she greets Mary with a loud cry: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!" (cf. Lk. 1:40-42) Elizabeth's exclamation or acclamation was subsequently to become part of the Hail Mary, as a continuation of the angel's greeting, thus becoming one of the Church's most frequently used prayers. But still more significant are the words of Elizabeth in the question which follows: "And why is this granted me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" (Lk. 1:43) Elizabeth bears witness to Mary: she recognizes and proclaims that before her stands the Mother of the Lord, the Mother of the Messiah. The son whom Elizabeth is carrying in her womb also shares in this witness: "The babe in my womb leaped for joy" (Lk. 1:44). This child is the future John the Baptist, who at the Jordan will point out Jesus as the Messiah.

While every word of Elizabeth's greeting is filled with meaning, her final words would seem to have fundamental importance: "And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord" (Lk. 1:45).⁽²⁸⁾ These words can be linked with the little "full of grace" of the angel's greeting. Both of these texts reveal an essential Mariological content, namely the truth about Mary, who has become really present in the mystery of Christ precisely because she "has believed." The fullness of grace announced by the angel means the gift of God himself. Mary's faith, proclaimed by Elizabeth at the Visitation, indicates how the Virgin of Nazareth responded to this gift.

[28] Cf. Saint Augustine, *De Sancta Virginitate*, III, 3: PL 40, 398; *Sermo* 25, 7: PL 46,

13. As the Council teaches, "'The obedience of faith' (Rom. 16:26; cf. Rom. 1:5; 2 Cor. 10:5-6) must be given to God who reveals, an obedience by which man entrusts his whole self freely to God."⁽²⁹⁾ This description of faith found perfect realization in Mary. The "decisive" moment was the Annunciation, and the very words of Elizabeth: "And blessed is she who believed" refer primarily to that very moment.⁽³⁰⁾

[29] Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum*, 5

[30] This is a classic theme, already expounded by Saint Irenaeus: "And, as by the action of the disobedient virgin, man was afflicted and, being cast down, died, so also by the action of the Virgin who obeyed the word of God, man being regenerated received, through life, life.... For it was meet and Just...that Eve should be "recapitulated" in Mary, so that the Virgin, becoming the advocate of the virgin, should dissolve and destroy the virginal disobedience by means of virginal obedience": *Expositio doctrinae apostolicae*, 33: S.Ch. 62, 83-86; cf. also *Adversus Haereses*, V, 19, 1: 5. Ch. 153, 248-250.

Indeed, at the Annunciation Mary entrusted herself to God completely, with the "full submission of intellect and will," manifesting "the obedience of faith" to him who spoke to her through his messenger.⁽³¹⁾ She responded, therefore, with all her human and feminine "I," and this response of faith included both perfect cooperation with "the grace of God that precedes and assists" and perfect openness to the action of the Holy Spirit, who "constantly brings faith to completion by his gifts."⁽³²⁾

[31] Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation Dei Verbum, 5.

[32] Ibid., 5, cf. Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Lumen Gentium, 56.

The word of the living God, announced to Mary by the angel, referred to her: "And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son" (Lk. 1:31). By accepting this announcement, Mary was to become the "Mother of the Lord," and the divine mystery of the Incarnation was to be accomplished in her: "The Father of mercies willed that the consent of the predestined Mother should precede the Incarnation." (33) And Mary gives this consent, after she has heard everything the messenger has to say. She says: "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word" (Lk. 1:38). This fiat of Mary-"let it be to me"-was decisive, on the human level, for the accomplishment of the divine mystery. There is a complete harmony with the words of the Son, who, according to the Letter to the Hebrews, says to the Father as he comes into the world: "Sacrifices and offering you have not desired, but a body you have prepared for me.... Lo, I have come to do your will, O God" (Heb. 10:5-7). The mystery of the Incarnation was accomplished when Mary uttered her fiat: "Let it be to me according to your word," which made possible, as far as it depended upon her in the divine plan, the granting of her Son's desire.

[33] Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Lumen Gentium, 56.

Mary uttered this fiat in faith. In faith she entrusted herself to God without reserve and "devoted herself totally as the handmaid of the Lord to the person and work of her Son." (34) And as the Fathers of the Church teach-she conceived this Son in her mind before she conceived him in her womb: precisely in faith! (35) Rightly therefore does Elizabeth praise Mary: "And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord." These words have already been fulfilled: Mary of Nazareth presents herself at the threshold of Elizabeth and Zechariah's house as the Mother of the Son of God. This is Elizabeth's joyful discovery: "The mother of my Lord comes to me"!

[34] Ibid., 56.

[35] Cf. *ibid.*, 53; Saint Augustine, *De Sancta Virginitate*, III, 3: PL 40, 398; *Sermo* 215, 4; PL 38, 1074; *Sermo* 196, I: PL 38, 1019; *De peccatorum meritis et remissione*, I, 29, 57: PL 44, 142; *Sermo* 25, 7: PL 46, 937-938; Saint Leo the Great, *Tractatus* 21, *de natale Domini*, I: CCL 138, 86.

14. Mary's faith can also be compared to that of Abraham, whom St. Paul calls "our father in faith" (cf. Rom. 4:12). In the salvific economy of God's revelation, Abraham's faith constitutes the beginning of the Old Covenant; Mary's faith at the Annunciation inaugurates the New Covenant. Just as Abraham "in hope believed against hope, that he should become the father of many nations" (cf. Rom. 4:18), so Mary, at the Annunciation, having professed her virginity ("How shall this be, since I have no husband?") believed that through the power of the Most High, by the power of the Holy Spirit, she would become the Mother of God's Son in accordance with the angel's revelation: "The child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God" (Lk. 1:35).

However, Elizabeth's words "And blessed is she who believed" do not apply only to that particular moment of the Annunciation. Certainly the Annunciation is the culminating moment of Mary's faith in her awaiting of Christ, but it is also the point of departure from which her whole "journey towards God" begins, her whole pilgrimage of faith. And on this road, in an eminent and truly heroic manner- indeed with an ever greater heroism of faith-the "obedience" which she professes to the word of divine revelation will be fulfilled. Mary's "obedience of faith" during the whole of her pilgrimage will show surprising similarities to the faith of Abraham. Just like the Patriarch of the People of God, so too Mary, during the pilgrimage of her filial and maternal fiat, "in hope believed against hope." Especially during certain stages of this journey the blessing granted to her "who believed" will be revealed with particular vividness. To believe means "to abandon oneself" to the truth of the word of the living God, knowing and humbly recognizing "how unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways" (Rom. 11:33). Mary, who by the eternal will of the Most High stands, one may say, at the very center of those "inscrutable ways" and "unsearchable judgments" of God, conforms herself to them in the dim light of faith, accepting fully and with a ready heart everything that is decreed in the divine plan.

15. When at the Annunciation Mary hears of the Son whose Mother she is to become and to whom "she will give the name Jesus" (= Savior), she also learns that "the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David," and that "he will reign over the house of Jacob for ever and of his kingdom there will be no end" (Lk. 1:32- 33). The hope of the whole of Israel was directed towards this. The promised Messiah is to be "great," and the heavenly messenger also announces that "he will be great"-great both by bearing the name of Son of the Most High and by the fact that he is to assume the inheritance of David. He is therefore to be a king, he is to reign "over the house of Jacob." Mary had grown up in the midst of these expectations of her people: could she guess, at the moment of the Annunciation, the vital significance of the angel's words? And how is one to understand that "kingdom" which "will have no end"?

Although through faith she may have perceived in that instant she was the mother of the "Messiah King," nevertheless she replied: "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word" (Lk. 1:38). From the first moment Mary professed above all the "obedience of faith," abandoning herself to the meaning which was given to the words of the Annunciation by him from whom they proceeded: God himself.

16. Later, a little further along this way of the "obedience of faith," Mary hears other words: those uttered by Simeon in the Temple of Jerusalem. It was now forty days after the birth of Jesus when, in accordance with the precepts of the Law of Moses, Mary and Joseph "brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord" (Lk. 2:22). The birth had taken place in conditions of extreme poverty. We know from Luke that when, on the occasion of the census ordered by the Roman authorities, Mary went with Joseph to Bethlehem, having found "no place in the inn," she gave birth to her Son in a stable and "laid him in a manger" (cf. Lk. 2:7).

A just and God-fearing man, called Simeon, appears at this beginning of Mary's "journey" of faith. His words, suggested by the Holy Spirit (cf. Lk. 2:25-27), confirm the truth of the Annunciation. For we read that he took up in his arms the child to whom-in accordance with the angel's command-the name Jesus was given (cf. Lk. 2:21). Simeon's words match the meaning of this name, which is Savior: "God is salvation." Turning to the Lord, he says: "For my eyes have seen your salvation which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel" (Lk. 2:30-32). At the same time, however, Simeon addresses Mary with the following words: "Behold, this child is set for the fall

and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is spoken against, that thoughts out of many hearts may be revealed"; and he adds with direct reference to her: "and a sword will pierce through your own soul also" (cf. Lk. 2:34-35). Simeon's words cast new light on the announcement which Mary had heard from the angel: Jesus is the Savior, he is "a light for revelation" to mankind. Is not this what was manifested in a way on Christmas night, when the shepherds come to the stable (cf. Lk. 2:8-20)? Is not this what was to be manifested even more clearly in the coming of the Magi from the East (cf. Mt. 2:1-12)? But at the same time, at the very beginning of his life, the Son of Mary, and his Mother with him, will experience in themselves the truth of those other words of Simeon: "a sign that is spoken against" (Lk. 2:34). Simeon's words seem like a second Annunciation to Mary, for they tell her of the actual historical situation in which the Son is to accomplish his mission, namely, in misunderstanding and sorrow. While this announcement on the one hand confirms her faith in the accomplishment of the divine promises of salvation, on the other hand it also reveals to her that she will have to live her obedience of faith in suffering, at the side of the suffering Savior, and that her motherhood will be mysterious and sorrowful. Thus, after the visit of the Magi who came from the East, after their homage ("they fell down and worshipped him") and after they had offered gifts (cf. Mt. 2:11), Mary together with the child has to flee into Egypt in the protective care of Joseph, for "Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him" (cf. Mt. 2:13). And until the death of Herod they will have to remain in Egypt (cf. Mt. 2:15).

17. When the Holy Family returns to Nazareth after Herod's death, there begins the long period of the hidden life. She "who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord" (Lk. 1:45) lives the reality of these words day by day. And daily at her side is the Son to whom "she gave the name Jesus"; therefore in contact with him she certainly uses this name, a fact which would have surprised no one, since the name had long been in use in Israel. Nevertheless, Mary knows that he who bears the name Jesus has been called by the angel "the Son of the Most High" (cf. Lk. 1:32). Mary knows she has conceived and given birth to him "without having a husband," by the power of the Holy Spirit, by the power of the Most High who overshadowed her (cf. Lk. 1:35), just as at the time of Moses and the Patriarchs the cloud covered the presence of God (cf. Ex. 24:16; 40:34-35; I Kings 8:10-12). Therefore Mary knows that the Son to whom she gave birth in a virginal manner is precisely that "Holy One," the Son of God, of whom the angel spoke to her.

During the years of Jesus' hidden life in the house at Nazareth, Mary's life too is "hid with Christ in God" (cf. Col. 3:3) through faith. For faith is contact with the mystery of God. Every day Mary is in constant contact with the ineffable mystery of God made man, a mystery that surpasses everything revealed in the Old Covenant. From the moment of the Annunciation, the mind of the Virgin-Mother has been initiated into the radical "newness" of God's self-revelation and has been made aware of the mystery. She is the first of those "little ones" of whom Jesus will say one day: "Father, ...you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to babes" (Mt. 11:25). For "no one knows the Son except the Father" (Mt. 11:27). If this is the case, how can Mary "know the Son"? Of course she does not know him as the Father does; and yet she is the first of those to whom the Father "has chosen to reveal him" (cf. Mt. 11:26-27; 1 Cor. 2:11). If though, from the moment of the Annunciation, the Son-whom only the Father knows completely, as the one who begets him in the eternal "today" (cf. Ps. 2:7) was revealed to Mary, she, his Mother, is in contact with the truth about her Son only in faith and through faith! She is therefore blessed, because "she has believed," and continues to believe day after day amidst all the trials and the adversities of Jesus' infancy and then during the years of the hidden life at Nazareth, where he "was obedient to them" (Lk. 2:51). He was obedient both to Mary and also to Joseph, since Joseph took the place of his father in people's eyes; for this reason, the Son

of Mary was regarded by the people as "the carpenter's son" (Mt. 13:55).

The Mother of that Son, therefore, mindful of what has been told her at the Annunciation and in subsequent events, bears within herself the radical "newness" of faith: the beginning of the New Covenant. This is the beginning of the Gospel, the joyful Good News. However, it is not difficult to see in that beginning a particular heaviness of heart, linked with a sort of night of faith"-to use the words of St. John of the Cross-a kind of "veil" through which one has to draw near to the Invisible One and to live in intimacy with the mystery.(36) And this is the way that Mary, for many years, lived in intimacy with the mystery of her Son, and went forward in her "pilgrimage of faith," while Jesus "increased in wisdom...and in favor with God and man" (Lk. 2:52). God's predilection for him was manifested ever more clearly to people's eyes. The first human creature thus permitted to discover Christ was Mary, who lived with Joseph in the same house at Nazareth.

[36] Ascent of Mount Carmel, 1. II, Ch. 3, 4-6.

However, when he had been found in the Temple, and his Mother asked him, "Son, why have you treated us so?" the twelve-year-old Jesus answered: "Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" And the Evangelist adds: "And they (Joseph and Mary) did not understand the saying which he spoke to them" (Lk. 2:48-50). Jesus was aware that "no one knows the Son except the Father" (cf. Mt. 11:27); thus even his Mother, to whom had been revealed most completely the mystery of his divine sonship, lived in intimacy with this mystery only through faith! Living side by side with her Son under the same roof, and faithfully persevering "in her union with her Son," she "advanced in her pilgrimage of faith," as the Council emphasizes.(37) And so it was during Christ's public life too (cf. Mk. 3:21-35) that day by day there was fulfilled in her the blessing uttered by Elizabeth at the Visitation: "Blessed is she who believed."

[37] Cf. Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Lumen Gentium, 58.

18. This blessing reaches its full meaning when Mary stands beneath the Cross of her Son (cf. Jn. 19:25). The Council says that this happened "not without a divine plan": by "suffering deeply with her only-begotten Son and joining herself with her maternal spirit to his sacrifice, lovingly consenting to the immolation of the victim to whom she had given birth," in this way Mary "faithfully preserved her union with her Son even to the Cross."(38) It is a union through faith-the same faith with which she had received the angel's revelation at the Annunciation. At that moment she had also heard the words: "He will be great...and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there will be no end" (Lk. 1:32-33).

[38] Ibid., 58.

And now, standing at the foot of the Cross, Mary is the witness, humanly speaking, of the complete negation of these words. On that wood of the Cross her Son hangs in agony as one condemned. "He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows...he was despised, and we esteemed him not": as one destroyed (cf. Is. 53:3- 5). How great, how heroic then is the obedience of faith shown by Mary in the face of God's "unsearchable judgments"! How completely she "abandons herself to God" without reserve, offering the full assent of the intellect and the will"(39) to him whose "ways are inscrutable" (cf. Rom. 11:33)! And how powerful too is the

action of grace in her soul, how all-pervading is the influence of the Holy Spirit and of his light and power!

[39] Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation Dei Verbum, 5.

Through this faith Mary is perfectly united with Christ in his self-emptying. For "Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men": precisely on Golgotha "humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross" (cf. Phil. 2:5-8). At the foot of the Cross Mary shares through faith in the shocking mystery of this self-emptying. This is perhaps the deepest "kenosis" of faith in human history. Through faith the Mother shares in the death of her Son, in his redeeming death; but in contrast with the faith of the disciples who fled, hers was far more enlightened. On Golgotha, Jesus through the Cross definitively confirmed that he was the "sign of contradiction" foretold by Simeon. At the same time, there were also fulfilled on Golgotha the words which Simeon had addressed to Mary: "and a sword will pierce through your own soul also." (40)

[40] Concerning Mary's participation or "compassion" in the death of Christ, cf. Saint Bernard, In Dominica infra octavam Assumptionis Sermo, 14: S. Bernardi Opera, V, 1968, 273.

19. Yes, truly "blessed is she who believed"! These words, spoken by Elizabeth after the Annunciation, here at the foot of the Cross seem to re-echo with supreme eloquence, and the power contained within them becomes something penetrating. From the Cross, that is to say from the very heart of the mystery of Redemption, there radiates and spreads out the prospect of that blessing of faith. It goes right back to "the beginning," and as a sharing in the sacrifice of Christ-the new Adam-it becomes in a certain sense the counterpoise to the disobedience and disbelief embodied in the sin of our first parents. Thus teach the Fathers of the Church and especially St. Irenaeus, quoted by the Constitution Lumen Gentium: "The knot of Eve's disobedience was untied by Mary's obedience; what the virgin Eve bound through her unbelief, the Virgin Mary loosened by her faith." (41) In the light of this comparison with Eve, the Fathers of the Church-as the Council also says-call Mary the "mother of the living" and often speak of "death through Eve, life through Mary." (42)

[41] Saint Irenaeus, Adversus Haereses III, 22, 4: S. Ch. 211, 438-444; cf. Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Lumen Gentium, 56, Note 6.

[42] Cf. Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Lumen Gentium, 56, and the Fathers quoted there in Notes 8 and 9.

In the expression "Blessed is she who believed," we can therefore rightly find a kind of "key" which unlocks for us the innermost reality of Mary, whom the angel hailed as "full of grace." If as "full of grace" she has been eternally present in the mystery of Christ, through faith she became a sharer in that mystery in every extension of her earthly journey. She "advanced in her pilgrimage of faith" and at the same time, in a discreet yet direct and effective way, she made present to humanity the mystery of Christ. And she still continues to do so. Through the mystery of Christ, she too is present within mankind. Thus through the mystery of the Son the mystery of

the Mother is also made clear.

3. Behold your mother

20. The Gospel of Luke records the moment when "a woman in the crowd raised her voice" and said to Jesus: "Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts that you sucked!" (Lk. 11:27) These words were an expression of praise of Mary as Jesus' mother according to the flesh. Probably the Mother of Jesus was not personally known to this woman; in fact, when Jesus began his messianic activity Mary did not accompany him but continued to remain at Nazareth. One could say that the words of that unknown woman in a way brought Mary out of her hiddenness.

Through these words, there flashed out in the midst of the crowd, at least for an instant, the gospel of Jesus' infancy. This is the gospel in which Mary is present as the mother who conceives Jesus in her womb, gives him birth and nurses him: the nursing mother referred to by the woman in the crowd. Thanks to this motherhood, Jesus, the Son of the Most High (cf. Lk. 1:32), is a true son of man. He is "flesh," like every other man: he is "the Word (who) became flesh" (cf. Jn. 1:14). He is of the flesh and blood of Mary! (43)

[43] "Christ is truth, Christ is flesh: Christ truth in the mind of Mary, Christ flesh in the womb of Mary": Saint Augustine, *Sermo 25 (Sermones inediti)*, 7: PL 46, 938.

But to the blessing uttered by that woman upon her who was his mother according to the flesh, Jesus replies in a significant way: "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it" (Lk. 11:28). He wishes to divert attention from motherhood understood only as a fleshly bond, in order to direct it towards those mysterious bonds of the spirit which develop from hearing and keeping God's word.

This same shift into the sphere of spiritual values is seen even more clearly in another response of Jesus reported by all the Synoptics. When Jesus is told that "his mother and brothers are standing outside and wish to see him," he replies: "My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it" (cf. Lk. 8:20-21). This he said "looking around on those who sat about him," as we read in Mark (3:34) or, according to Matthew (12:49), "stretching out his hand towards his disciples."

These statements seem to fit in with the reply which the twelve- year-old Jesus gave to Mary and Joseph when he was found after three days in the Temple at Jerusalem.

Now, when Jesus left Nazareth and began his public life throughout Palestine, he was completely and exclusively "concerned with his Father's business" (cf. Lk. 2:49). He announced the Kingdom: the "Kingdom of God" and "his Father's business," which add a new dimension and meaning to everything human, and therefore to every human bond, insofar as these things relate to the goals and tasks assigned to every human being. Within this new dimension, also a bond such as that of "brotherhood" means something different from "brotherhood according to the flesh" deriving from a common origin from the same set of parents. "Motherhood," too, in the dimension of the Kingdom of God and in the radius of the fatherhood of God himself, takes on another meaning. In the words reported by Luke, Jesus teaches precisely this new meaning of motherhood.

