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A SERIES ON THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

The Holy Rosary

Having reflected on the sufferings of prayer and on Eucharistic Adoration, let us now turn to the various forms of prayer. Although prayer is in itself a simple thing, it is not always easy for us to pray, and even less so to pray well. This too is an art, and in order to learn it, we need to study the various forms and methods of prayer that exist and, above all, to practice prayer fervently. One prayer that is quite widespread and beloved in our Catholic Church, especially in certain circles, is the Holy Rosary. In many of her authentic apparitions, the Virgin Mary tells us how important it is to her that we pray the Rosary. That is why it is worthwhile to meditate on this valuable prayer.

In his book on the Rosary, the theologian and spiritual master Romano Guardini writes that the Rosary "is a prayer that flows silently in an ordered framework." With these words, he captured with great precision one of the secrets inherent in this prayer: through the Holy Rosary, one enters into a serene stream that flows from God to man, and which, with the human response of faith, returns back to God.

What is it that makes the Rosary so valuable and recommendable for cultivating and increasing the life of faith?

Unfortunately, in certain circles the Rosary faces many prejudices. For some people, it seems to be nothing more than meaningless "repetition". For others, it awakens unpleasant memories of times past, when they were forced to pray this prayer in the family or in church. But these prejudices or resistances can be overcome if one tries to more deeply understand the meaning of the Holy Rosary.

- **The Holy Rosary is a meditative prayer;** it is a classic Christian meditation.

The repetition of the Hail Marys forms a chain that leads to the mysteries of salvation. Many spiritual masters emphasize the benefit of a repetitive prayer, which is capable of recollecting man's heart and quieting the restless spirit. A calm and recollected spirit can more easily concentrate on the content and essence of prayer. The mysteries of the Holy Rosary, which are the stations of the life of Jesus, settle in our hearts through

meditation and repetition, becoming a kind of inner certainty. And this, in turn, leads to greater love and gratitude towards Jesus. It is fundamental to pray the Rosary with the heart; that is, to pray it within ourselves. Again and again the frequent repetitions gently call the scattered spirit back to the true center of prayer.

- **The Holy Rosary is a biblical prayer.**

Since ancient times, there has existed in Judaism the tradition of praying the so-called "Psalter", which are the psalms that Jesus himself prayed with his disciples. The Church, thanks to the monks, adopted this form of liturgical prayer, and thus arose the so-called "Liturgy of the Hours", in which the 150 psalms are organized in a weekly or monthly cycle. The Rosary was called the "psalter of the Virgin Mary", because originally 150 Hail Marys were prayed in the 15 mysteries, also in an orderly and simple cycle of prayer, so that it is accessible to all people. Another aspect that the Holy Rosary has in common with the psalms is its biblical character.

In fact, the first part of the Hail Mary are the words of the angel's greeting, along with Elizabeth's greeting when she recognizes that the Virgin is carrying the Messiah in her womb. In the angelic salutation, Mary is told of God's plan for her Son to become man, and she receives the invitation to join in this Will of God with her free consent. By repeating this angelic salutation in the Rosary, one enters into and actualizes this event, which, in the first instance, was appointed to the Virgin, but extends to the whole of humanity. The one who prays, greets Mary with this same salutation, and thus recalls the salvific event, which settles more and more in the heart. Moreover, the event of the Annunciation becomes a question for the person praying: Are we ready to accept the message of the angel and to do the Will of God, so as to bring Christ to the world?

- **The Holy Rosary is a realistic prayer.**

The Church has long known the loving power of Mary's intercession with God. In the second part of the Hail Mary, we pray that this intercession be extended to us, particularly at the hour of death. The special power of Our Lady's intercession is derived from her closeness to God. No other person was so closely and intimately involved in the mystery of salvation as was Mary, being Mother and disciple of Jesus. Asking for her help at the hour of death certainly comes from a spiritual experience. Man cannot

simply displace the reality of death from his life; he must integrate it. Thus, this supplication not only invokes Mary's protection and creates a relationship of trust with her, but also implies a conscious confrontation with the inevitable reality of death. Thanks to faith, death can be stripped of its bitterness and hopelessness. Then, we may integrate the reality of death into our life, and our life will become very realistic.

To conclude, let us listen to the collect prayer of the Feast of the Holy Rosary according to the ancient Missal: "O God, whose only begotten Son, by His life, death, and resurrection, has purchased for us the rewards of eternal salvation. Grant, we beseech Thee, that while meditating on these mysteries of the most holy Rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary, that we may both imitate what they contain and obtain what they promise, through Christ our Lord."