Is Jesus thereby distancing himself from his mother according to the flesh? Does he perhaps wish to leave her in the hidden obscurity which she herself has chosen? If this seems to be the case from the tone of those words, one must nevertheless note that the new and different motherhood which Jesus speaks of to his disciples refers precisely to Mary in a very special way. Is not Mary the first of "those who hear the word of God and do it"? And therefore does not the blessing uttered by Jesus in response to the woman in the crowd refer primarily to her? Without any doubt, Mary is worthy of blessing by the very fact that she became the mother of Jesus according to the flesh ("Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts that you sucked"), but also and especially because already at the Annunciation she accepted the word of God, because she believed it, because she was obedient to God, and because she "kept" the word and "pondered it in her heart" (cf. Lk. 1:38, 45; 2:19, 51) and by means of her whole life accomplished it. Thus we can say that the blessing proclaimed by Jesus is not in opposition, despite appearances, to the blessing uttered by the unknown woman, but rather coincides with that blessing in the person of this Virgin Mother, who called herself only "the handmaid of the Lord" (Lk. 1:38). If it is true that "all generations will call her blessed" (cf. Lk. 1:48), then it can be said that the unnamed woman was the first to confirm unwittingly that prophetic phrase of Mary's Magnificat and to begin the Magnificat of the ages.

If through faith Mary became the bearer of the Son given to her by the Father through the power of the Holy Spirit, while preserving her virginity intact, in that same faith she discovered and accepted the other dimension of motherhood revealed by Jesus during his messianic mission. One can say that this dimension of motherhood belonged to Mary from the beginning, that is to say from the moment of the conception and birth of her Son. From that time she was "the one who believed." But as the messianic mission of her Son grew clearer to her eyes and spirit, she herself as a mother became ever more open to that new dimension of motherhood which was to constitute her "part" beside her Son. Had she not said from the very beginning: "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word" (Lk. 1:38)? Through faith Mary continued to hear and to ponder that word, in which there became ever clearer, in a way "which surpasses knowledge" (Eph. 3:19), the self-revelation of the living God. Thus in a sense Mary as Mother became the first "disciple" of her Son, the first to whom he seemed to say: "Follow me," even before he addressed this call to the Apostles or to anyone else (cf. Jn. 1:43).

21. From this point of view, particularly eloquent is the passage in the Gospel of John which presents Mary at the wedding feast of Cana. She appears there as the Mother of Jesus at the beginning of his public life: "There was a marriage at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there; Jesus also was invited to the marriage, with his disciples" (Jn. 2:1-2). From the text it appears that Jesus and his disciples were invited together with Mary, as if by reason of her presence at the celebration: the Son seems to have been invited because of his mother. We are familiar with the sequence of events which resulted from that invitation, that "beginning of the signs" wrought by Jesus-the water changed into wine-which prompts the Evangelist to say that Jesus "manifested his glory; and his disciples believed in him" (Jn. 2:11).

Mary is present at Cana in Galilee as the Mother of Jesus, and in a significant way she contributes to that "beginning of the signs" which reveal the messianic power of her Son. We read: "When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, 'They have no wine.' And Jesus said to her, 'O woman, what have you to do with me? My hour has not yet come'" (Jn. 2:3-4). In John's Gospel that "hour" means the time appointed by the Father when the Son accomplishes his task and is to be glorified (cf. Jn. 7:30; 8:20; 12:23, 27; 13:1; 17:1; 19:27). Even though Jesus' reply to his mother sounds like a refusal (especially if we consider the blunt statement "My hour

has not yet come" rather than the question), Mary nevertheless turns to the servants and says to them: "Do whatever he tells you" (Jn. 2:5). Then Jesus orders the servants to fill the stone jars with water, and the water becomes wine, better than the wine which has previously been served to the wedding guests.

What deep understanding existed between Jesus and his mother? How can we probe the mystery of their intimate spiritual union? But the fact speaks for itself. It is certain that that event already quite clearly outlines the new dimension, the new meaning of Mary's motherhood. Her motherhood has a significance which is not exclusively contained in the words of Jesus and in the various episodes reported by the Synoptics (Lk. 11:27-28 and Lk. 8:19-21; Mt. 12:46-50; Mk. 3:31-35). In these texts Jesus means above all to contrast the motherhood resulting from the fact of birth with what this "motherhood" (and also "brotherhood") is to be in the dimension of the Kingdom of God, in the salvific radius of God's fatherhood. In John's text on the other hand, the description of the Cana event outlines what is actually manifested as a new kind of motherhood according to the spirit and not just according to the flesh, that is to say Mary's solicitude for human beings, her coming to them in the wide variety of their wants and needs. At Cana in Galilee there is shown only one concrete aspect of human need, apparently a small one of little importance ("They have no wine"). But it has a symbolic value: this coming to the aid of human needs means, at the same time, bringing those needs within the radius of Christ's messianic mission and salvific power. Thus there is a mediation: Mary places herself between her Son and mankind in the reality of their wants, needs and sufferings. She puts herself "in the middle," that is to say she acts as a mediatrix not as an outsider, but in her position as mother. She knows that as such she can point out to her Son the needs of mankind, and in fact, she "has the right" to do so. Her mediation is thus in the nature of intercession: Mary "intercedes" for mankind. And that is not all. As a mother she also wishes the messianic power of her Son to be manifested, that salvific power of his which is meant to help man in his misfortunes, to free him from the evil which in various forms and degrees weighs heavily upon his life. Precisely as the Prophet Isaiah had foretold about the Messiah in the famous passage which Jesus quoted before his fellow townsfolk in Nazareth: "To preach good news to the poor...to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind..." (cf. Lk. 4:18).

Another essential element of Mary's maternal task is found in her words to the servants: "Do whatever he tells you." The Mother of Christ presents herself as the spokeswoman of her Son's will, pointing out those things which must be done so that the salvific power of the Messiah may be manifested. At Cana, thanks to the intercession of Mary and the obedience of the servants, Jesus begins "his hour." At Cana Mary appears as believing in Jesus. Her faith evokes his first "sign" and helps to kindle the faith of the disciples.

22. We can therefore say that in this passage of John's Gospel we find as it were a first manifestation of the truth concerning Mary's maternal care. This truth has also found expression in the teaching of the Second Vatican Council. It is important to note how the Council illustrates Mary's maternal role as it relates to the mediation of Christ. Thus we read: "Mary's maternal function towards mankind in no way obscures or diminishes the unique mediation of Christ, but rather shows its efficacy," because "there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 2:5). This maternal role of Mary flows, according to God's good pleasure, "from the superabundance of the merits of Christ; it is founded on his mediation, absolutely depends on it, and draws all its efficacy from it." (44) It is precisely in this sense that the episode at Cana in Galilee offers us a sort of first announcement of Mary's mediation, wholly oriented towards Christ and tending to the revelation of his salvific power.

[44] Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 60.

From the text of John it is evident that it is a mediation which is maternal. As the Council proclaims: Mary became "a mother to us in the order of grace." This motherhood in the order of grace flows from her divine motherhood. Because she was, by the design of divine Providence, the mother who nourished the divine Redeemer, Mary became "an associate of unique nobility, and the Lord's humble handmaid," who "cooperated by her obedience, faith, hope and burning charity in the Savior's work of restoring supernatural life to souls." (45) And "this maternity of Mary in the order of grace. . .will last without interruption until the eternal fulfillment of all the elect." (46)

[45] *Ibid.*, 61.

[46] *Ibid.*, 62.

23. If John's description of the event at Cana presents Mary's caring motherhood at the beginning of Christ's messianic activity, another passage from the same Gospel confirms this motherhood in the salvific economy of grace at its crowning moment, namely when Christ's sacrifice on the Cross, his Paschal Mystery, is accomplished. John's description is concise: "Standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother, and the disciple whom he loved standing near, he said to his mother: 'Woman, behold your son!' Then he said to the disciple, 'Behold, your mother!' And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home" (Jn. 19:25-27).

Undoubtedly, we find here an expression of the Son's particular solicitude for his Mother, whom he is leaving in such great sorrow. And yet the "testament of Christ's Cross" says more. Jesus highlights a new relationship between Mother and Son, the whole truth and reality of which he solemnly confirms. One can say that if Mary's motherhood of the human race had already been outlined, now it is clearly stated and established. It emerges from the definitive accomplishment of the Redeemer's Paschal Mystery. The Mother of Christ, who stands at the very center of this mystery—a mystery which embraces each individual and all humanity—is given as mother to every single individual and all mankind. The man at the foot of the Cross is John, "the disciple whom he loved." (47) But it is not he alone. Following tradition, the Council does not hesitate to call Mary "the Mother of Christ and mother of mankind": since she "belongs to the offspring of Adam she is one with all human beings.... Indeed she is 'clearly the mother of the members of Christ...since she cooperated out of love so that there might be born in the Church the faithful.'" (48)

[47] There is a well-known passage of Origen on the presence of Mary and John on Calvary: "The Gospels are the first fruits of all Scripture and the Gospel of John is the first of the Gospels: no one can grasp its meaning without having leaned his head on Jesus' breast and having received from Jesus Mary as Mother": Comm. in Ioan., I, 6: PG 14, 31; cf. Saint Ambrose, *Expos. Evang. sec. Lucam*, X, 129-131: CSEL 32/4, 504f.

[48] Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 54 and 53; the latter text quotes Saint Augustine, *De Sancta Virginitate*, VI, 6: PL 40, 399.

And so this "new motherhood of Mary," generated by faith, is the fruit of the "new" love which came to definitive maturity in her at the foot of the Cross, through her sharing in the redemptive love of her Son.

24. Thus we find ourselves at the very center of the fulfillment of the promise contained in the Proto-gospel: the "seed of the woman...will crush the head of the serpent" (cf. Gen. 3:15). By his redemptive death Jesus Christ conquers the evil of sin and death at its very roots. It is significant that, as he speaks to his mother from the Cross, he calls her "woman" and says to her: "Woman, behold your son!" Moreover, he had addressed her by the same term at Cana too (cf. Jn. 2:4). How can one doubt that especially now, on Golgotha, this expression goes to the very heart of the mystery of Mary, and indicates the unique place which she occupies in the whole economy of salvation? As the Council teaches, in Mary "the exalted Daughter of Sion, and after a long expectation of the promise, the times were at length fulfilled and the new dispensation established. All this occurred when the Son of God took a human nature from her, that he might in the mysteries of his flesh free man from sin." (49)

[49] Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 55.

The words uttered by Jesus from the Cross signify that the motherhood of her who bore Christ finds a "new" continuation in the Church and through the Church, symbolized and represented by John. In this way, she who as the one "full of grace" was brought into the mystery of Christ in order to be his Mother and thus the Holy Mother of God, through the Church remains in that mystery as "the woman" spoken of by the Book of Genesis (3:15) at the beginning and by the Apocalypse (12:1) at the end of the history of salvation. In accordance with the eternal plan of Providence, Mary's divine motherhood is to be poured out upon the Church, as indicated by statements of Tradition, according to which Mary's "motherhood" of the Church is the reflection and extension of her motherhood of the Son of God. (50)

[50] Cf. Saint Leo the Great, *Tractatus* 26, de natale Domini, 2: CCL 138, 126.

According to the Council the very moment of the Church's birth and full manifestation to the world enables us to glimpse this continuity of Mary's motherhood: "Since it pleased God not to manifest solemnly the mystery of the salvation of the human race until he poured forth the Spirit promised by Christ, we see the Apostles before the day of Pentecost 'continuing with one mind in prayer with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren' (Acts 1:14). We see Mary prayerfully imploring the gift of the Spirit, who had already overshadowed her in the Annunciation." (51)

[51] Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 59.

And so, in the redemptive economy of grace, brought about through the action of the Holy Spirit, there is a unique correspondence between the moment of the Incarnation of the Word and the moment of the birth of the Church. The person who links these two moments is Mary: Mary at Nazareth and Mary in the Upper Room at Jerusalem. In both cases her discreet yet essential presence indicates the path of "birth from the Holy Spirit." Thus she who is present in the mystery of Christ as Mother becomes-by the will of the Son and the power of the Holy Spirit-present in the mystery of the Church. In the Church too she continues to be a maternal presence, as is shown by the words spoken from the Cross: "Woman, behold your son!";

"Behold, your mother."

PART II

The Mother Of God At The Center Of The Pilgrim Church

1. The Church, the People of God present in all the nations of the earth

25. "The Church `like a pilgrim in a foreign land, presses forward amid the persecutions of the world and the consolations of God,' (52) announcing the Cross and Death of the Lord until he comes (cf. 1 Cor. 11:26)." (53) "Israel according to the flesh, which wandered as an exile in the desert, was already called the Church of God (cf. 2 Esd. 13:1; Num. 20:4; Dt. 23:1ff.). Likewise the new Israel...is also called the Church of Christ (cf Mt 16:18). For he has bought it for himself with his blood (Acts 20:28), has filled it with his Spirit, and provided it with those means which befit it as a visible and social unity. God has gathered together as one all those who in faith look upon Jesus as the author of salvation and the source of unity and peace, and has established them as Church, that for each and all she may be the visible sacrament of this saving unity." (54)

[52] Saint Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, XVIII, 51: CCL 48, 650.

[53] Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Lumen Gentium*, 8.

[54] *Ibid.*, 9.

The Second Vatican Council speaks of the pilgrim Church, establishing an analogy with the Israel of the Old Covenant journeying through the desert. The journey also has an external character, visible in the time and space in which it historically takes place. For the Church "is destined to extend to all regions of the earth and so to enter into the history of mankind," but at the same time "she transcends all limits of time and of space." (55) And yet the essential character of her pilgrimage is interior: it is a question of a pilgrimage through faith, by "the power of the Risen Lord," (56) a pilgrimage in the Holy Spirit, given to the Church as the invisible Comforter (*parakletos*) (cf. Jn. 14:26; 15:26; 16:7): "Moving forward through trial and tribulation, the Church is strengthened by the power of God's grace promised to her by the Lord, so that...moved by the Holy Spirit, she may never cease to renew herself, until through the Cross she arrives at the light which knows no setting." (57)

[55] *Ibid.*, 9.

[56] *Ibid.*, 8.

[57] *Ibid.*, 9.

It is precisely in this ecclesial journey or pilgrimage through space and time, and even more through the history of souls, that Mary is present, as the one who is "blessed because she believed," as the one who advanced on the pilgrimage of faith, sharing unlike any other creature in the mystery of Christ. The Council further says that "Mary figured profoundly in the history of

salvation and in a certain way unites and mirrors within herself the central truths of the faith." (58) Among all believers she is like a "mirror" in which are reflected in the most profound and limpid way "the mighty works of God" (Acts 2:11).

[58] Ibid., 65.

26. Built by Christ upon the Apostles, the Church became fully aware of these mighty works of God on the day of Pentecost, when those gathered together in the Upper Room "were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2:4). From that moment there also begins that journey of faith, the Church's pilgrimage through the history of individuals and peoples. We know that at the beginning of this journey Mary is present. We see her in the midst of the Apostles in the Upper Room, "prayerfully imploring the gift of the Spirit." (59)

[59] Ibid., 59.

In a sense her journey of faith is longer. The Holy Spirit had already come down upon her, and she became his faithful spouse at the Annunciation, welcoming the Word of the true God, offering "the full submission of intellect and will...and freely assenting to the truth revealed by him," indeed abandoning herself totally to God through "the obedience of faith," (60) whereby she replied to the angel: "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." The journey of faith made by Mary, whom we see praying in the Upper Room, is thus longer than that of the others gathered there: Mary "goes before them," "leads the way" for them. (61) The moment of Pentecost in Jerusalem had been prepared for by the moment of the Annunciation in Nazareth, as well as by the Cross. In the Upper Room Mary's journey meets the Church's journey of faith. In what way?

[60] Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation Dei Verbum, 5.

[61] Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Lumen Gentium, 63.

Among those who devoted themselves to prayer in the Upper Room, preparing to go "into the whole world" after receiving the Spirit, some had been called by Jesus gradually from the beginning of his mission in Israel. Eleven of them had been made Apostles, and to them Jesus had passed on the mission which he himself had received from the Father. "As the Father has sent me, even so I send you" (Jn. 20:21), he had said to the Apostles after the Resurrection. And forty days later, before returning to the Father, he had added: "when the Holy Spirit has come upon you...you shall be my witnesses...to the end of the earth" (cf. Acts 1:8). This mission of the Apostles began the moment they left the Upper Room in Jerusalem. The Church is born and then grows through the testimony that Peter and the Apostles bear to the Crucified and Risen Christ (cf. Acts 2:31-34; 3:15-18; 4:10-12; 5:30-32).

Mary did not directly receive this apostolic mission. She was not among those whom Jesus sent "to the whole world to teach all nations" (cf. Mt. 28:19) when he conferred this mission on them. But she was in the Upper Room, where the Apostles were preparing to take up this mission with the coming of the Spirit of Truth: she was present with them. In their midst Mary was "devoted

to prayer" as the "mother of Jesus" (cf. Acts 1:13-14), of the Crucified and Risen Christ. And that first group of those who in faith looked "upon Jesus as the author of salvation," (62) knew that Jesus was the Son of Mary, and that she was his Mother, and that as such she was from the moment of his conception and birth a unique witness to the mystery of Jesus, that mystery which before their eyes had been disclosed and confirmed in the Cross and Resurrection. Thus, from the very first moment, the Church "looked at" Mary through Jesus, just as she "looked at" Jesus through Mary. For the Church of that time and of every time Mary is a singular witness to the years of Jesus' infancy and hidden life at Nazareth, when she "kept all these things, pondering them in her heart" (Lk. 2:19; cf. Lk. 2:51).

[62] Cf. *ibid.*, 9.

But above all, in the Church of that time and of every time Mary was and is the one who is "blessed because she believed"; she was the first to believe. From the moment of the Annunciation and conception, from the moment of his birth in the stable at Bethlehem, Mary followed Jesus step by step in her maternal pilgrimage of faith. She followed him during the years of his hidden life at Nazareth; she followed him also during the time after he left home, when he began "to do and to teach" (cf. Acts 1:1) in the midst of Israel. Above all she followed him in the tragic experience of Golgotha. Now, while Mary was with the Apostles in the Upper Room in Jerusalem at the dawn of the Church, her faith, born from the words of the Annunciation, found confirmation. The angel had said to her then: "You will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great...and he will reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there will be no end." The recent events on Calvary had shrouded that promise in darkness, yet not even beneath the Cross did Mary's faith fail. She had still remained the one who, like Abraham, "in hope believed against hope" (Rom. 4:18). But it is only after the Resurrection that hope had shown its true face and the promise had begun to be transformed into reality. For Jesus, before returning to the Father, had said to the Apostles: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations . . . lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age" (cf. Mt. 28:19-20). Thus had spoken the one who by his Resurrection had revealed himself as the conqueror of death, as the one who possessed the kingdom of which, as the angel said, "there will be no end."

27. Now, at the first dawn of the Church, at the beginning of the long journey through faith which began at Pentecost in Jerusalem, Mary was with all those who were the seed of the "new Israel." She was present among them as an exceptional witness to the mystery of Christ. And the Church was assiduous in prayer together with her, and at the same time "contemplated her in the light of the Word made man." It was always to be so. For when the Church "enters more intimately into the supreme mystery of the Incarnation," she thinks of the Mother of Christ with profound reverence and devotion. (63) Mary belongs indissolubly to the mystery of Christ, and she belongs also to the mystery of the Church from the beginning, from the day of the Church's birth. At the basis of what the Church has been from the beginning, and of what she must continually become from generation to generation, in the midst of all the nations of the earth, we find the one "who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord" (Lk. 1:45). It is precisely Mary's faith which marks the beginning of the new and eternal Covenant of God with man in Jesus Christ; this heroic faith of hers "precedes" the apostolic witness of the Church, and ever remains in the Church's heart hidden like a special heritage of God's revelation. All those who from generation to generation accept the apostolic witness of the Church share in that mysterious inheritance, and in a sense share in Mary's faith.

[63] Cf. *ibid.*, 65.

Elizabeth's words "Blessed is she who believed" continue to accompany the Virgin also at Pentecost; they accompany her from age to age, wherever knowledge of Christ's salvific mystery spreads, through the Church's apostolic witness and service. Thus is fulfilled the prophecy of the Magnificat: "All generations will call me blessed; for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name" (Lk. 1:48-49). For knowledge of the mystery of Christ leads us to bless his Mother, in the form of special veneration for the Theotokos. But this veneration always includes a blessing of her faith, for the Virgin of Nazareth became blessed above all through this faith, in accordance with Elizabeth's words. Those who from generation to generation among the different peoples and nations of the earth accept with faith the mystery of Christ, the Incarnate Word and Redeemer of the world, not only turn with veneration to Mary and confidently have recourse to her as his Mother, but also seek in her faith support for their own. And it is precisely this lively sharing in Mary's faith that determines her special place in the Church's pilgrimage as the new People of God throughout the earth.

28. As the Council says, "Mary figured profoundly in the history of salvation.... Hence when she is being preached and venerated, she summons the faithful to her Son and his sacrifice, and to love for the Father." (64) For this reason, Mary's faith, according to the Church's apostolic witness, in some way continues to become the faith of the pilgrim People of God: the faith of individuals and communities, of places and gatherings, and of the various groups existing in the Church. It is a faith that is passed on simultaneously through both the mind and the heart. It is gained or regained continually through prayer. Therefore, "the Church in her apostolic work also rightly looks to her who brought forth Christ, conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin, so that through the Church Christ may be born and increase in the hearts of the faithful also." (65)

[64] *Ibid.*, 65.

[65] *Ibid.*, 65.

Today, as on this pilgrimage of faith we draw near to the end of the second Christian Millennium, the Church, through the teaching of the Second Vatican Council, calls our attention to her vision of herself, as the "one People of God...among all the nations of the earth." And she reminds us of that truth according to which all the faithful, though "scattered throughout the world, are in communion with each other in the Holy Spirit." (66) We can therefore say that in this union the mystery of Pentecost is continually being accomplished. At the same time, the Lord's apostles and disciples, in all the nations of the earth, "devote themselves to prayer together with Mary, the mother of Jesus" (Acts 1:14). As they constitute from generation to generation the "sign of the Kingdom" which is not of this world, (67) they are also aware that in the midst of this world they must gather around that King to whom the nations have been given in heritage (cf. Ps. 2:8), to whom the Father has given "the throne of David his father," so that he "will reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

[66] Cf. *ibid.*, 13.

[67] Cf. *ibid.*, 13.

During this time of vigil, Mary, through the same faith which made her blessed, especially from

the moment of the Annunciation, is present in the Church's mission, present in the Church's work of introducing into the world the Kingdom of her Son. (68)

[68] Cf. *ibid.*, 13.

This presence of Mary finds many different expressions in our day, just as it did throughout the Church's history. It also has a wide field of action. Through the faith and piety of individual believers; through the traditions of Christian families or "domestic churches," of parish and missionary communities, religious institutes and dioceses; through the radiance and attraction of the great shrines where not only individuals or local groups, but sometimes whole nations and societies, even whole continents, seek to meet the Mother of the Lord, the one who is blessed because she believed is the first among believers and therefore became the Mother of Emmanuel. This is the message of the Land of Palestine, the spiritual homeland of all Christians because it was the homeland of the Savior of the world and of his Mother. This is the message of the many churches in Rome and throughout the world which have been raised up in the course of the centuries by the faith of Christians. This is the message of centers like Guadalupe, Lourdes, Fatima and the others situated in the various countries. Among them how could I fail to mention the one in my own native land, Jasna Gora? One could perhaps speak of a specific "geography" of faith and Marian devotion, which includes all these special places of pilgrimage where the People of God seek to meet the Mother of God in order to find, within the radius of the maternal presence of her "who believed," a strengthening of their own faith. For in Mary's faith, first at the Annunciation and then fully at the foot of the Cross, an interior space was reopened within humanity which the eternal Father can fill "with every spiritual blessing." It is the space "of the new and eternal Covenant," (69) and it continues to exist in the Church, which in Christ is "a kind of sacrament or sign of intimate union with God, and of the unity of all mankind." (70)

[69] Cf. Roman Missal, formula of the Consecration of the Chalice in the Eucharistic Prayers.

[70] Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 1.

In the faith which Mary professed at the Annunciation as the "handmaid of the Lord" and in which she constantly "precedes" the pilgrim People of God throughout the earth, the Church "strives energetically and constantly to bring all humanity...back to Christ its Head in the unity of his Spirit." (71)

[71] *Ibid.*, 13.

2. The Church's journey and the unity of all Christians

29. "In all of Christ's disciples the Spirit arouses the desire to be peacefully united, in the manner determined by Christ, as one flock under one shepherd." (72) The journey of the Church, especially in our own time, is marked by the sign of ecumenism: Christians are seeking ways to restore that unity which Christ implored from the Father for his disciples on the day before his Passion: "That they may all be one; even as you, Father, are in me, and I in you that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me" (Jn. 17:21). The unity of Christ's disciples, therefore, is a great sign given in order to kindle faith in the world while their

division constitutes a scandal.(73)

[72] Ibid., 15.

[73] Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Decree on Ecumenism Unitatis Redintegratio, 1.

The ecumenical movement, on the basis of a clearer and more widespread awareness of the urgent need to achieve the unity of all Christians, has found on the part of the Catholic Church its culminating expression in the work of the Second Vatican Council: Christians must deepen in themselves and each of their communities that "obedience of faith" of which Mary is the first and brightest example. And since she "shines forth on earth,...as a sign of sure hope and solace for the pilgrim People of God," "it gives great joy and comfort to this most holy Synod that among the divided brethren, too, there are those who live due honor to the Mother of our Lord and Savior. This is especially so among the Easterners."(74)

[74] Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Lumen Gentium, 68, 69. On Mary Most Holy, promoter of Christian unity, and on the cult of Mary in the East, cf. Leo XIII, Encyclical Epistle Adiutricem Populi (5 September 1885): Acta Leonis XV, 300-312.

30. Christians know that their unity will be truly rediscovered only if it is based on the unity of their faith. They must resolve considerable discrepancies of doctrine concerning the mystery and ministry of the Church, and sometimes also concerning the role of Mary in the work of salvation.(75) The dialogues begun by the Catholic Church with the Churches and Ecclesial Communities of the West(76) are steadily converging upon these two inseparable aspects of the same mystery of salvation. If the mystery of the Word made flesh enables us to glimpse the mystery of the divine motherhood and is, in turn, contemplation of the Mother of God brings us to a more profound understanding of the mystery of the Incarnation, then the same must be said for the mystery of the Church and Mary's role in the work of salvation. By a more profound study of both Mary and the Church, clarifying each by the light of the other, Christians who are eager to do what Jesus tells them-as their Mother recommends (cf. Jn. 2:5)- will be able to go forward together on this "pilgrimage of faith." Mary, who is still the model of this pilgrimage, is to lead them to the unity which is willed by their one Lord and so much desired by those who are attentively listening to what "the Spirit is saying to the Churches" today (Rev. 2:7, 11, 17).

[75] Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Decree on Ecumenism Unitatis Redintegratio, 20.

[76] Cf. ibid., 19.

Meanwhile, it is a hopeful sign that these Churches and Ecclesial Communities are finding agreement with the Catholic Church on fundamental points of Christian belief, including matters relating to the Virgin Mary. For they recognize her as the Mother of the Lord and hold that this forms part of our faith in Christ, true God and true man. They look to her who at the foot of the Cross accepts as her son the beloved disciple, the one who in his turn accepts her as his mother.

Therefore, why should we not all together look to her as our common Mother, who prays for the unity of God's family and who "precedes" us all at the head of the long line of witnesses of faith

in the one Lord, the Son of God, who was conceived in her virginal womb by the power of the Holy Spirit?

31. On the other hand, I wish to emphasize how profoundly the Catholic Church, the Orthodox Church and the ancient Churches of the East feel united by love and praise of the Theotokos. Not only "basic dogmas of the Christian faith concerning the Trinity and God's Word made flesh of the Virgin Mary were defined in Ecumenical Councils held in the East," (77) but also in their liturgical worship "the Orientals pay high tribute, in very beautiful hymns, to Mary ever Virgin...God's Most Holy Mother." (78)

[77] Ibid., 14.

[78] Ibid., 15.

The brethren of these Churches have experienced a complex history, but it is one that has always been marked by an intense desire for Christian commitment and apostolic activity, despite frequent persecution, even to the point of bloodshed. It is a history of fidelity to the Lord, an authentic "pilgrimage of faith" in space and time, during which Eastern Christians have always looked with boundless trust to the Mother of the Lord, celebrated her with praise and invoked her with unceasing prayer. In the difficult moments of their troubled Christian existence, "they have taken refuge under her protection," (79) conscious of having in her a powerful aid. The Churches which profess the doctrine of Ephesus proclaim the Virgin as "true Mother of God," since "our Lord Jesus Christ, born of the Father before time began according to his divinity, in the last days, for our sake and for our salvation, was himself begotten of Mary, the Virgin Mother of God according to his humanity." (80) The Greek Fathers and the Byzantine tradition contemplating the Virgin in the light of the Word made flesh, have sought to penetrate the depth of that bond which unites Mary, as the Mother of God, to Christ and the Church: the Virgin is a permanent presence in the whole reality of the salvific mystery.

[79] Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 66.

[80] Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon, *Definitio fidei: Conciliorum Oecumenicorum Decreta*, Bologna 1973, 86 (DS 301).

The Coptic and Ethiopian traditions were introduced to this contemplation of the mystery of Mary by St. Cyril of Alexandria, and in their turn they have celebrated it with a profuse poetic blossoming. (81) The poetic genius of St. Ephrem the Syrian, called "the lyre of the Holy Spirit," tirelessly sang of Mary, leaving a still living mark on the whole tradition of the Syriac Church. (82) In his panegyric of the Theotókos, St. Gregory of Narek, one of the outstanding glories of Armenia, with powerful poetic inspiration ponders the different aspects of the mystery of the Incarnation, and each of them is for him an occasion to sing and extol the extraordinary dignity and magnificent beauty of the Virgin Mary, Mother of the Word made flesh. (83)

[81] Cf. the *Weddase Maryam* (Praises of Mary), which follows the Ethiopian Psalter and contains hymns and prayers to Mary for each day of the week. Cf. also the *Matshafa Kidana Mehrat* (Book of the Pact of Mercy); the importance given to Mary in the Ethiopian hymnology and liturgy deserves to be emphasized.

[82] Cf. Saint Ephrem, Hymn. de Nativitate: Scriptorum Syri, 82, CSCO, 186.

[83] Cf. Saint Gregory of Narek, Le livre de prieres: S. Ch. 78, 160-163; 428-432.

It does not surprise us therefore that Mary occupies a privileged place in the worship or the ancient Oriental Churches with an incomparable abundance of feasts and hymns.

32. In the Byzantine liturgy, in all the hours of the Divine Office, praise of the Mother is linked with praise of her Son and with the praise which, through the Son, is offered up to the Father in the Holy Spirit. In the Anaphora or Eucharistic Prayer of St. John Chrysostom, immediately after the epiclesis the assembled community sings in honor of the Mother of God: "It is truly just to proclaim you blessed, O Mother of God, who are most blessed, all pure and Mother of our God. We magnify you who are more honorable than the Cherubim and incomparably more glorious than the Seraphim. You who, without losing your virginity, gave birth to the Word of God. You who are truly the Mother of God."

These praises, which in every celebration of the Eucharistic Liturgy are offered to Mary, have moulded the faith, piety and prayer of the faithful. In the course of the centuries they have permeated their whole spiritual outlook, fostering in them a profound devotion to the "All Holy Mother of God."

33. This year there occurs the twelfth centenary of the Second Ecumenical Council of Nicaea (787). Putting an end to the wellknown controversy about the cult of sacred images, this Council defined that, according to the teaching of the holy Fathers and the universal tradition of the Church, there could be exposed for the veneration of the faithful, together with the Cross, also images of the Mother of God, of the angels and of the saints, in churches and houses and at the roadside. (84) This custom has been maintained in the whole of the East and also in the West. Images of the Virgin have a place of honor in churches and houses. In them Mary is represented in a number of ways: as the throne of God carrying the Lord and giving him to humanity (Theotokos); as the way that leads to Christ and manifests him (Hodegetria); as a praying figure in an attitude of intercession and as a sign of the divine presence on the journey of the faithful until the day of the Lord (Deesis); as the protectress who stretches out her mantle over the peoples (Pokrov), or as the merciful Virgin of tenderness (Eleousa). She is usually represented with her Son, the child Jesus, in her arms: it is the relationship with the Son which glorifies the Mother. Sometimes she embraces him with tenderness (Glykophilousa); at other times she is a hieratic figure, apparently rapt in contemplation of him who is the Lord of history (cf. Rev. 5:9-14). (85)

[84] Second Ecumenical Council of Nicaea: Conciliorum Oecumenicorum Decreta, Bologna 1973, 135-138 (DS 600-609).

[85] Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Lumen Gentium, 59.

It is also appropriate to mention the icon of Our Lady of Vladimir, which continually accompanied the pilgrimage of faith of the peoples of ancient Rus'. The first Millennium of the conversion of those noble lands to Christianity is approaching: lands of humble folk, of thinkers and of saints.

The Icons are still venerated in the Ukraine, in Byelorussia and in Russia under various titles. They are images which witness to the faith and spirit of prayer of that people, who sense the presence and protection of the Mother of God. In these Icons the Virgin shines as the image of divine beauty, the abode of Eternal Wisdom, the figure of the one who prays, the prototype of contemplation, the image of glory: she who even in her earthly life possessed the spiritual knowledge inaccessible to human reasoning and who attained through faith the most sublime knowledge. I also recall the Icon of the Virgin of the Cenacle, praying with the Apostles as they awaited the Holy Spirit: could she not become the sign of hope for all those who, in fraternal dialogue, wish to deepen their obedience of faith?

34. Such a wealth of praise, built up by the different forms of the Church's great tradition, could help us to hasten the day when the Church can begin once more to breathe fully with her "two lungs," the East and the West. As I have often said, this is more than ever necessary today. It would be an effective aid in furthering the progress of the dialogue already taking place between the Catholic Church and the Churches and Ecclesial Communities of the West. (86) It would also be the way for the pilgrim Church to sing and to live more perfectly her "Magnificat."

[86] Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Decree on Ecumenism *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 19.

3. The "Magnificat" of the pilgrim Church

35. At the present stage of her journey, therefore, the Church seeks to rediscover the unity of all who profess their faith in Christ, in order to show obedience to her Lord, who prayed for this unity before his Passion. "Like a pilgrim in a foreign land, the Church presses forward amid the persecutions of the world and the consolations of God, announcing the Cross and Death of the Lord until he comes." (87) "Moving forward through trial and tribulation, the Church is strengthened by the power of God's grace promised to her by the Lord, so that in the weakness of the flesh she may not waver from perfect fidelity, but remain a bride worthy of her Lord; that moved by the Holy Spirit she may never cease to renew herself, until through the Cross she arrives at the light which knows no setting." (88)

[87] Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 8.

[88] *Ibid.*, 9.

The Virgin Mother is constantly present on this journey of faith of the People of God towards the light. This is shown in a special way by the canticle of the "Magnificat," which, having welled up from the depths of Mary's faith at the Visitation, ceaselessly re-echoes in the heart of the Church down the centuries. This is proved by its daily recitation in the liturgy of Vespers and at many other moments of both personal and communal devotion.

"My soul magnifies the Lord,
and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
for he has looked on his servant in her lowliness.
For behold, henceforth all generations
will call me blessed;

for he who is mighty has done great things for me,
and holy is his name:
and his mercy is from age to age
on those who fear him.
He has shown strength with his arm,
he has scattered the proud-hearted,
he has cast down the mighty from their thrones,
and lifted up the lowly;
he has filled the hungry with good things,
sent the rich away empty.
He has helped his servant Israel,
remembering his mercy,
as he spoke to our fathers,
to Abraham and to his posterity for ever." (Lk. 1 : 46-55)

36. When Elizabeth greeted her young kinswoman coming from Nazareth, Mary replied with the Magnificat. In her greeting, Elizabeth first called Mary "blessed" because of "the fruit of her womb," and then she called her "blessed" because of her faith (cf. Lk. 1:42, 45). These two blessings referred directly to the Annunciation. Now, at the Visitation, when Elizabeth's greeting bears witness to that culminating moment, Mary's faith acquires a new consciousness and a new expression. That which remained hidden in the depths of the "obedience of faith" at the Annunciation can now be said to spring forth like a clear and life-giving flame of the spirit. The words used by Mary on the threshold of Elizabeth's house are an inspired profession of her faith, in which her response to the revealed word is expressed with the religious and poetical exultation of her whole being towards God. In these sublime words, which are simultaneously very simple and wholly inspired by the sacred texts of the people of Israel, (89) Mary's personal experience, the ecstasy of her heart, shines forth. In them shines a ray of the mystery of God, the glory of his ineffable holiness, the eternal love which, as an irrevocable gift, enters into human history.

[89] As is well-known, the words of the Magnificat contain or echo numerous passages of the Old Testament.

Mary is the first to share in this new revelation of God and, within the same, in this new "self-giving" of God. Therefore she proclaims: "For he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name." Her words reflect a joy of spirit which is difficult to express: "My spirit rejoices in God my Savior." Indeed, "the deepest truth about God and the salvation of man is made clear to us in Christ, who is at the same time the mediator and the fullness of all revelation." (90) In her exultation Mary confesses that she finds herself in the very heart of this fullness of Christ. She is conscious that the promise made to the fathers, first of all "to Abraham and to his posterity for ever," is being fulfilled in herself. She is thus aware that concentrated within herself as the mother of Christ is the whole salvific economy, in which "from age to age" is manifested he who as the God of the Covenant, "remembers his mercy."

[90] Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation Dei Verbum, 2.

37. The Church, which from the beginning has modelled her earthly journey on that of the Mother of God, constantly repeats after her the words of the Magnificat. From the depths of the Virgin's faith at the Annunciation and the Visitation, the Church derives the truth about the God

of the Covenant: the God who is Almighty and does "great things" for man: "holy is his name." In the Magnificat the Church sees uprooted that sin which is found at the outset of the earthly history of man and woman, the sin of disbelief and of "little faith" in God. In contrast with the "suspicion" which the "father of lies" sowed in the heart of Eve the first woman, Mary, whom tradition is wont to call the "new Eve" (91) and the true "Mother of the living," (92) boldly proclaims the undimmed truth about God: the holy and almighty God, who from the beginning is the source of all gifts, he who "has done great things" in her, as well as in the whole universe. In the act of creation God gives existence to all that is. In creating man, God gives him the dignity of the image and likeness of himself in a special way as compared with all earthly creatures. Moreover, in his desire to give God gives himself in the Son, notwithstanding man's sin: "He so loved the world that he gave his only Son" (Jn. 3:16). Mary is the first witness of this marvelous truth, which will be fully accomplished through "the works and words" (cf. Acts 1:1) of her Son and definitively through his Cross and Resurrection.

[91] Cf. for example Saint Justin, *Dialogus cum Tryphone iudaeo*, 100: Otto II, 358; Saint Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* III, 22, 4: S. Ch. 211, 439-445; Tertullian, *De carne Christi*, 17, 4-6: CCL 2, 904f.

[92] Cf. Saint Epiphanius, *Panarion*, III, 2; Haer. 78, 18: PG 42, 727-730.

The Church, which even "amid trials and tribulations" does not cease repeating with Mary the words of the Magnificat, is sustained by the power of God's truth, proclaimed on that occasion with such extraordinary simplicity. At the same time, by means of this truth about God, the Church desires to shed light upon the difficult and sometimes tangled paths of man's earthly existence. The Church's journey, therefore, near the end of the second Christian Millennium, involves a renewed commitment to her mission. Following him who said of himself: "(God) has anointed me to preach good news to the poor" (cf. Lk. 4:18), the Church has sought from generation to generation and still seeks today to accomplish that same mission. The Church's love of preference for the poor is wonderfully inscribed in Mary's Magnificat. The God of the Covenant, celebrated in the exultation of her spirit by the Virgin of Nazareth, is also he who "has cast down the mighty from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly, ...filled the hungry with good things, sent the rich away empty, ...scattered the proud-hearted...and his mercy is from age to age on those who fear him." Mary is deeply imbued with the spirit of the "poor of Yahweh," who in the prayer of the Psalms awaited from God their salvation, placing all their trust in him (cf. Pss. 25; 31; 35; 55). Mary truly proclaims the coming of the "Messiah of the poor" (cf. Is. 11:4; 61:1). Drawing from Mary's heart, from the depth of her faith expressed in the words of the Magnificat, the Church renews ever more effectively in herself the awareness that the truth about God who saves, the truth about God who is the source of every gift, cannot be separated from the manifestation of his love of preference for the poor and humble, that love which, celebrated in the Magnificat, is later expressed in the words and works of Jesus.

The Church is thus aware-and at the present time this awareness is particularly vivid-not only that these two elements of the message contained in the Magnificat cannot be separated, but also that there is a duty to safeguard carefully the importance of "the poor" and of "the option in favor of the poor" in the word of the living God. These are matters and questions intimately connected with the Christian meaning of freedom and liberation. "Mary is totally dependent upon God and completely directed towards him, and at the side of her Son, she is the most perfect image of freedom and of the liberation of humanity and of the universe. It is to her as Mother and Model that the Church must look in order to understand in its completeness the meaning of

her own mission." (93)

[93] Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation (22 March 1986), 97.

PART III

Maternal Mediation

1. Mary, the Handmaid of the Lord

38. The Church knows and teaches with Saint Paul that there is only one mediator: "For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all" (1 Tim. 2:5-6). "The maternal role of Mary towards people in no way obscures or diminishes the unique mediation of Christ, but rather shows its power": (94) it is mediation in Christ.

[94] Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Lumen Gentium, 60.

The Church knows and teaches that "all the saving influences of the Blessed Virgin on mankind originate...from the divine pleasure. They flow forth from the superabundance of the merits of Christ, rest on his mediation, depend entirely on it, and draw all their power from it. In no way do they impede the immediate union of the faithful with Christ. Rather, they foster this union." (95) This saving influence is sustained by the Holy Spirit, who, just as he overshadowed the Virgin Mary when he began in her the divine motherhood, in a similar way constantly sustains her solicitude for the brothers and sisters of her Son.

[95] Ibid., 60.

In effect, Mary's mediation is intimately linked with her motherhood. It possesses a specifically maternal character, which distinguishes it from the mediation of the other creatures who in various and always subordinate ways share in the one mediation of Christ, although her own mediation is also a shared mediation. (96) In fact, while it is true that "no creature could ever be classed with the Incarnate Word and Redeemer," at the same time "the unique mediation of the Redeemer does not exclude but rather gives rise among creatures to a manifold cooperation which is but a sharing in this unique source." And thus "the one goodness of God is in reality communicated diversely to his creatures." (97)

[96] Cf. the formula of mediatrix "ad Mediatorem" of Saint Bernard, In Dominica infra oct. Assumptionis Sermo, 2: S. Bernardi Opera, V, 1968, 263. Mary as a pure mirror sends back to her Son all the glory and honor which she receives: Id., In Nativitate B. Mariae Sermo-De Aquaeductu, 12: ed. cit., 283.

[97] Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Lumen Gentium, 62.

The teaching of the Second Vatican Council presents the truth of Mary's mediation as "a sharing in the one unique source that is the mediation of Christ himself." Thus we read: "The Church does not hesitate to profess this subordinate role of Mary. She experiences it continuously and commends it to the hearts of the faithful, so that, encouraged by this maternal help, they may more closely adhere to the Mediator and Redeemer." (98) This role is at the same time special and extraordinary. It flows from her divine motherhood and can be understood and lived in faith only on the basis of the full truth of this motherhood. Since by virtue of divine election Mary is the earthly Mother of the Father's consubstantial Son and his "generous companion" in the work of redemption "she is a mother to us in the order of grace." (99) This role constitutes a real dimension of her presence in the saving mystery of Christ and the Church.

[98] Ibid., 62.

[99] Ibid., 61.

39. From this point of view we must consider once more the fundamental event in the economy of salvation, namely the Incarnation of the Word at the moment of the Annunciation. It is significant that Mary, recognizing in the words of the divine messenger the will of the Most High and submitting to his power, says: "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word" (Lk. 1:38). The first moment of submission to the one mediation "between God and men"-the mediation of Jesus Christ-is the Virgin of Nazareth's acceptance of motherhood. Mary consents to God's choice, in order to become through the power of the Holy Spirit the Mother of the Son of God. It can be said that a consent to motherhood is above all a result of her total selfgiving to God in virginity. Mary accepted her election as Mother of the Son of God, guided by spousal love, the love which totally "consecrates" a human being to God. By virtue of this love, Mary wished to be always and in all things "given to God," living in virginity. The words "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord" express the fact that from the outset she accepted and understood her own motherhood as a total gift of self, a gift of her person to the service of the saving plans of the Most High. And to the very end she lived her entire maternal sharing in the life of Jesus Christ, her Son, in a way that matched her vocation to virginity.

Mary's motherhood, completely pervaded by her spousal attitude as the "handmaid of the Lord," constitutes the first and fundamental dimension of that mediation which the Church confesses and proclaims in her regard (100) and continually "commends to the hearts of the faithful," since the Church has great trust in her. For it must be recognized that before anyone else it was God himself, the Eternal Father, who entrusted himself to the Virgin of Nazareth, giving her his own Son in the mystery of the Incarnation. Her election to the supreme office and dignity of Mother of the Son of God refers, on the ontological level, to the very reality of the union of the two natures in the person of the Word (hypostatic union). This basic fact of being the Mother of the Son of God is from the very beginning a complete openness to the person of Christ, to his whole work, to his whole mission. The words "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord" testify to Mary's openness of spirit: she perfectly unites in herself the love proper to virginity and the love characteristic of motherhood, which are joined and, as it were, fused together.

[100] Ibid., 62.

For this reason Mary became not only the "nursing mother" of the Son of Man but also the "associate of unique nobility" (101) of the Messiah and Redeemer. As I have already said, she advanced in her pilgrimage of faith, and in this pilgrimage to the foot of the Cross there was

simultaneously accomplished her maternal cooperation with the Savior's whole mission through her actions and sufferings. Along the path of this collaboration with the work of her Son, the Redeemer, Mary's motherhood itself underwent a singular transformation, becoming ever more imbued with "burning charity" towards all those to whom Christ's mission was directed. Through this "burning charity," which sought to achieve, in union with Christ, the restoration of "supernatural life to souls," (102) Mary entered, in a way all her own, into the one mediation "between God and men" which is the mediation of the man Christ Jesus. If she was the first to experience within herself the supernatural consequences of this one mediation-in the Annunciation she had been greeted as "full of grace"-then we must say that through this fullness of grace and supernatural life she was especially predisposed to cooperation with Christ, the one Mediator of human salvation. And such cooperation is precisely this mediation subordinated to the mediation of Christ.

[101] Ibid., 61.

[102] Ibid., 61.

In Mary's case we have a special and exceptional mediation, based upon her "fullness of grace," which was expressed in the complete willingness of the "handmaid of the Lord." In response to this interior willingness of his Mother, Jesus Christ prepared her ever more completely to become for all people their "mother in the order of grace." This is indicated, at least indirectly, by certain details noted by the Synoptics (cf. Lk. 11:28; 8:20-21; Mk. 3:32-35; Mt. 12:47-50) and still more so by the Gospel of John (cf. 2:1-12; 19:25-27), which I have already mentioned. Particularly eloquent in this regard are the words spoken by Jesus on the Cross to Mary and John.

40. After the events of the Resurrection and Ascension Mary entered the Upper Room together with the Apostles to await Pentecost, and was present there as the Mother of the glorified Lord. She was not only the one who "advanced in her pilgrimage of faith" and loyally persevered in her union with her Son "unto the Cross," but she was also the "handmaid of the Lord," left by her Son as Mother in the midst of the infant Church: "Behold your mother." Thus there began to develop a special bond between this Mother and the Church. For the infant Church was the fruit of the Cross and Resurrection of her Son. Mary, who from the beginning had given herself without reserve to the person and work of her Son, could not but pour out upon the Church, from the very beginning, her maternal self-giving. After her Son's departure, her motherhood remains in the Church as maternal mediation: interceding for all her children, the Mother cooperates in the saving work of her Son, the Redeemer of the world. In fact the Council teaches that the "motherhood of Mary in the order of grace...will last without interruption until the eternal fulfillment of all the elect." (103) With the redeeming death of her Son, the maternal mediation of the handmaid of the Lord took on a universal dimension, for the work of redemption embraces the whole of humanity. Thus there is manifested in a singular way the efficacy of the one and universal mediation of Christ "between God and men" Mary's cooperation shares, in its subordinate character, in the universality of the mediation of the Redeemer, the one Mediator. This is clearly indicated by the Council in the words quoted above.

[103] Ibid., 62.

"For," the text goes on, "taken up to heaven, she did not lay aside this saving role, but by her manifold acts of intercession continues to win for us gifts of eternal salvation." (104) With this

character of "intercession," first manifested at Cana in Galilee, Mary's mediation continues in the history of the Church and the world. We read that Mary "by her maternal charity, cares for the brethren of her Son who still journey on earth surrounded by dangers and difficulties, until they are led to their happy homeland." (105) In this way Mary's motherhood continues unceasingly in the Church as the mediation which intercedes, and the Church expresses her faith in this truth by invoking Mary "under the titles of Advocate, Auxiliatrix, Adjutrix and Mediatrix." (106)

[104] Ibid., 62.

[105] Ibid., 62; in her prayer too the Church recognizes and celebrates Mary's "maternal role": it is a role "of intercession and forgiveness, petition and grace, reconciliation and peace" (cf. Preface of the Mass of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother and Mediatrix of Grace, in *Collectio Missarum de Beata Maria Virgine*, ed. typ. 1987, I, 120).

[106] Ibid., 62.

41. Through her mediation, subordinate to that of the Redeemer, Mary contributes in a special way to the union of the pilgrim Church on earth with the eschatological and heavenly reality of the Communion of Saints, since she has already been "assumed into heaven." (107) The truth of the Assumption, defined by Pius XII, is reaffirmed by the Second Vatican Council, which thus expresses the Church's faith: "Preserved free from all guilt of original sin, the Immaculate Virgin was taken up body and soul into heavenly glory upon the completion of her earthly sojourn. She was exalted by the Lord as Queen of the Universe, in order that she might be the more thoroughly conformed to her Son, the Lord of lords (cf. Rev. 19:16) and the conqueror of sin and death." (108) In this teaching Pius XII was in continuity with Tradition, which has found many different expressions in the history of the Church, both in the East and in the West.

[107] Ibid., 62; cf. Saint John Damascene, *Hom. in Dormitionem*, I, 11; II, 2, 14; III, 2; S. Ch. 80, 111f.; 127-131; 157-161; 181-185; Saint Bernard, *In Assumptione Beatae Mariae Sermo*, 1-2; S. Bernardi Opera, V, 1968, 228-238.

[108] Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 59; cf. Pope Pius XII, *Apostolic Constitution Munificentissimus Deus* (1 November 1950): AAS 42 (1950) 769-771; Saint Bernard presents Mary immersed in the splendor of the Son's glory: *In Dominica infra oct. Assumptionis Sermo*, 3; S. Bernardi Opera, V, 1968, 263f.

By the mystery of the Assumption into heaven there were definitively accomplished in Mary all the effects of the one mediation of Christ the Redeemer of the world and Risen Lord: "In Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ" (1 Cor. 15:22-23). In the mystery of the Assumption is expressed the faith of the Church, according to which Mary is "united by a close and indissoluble bond" to Christ, for, if as Virgin and Mother she was singularly united with him in his first coming, so through her continued collaboration with him she will also be united with him in expectation of the second; "redeemed in an especially sublime manner by reason of the merits of her Son," (109) she also has that specifically maternal role of mediatrix of mercy at his final coming, when all those who belong to Christ "shall be made alive," when "the last enemy to be destroyed is death" (1 Cor. 15:26). (110)

[109] Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 53.

[110] On this particular aspect of Mary's mediation as implorer of clemency from the "Son as Judge," cf. Saint Bernard, In Dominica infra oct. Assumptionis Sermo, 1-2: S. Bernardi Opera, V, 1968, 262f; Pope Leo XIII, Encyclical Epistle *Octobri Mense* (22 September 1891): *Acta Leonis*, XI, 299-315.

Connected with this exaltation of the noble "Daughter of Sion"(111) through her Assumption into heaven is the mystery of her eternal glory. For the Mother of Christ is glorified as "Queen of the Universe." (112) She who at the Annunciation called herself the "handmaid of the Lord" remained throughout her earthly life faithful to what this name expresses. In this she confirmed that she was a true "disciple" of Christ, who strongly emphasized that his mission was one of service: the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mt. 20:28). In this way Mary became the first of those who, "serving Christ also in others, with humility and patience lead their brothers and sisters to that King whom to serve is to reign," (113) and she fully obtained that "state of royal freedom" proper to Christ's disciples: to serve means to reign!

[111] Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 55.

[112] *Ibid.*, 59.

[113] *Ibid.*, 36.

"Christ obeyed even at the cost of death, and was therefore raised up by the Father (cf. Phil. 2:8-9). Thus he entered into the glory of his kingdom. To him all things are made subject until he subjects himself and all created things to the Father, that God may be all in all (cf. 1 Cor. 15:27-28)." (114) Mary, the handmaid of the Lord, has a share in this Kingdom of the Son. (115) The glory of serving does not cease to be her royal exaltation: assumed into heaven, she does not cease her saving service, which expresses her maternal mediation "until the eternal fulfillment of all the elect." (116) Thus, she who here on earth "loyally preserved in her union with her Son unto the Cross," continues to remain united with him, while now "all things are subjected to him, until he subjects to the Father himself and all things." Thus in her Assumption into heaven, Mary is as it were clothed by the whole reality of the Communion of Saints, and her very union with the Son in glory is wholly oriented towards the definitive fullness of the Kingdom, when "God will be all in all."

[114] *Ibid.*, 36.

[115] With regard to Mary as Queen, cf. Saint John Damascene, Hom. in Nativitatem, 6; 12; Hom. in Dormitionem, 1, 2, 12, 14; II, 11; III, 4: S. Ch. 80, 59f.; 77f.; 83f.; 113f.; 117; 151f.; 189-193.

[116] Second Vatican Ecumenical Council. Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 62.

In this phase too Mary's maternal mediation does not cease to be subordinate to him who is the one Mediator, until the final realization of "the fullness of time," that is to say until "all things are united in Christ" (cf. Eph. 1:10).

2. Mary in the life of the Church and of every Christian

42. Linking itself with Tradition, the Second Vatican Council brought new light to bear on the role of the Mother of Christ in the life of the Church. "Through the gift...of divine motherhood, Mary is united with her Son, the Redeemer, and with his singular graces and offices. By these, the Blessed Virgin is also intimately united with the Church: the Mother of God is a figure of the Church in the matter of faith, charity and perfect union with Christ."(117) We have already noted how, from the beginning, Mary remains with the Apostles in expectation of Pentecost and how, as "the blessed one who believed," she is present in the midst of the pilgrim Church from generation to generation through faith and as the model of the hope which does not disappoint (cf. Rom. 5:5).

[117] Ibid., 63.

Mary believed in the fulfillment of what had been said to her by the Lord. As Virgin, she believed that she would conceive and bear a son: the "Holy One," who bears the name of "Son of God," the name "Jesus" (= God who saves). As handmaid of the Lord, she remained in perfect fidelity to the person and mission of this Son. As Mother, "believing and obeying...she brought forth on earth the Father's Son. This she did, knowing not man but overshadowed by the Holy Spirit."(118)

[118] Ibid., 63.

For these reasons Mary is honored in the Church "with special reverence. Indeed, from most ancient times the Blessed Virgin Mary has been venerated under the title of 'God-bearer.' In all perils and needs, the faithful have fled prayerfully to her protection."(119) This cult is altogether special: it bears in itself and expresses the profound link which exists between the Mother of Christ and the Church.(120) As Virgin and Mother, Mary remains for the Church a "permanent model." It can therefore be said that especially under this aspect, namely as a model, or rather as a "figure," Mary, present in the mystery of Christ, remains constantly present also in the mystery of the Church. For the Church too is "called mother and virgin," and these names have a profound biblical and theological justification.(121)

[119] Ibid., 66.

[120] Cf. Saint Ambrose, *De Institutione Virginis*, XIV, 88-89: PL 16, 341, Saint Augustine, *Sermo* 215, 4: PL 38, 1074; *De Sancta Virginitate*, II, 2; V, 5; VI, 6: PL 40, 397-398f.; 399; *Sermo* 191, II, 3: PL 38, 1010f.

[121] Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Lumen Centium*, 63.

43. The Church "becomes herself a mother by accepting God's word with fidelity."(122) Like

Mary, who first believed by accepting the word of God revealed to her at the Annunciation and by remaining faithful to that word in all her trials even unto the Cross, so too the Church becomes a mother when, accepting with fidelity the word of God, "by her preaching and by baptism she brings forth to a new and immortal life children who are conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of God." (123) This "maternal" characteristic of the Church was expressed in a particularly vivid way by the Apostle to the Gentiles when he wrote: "My little children, with whom I am again in travail until Christ be formed in you!" (Gal. 4:19) These words of Saint Paul contain an interesting sign of the early Church's awareness of her own motherhood, linked to her apostolic service to mankind. This awareness enabled and still enables the Church to see the mystery of her life and mission modelled upon the example of the Mother of the Son, who is "the first-born among many brethren" (Rom. 8:29).

[122] Ibid., 64.

[123] Ibid., 64.

It can be said that from Mary the Church also learns her own motherhood: she recognizes the maternal dimension of her vocation, which is essentially bound to her sacramental nature, in "contemplating Mary's mysterious sanctity, imitating her charity and faithfully fulfilling the Father's will." (124) If the Church is the sign and instrument of intimate union with God, she is so by reason of her motherhood, because, receiving life from the Spirit, she "generates" sons and daughters of the human race to a new life in Christ. For, just as Mary is at the service of the mystery of the Incarnation, so the Church is always at the service of the mystery of adoption to sonship through grace.

[124] Ibid., 64.

Likewise, following the example of Mary, the Church remains the virgin faithful to her spouse: The Church herself is a virgin who keeps whole and pure the fidelity she has pledged to her Spouse." (125) For the Church is the spouse of Christ, as is clear from the Pauline Letters (cf. Eph. 5:21-33; 2 Cor. 11:2), and from the title found in John: "bride of the Lamb" (Rev. 21:9). If the Church as spouse "keeps the fidelity she has pledged to Christ," this fidelity, even though in the Apostle's teaching it has become an image of marriage (cf. Eph. 5:23-33), also has value as a model of total self-giving to God in celibacy "for the kingdom of heaven," in virginity consecrated to God (cf. Mt. 19:11-12; 2 Cor. 11:2). Precisely such virginity, after the example of the Virgin of Nazareth, is the source of a special spiritual fruitfulness: it is the source of motherhood in the Holy Spirit.

[125] Ibid., 64.

But the Church also preserves the faith received from Christ. Following the example of Mary, who kept and pondered in her heart everything relating to her divine Son (cf. Lk. 2:19, 51), the Church is committed to preserving the word of God and investigating its riches with discernment and prudence, in order to bear faithful witness to it before all mankind in every age. (126)

[126] Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation Dei Verbum, 8; Saint Bonaventure, Comment. in Evang. Lucae, Ad Claras Aquas, VII, 53, No. 40, 68, No. 109.

44. Given Mary's relationship to the Church as an exemplar, the Church is close to her and seeks to become like her: "Imitating the Mother of her Lord, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, she preserves with virginal purity an integral faith, a firm hope, and a sincere charity." (127) Mary is thus present in the mystery of the Church as a model. But the Church's mystery also consists in generating people to a new and immortal life: this is her motherhood in the Holy Spirit. And here Mary is not only the model and figure of the Church; she is much more. For, "with maternal love she cooperates in the birth and development" of the sons and daughters of Mother Church. The Church's motherhood is accomplished not only according to the model and figure of the Mother of God but also with her "cooperation." The Church draws abundantly from this cooperation, that is to say from the maternal mediation which is characteristic of Mary, insofar as already on earth she cooperated in the rebirth and development of the Church's sons and daughters, as the Mother of that Son whom the Father "placed as the first-born among many brethren." (128)

[127] Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 64.

[128] *Ibid.*, 63.

She cooperated, as the Second Vatican Council teaches, with a maternal love. (129) Here we perceive the real value of the words spoken by Jesus to his Mother at the hour of the Cross: "Woman, behold your son" and to the disciple: "Behold your mother" (Jn. 19:26-27). They are words which determine Mary's place in the life of Christ's disciples and they express—as I have already said—the new motherhood of the Mother of the Redeemer: a spiritual motherhood, born from the heart of the Paschal Mystery of the Redeemer of the world. It is a motherhood in the order of grace, for it implores the gift of the Spirit, who raises up the new children of God, redeems through the sacrifice of Christ that Spirit whom Mary too, together with the Church, received on the day of Pentecost.

[129] Cf. *ibid.*, 63.

Her motherhood is particularly noted and experienced by the Christian people at the Sacred Banquet—the liturgical celebration of the mystery of the Redemption—at which Christ, his true body born of the Virgin Mary, becomes present.

The piety of the Christian people has always very rightly sensed a profound link between devotion to the Blessed Virgin and worship of the Eucharist: this is a fact that can be seen in the liturgy of both the West and the East, in the traditions of the Religious Families, in the modern movements of spirituality, including those for youth, and in the pastoral practice of the Marian Shrines. Mary guides the faithful to the Eucharist.

45. Of the essence of motherhood is the fact that it concerns the person. Motherhood always establishes a unique and unrepeatable relationship between two people: between mother and child and between child and mother. Even when the same woman is the mother of many children, her personal relationship with each one of them is of the very essence of motherhood. For each child is generated in a unique and unrepeatable way, and this is true both for the mother and for the child. Each child is surrounded in the same way by that maternal love on which are based the child's development and coming to maturity as a human being.

It can be said that motherhood "in the order of grace" preserves the analogy with what "in the order of nature" characterizes the union between mother and child. In the light of this fact it becomes easier to understand why in Christ's testament on Golgotha his Mother's new motherhood is expressed in the singular, in reference to one man: "Behold your son."

It can also be said that these same words fully show the reason for the Marian dimension of the life of Christ's disciples. This is true not only of John, who at that hour stood at the foot of the Cross together with his Master's Mother, but it is also true of every disciple of Christ, of every Christian. The Redeemer entrusts his mother to the disciple, and at the same time he gives her to him as his mother. Mary's motherhood, which becomes man's inheritance, is a gift: a gift which Christ himself makes personally to every individual. The Redeemer entrusts Mary to John because he entrusts John to Mary. At the foot of the Cross there begins that special entrusting of humanity to the Mother of Christ, which in the history of the Church has been practiced and expressed in different ways. The same Apostle and Evangelist, after reporting the words addressed by Jesus on the Cross to his Mother and to himself, adds: "And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home" (Jn. 19:27). This statement certainly means that the role of son was attributed to the disciple and that he assumed responsibility for the Mother of his beloved Master. And since Mary was given as a mother to him personally, the statement indicates, even though indirectly, everything expressed by the intimate relationship of a child with its mother. And all of this can be included in the word "entrusting." Such entrusting is the response to a person's love, and in particular to the love of a mother.

The Marian dimension of the life of a disciple of Christ is expressed in a special way precisely through this filial entrusting to the Mother of Christ, which began with the testament of the Redeemer on Golgotha. Entrusting himself to Mary in a filial manner, the Christian, like the Apostle John, "welcomes" the Mother of Christ "into his own home" (130) and brings her into everything that makes up his inner life, that is to say into his human and Christian "I": he "took her to his own home." Thus the Christian seeks to be taken into that "maternal charity" with which the Redeemer's Mother "cares for the brethren of her Son," (131) "in whose birth and development she cooperates" (132) in the measure of the gift proper to each one through the power of Christ's Spirit. Thus also is exercised that motherhood in the Spirit which became Mary's role at the foot of the Cross and in the Upper Room.

[130] Clearly, in the Greek text the expression "eis ta idia" goes beyond the mere acceptance of Mary by the disciple in the sense of material lodging and hospitality in his house; it indicates rather a communion of life established between the two as a result of the words of the dying Christ: cf. Saint Augustine, In Ioan. Evang. tract. 119, 3: CCL 36, 659: "He took her to himself, not into his own property, for he possessed nothing of his own, but among his own duties, which he attended to with dedication."

[131] Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Lumen Gentium, 62.

[132] Ibid., 63.

46. This filial relationship, this self-entrusting of a child to its mother, not only has its beginning in Christ but can also be said to be definitively directed towards him. Mary can be said to

continue to say to each individual the words which she spoke at Cana in Galilee: "Do whatever he tells you." For he, Christ, is the one Mediator between God and mankind; he is "the way, and the truth, and the life" (Jn. 14:6); it is he whom the Father has given to the world, so that man "should not perish but have eternal life" (Jn. 3:16). The Virgin of Nazareth became the first "witness" of this saving love of the Father, and she also wishes to remain its humble handmaid always and everywhere. For every Christian, for every human being, Mary is the one who first "believed," and precisely with her faith as Spouse and Mother she wishes to act upon all those who entrust themselves to her as her children. And it is well known that the more her children persevere and progress in this attitude, the nearer Mary leads them to the "unsearchable riches of Christ" (Eph. 3:8). And to the same degree they recognize more and more clearly the dignity of man in all its fullness and the definitive meaning of his vocation, for "Christ...fully reveals man to man himself." (133)

[133] Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, 22.

This Marian dimension of Christian life takes on special importance in relation to women and their status. In fact, femininity has a unique relationship with the Mother of the Redeemer, a subject which can be studied in greater depth elsewhere. Here I simply wish to note that the figure of Mary of Nazareth sheds light on womanhood as such by the very fact that God, in the sublime event of the Incarnation of his Son, entrusted himself to the ministry, the free and active ministry of a woman. It can thus be said that women, by looking to Mary, find in her the secret of living their femininity with dignity and of achieving their own true advancement. In the light of Mary, the Church sees in the face of women the reflection of a beauty which mirrors the loftiest sentiments of which the human heart is capable: the self-offering totality of love; the strength that is capable of bearing the greatest sorrows; limitless fidelity and tireless devotion to work; the ability to combine penetrating intuition with words of support and encouragement.

47. At the Council Paul VI solemnly proclaimed that Mary is the Mother of the Church, "that is, Mother of the entire Christian people, both faithful and pastors." (134) Later, in 1968, in the Profession of faith known as the "Credo of the People of God," he restated this truth in an even more forceful way in these words: "We believe that the Most Holy Mother of God, the new Eve, the Mother of the Church, carries on in heaven her maternal role with regard to the members of Christ, cooperating in the birth and development of divine life in the souls of the redeemed." (135)

[134] Cf. Pope Paul VI, Discourse of 21 November 1964: AAS 56 (1964) 1015.

[135] Pope Paul VI, Solemn Profession of Faith (30 June 1968), 15: AAS 60 (1968) 438f.

The Council's teaching emphasized that the truth concerning the Blessed Virgin, Mother of Christ, is an effective aid in exploring more deeply the truth concerning the Church. When speaking of the Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, which had just been approved by the Council, Paul VI said: "Knowledge of the true Catholic doctrine regarding the Blessed Virgin Mary will always be a key to the exact understanding of the mystery of Christ and of the Church." (136) Mary is present in the Church as the Mother of Christ, and at the same time as that Mother whom Christ, in the mystery of the Redemption, gave to humanity in the person of the Apostle John. Thus, in her new motherhood in the Spirit, Mary embraces each and every one in the Church, and embraces

each and every one through the Church. In this sense Mary, Mother of the Church, is also the Church's model. Indeed, as Paul VI hopes and asks, the Church must draw "from the Virgin Mother of God the most authentic form of perfect imitation of Christ." (137)

[136] Pope Paul VI, Discourse of 21 November 1964: AAS 56 (1964) 1015.

[137] Ibid., 1016.

Thanks to this special bond linking the Mother of Christ with the Church, there is further clarified the mystery of that "woman" who, from the first chapters of the Book of Genesis until the Book of Revelation, accompanies the revelation of God's salvific plan for humanity. For Mary, present in the Church as the Mother of the Redeemer, takes part, as a mother, in that monumental struggle; against the powers of darkness" (138) which continues throughout human history. And by her ecclesial identification as the "woman clothed with the sun" (Rev. 12: 1), (139) it can be said that "in the Most Holy Virgin the Church has already reached that perfection whereby she exists without spot or wrinkle." Hence, as Christians raise their eyes with faith to Mary in the course of their earthly pilgrimage, they "strive to increase in holiness." (140) Mary, the exalted Daughter of Sion, helps all her children, wherever they may be and whatever their condition, to find in Christ the path to the Father's house.

[138] Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, 37.

[139] Cf. Saint Bernard, In Dominica infra oct. Assumptionis Sermo: S. Bernardi Opera V, 1968, 262-274.

[140] Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 65.

Thus, throughout her life, the Church maintains with the Mother of God a link which embraces, in the saving mystery, the past, the present and the future, and venerates her as the spiritual mother of humanity and the advocate of grace.

3. The meaning of the Marian Year

48. It is precisely the special bond between humanity and this Mother which has led me to proclaim a Marian Year in the Church, in this period before the end of the Second Millennium since Christ's birth, a similar initiative was taken in the past. when Pius XII proclaimed 1954 as a Marian Year, in order to highlight the exceptional holiness of the Mother of Christ as expressed in the mysteries of her Immaculate Conception (defined exactly a century before) and of her Assumption into heaven. (141)

[141] Cf. Encyclical Letter *Fulgens Corona* (8 September 1953): AAS 45 (1953) 577-592. Pius X with his Encyclical Letter *Ad Diem Illum* (2 February 1904), on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the dogmatic definition of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, had proclaimed an Extraordinary jubilee of a few months; Pii X P. M. Acta, I, 147-166.

Now, following the line of the Second Vatican Council, I wish to emphasize the special presence of the Mother of God in the mystery of Christ and his Church. For this is a fundamental dimension emerging from the Mariology of the Council, the end of which is now more than twenty years behind us. The Extraordinary Synod of Bishops held in 1985 exhorted everyone to follow faithfully the teaching and guidelines of the Council. We can say that these two events-the Council and the synod-embody what the Holy Spirit himself wishes "to say to the Church" in the present phase of history.

In this context, the Marian Year is meant to promote a new and more careful reading of what the Council said about the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, in the mystery of Christ and of the Church, the topic to which the contents of this Encyclical are devoted. Here we speak not only of the doctrine of faith but also of the life of faith, and thus of authentic "Marian spirituality," seen in the light of Tradition, and especially the spirituality to which the Council exhorts us. (142) Furthermore, Marian spirituality, like its corresponding devotion, finds a very rich source in the historical experience of individuals and of the various Christian communities present among the different peoples and nations of the world. In this regard, I would like to recall, among the many witnesses and teachers of this spirituality, the figure of Saint Louis Marie Grignion de Montfort, (143) who proposes consecration to Christ through the hands of Mary, as an effective means for Christians to live faithfully their baptismal commitments. I am pleased to note that in our own time too new manifestations of this spirituality and devotion are not lacking.

[142] Cf. Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 66-67.

[143] Saint Louis Marie Grignion de Montfort, *Traite de la varie devotion a la sainte Vierge*. This saint can rightly be linked with the figure of Saint Alfonso Maria de' Liguori, the second centenary of whose death occurs this year; cf. among his works *Le glorie di Maria*.

There thus exist solid points of reference to look to and follow in the context of this Marian Year.

49. This Marian Year will begin on the Solemnity of Pentecost, on June 7 next. For it is a question not only of recalling that Mary "preceded" the entry of Christ the Lord into the history of the human family, but also of emphasizing, in the light of Mary, that from the moment when the mystery of the Incarnation was accomplished, human history entered "the fullness of time," and that the Church is the sign of this fullness. As the People of God, the Church makes her pilgrim way towards eternity through faith, in the midst of all the peoples and nations, beginning from the day of Pentecost. Christ's Mother-who was present at the beginning of "the time of the Church," when in expectation of the coming of the Holy Spirit she devoted herself to prayer in the midst of the Apostles and her Son's disciples-constantly "precedes" the Church in her journey through human history. She is also the one who, precisely as the "handmaid of the Lord," cooperates unceasingly with the work of salvation accomplished by Christ, her Son.

Thus by means of this Marian Year the Church is called not only to remember everything in her past that testifies to the special maternal cooperation of the Mother of God in the work of salvation in Christ the lord, but also, on her own part, to prepare for the future the paths of this cooperation. For the end of the second Christian Millennium opens up as a new prospect.

50. As has already been mentioned, also among our divided brethren many honor and celebrate the Mother of the Lord, especially among the Orientals. It is a Marian light cast upon ecumenism. In particular, I wish to mention once more that during the Marian Year there will occur the Millennium of the Baptism of Saint Vladimir, Grand Duke of Kiev [988]. This marked the beginning of Christianity in the territories of what was then called Rus', and subsequently in other territories of Eastern Europe. In this way, through the work of evangelization, Christianity spread beyond Europe, as far as the northern territories of the Asian continent. We would therefore like, especially during this Year, to join in prayer with all those who are celebrating the Millennium of this Baptism, both Orthodox and Catholics, repeating and confirming with the Council those sentiments of joy and comfort that "the Easterners...with ardent emotion and devout mind concur in reverencing the Mother of God, ever Virgin." (144) Even though we are still experiencing the painful effects of the separation which took place some decades later [1054], we can say that in the presence of the Mother of Christ we feel that we are true brothers and sisters within that messianic People, which is called to be the one family of God on earth. As I announced at the beginning of the New Year "We desire to reconfirm this universal inheritance of all the Sons and daughters of this earth." (145)

[144] Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Lumen Gentium, 69.

[145] Homily on 1 January 1987.

In announcing the Year of Mary, I also indicated that it will end next year on the Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin into heaven, in order to emphasize the "great sign in heaven" spoken of by the Apocalypse. In this way we also wish to respond to the exhortation of the Council, which looks to Mary as "a sign of sure hope and solace for the pilgrim People of God." And the Council expresses this exhortation in the following words: "Let the entire body of the faithful pour forth persevering prayer to the Mother of God and Mother of mankind. Let them implore that she who aided the beginning of the Church by her prayers may now, exalted as she is in heaven above all the saints and angels, intercede with her Son in the fellowship of all the saints. May she do so until all the peoples of the human family, whether they are honored with the name of Christian or whether they still do not know their Savior, are happily gathered together in peace and harmony into the one People of God, for the glory of the Most Holy and Undivided Trinity." (146)

[146] Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Lumen Gentium, 69.

CONCLUSION

51. At the end of the daily Liturgy of the Hours, among the invocations addressed to Mary by the Church is the following:

"Loving Mother of the Redeemer, gate of heaven, star of the sea,
assist your people who have fallen yet strive to rise again.
To the wonderment of nature you bore your Creator!"

"To the wonderment of nature"! These words of the antiphon express that wonderment of faith which accompanies the mystery of Mary's divine motherhood. In a sense, it does so in the heart of the whole of creation, and, directly, in the heart of the whole People of God, in the heart of the

Church. How wonderfully far God has gone, the Creator and Lord of all things, in the "revelation of himself" to man! (147) How clearly he has bridged all the spaces of that infinite "distance" which separates the Creator from the creature! If in himself he remains ineffable and unsearchable, still more ineffable and unsearchable is he in the reality of the Incarnation of the Word, who became man through the Virgin of Nazareth.

[147] Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation Dei Verbum, 2: "Through this revelation...the invisible God...out of the abundance of his love speaks to men as friends...and lives among them..., so that he may invite and take them into fellowship with himself."

If he has eternally willed to call man to share in the divine nature (cf. 2 Pt. 1:4), it can be said that he has matched the "divinization" of man to humanity's historical conditions, so that even after sin he is ready to restore at a great price the eternal plan of his love through the "humanization" of his Son, who is of the same being as himself. The whole of creation, and more directly man himself, cannot fail to be amazed at this gift in which he has become a sharer, in the Holy Spirit: "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son" (Jn. 3:16).

At the center of this mystery, in the midst of this wonderment of faith, stands Mary. As the loving Mother of the Redeemer, she was the first to experience it: "To the wonderment of nature you bore your Creator"!

52. The words of this liturgical antiphon also express the truth of the "great transformation" which the mystery of the Incarnation establishes for man. It is a transformation which belongs to his entire history, from that beginning which is revealed to us in the first chapters of Genesis until the final end, in the perspective of the end of the world, of which Jesus has revealed to us "neither the day nor the hour" (Mt. 25:13). It is an unending and continuous transformation between falling and rising again, between the man of sin and the man of grace and justice. The Advent liturgy in particular is at the very heart of this transformation and captures its unceasing "here and now" when it exclaims: "Assist your people who have fallen yet strive to rise again"!

These words apply to every individual, every community, to nations and peoples, and to the generations and epochs of human history, to our own epoch, to these years of the Millennium which is drawing to a close: "Assist, yes assist, your people who have fallen"!

This is the invocation addressed to Mary, the "loving Mother of the Redeemer," the invocation addressed to Christ, who through Mary entered human history. Year after year the antiphon rises to Mary, evoking that moment which saw the accomplishment of this essential historical transformation, which irreversibly continues: the transformation from "falling" to "rising."

Mankind has made wonderful discoveries and achieved extraordinary results in the fields of science and technology. It has made great advances along the path of progress and civilization, and in recent times one could say that it has succeeded in speeding up the pace of history. But the fundamental transformation, the one which can be called "original," constantly accompanies man's journey, and through all the events of history accompanies each and every individual. It is the transformation from "falling" to "rising," from death to life. It is also a constant challenge to people's consciences, a challenge to man's whole historical awareness: the challenge to follow the path of "not falling" in ways that are ever old and ever new, and of "rising again" if a fall has

occurred.

As she goes forward with the whole of humanity towards the frontier between the two Millennia, the Church, for her part, with the whole community of believers and in union with all men and women of good will, takes up the great challenge contained in these words of the Marian antiphon: "the people who have fallen yet strive to rise again," and she addresses both the Redeemer and his Mother with the plea: "Assist us." For, as this prayer attests, the Church sees the Blessed Mother of God in the saving mystery of Christ and in her own mystery. She sees Mary deeply rooted in humanity's history, in man's eternal vocation according to the providential plan which God has made for him from eternity. She sees Mary maternally present and sharing in the many complicated problems which today beset the lives of individuals, families and nations; she sees her helping the Christian people in the constant struggle between good and evil, to ensure that it "does not fall," or, if it has fallen, that it "rises again."

I hope with all my heart that the reflections contained in the present Encyclical will also serve to renew this vision in the hearts of all believers.

As Bishop of Rome, I send to all those to whom these thoughts are addressed the kiss of peace, my greeting and my blessing in our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Given in Rome, at Saint Peter's, on March 25, the Solemnity of the Annunciation of the Lord, in the year 1987, the ninth of my Pontificate.

JOHN PAUL II

Pope Saint Pius V: [Consueverunt Romani](#)

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Rosarium Virginis Mariae

On the Most Holy Rosary

Apostolic Letter of Pope John Paul II

October 16, 2002

TO THE BISHOPS, CLERGY AND FAITHFUL
ON THE MOST HOLY ROSARY

INTRODUCTION

1. The Rosary of the Virgin Mary, which gradually took form in the second millennium under the guidance of the Spirit of God, is a prayer loved by countless Saints and encouraged by the Magisterium. Simple yet profound, it still remains, at the dawn of this third millennium, a prayer of great significance, destined to bring forth a harvest of holiness. It blends easily into the spiritual journey of the Christian life, which, after two thousand years, has lost none of the freshness of its beginnings and feels drawn by the Spirit of God to "set out into the deep" (duc in altum!) in order once more to proclaim, and even cry out, before the world that Jesus Christ is Lord and Saviour, "the way, and the truth and the life" (Jn 14:6), "the goal of human history and the point on which the desires of history and civilization turn".[1]

[1] Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, 45.

The Rosary, though clearly Marian in character, is at heart a Christocentric prayer. In the sobriety of its elements, it has all the depth of the Gospel message in its entirety, of which it can be said to be a compendium.[2] It is an echo of the prayer of Mary, her perennial Magnificat for the work of the redemptive Incarnation which began in her virginal womb. With the Rosary, the Christian people sits at the school of Mary and is led to contemplate the beauty on the face of Christ and to experience the depths of his love. Through the Rosary the faithful receive abundant grace, as though from the very hands of the Mother of the Redeemer.

[2] Pope Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Marialis Cultus* (2 February 1974), 42: AAS 66 (1974), 153.

The Popes and the Rosary

2. Numerous predecessors of mine attributed great importance to this prayer. Worthy of special note in this regard is Pope Leo XIII who on 1 September 1883 promulgated the Encyclical *Supremi Apostolatus Officio*, [3] a document of great worth, the first of his many statements about this prayer, in which he proposed the Rosary as an effective spiritual weapon against the evils afflicting society. Among the more recent Popes who, from the time of the Second Vatican Council, have distinguished themselves in promoting the Rosary I would mention Blessed John XXIII [4] and above all Pope Paul VI, who in his Apostolic Exhortation *Marialis Cultus* emphasized, in the spirit of the Second Vatican Council, the Rosary's evangelical character and its Christocentric inspiration. I myself have often encouraged the frequent recitation of the Rosary. From my youthful years this prayer has held an important place in my spiritual life. I was powerfully reminded of this during my recent visit to Poland, and in particular at the Shrine of Kalwaria. The Rosary has accompanied me in moments of joy and in moments of difficulty. To it I have entrusted any number of concerns; in it I have always found comfort. Twenty-four years ago, on 29 October 1978, scarcely two weeks after my election to the See of Peter, I frankly admitted: "The Rosary is my favourite prayer. A marvellous prayer! Marvellous in its simplicity and its depth. [...]. It can be said that the Rosary is, in some sense, a prayer-commentary on the final chapter of the Vatican II Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, a chapter which discusses the wondrous presence of the Mother of God in the mystery of Christ and the Church. Against the background of the words *Ave Maria* the principal events of the life of Jesus Christ pass before the eyes of the soul. They take shape in the complete series of the joyful, sorrowful and glorious mysteries, and they put us in living communion with Jesus through -- we might say -- the heart of his Mother. At the same time our heart can embrace in the decades of the Rosary all the events that make up the lives of individuals, families, nations, the Church, and all mankind. Our personal concerns and those of our neighbour, especially those who are closest to us, who are dearest to us. Thus the simple prayer of the Rosary marks the rhythm of human life". [5]

[3] Cf. *Acta Leonis XIII*, 3 (1884), 280-289.

[4] Particularly worthy of note is his Apostolic Epistle on the Rosary *Il religioso convegno* (29 September 1961): *AAS* 53 (1961), 641-647.

[5] *Angelus: Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, I (1978): 75-76.

With these words, dear brothers and sisters, I set the first year of my Pontificate within the daily rhythm of the Rosary. Today, as I begin the twenty-fifth year of my service as the Successor of Peter, I wish to do the same. How many graces have I received in these years from the Blessed Virgin through the Rosary: *Magnificat anima mea Dominum*! I wish to lift up my thanks to the Lord in the words of his Most Holy Mother, under whose protection I have placed my Petrine ministry: *Totus Tuus*!

October 2002 -- October 2003: The Year of the Rosary

3. Therefore, in continuity with my reflection in the Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, in which, after the experience of the Jubilee, I invited the people of God to "start afresh from Christ", [6] I have felt drawn to offer a reflection on the Rosary, as a kind of Marian complement to that Letter and an exhortation to contemplate the face of Christ in union with, and at the school of, his Most Holy Mother. To recite the Rosary is nothing other than to contemplate with Mary the face of Christ. As a way of highlighting this invitation, prompted by the forthcoming

120th anniversary of the aforementioned Encyclical of Leo XIII, I desire that during the course of this year the Rosary should be especially emphasized and promoted in the various Christian communities. I therefore proclaim the year from October 2002 to October 2003 the Year of the Rosary.

[6] 6 AAS 93 (2001), 285.

I leave this pastoral proposal to the initiative of each ecclesial community. It is not my intention to encumber but rather to complete and consolidate pastoral programmes of the Particular Churches. I am confident that the proposal will find a ready and generous reception. The Rosary, reclaimed in its full meaning, goes to the very heart of Christian life; it offers a familiar yet fruitful spiritual and educational opportunity for personal contemplation, the formation of the People of God, and the new evangelization. I am pleased to reaffirm this also in the joyful remembrance of another anniversary: the fortieth anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council on October 11, 1962, the "great grace" disposed by the Spirit of God for the Church in our time.[7]

[7] During the years of preparation for the Council, Pope John XXIII did not fail to encourage the Christian community to recite the Rosary for the success of this ecclesial event: cf. Letter to the Cardinal Vicar (28 September 1960): AAS 52 (1960), 814-816.

Objections to the Rosary

4. The timeliness of this proposal is evident from a number of considerations. First, the urgent need to counter a certain crisis of the Rosary, which in the present historical and theological context can risk being wrongly devalued, and therefore no longer taught to the younger generation. There are some who think that the centrality of the Liturgy, rightly stressed by the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, necessarily entails giving lesser importance to the Rosary. Yet, as Pope Paul VI made clear, not only does this prayer not conflict with the Liturgy, it sustains it, since it serves as an excellent introduction and a faithful echo of the Liturgy, enabling people to participate fully and interiorly in it and to reap its fruits in their daily lives.

Perhaps too, there are some who fear that the Rosary is somehow unecumenical because of its distinctly Marian character. Yet the Rosary clearly belongs to the kind of veneration of the Mother of God described by the Council: a devotion directed to the Christological centre of the Christian faith, in such a way that "when the Mother is honoured, the Son ... is duly known, loved and glorified".[8] If properly revitalized, the Rosary is an aid and certainly not a hindrance to ecumenism!

[8] Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 66.

A path of contemplation

5. But the most important reason for strongly encouraging the practice of the Rosary is that it represents a most effective means of fostering among the faithful that commitment to the contemplation of the Christian mystery which I have proposed in the Apostolic Letter *Novo*

Millennio Ineunte as a genuine "training in holiness": "What is needed is a Christian life distinguished above all in the art of prayer".[9] Inasmuch as contemporary culture, even amid so many indications to the contrary, has witnessed the flowering of a new call for spirituality, due also to the influence of other religions, it is more urgent than ever that our Christian communities should become "genuine schools of prayer".[10]

[9] No. 32: AAS 93 (2001), 288.

[10] Ibid., 33: loc. cit., 289.

The Rosary belongs among the finest and most praiseworthy traditions of Christian contemplation. Developed in the West, it is a typically meditative prayer, corresponding in some way to the "prayer of the heart" or "Jesus prayer" which took root in the soil of the Christian East.

Prayer for peace and for the family

6. A number of historical circumstances also make a revival of the Rosary quite timely. First of all, the need to implore from God the gift of peace. The Rosary has many times been proposed by my predecessors and myself as a prayer for peace. At the start of a millennium which began with the terrifying attacks of 11 September 2001, a millennium which witnesses every day innumerable parts of the world fresh scenes of bloodshed and violence, to rediscover the Rosary means to immerse oneself in contemplation of the mystery of Christ who "is our peace", since he made "the two of us one, and broke down the dividing wall of hostility" (Eph 2: 14). Consequently, one cannot recite the Rosary without feeling caught up in a clear commitment to advancing peace, especially in the land of Jesus, still so sorely afflicted and so close to the heart of every Christian.

A similar need for commitment and prayer arises in relation to another critical contemporary issue: the family, the primary cell of society, increasingly menaced by forces of disintegration on both the ideological and practical planes, so as to make us fear for the future of this fundamental and indispensable institution and, with it, for the future of society as a whole. The revival of the Rosary in Christian families, within the context of a broader pastoral ministry to the family, will be an effective aid to countering the devastating effects of this crisis typical of our age.

"Behold, your Mother!" (Jn 19:27)

7. Many signs indicate that still today the Blessed Virgin desires to exercise through this same prayer that maternal concern to which the dying Redeemer entrusted, in the person of the beloved disciple, all the sons and daughters of the Church: "Woman, behold your son!" (Jn19:26). Well-known are the occasions in the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries on which the Mother of Christ made her presence felt and her voice heard, in order to exhort the People of God to this form of contemplative prayer. I would mention in particular, on account of their great influence on the lives of Christians and the authoritative recognition they have received from the Church, the apparitions of Lourdes and of Fatima; [11] these shrines continue to be visited by great numbers of pilgrims seeking comfort and hope.

[11] It is well-known and bears repeating that private revelations are not the same as public revelation, which is binding on the whole Church. It is the task of the Magisterium to discern and recognize the authenticity and value of private revelations for the piety of the faithful.

Following the witnesses

8. It would be impossible to name all the many Saints who discovered in the Rosary a genuine path to growth in holiness. We need but mention Saint Louis Marie Grignon de Montfort, the author of an excellent work on the Rosary, [12] and, closer to ourselves, Padre Pio of Pietrelcina, whom I recently had the joy of canonizing. As a true apostle of the Rosary, Blessed Bartolo Longo had a special charism. His path to holiness rested on an inspiration heard in the depths of his heart: "Whoever spreads the Rosary is saved!". [13] As a result, he felt called to build a Church dedicated to Our Lady of the Holy Rosary in Pompei, against the background of the ruins of the ancient city, which scarcely heard the proclamation of Christ before being buried in 79 A.D. during an eruption of Mount Vesuvius, only to emerge centuries later from its ashes as a witness to the lights and shadows of classical civilization. By his whole life's work and especially by the practice of the "Fifteen Saturdays", Bartolo Longo promoted the Christocentric and contemplative heart of the Rosary, and received great encouragement and support from Leo XIII, the "Pope of the Rosary".

[12] The Secret of the Rosary.

[13] Blessed Bartolo Longo, *Storia del Santuario di Pompei*, Pompei, 1990, 59.

CHAPTER I CONTEMPLATING CHRIST WITH MARY

A face radiant as the sun

9. "And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun" (Mt 17:2). The Gospel scene of Christ's transfiguration, in which the three Apostles Peter, James and John appear entranced by the beauty of the Redeemer, can be seen as an icon of Christian contemplation. To look upon the face of Christ, to recognize its mystery amid the daily events and the sufferings of his human life, and then to grasp the divine splendour definitively revealed in the Risen Lord, seated in glory at the right hand of the Father: this is the task of every follower of Christ and therefore the task of each one of us. In contemplating Christ's face we become open to receiving the mystery of Trinitarian life, experiencing ever anew the love of the Father and delighting in the joy of the Holy Spirit. Saint Paul's words can then be applied to us: "Beholding the glory of the Lord, we are being changed into his likeness, from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit" (2Cor 3:18).

Mary, model of contemplation

10. The contemplation of Christ has an incomparable model in Mary. In a unique way the face of the Son belongs to Mary. It was in her womb that Christ was formed, receiving from her a human resemblance which points to an even greater spiritual closeness. No one has ever

devoted himself to the contemplation of the face of Christ as faithfully as Mary. The eyes of her heart already turned to him at the Annunciation, when she conceived him by the power of the Holy Spirit. In the months that followed she began to sense his presence and to picture his features. When at last she gave birth to him in Bethlehem, her eyes were able to gaze tenderly on the face of her Son, as she "wrapped him in swaddling cloths, and laid him in a manger" (Lk2: 7).

Thereafter Mary's gaze, ever filled with adoration and wonder, would never leave him. At times it would be a questioning look, as in the episode of the finding in the Temple: "Son, why have you treated us so?" (Lk 2:48); it would always be a penetrating gaze, one capable of deeply understanding Jesus, even to the point of perceiving his hidden feelings and anticipating his decisions, as at Cana (cf. Jn 2:5). At other times it would be a look of sorrow, especially beneath the Cross, where her vision would still be that of a mother giving birth, for Mary not only shared the passion and death of her Son, she also received the new son given to her in the beloved disciple (cf. Jn 19:26-27). On the morning of Easter hers would be a gaze radiant with the joy of the Resurrection, and finally, on the day of Pentecost, a gaze afire with the outpouring of the Spirit (cf. Acts 1:14).

Mary's memories

11. Mary lived with her eyes fixed on Christ, treasuring his every word: "She kept all these things, pondering them in her heart" (Lk 2:19; cf. 2:51). The memories of Jesus, impressed upon her heart, were always with her, leading her to reflect on the various moments of her life at her Son's side. In a way those memories were to be the "rosary" which she recited uninterruptedly throughout her earthly life.

Even now, amid the joyful songs of the heavenly Jerusalem, the reasons for her thanksgiving and praise remain unchanged. They inspire her maternal concern for the pilgrim Church, in which she continues to relate her personal account of the Gospel. Mary constantly sets before the faithful the "mysteries" of her Son, with the desire that the contemplation of those mysteries will release all their saving power. In the recitation of the Rosary, the Christian community enters into contact with the memories and the contemplative gaze of Mary.

The Rosary, a contemplative prayer

12. The Rosary, precisely because it starts with Mary's own experience, is an exquisitely contemplative prayer. Without this contemplative dimension, it would lose its meaning, as Pope Paul VI clearly pointed out: "Without contemplation, the Rosary is a body without a soul, and its recitation runs the risk of becoming a mechanical repetition of formulas, in violation of the admonition of Christ: 'In praying do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do; for they think they will be heard for their many words' (Mt 6:7). By its nature the recitation of the Rosary calls for a quiet rhythm and a lingering pace, helping the individual to meditate on the mysteries of the Lord's life as seen through the eyes of her who was closest to the Lord. In this way the unfathomable riches of these mysteries are disclosed".[14]

[14] Apostolic Exhortation *Marialis Cultus* (2 February 1974), 47: AAS (1974), 156.

It is worth pausing to consider this profound insight of Paul VI, in order to bring out certain

aspects of the Rosary which show that it is really a form of Christocentric contemplation.

Remembering Christ with Mary

13. Mary's contemplation is above all a remembering. We need to understand this word in the biblical sense of remembrance (zakar) as a making present of the works brought about by God in the history of salvation. The Bible is an account of saving events culminating in Christ himself. These events not only belong to "yesterday"; they are also part of the "today" of salvation. This making present comes about above all in the Liturgy: what God accomplished centuries ago did not only affect the direct witnesses of those events; it continues to affect people in every age with its gift of grace. To some extent this is also true of every other devout approach to those events: to "remember" them in a spirit of faith and love is to be open to the grace which Christ won for us by the mysteries of his life, death and resurrection.

Consequently, while it must be reaffirmed with the Second Vatican Council that the Liturgy, as the exercise of the priestly office of Christ and an act of public worship, is "the summit to which the activity of the Church is directed and the font from which all its power flows", [15] it is also necessary to recall that the spiritual life "is not limited solely to participation in the liturgy. Christians, while they are called to prayer in common, must also go to their own rooms to pray to their Father in secret (cf. Mt 6:6); indeed, according to the teaching of the Apostle, they must pray without ceasing (cf. 1Thes 5:17)". [16] The Rosary, in its own particular way, is part of this varied panorama of "ceaseless" prayer. If the Liturgy, as the activity of Christ and the Church, is a saving action par excellence, the Rosary too, as a "meditation" with Mary on Christ, is a salutary contemplation. By immersing us in the mysteries of the Redeemer's life, it ensures that what he has done and what the liturgy makes present is profoundly assimilated and shapes our existence.

[15] Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy Sacrosanctum Concilium, 10.

[16] Ibid., 12.

Learning Christ from Mary

14. Christ is the supreme Teacher, the revealer and the one revealed. It is not just a question of learning what he taught but of "learning him". In this regard could we have any better teacher than Mary? From the divine standpoint, the Spirit is the interior teacher who leads us to the full truth of Christ (cf. Jn 14:26; 15:26; 16:13). But among creatures no one knows Christ better than Mary; no one can introduce us to a profound knowledge of his mystery better than his Mother.

The first of the "signs" worked by Jesus -- the changing of water into wine at the marriage in Cana -- clearly presents Mary in the guise of a teacher, as she urges the servants to do what Jesus commands (cf. Jn 2:5). We can imagine that she would have done likewise for the disciples after Jesus' Ascension, when she joined them in awaiting the Holy Spirit and supported them in their first mission. Contemplating the scenes of the Rosary in union with Mary is a means of learning from her to "read" Christ, to discover his secrets and to understand his message.

This school of Mary is all the more effective if we consider that she teaches by obtaining for us in abundance the gifts of the Holy Spirit, even as she offers us the incomparable example of her own "pilgrimage of faith".[17] As we contemplate each mystery of her Son's life, she invites us to do as she did at the Annunciation: to ask humbly the questions which open us to the light, in order to end with the obedience of faith: "Behold I am the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to your word" (Lk 1:38).

[17] Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Lumen Gentium, 58.

Being conformed to Christ with Mary

15. Christian spirituality is distinguished by the disciple's commitment to become conformed ever more fully to his Master (cf. Rom 8:29; Phil 3:10,12). The outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Baptism grafts the believer like a branch onto the vine which is Christ (cf. Jn 15:5) and makes him a member of Christ's mystical Body (cf. 1Cor 12:12; Rom 12:5). This initial unity, however, calls for a growing assimilation which will increasingly shape the conduct of the disciple in accordance with the "mind" of Christ: "Have this mind among yourselves, which was in Christ Jesus" (Phil 2:5). In the words of the Apostle, we are called "to put on the Lord Jesus Christ" (cf. Rom 13:14; Gal 3:27).

In the spiritual journey of the Rosary, based on the constant contemplation -- in Mary's company -- of the face of Christ, this demanding ideal of being conformed to him is pursued through an association which could be described in terms of friendship. We are thereby enabled to enter naturally into Christ's life and as it were to share his deepest feelings. In this regard Blessed Bartolo Longo has written: "Just as two friends, frequently in each other's company, tend to develop similar habits, so too, by holding familiar converse with Jesus and the Blessed Virgin, by meditating on the mysteries of the Rosary and by living the same life in Holy Communion, we can become, to the extent of our lowliness, similar to them and can learn from these supreme models a life of humility, poverty, hiddenness, patience and perfection".[18]

[18] I Quindici Sabati del Santissimo Rosario, 27th ed., Pompei, 1916, 27.

In this process of being conformed to Christ in the Rosary, we entrust ourselves in a special way to the maternal care of the Blessed Virgin. She who is both the Mother of Christ and a member of the Church, indeed her "pre-eminent and altogether singular member", [19] is at the same time the "Mother of the Church". As such, she continually brings to birth children for the mystical Body of her Son. She does so through her intercession, imploring upon them the inexhaustible outpouring of the Spirit. Mary is the perfect icon of the motherhood of the Church.

[19] Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Lumen Gentium, 53.

The Rosary mystically transports us to Mary's side as she is busy watching over the human growth of Christ in the home of Nazareth. This enables her to train us and to mold us with the same care, until Christ is "fully formed" in us (cf. Gal 4:19). This role of Mary, totally grounded in that of Christ and radically subordinated to it, "in no way obscures or diminishes the unique mediation of Christ, but rather shows its power".[20] This is the luminous principle expressed by

the Second Vatican Council which I have so powerfully experienced in my own life and have made the basis of my episcopal motto: *Totus Tuus*. [21] The motto is of course inspired by the teaching of Saint Louis Marie Grignon de Montfort, who explained in the following words Mary's role in the process of our configuration to Christ: "Our entire perfection consists in being conformed, united and consecrated to Jesus Christ. Hence the most perfect of all devotions is undoubtedly that which conforms, unites and consecrates us most perfectly to Jesus Christ. Now, since Mary is of all creatures the one most conformed to Jesus Christ, it follows that among all devotions that which most consecrates and conforms a soul to our Lord is devotion to Mary, his Holy Mother, and that the more a soul is consecrated to her the more will it be consecrated to Jesus Christ". [22] Never as in the Rosary do the life of Jesus and that of Mary appear so deeply joined. Mary lives only in Christ and for Christ!

[20] *Ibid.*, 60.

[21] Cf. First Radio Address *Urbi et Orbi* (17 October 1978): AAS 70 (1978), 927.

[22] *Treatise on True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary*.

Praying to Christ with Mary

16. Jesus invited us to turn to God with insistence and the confidence that we will be heard: "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you" (Mt 7:7). The basis for this power of prayer is the goodness of the Father, but also the mediation of Christ himself (cf. 1Jn 2:1) and the working of the Holy Spirit who "intercedes for us" according to the will of God (cf. Rom 8:26-27). For "we do not know how to pray as we ought" (Rom 8:26), and at times we are not heard "because we ask wrongly" (cf. Jas 4:2-3).

In support of the prayer which Christ and the Spirit cause to rise in our hearts, Mary intervenes with her maternal intercession. "The prayer of the Church is sustained by the prayer of Mary". [23] If Jesus, the one Mediator, is the Way of our prayer, then Mary, his purest and most transparent reflection, shows us the Way. "Beginning with Mary's unique cooperation with the working of the Holy Spirit, the Churches developed their prayer to the Holy Mother of God, centering it on the person of Christ manifested in his mysteries". [24] At the wedding of Cana the Gospel clearly shows the power of Mary's intercession as she makes known to Jesus the needs of others: "They have no wine" (Jn 2:3).

[23] *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2679.

[24] *Ibid.*, 2675.

The Rosary is both meditation and supplication. Insistent prayer to the Mother of God is based on confidence that her maternal intercession can obtain all things from the heart of her Son. She is "all-powerful by grace", to use the bold expression, which needs to be properly understood, of Blessed Bartolo Longo in his *Supplication to Our Lady*. [25] This is a conviction which, beginning with the Gospel, has grown ever more firm in the experience of the Christian people. The supreme poet Dante expresses it marvellously in the lines sung by Saint Bernard: "Lady, thou art so great and so powerful, that whoever desires grace yet does not turn to thee, would have his

desire fly without wings".[26] When in the Rosary we plead with Mary, the sanctuary of the Holy Spirit (cf. Lk 1:35), she intercedes for us before the Father who filled her with grace and before the Son born of her womb, praying with us and for us.

[25] The Supplication to the Queen of the Holy Rosary was composed by Blessed Bartolo Longo in 1883 in response to the appeal of Pope Leo XIII, made in his first Encyclical on the Rosary, for the spiritual commitment of all Catholics in combating social ills. It is solemnly recited twice yearly, in May and October.

[26] Divina Commedia, Paradiso XXXIII, 13-15.

Proclaiming Christ with Mary

17. The Rosary is also a path of proclamation and increasing knowledge, in which the mystery of Christ is presented again and again at different levels of the Christian experience. Its form is that of a prayerful and contemplative presentation, capable of forming Christians according to the heart of Christ. When the recitation of the Rosary combines all the elements needed for an effective meditation, especially in its communal celebration in parishes and shrines, it can present a significant catechetical opportunity which pastors should use to advantage. In this way too Our Lady of the Rosary continues her work of proclaiming Christ. The history of the Rosary shows how this prayer was used in particular by the Dominicans at a difficult time for the Church due to the spread of heresy. Today we are facing new challenges. Why should we not once more have recourse to the Rosary, with the same faith as those who have gone before us? The Rosary retains all its power and continues to be a valuable pastoral resource for every good evangelizer.

CHAPTER II MYSTERIES OF CHRIST -- MYSTERIES OF HIS MOTHER

The Rosary, "a compendium of the Gospel"

18. The only way to approach the contemplation of Christ's face is by listening in the Spirit to the Father's voice, since "no one knows the Son except the Father" (Mt 11:27). In the region of Caesarea Philippi, Jesus responded to Peter's confession of faith by indicating the source of that clear intuition of his identity: "Flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven" (Mt 16:17). What is needed, then, is a revelation from above. In order to receive that revelation, attentive listening is indispensable: "Only the experience of silence and prayer offers the proper setting for the growth and development of a true, faithful and consistent knowledge of that mystery".[27]

[27] John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte* (6 January 2001), 20: AAS 93 (2001), 279.

The Rosary is one of the traditional paths of Christian prayer directed to the contemplation of Christ's face. Pope Paul VI described it in these words: "As a Gospel prayer, centred on the mystery of the redemptive Incarnation, the Rosary is a prayer with a clearly Christological orientation. Its most characteristic element, in fact, the litany- like succession of Hail Marys, becomes in itself an unceasing praise of Christ, who is the ultimate object both of the Angel's

announcement and of the greeting of the Mother of John the Baptist: 'Blessed is the fruit of your womb' (Lk 1:42). We would go further and say that the succession of Hail Marys constitutes the warp on which is woven the contemplation of the mysteries. The Jesus that each Hail Mary recalls is the same Jesus whom the succession of mysteries proposes to us now as the Son of God, now as the Son of the Virgin".[28]

[28] Apostolic Exhortation *Marialis Cultus* (2 February 1974), 46: AAS 6 (1974), 155.

A proposed addition to the traditional pattern

19. Of the many mysteries of Christ's life, only a few are indicated by the Rosary in the form that has become generally established with the seal of the Church's approval. The selection was determined by the origin of the prayer, which was based on the number 150, the number of the Psalms in the Psalter.

I believe, however, that to bring out fully the Christological depth of the Rosary it would be suitable to make an addition to the traditional pattern which, while left to the freedom of individuals and communities, could broaden it to include the mysteries of Christ's public ministry between his Baptism and his Passion. In the course of those mysteries we contemplate important aspects of the person of Christ as the definitive revelation of God. Declared the beloved Son of the Father at the Baptism in the Jordan, Christ is the one who announces the coming of the Kingdom, bears witness to it in his works and proclaims its demands. It is during the years of his public ministry that the mystery of Christ is most evidently a mystery of light: "While I am in the world, I am the light of the world" (Jn 9:5).

Consequently, for the Rosary to become more fully a "compendium of the Gospel", it is fitting to add, following reflection on the Incarnation and the hidden life of Christ (the joyful mysteries) and before focusing on the sufferings of his Passion (the sorrowful mysteries) and the triumph of his Resurrection (the glorious mysteries), a meditation on certain particularly significant moments in his public ministry (the mysteries of light). This addition of these new mysteries, without prejudice to any essential aspect of the prayer's traditional format, is meant to give it fresh life and to enkindle renewed interest in the Rosary's place within Christian spirituality as a true doorway to the depths of the Heart of Christ, ocean of joy and of light, of suffering and of glory.

The Joyful Mysteries

20. The first five decades, the "joyful mysteries", are marked by the joy radiating from the event of the Incarnation. This is clear from the very first mystery, the Annunciation, where Gabriel's greeting to the Virgin of Nazareth is linked to an invitation to messianic joy: "Rejoice, Mary". The whole of salvation history, in some sense the entire history of the world, has led up to this greeting. If it is the Father's plan to unite all things in Christ (cf. Eph 1:10), then the whole of the universe is in some way touched by the divine favour with which the Father looks upon Mary and makes her the Mother of his Son. The whole of humanity, in turn, is embraced by the fiat with which she readily agrees to the will of God.

Exultation is the keynote of the encounter with Elizabeth, where the sound of Mary's voice and

the presence of Christ in her womb cause John to "leap for joy" (cf. Lk 1:44). Gladness also fills the scene in Bethlehem, when the birth of the divine Child, the Saviour of the world, is announced by the song of the angels and proclaimed to the shepherds as "news of great joy" (Lk 2:10).

The final two mysteries, while preserving this climate of joy, already point to the drama yet to come. The Presentation in the Temple not only expresses the joy of the Child's consecration and the ecstasy of the aged Simeon; it also records the prophecy that Christ will be a "sign of contradiction" for Israel and that a sword will pierce his mother's heart (cf Lk 2:34-35). Joy mixed with drama marks the fifth mystery, the finding of the twelve-year-old Jesus in the Temple. Here he appears in his divine wisdom as he listens and raises questions, already in effect one who "teaches". The revelation of his mystery as the Son wholly dedicated to his Father's affairs proclaims the radical nature of the Gospel, in which even the closest of human relationships are challenged by the absolute demands of the Kingdom. Mary and Joseph, fearful and anxious, "did not understand" his words (Lk 2:50).

To meditate upon the "joyful" mysteries, then, is to enter into the ultimate causes and the deepest meaning of Christian joy. It is to focus on the realism of the mystery of the Incarnation and on the obscure foreshadowing of the mystery of the saving Passion. Mary leads us to discover the secret of Christian joy, reminding us that Christianity is, first and foremost, euangelion, "good news", which has as its heart and its whole content the person of Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh, the one Saviour of the world.

The Mysteries of Light

21. Moving on from the infancy and the hidden life in Nazareth to the public life of Jesus, our contemplation brings us to those mysteries which may be called in a special way "mysteries of light". Certainly the whole mystery of Christ is a mystery of light. He is the "light of the world" (Jn 8:12). Yet this truth emerges in a special way during the years of his public life, when he proclaims the Gospel of the Kingdom. In proposing to the Christian community five significant moments -- "luminous" mysteries -- during this phase of Christ's life, I think that the following can be fittingly singled out: (1) his Baptism in the Jordan, (2) his self-manifestation at the wedding of Cana, (3) his proclamation of the Kingdom of God, with his call to conversion, (4) his Transfiguration, and finally, (5) his institution of the Eucharist, as the sacramental expression of the Paschal Mystery.

Each of these mysteries is a revelation of the Kingdom now present in the very person of Jesus. The Baptism in the Jordan is first of all a mystery of light. Here, as Christ descends into the waters, the innocent one who became "sin" for our sake (cf. 2Cor 5:21), the heavens open wide and the voice of the Father declares him the beloved Son (cf. Mt 3:17 and parallels), while the Spirit descends on him to invest him with the mission which he is to carry out. Another mystery of light is the first of the signs, given at Cana (cf. Jn 2:1-12), when Christ changes water into wine and opens the hearts of the disciples to faith, thanks to the intervention of Mary, the first among believers. Another mystery of light is the preaching by which Jesus proclaims the coming of the Kingdom of God, calls to conversion (cf. Mk 1:15) and forgives the sins of all who draw near to him in humble trust (cf. Mk 2:3-13; Lk 7:47-48): the inauguration of that ministry of mercy which he continues to exercise until the end of the world, particularly through the Sacrament of Reconciliation which he has entrusted to his Church (cf. Jn 20:22-23). The mystery of light par excellence is the Transfiguration, traditionally believed to have taken place on Mount

Tabor. The glory of the Godhead shines forth from the face of Christ as the Father commands the astonished Apostles to "listen to him" (cf. Lk 9:35 and parallels) and to prepare to experience with him the agony of the Passion, so as to come with him to the joy of the Resurrection and a life transfigured by the Holy Spirit. A final mystery of light is the institution of the Eucharist, in which Christ offers his body and blood as food under the signs of bread and wine, and testifies "to the end" his love for humanity (Jn 13:1), for whose salvation he will offer himself in sacrifice.

In these mysteries, apart from the miracle at Cana, the presence of Mary remains in the background. The Gospels make only the briefest reference to her occasional presence at one moment or other during the preaching of Jesus (cf. Mk 3:31-5; Jn 2:12), and they give no indication that she was present at the Last Supper and the institution of the Eucharist. Yet the role she assumed at Cana in some way accompanies Christ throughout his ministry. The revelation made directly by the Father at the Baptism in the Jordan and echoed by John the Baptist is placed upon Mary's lips at Cana, and it becomes the great maternal counsel which Mary addresses to the Church of every age: "Do whatever he tells you" (Jn 2:5). This counsel is a fitting introduction to the words and signs of Christ's public ministry and it forms the Marian foundation of all the "mysteries of light".

The Sorrowful Mysteries

22. The Gospels give great prominence to the sorrowful mysteries of Christ. From the beginning Christian piety, especially during the Lenten devotion of the Way of the Cross, has focused on the individual moments of the Passion, realizing that here is found the culmination of the revelation of God's love and the source of our salvation. The Rosary selects certain moments from the Passion, inviting the faithful to contemplate them in their hearts and to relive them. The sequence of meditations begins with Gethsemane, where Christ experiences a moment of great anguish before the will of the Father, against which the weakness of the flesh would be tempted to rebel. There Jesus encounters all the temptations and confronts all the sins of humanity, in order to say to the Father: "Not my will but yours be done" (Lk 22:42 and parallels). This "Yes" of Christ reverses the "No" of our first parents in the Garden of Eden. And the cost of this faithfulness to the Father's will is made clear in the following mysteries; by his scourging, his crowning with thorns, his carrying the Cross and his death on the Cross, the Lord is cast into the most abject suffering: Ecce homo!

This abject suffering reveals not only the love of God but also the meaning of man himself.

Ecce homo: the meaning, origin and fulfilment of man is to be found in Christ, the God who humbles himself out of love "even unto death, death on a cross" (Phil 2:8). The sorrowful mysteries help the believer to relive the death of Jesus, to stand at the foot of the Cross beside Mary, to enter with her into the depths of God's love for man and to experience all its life-giving power.

The Glorious Mysteries

23. "The contemplation of Christ's face cannot stop at the image of the Crucified One. He is the Risen One!" [29] The Rosary has always expressed this knowledge born of faith and invited the believer to pass beyond the darkness of the Passion in order to gaze upon Christ's glory in the Resurrection and Ascension. Contemplating the Risen One, Christians rediscover the reasons for

their own faith (cf. 1Cor 15:14) and relive the joy not only of those to whom Christ appeared -- the Apostles, Mary Magdalene and the disciples on the road to Emmaus -- but also the joy of Mary, who must have had an equally intense experience of the new life of her glorified Son. In the Ascension, Christ was raised in glory to the right hand of the Father, while Mary herself would be raised to that same glory in the Assumption, enjoying beforehand, by a unique privilege, the destiny reserved for all the just at the resurrection of the dead. Crowned in glory -- as she appears in the last glorious mystery -- Mary shines forth as Queen of the Angels and Saints, the anticipation and the supreme realization of the eschatological state of the Church.

[29] John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte* (6 January 2001), 28: AAS 93 (2001), 284.

At the centre of this unfolding sequence of the glory of the Son and the Mother, the Rosary sets before us the third glorious mystery, Pentecost, which reveals the face of the Church as a family gathered together with Mary, enlivened by the powerful outpouring of the Spirit and ready for the mission of evangelization. The contemplation of this scene, like that of the other glorious mysteries, ought to lead the faithful to an ever greater appreciation of their new life in Christ, lived in the heart of the Church, a life of which the scene of Pentecost itself is the great "icon". The glorious mysteries thus lead the faithful to greater hope for the eschatological goal towards which they journey as members of the pilgrim People of God in history. This can only impel them to bear courageous witness to that "good news" which gives meaning to their entire existence.

From "mysteries" to the "Mystery": Mary's way

24. The cycles of meditation proposed by the Holy Rosary are by no means exhaustive, but they do bring to mind what is essential and they awaken in the soul a thirst for a knowledge of Christ continually nourished by the pure source of the Gospel. Every individual event in the life of Christ, as narrated by the Evangelists, is resplendent with the Mystery that surpasses all understanding (cf. Eph 3:19): the Mystery of the Word made flesh, in whom "all the fullness of God dwells bodily" (Col 2:9). For this reason the Catechism of the Catholic Church places great emphasis on the mysteries of Christ, pointing out that "everything in the life of Jesus is a sign of his Mystery". [30] The "duc in altum" of the Church of the third millennium will be determined by the ability of Christians to enter into the "perfect knowledge of God's mystery, of Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col 2:2-3). The Letter to the Ephesians makes this heartfelt prayer for all the baptized: "May Christ dwell in your hearts through faith, so that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have power... to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God" (3:17-19).

[30] No. 515.

The Rosary is at the service of this ideal; it offers the "secret" which leads easily to a profound and inward knowledge of Christ. We might call it Mary's way. It is the way of the example of the Virgin of Nazareth, a woman of faith, of silence, of attentive listening. It is also the way of a Marian devotion inspired by knowledge of the inseparable bond between Christ and his Blessed Mother: the mysteries of Christ are also in some sense the mysteries of his Mother, even when they do not involve her directly, for she lives from him and through him. By making our own the words of the Angel Gabriel and Saint Elizabeth contained in the Hail Mary, we find ourselves constantly drawn to seek out afresh in Mary, in her arms and in her heart, the "blessed fruit of

her womb" (cf Lk 1:42).

Mystery of Christ, mystery of man

25. In my testimony of 1978 mentioned above, where I described the Rosary as my favourite prayer, I used an idea to which I would like to return. I said then that "the simple prayer of the Rosary marks the rhythm of human life".[31]

[31] Angelus Message of 29 October 1978 : Insegnamenti, I (1978), 76.

In the light of what has been said so far on the mysteries of Christ, it is not difficult to go deeper into this anthropological significance of the Rosary, which is far deeper than may appear at first sight. Anyone who contemplates Christ through the various stages of his life cannot fail to perceive in him the truth about man. This is the great affirmation of the Second Vatican Council which I have so often discussed in my own teaching since the Encyclical Letter *Redemptor Hominis*: "it is only in the mystery of the Word made flesh that the mystery of man is seen in its true light".[32] The Rosary helps to open up the way to this light. Following in the path of Christ, in whom man's path is "recapitulated", [33] revealed and redeemed, believers come face to face with the image of the true man. Contemplating Christ's birth, they learn of the sanctity of life; seeing the household of Nazareth, they learn the original truth of the family according to God's plan; listening to the Master in the mysteries of his public ministry, they find the light which leads them to enter the Kingdom of God; and following him on the way to Calvary, they learn the meaning of salvific suffering. Finally, contemplating Christ and his Blessed Mother in glory, they see the goal towards which each of us is called, if we allow ourselves to be healed and transformed by the Holy Spirit. It could be said that each mystery of the Rosary, carefully meditated, sheds light on the mystery of man.

[32] Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, 22.

[33] Cf. Saint Irenaeus of Lyons, *Adversus Haereses*, III, 18, 1: PG 7, 932.

At the same time, it becomes natural to bring to this encounter with the sacred humanity of the Redeemer all the problems, anxieties, labours and endeavours which go to make up our lives. "Cast your burden on the Lord and he will sustain you" (Ps 55:23). To pray the Rosary is to hand over our burdens to the merciful hearts of Christ and his Mother. Twenty-five years later, thinking back over the difficulties which have also been part of my exercise of the Petrine ministry, I feel the need to say once more, as a warm invitation to everyone to experience it personally: the Rosary does indeed "mark the rhythm of human life", bringing it into harmony with the "rhythm" of God's own life, in the joyful communion of the Holy Trinity, our life's destiny and deepest longing.

CHAPTER III

"FOR ME, TO LIVE IS CHRIST"

The Rosary, a way of assimilating the mystery

26. Meditation on the mysteries of Christ is proposed in the Rosary by means of a method designed to assist in their assimilation. It is a method based on repetition. This applies above all to the Hail Mary, repeated ten times in each mystery. If this repetition is considered superficially, there could be a temptation to see the Rosary as a dry and boring exercise. It is quite another thing, however, when the Rosary is thought of as an outpouring of that love which tirelessly returns to the person loved with expressions similar in their content but ever fresh in terms of the feeling pervading them.

In Christ, God has truly assumed a "heart of flesh". Not only does God have a divine heart, rich in mercy and in forgiveness, but also a human heart, capable of all the stirrings of affection. If we needed evidence for this from the Gospel, we could easily find it in the touching dialogue between Christ and Peter after the Resurrection: "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Three times this question is put to Peter, and three times he gives the reply: "Lord, you know that I love you" (cf. Jn 21:15-17). Over and above the specific meaning of this passage, so important for Peter's mission, none can fail to recognize the beauty of this triple repetition, in which the insistent request and the corresponding reply are expressed in terms familiar from the universal experience of human love. To understand the Rosary, one has to enter into the psychological dynamic proper to love.

One thing is clear: although the repeated Hail Mary is addressed directly to Mary, it is to Jesus that the act of love is ultimately directed, with her and through her. The repetition is nourished by the desire to be conformed ever more completely to Christ, the true programme of the Christian life. Saint Paul expressed this project with words of fire: "For me to live is Christ and to die is gain" (Phil 1:21). And again: "It is no longer I that live, but Christ lives in me" (Gal 2:20). The Rosary helps us to be conformed ever more closely to Christ until we attain true holiness.

A valid method...

27. We should not be surprised that our relationship with Christ makes use of a method. God communicates himself to us respecting our human nature and its vital rhythms. Hence, while Christian spirituality is familiar with the most sublime forms of mystical silence in which images, words and gestures are all, so to speak, superseded by an intense and ineffable union with God, it normally engages the whole person in all his complex psychological, physical and relational reality.

This becomes apparent in the Liturgy. Sacraments and sacramentals are structured as a series of rites which bring into play all the dimensions of the person. The same applies to non-liturgical prayer. This is confirmed by the fact that, in the East, the most characteristic prayer of Christological meditation, centred on the words "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner"[34] is traditionally linked to the rhythm of breathing; while this practice favours perseverance in the prayer, it also in some way embodies the desire for Christ to become the breath, the soul and the "all" of one's life.

... which can nevertheless be improved

[34] Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2616.

28. I mentioned in my Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte* that the West is now experiencing a renewed demand for meditation, which at times leads to a keen interest in aspects of other religions. [35] Some Christians, limited in their knowledge of the Christian contemplative tradition, are attracted by those forms of prayer. While the latter contain many elements which are positive and at times compatible with Christian experience, they are often based on ultimately unacceptable premises. Much in vogue among these approaches are methods aimed at attaining a high level of spiritual concentration by using techniques of a psychophysical, repetitive and symbolic nature. The Rosary is situated within this broad gamut of religious phenomena, but it is distinguished by characteristics of its own which correspond to specifically Christian requirements.

[35] Cf. No. 33: AAS 93 (2001), 289.

In effect, the Rosary is simply a method of contemplation. As a method, it serves as a means to an end and cannot become an end in itself. All the same, as the fruit of centuries of experience, this method should not be undervalued. In its favour one could cite the experience of countless Saints. This is not to say, however, that the method cannot be improved. Such is the intent of the addition of the new series of *mysteria lucis* to the overall cycle of mysteries and of the few suggestions which I am proposing in this Letter regarding its manner of recitation. These suggestions, while respecting the well-established structure of this prayer, are intended to help the faithful to understand it in the richness of its symbolism and in harmony with the demands of daily life. Otherwise there is a risk that the Rosary would not only fail to produce the intended spiritual effects, but even that the beads, with which it is usually said, could come to be regarded as some kind of amulet or magic object, thereby radically distorting their meaning and function.

Announcing each mystery

29. Announcing each mystery, and perhaps even using a suitable icon to portray it, is as it were to open up a scenario on which to focus our attention. The words direct the imagination and the mind towards a particular episode or moment in the life of Christ. In the Church's traditional spirituality, the veneration of icons and the many devotions appealing to the senses, as well as the method of prayer proposed by Saint Ignatius of Loyola in the *Spiritual Exercises*, make use of visual and imaginative elements (the *compositio loci*), judged to be of great help in concentrating the mind on the particular mystery. This is a methodology, moreover, which corresponds to the inner logic of the Incarnation: in Jesus, God wanted to take on human features. It is through his bodily reality that we are led into contact with the mystery of his divinity.

This need for concreteness finds further expression in the announcement of the various mysteries of the Rosary. Obviously these mysteries neither replace the Gospel nor exhaust its content. The Rosary, therefore, is no substitute for *lectio divina*; on the contrary, it presupposes and promotes it. Yet, even though the mysteries contemplated in the Rosary, even with the addition of the *mysteria lucis*, do no more than outline the fundamental elements of the life of Christ, they easily draw the mind to a more expansive reflection on the rest of the Gospel, especially when the Rosary is prayed in a setting of prolonged recollection.

Listening to the word of God

30. In order to supply a Biblical foundation and greater depth to our meditation, it is helpful to

follow the announcement of the mystery with the proclamation of a related Biblical passage, long or short, depending on the circumstances. No other words can ever match the efficacy of the inspired word. As we listen, we are certain that this is the word of God, spoken for today and spoken "for me".

If received in this way, the word of God can become part of the Rosary's methodology of repetition without giving rise to the ennui derived from the simple recollection of something already well known. It is not a matter of recalling information but of allowing God to speak. In certain solemn communal celebrations, this word can be appropriately illustrated by a brief commentary.

Silence

31. Listening and meditation are nourished by silence. After the announcement of the mystery and the proclamation of the word, it is fitting to pause and focus one's attention for a suitable period of time on the mystery concerned, before moving into vocal prayer. A discovery of the importance of silence is one of the secrets of practicing contemplation and meditation. One drawback of a society dominated by technology and the mass media is the fact that silence becomes increasingly difficult to achieve. Just as moments of silence are recommended in the Liturgy, so too in the recitation of the Rosary it is fitting to pause briefly after listening to the word of God, while the mind focuses on the content of a particular mystery.

The "Our Father"

32. After listening to the word and focusing on the mystery, it is natural for the mind to be lifted up towards the Father. In each of his mysteries, Jesus always leads us to the Father, for as he rests in the Father's bosom (cf. Jn 1:18) he is continually turned towards him. He wants us to share in his intimacy with the Father, so that we can say with him: "Abba, Father" (Rom 8:15; Gal 4:6). By virtue of his relationship to the Father he makes us brothers and sisters of himself and of one another, communicating to us the Spirit which is both his and the Father's. Acting as a kind of foundation for the Christological and Marian meditation which unfolds in the repetition of the Hail Mary, the Our Father makes meditation upon the mystery, even when carried out in solitude, an ecclesial experience.

The ten "Hail Marys"

33. This is the most substantial element in the Rosary and also the one which makes it a Marian prayer par excellence. Yet when the Hail Mary is properly understood, we come to see clearly that its Marian character is not opposed to its Christological character, but that it actually emphasizes and increases it. The first part of the Hail Mary, drawn from the words spoken to Mary by the Angel Gabriel and by Saint Elizabeth, is a contemplation in adoration of the mystery accomplished in the Virgin of Nazareth. These words express, so to speak, the wonder of heaven and earth; they could be said to give us a glimpse of God's own wonderment as he contemplates his "masterpiece" -- the Incarnation of the Son in the womb of the Virgin Mary. If we recall how, in the Book of Genesis, God "saw all that he had made" (Gen 1:31), we can find here an echo of that "pathos with which God, at the dawn of creation, looked upon the work of his hands".[36] The repetition of the Hail Mary in the Rosary gives us a share in God's own wonder and pleasure: in jubilant amazement we acknowledge the greatest miracle of history. Mary's prophecy here

finds its fulfilment: "Henceforth all generations will call me blessed" (Lk 1:48).

[36] John Paul II, Letter to Artists (4 April 1999), 1: AAS 91 (1999), 1155.

The centre of gravity in the Hail Mary, the hinge as it were which joins its two parts, is the name of Jesus. Sometimes, in hurried recitation, this centre of gravity can be overlooked, and with it the connection to the mystery of Christ being contemplated. Yet it is precisely the emphasis given to the name of Jesus and to his mystery that is the sign of a meaningful and fruitful recitation of the Rosary. Pope Paul VI drew attention, in his Apostolic Exhortation *Marialis Cultus*, to the custom in certain regions of highlighting the name of Christ by the addition of a clause referring to the mystery being contemplated. [37] This is a praiseworthy custom, especially during public recitation. It gives forceful expression to our faith in Christ, directed to the different moments of the Redeemer's life. It is at once a profession of faith and an aid in concentrating our meditation, since it facilitates the process of assimilation to the mystery of Christ inherent in the repetition of the Hail Mary. When we repeat the name of Jesus -- the only name given to us by which we may hope for salvation (cf. Acts 4:12) -- in close association with the name of his Blessed Mother, almost as if it were done at her suggestion, we set out on a path of assimilation meant to help us enter more deeply into the life of Christ.

[37] Cf. No. 46: AAS 66 (1974), 155. This custom has also been recently praised by the Congregation for Divine Worship and for the Discipline of the Sacraments in its *Direttorio su pietà popolare e liturgia. Principi e orientamenti* (17 December 2001), 201, Vatican City, 2002, 165.

From Mary's uniquely privileged relationship with Christ, which makes her the Mother of God, *Theotókos*, derives the forcefulness of the appeal we make to her in the second half of the prayer, as we entrust to her maternal intercession our lives and the hour of our death.

The "Gloria"

34. Trinitarian doxology is the goal of all Christian contemplation. For Christ is the way that leads us to the Father in the Spirit. If we travel this way to the end, we repeatedly encounter the mystery of the three divine Persons, to whom all praise, worship and thanksgiving are due. It is important that the Gloria, the high-point of contemplation, be given due prominence in the Rosary. In public recitation it could be sung, as a way of giving proper emphasis to the essentially Trinitarian structure of all Christian prayer.

To the extent that meditation on the mystery is attentive and profound, and to the extent that it is enlivened -- from one Hail Mary to another -- by love for Christ and for Mary, the glorification of the Trinity at the end of each decade, far from being a perfunctory conclusion, takes on its proper contemplative tone, raising the mind as it were to the heights of heaven and enabling us in some way to relive the experience of Tabor, a foretaste of the contemplation yet to come: "It is good for us to be here!" (Lk 9:33).

The concluding short prayer

35. In current practice, the Trinitarian doxology is followed by a brief concluding prayer which

varies according to local custom. Without in any way diminishing the value of such invocations, it is worthwhile to note that the contemplation of the mysteries could better express their full spiritual fruitfulness if an effort were made to conclude each mystery with a prayer for the fruits specific to that particular mystery. In this way the Rosary would better express its connection with the Christian life. One fine liturgical prayer suggests as much, inviting us to pray that, by meditation on the mysteries of the Rosary, we may come to "imitate what they contain and obtain what they promise".[38]

[38] "...concede, quaesumus, ut haec mysteria sacratissimo beatæ Mariae Virginis Rosario recolentes, et imitemur quod continent, et quod promittunt assequamur".
Missale Romanum 1960, in festo B.M. Virginis a Rosario.

Such a final prayer could take on a legitimate variety of forms, as indeed it already does. In this way the Rosary can be better adapted to different spiritual traditions and different Christian communities. It is to be hoped, then, that appropriate formulas will be widely circulated, after due pastoral discernment and possibly after experimental use in centres and shrines particularly devoted to the Rosary, so that the People of God may benefit from an abundance of authentic spiritual riches and find nourishment for their personal contemplation.

The Rosary beads

36. The traditional aid used for the recitation of the Rosary is the set of beads. At the most superficial level, the beads often become a simple counting mechanism to mark the succession of Hail Marys. Yet they can also take on a symbolism which can give added depth to contemplation.

Here the first thing to note is the way the beads converge upon the Crucifix, which both opens and closes the unfolding sequence of prayer. The life and prayer of believers is centred upon Christ. Everything begins from him, everything leads towards him, everything, through him, in the Holy Spirit, attains to the Father.

As a counting mechanism, marking the progress of the prayer, the beads evoke the unending path of contemplation and of Christian perfection. Blessed Bartolo Longo saw them also as a "chain" which links us to God. A chain, yes, but a sweet chain; for sweet indeed is the bond to God who is also our Father. A "filial" chain which puts us in tune with Mary, the "handmaid of the Lord" (Lk 1:38) and, most of all, with Christ himself, who, though he was in the form of God, made himself a "servant" out of love for us (Phil 2:7).

A fine way to expand the symbolism of the beads is to let them remind us of our many relationships, of the bond of communion and fraternity which unites us all in Christ.

The opening and closing

37. At present, in different parts of the Church, there are many ways to introduce the Rosary. In some places, it is customary to begin with the opening words of Psalm 70: "O God, come to my aid; O Lord, make haste to help me", as if to nourish in those who are praying a humble awareness of their own insufficiency. In other places, the Rosary begins with the recitation of the Creed, as if to make the profession of faith the basis of the contemplative journey about to be

undertaken. These and similar customs, to the extent that they prepare the mind for contemplation, are all equally legitimate. The Rosary is then ended with a prayer for the intentions of the Pope, as if to expand the vision of the one praying to embrace all the needs of the Church. It is precisely in order to encourage this ecclesial dimension of the Rosary that the Church has seen fit to grant indulgences to those who recite it with the required dispositions.

If prayed in this way, the Rosary truly becomes a spiritual itinerary in which Mary acts as Mother, Teacher and Guide, sustaining the faithful by her powerful intercession. Is it any wonder, then, that the soul feels the need, after saying this prayer and experiencing so profoundly the motherhood of Mary, to burst forth in praise of the Blessed Virgin, either in that splendid prayer the *Salve Regina* or in the Litany of Loreto? This is the crowning moment of an inner journey which has brought the faithful into living contact with the mystery of Christ and his Blessed Mother.

Distribution over time

38. The Rosary can be recited in full every day, and there are those who most laudably do so. In this way it fills with prayer the days of many a contemplative, or keeps company with the sick and the elderly who have abundant time at their disposal. Yet it is clear -- and this applies all the more if the new series of *mysteria lucis* is included -- that many people will not be able to recite more than a part of the Rosary, according to a certain weekly pattern. This weekly distribution has the effect of giving the different days of the week a certain spiritual "colour", by analogy with the way in which the Liturgy colours the different seasons of the liturgical year.

According to current practice, Monday and Thursday are dedicated to the "joyful mysteries", Tuesday and Friday to the "sorrowful mysteries", and Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday to the "glorious mysteries". Where might the "mysteries of light" be inserted? If we consider that the "glorious mysteries" are said on both Saturday and Sunday, and that Saturday has always had a special Marian flavour, the second weekly meditation on the "joyful mysteries", mysteries in which Mary's presence is especially pronounced, could be moved to Saturday. Thursday would then be free for meditating on the "mysteries of light".

This indication is not intended to limit a rightful freedom in personal and community prayer, where account needs to be taken of spiritual and pastoral needs and of the occurrence of particular liturgical celebrations which might call for suitable adaptations. What is really important is that the Rosary should always be seen and experienced as a path of contemplation. In the Rosary, in a way similar to what takes place in the Liturgy, the Christian week, centred on Sunday, the day of Resurrection, becomes a journey through the mysteries of the life of Christ, and he is revealed in the lives of his disciples as the Lord of time and of history.

CONCLUSION

"Blessed Rosary of Mary, sweet chain linking us to God"

39. What has been said so far makes abundantly clear the richness of this traditional prayer, which has the simplicity of a popular devotion but also the theological depth of a prayer suited to those who feel the need for deeper contemplation.

The Church has always attributed particular efficacy to this prayer, entrusting to the Rosary, to its choral recitation and to its constant practice, the most difficult problems. At times when Christianity itself seemed under threat, its deliverance was attributed to the power of this prayer, and Our Lady of the Rosary was acclaimed as the one whose intercession brought salvation.

Today I willingly entrust to the power of this prayer -- as I mentioned at the beginning -- the cause of peace in the world and the cause of the family.

Peace

40. The grave challenges confronting the world at the start of this new Millennium lead us to think that only an intervention from on high, capable of guiding the hearts of those living in situations of conflict and those governing the destinies of nations, can give reason to hope for a brighter future.

The Rosary is by its nature a prayer for peace, since it consists in the contemplation of Christ, the Prince of Peace, the one who is "our peace" (Eph 2: 14). Anyone who assimilates the mystery of Christ -- and this is clearly the goal of the Rosary -- learns the secret of peace and makes it his life's project. Moreover, by virtue of its meditative character, with the tranquil succession of Hail Marys, the Rosary has a peaceful effect on those who pray it, disposing them to receive and experience in their innermost depths, and to spread around them, that true peace which is the special gift of the Risen Lord (cf. Jn 14:27; 20.21).

The Rosary is also a prayer for peace because of the fruits of charity which it produces. When prayed well in a truly meditative way, the Rosary leads to an encounter with Christ in his mysteries and so cannot fail to draw attention to the face of Christ in others, especially in the most afflicted. How could one possibly contemplate the mystery of the Child of Bethlehem, in the joyful mysteries, without experiencing the desire to welcome, defend and promote life, and to shoulder the burdens of suffering children all over the world? How could one possibly follow in the footsteps of Christ the Revealer, in the mysteries of light, without resolving to bear witness to his "Beatitudes" in daily life? And how could one contemplate Christ carrying the Cross and Christ Crucified, without feeling the need to act as a "Simon of Cyrene" for our brothers and sisters weighed down by grief or crushed by despair? Finally, how could one possibly gaze upon the glory of the Risen Christ or of Mary Queen of Heaven, without yearning to make this world more beautiful, more just, more closely conformed to God's plan?

In a word, by focusing our eyes on Christ, the Rosary also makes us peacemakers in the world. By its nature as an insistent choral petition in harmony with Christ's invitation to "pray ceaselessly" (Lk 18: 1), the Rosary allows us to hope that, even today, the difficult "battle" for peace can be won. Far from offering an escape from the problems of the world, the Rosary obliges us to see them with responsible and generous eyes, and obtains for us the strength to face them with the certainty of God's help and the firm intention of bearing witness in every situation to "love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony" (Col 3: 14).

The family: parents...

41. As a prayer for peace, the Rosary is also, and always has been, a prayer of and for the family. At one time this prayer was particularly dear to Christian families, and it certainly brought

them closer together. It is important not to lose this precious inheritance. We need to return to the practice of family prayer and prayer for families, continuing to use the Rosary.

In my Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte* I encouraged the celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours by the lay faithful in the ordinary life of parish communities and Christian groups; [39] I now wish to do the same for the Rosary. These two paths of Christian contemplation are not mutually exclusive; they complement one another. I would therefore ask those who devote themselves to the pastoral care of families to recommend heartily the recitation of the Rosary.

[39] Cf. No. 34: AAS 93 (2001), 290.

The family that prays together stays together. The Holy Rosary, by age-old tradition, has shown itself particularly effective as a prayer which brings the family together. Individual family members, in turning their eyes towards Jesus, also regain the ability to look one another in the eye, to communicate, to show solidarity, to forgive one another and to see their covenant of love renewed in the Spirit of God.

Many of the problems facing contemporary families, especially in economically developed societies, result from their increasing difficulty in communicating. Families seldom manage to come together, and the rare occasions when they do are often taken up with watching television. To return to the recitation of the family Rosary means filling daily life with very different images, images of the mystery of salvation: the image of the Redeemer, the image of his most Blessed Mother. The family that recites the Rosary together reproduces something of the atmosphere of the household of Nazareth: its members place Jesus at the centre, they share his joys and sorrows, they place their needs and their plans in his hands, they draw from him the hope and the strength to go on.

... and children

42. It is also beautiful and fruitful to entrust to this prayer the growth and development of children. Does the Rosary not follow the life of Christ, from his conception to his death, and then to his Resurrection and his glory? Parents are finding it ever more difficult to follow the lives of their children as they grow to maturity. In a society of advanced technology, of mass communications and globalization, everything has become hurried, and the cultural distance between generations is growing ever greater. The most diverse messages and the most unpredictable experiences rapidly make their way into the lives of children and adolescents, and parents can become quite anxious about the dangers their children face. At times parents suffer acute disappointment at the failure of their children to resist the seductions of the drug culture, the lure of an unbridled hedonism, the temptation to violence, and the manifold expressions of meaninglessness and despair.

To pray the Rosary for children, and even more, with children, training them from their earliest years to experience this daily "pause for prayer" with the family, is admittedly not the solution to every problem, but it is a spiritual aid which should not be underestimated. It could be objected that the Rosary seems hardly suited to the taste of children and young people of today. But perhaps the objection is directed to an impoverished method of praying it. Furthermore, without prejudice to the Rosary's basic structure, there is nothing to stop children and young people from praying it -- either within the family or in groups -- with appropriate symbolic and practical aids

to understanding and appreciation. Why not try it? With God's help, a pastoral approach to youth which is positive, impassioned and creative -- as shown by the World Youth Days! -- is capable of achieving quite remarkable results. If the Rosary is well presented, I am sure that young people will once more surprise adults by the way they make this prayer their own and recite it with the enthusiasm typical of their age group.

The Rosary, a treasure to be rediscovered

43. Dear brothers and sisters! A prayer so easy and yet so rich truly deserves to be rediscovered by the Christian community. Let us do so, especially this year, as a means of confirming the direction outlined in my Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, from which the pastoral plans of so many particular Churches have drawn inspiration as they look to the immediate future.

I turn particularly to you, my dear Brother Bishops, priests and deacons, and to you, pastoral agents in your different ministries: through your own personal experience of the beauty of the Rosary, may you come to promote it with conviction.

I also place my trust in you, theologians: by your sage and rigorous reflection, rooted in the word of God and sensitive to the lived experience of the Christian people, may you help them to discover the Biblical foundations, the spiritual riches and the pastoral value of this traditional prayer.

I count on you, consecrated men and women, called in a particular way to contemplate the face of Christ at the school of Mary.

I look to all of you, brothers and sisters of every state of life, to you, Christian families, to you, the sick and elderly, and to you, young people: confidently take up the Rosary once again. Rediscover the Rosary in the light of Scripture, in harmony with the Liturgy, and in the context of your daily lives.

May this appeal of mine not go unheard! At the start of the twenty-fifth year of my Pontificate, I entrust this Apostolic Letter to the loving hands of the Virgin Mary, prostrating myself in spirit before her image in the splendid Shrine built for her by Blessed Bartolo Longo, the apostle of the Rosary. I willingly make my own the touching words with which he concluded his well-known Supplication to the Queen of the Holy Rosary: "O Blessed Rosary of Mary, sweet chain which unites us to God, bond of love which unites us to the angels, tower of salvation against the assaults of Hell, safe port in our universal shipwreck, we will never abandon you. You will be our comfort in the hour of death: yours our final kiss as life ebbs away. And the last word from our lips will be your sweet name, O Queen of the Rosary of Pompei, O dearest Mother, O Refuge of Sinners, O Sovereign Consoler of the Afflicted. May you be everywhere blessed, today and always, on earth and in heaven".

From the Vatican, on the 16th day of October in the year 2002, the beginning of the twenty-fifth year of my Pontificate.

JOHN PAUL II

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Pope Leo XIII: [Supremi Apostolatus Officio](#) | [Superiore Anno](#) | [Quod Auctoritate](#) | [Vi E Ben Noto](#) | [Quamquam Pluries](#) | [Octobri Mense](#) | [Magnae Dei Matris](#) | [Laetittiae Sanctae](#) | [Iucunda Semper Expectatione](#) | [Adiutricem Populi](#) | [Fidentem Piumque Animum](#) | [Augustissimae Virginis Mariae](#) | [Diuturni Temporis](#)

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