

XVIII Sunday after Pentecost – The Holy Rosary

In the name of the Father...

October is dedicated to the Holy Rosary, which feast we celebrated yesterday on the first Saturday of the month in this centennial anniversary of Our Lady's apparitions at Fatima, Friday of this week being the anniversary of the Miracle of the Sun.

Throughout her appearances at Fatima, Our Lady urged daily recitation of the Rosary together with the need for penance for sin and reform.

Yesterday's feast of *The Holy Rosary* originally was *Our Lady of Victory*, recalling the Christian victory over the numerically superior Turks at the great naval battle of Lepanto on 7th October 1571. At that time, the Muslim Turks threatened to overrun still-Christian Europe. Rather than face their common enemy, most Christian princes preferred to indulge their own petty affairs. Finally, due to Pope St Pius V's persistence, a Christian fleet *rose up* to face the threat.

Also by St Pius V's efforts, a crusade of prayer *rose up*, specifically praying the Rosary for the Christian fleet's triumph. Indeed, when the fleet was miraculously successful, Pius unhesitatingly ascribed the victory to Our Lady and the prayers raised up to her.

Undoubtedly a powerful weapon against the Church's enemies, the Rosary also is a great aid to contemplative prayer, leading to a deeper penetration of the mysteries of our faith, not only through the individual mysteries proposed to us, but also through the relationships between them. For while the Rosary recalls the great work of redemption sequentially, its structure brings into relief the central theme of Our Lord's kingship as also the subordinate and parallel role of His Mother. The Rosary, then, is not some random selection of mysteries which can be altered at whim: any augmentation or diminution only obscures its precise proportion to lead us to contemplative prayer, something it could do only if it was given as an integral whole as the Roman Pontiffs assert, especially the great and saintly Leo XIII.

As an example of the relationships between the mysteries bringing to the fore Our Lady's role in redemption history, let us consider the first two joyful mysteries - the Annunciation and the Visitation.

Relating the Blessed Virgin's exchange with the Angel Gabriel,¹ St Luke alludes to the Old Testament Ark of the Covenant which God commanded Moses to make, showing the Ark (bearing God's word written on tablets of stone by the finger of God) fulfilled in the Blessed Virgin (bearing God's Word written in human flesh by the Holy Ghost): the glory of the Lord was to rest upon her: she was to bear God's Covenant within her.²

¹ [Lk 1:26-38](#): St Matthew's account of the Incarnation does not relate this conversation.

² C.f., [Ex 25:10-22](#); [29:43-46](#); [31:18](#); [40:34-35](#)

Relating the Visitation, Luke continues the allusion, recalling King David bringing the Ark to Jerusalem, his new capital city, with great joy, dancing and singing; the attempt was aborted when Uzza was struck dead, David lamenting: *How shall the Ark of the Lord come to me*, the Ark subsequently remaining in the house of Obedom for three months.³ At the Visitation, Luke recalls Elizabeth exclaiming: *How is it that the Mother of my Lord should come to me*, John the Baptist dancing for joy, and the Blessed Virgin remaining with her cousin for three months.⁴

We can attain a deeper understanding of these two mysteries by recalling the commission of Gideon.⁵ Israel was in captivity to her enemies - the Midianites - because she had disobeyed the Lord.⁶ The Angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon and saluted him: *The Lord is with you, O mighty man of valor*, anticipating Gabriel's salutation of the Blessed Virgin: *Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you*.⁷ Indeed, Gideon asked whether he had found favor before the Lord, foreshadowing Gabriel's assertion to the Blessed Virgin that she indeed had done so.⁸ Gideon protested his unworthiness - he being the least of his father's house, itself the least of the tribes of Israel - foreshadowing the Blessed Virgin's profession of humility.⁹ Finally, at the end of his discourse with Gideon, the angel of the Lord vanished from his sight, as Gabriel would take his leave from the Blessed Virgin.¹⁰

Having saluted him as a mighty man of valor, the angel told Gideon: *Go in this your strength, and ... deliver Israel out of the hand of Midian*.¹¹ St Luke relates of the Visitation: *In those days Mary rose up*,¹² recalling the words of the psalmist: *Let God arise, and let his enemies be scattered...* also recalling Moses sending the Ark with the Israelite army: *And when the ark was lifted up, Moses said: Arise, O Lord, and let your enemies be scattered*.¹³

Going to visit her cousin Elizabeth, the Blessed Virgin *rose up*, carrying within her God's Word written not on tablets of stone but in human flesh, and scattered man's greatest enemy. Fulfilling the type of Gideon, the Blessed Virgin was an instrument to deliver Israel not from the hand of Midian, but something far more terrible: for at the sound of her voice, St. John the Baptist was freed from the

³ [2 Sam 6:5 & 15, 9, 11](#)

⁴ [Lk 1:43, 41 & 44, 56](#)

⁵ [Jdg 6:1-24](#)

⁶ [Jdg 6:10](#), c.f., [Gen 3:17](#)

⁷ [Jdg 6:12](#), c.f., [Lk 1:28](#)

⁸ [Jdg 6:30](#), c.f., [Lk 1:30](#)

⁹ [Jdg 6:15](#), c.f., [Lk 1:29, 48](#)

¹⁰ [Jdg 6:21](#), c.f., [Lk 1:38](#)

¹¹ [Jdg 6:14](#)

¹² [Lk 1:39](#)

¹³ [Ps 67\(8\):1](#); [Num 10:35](#)

captivity of Original Sin.¹⁴ Like the remission of the paralytic's sin in relation to his healing, this was a victory far greater than Gideon's and that of the Christian fleet which - under her patronage - *rose up* to face the Turks at Lepanto.

Here, then, is hinted her role as Coredemptrix, she being wholly dependent upon Our Lord, the child whom she carries, and yet having a true participation in redemption, for John is freed at the sound of her voice. This then is but one small example of how praying the Rosary leads us to a deeper understanding of the faith.

The Rosary, however, also is most powerful against the Church's enemies. Indeed, like the Christian fleet which *rose up* at Lepanto, it seems so ill proportioned to the task. Recently, I have spoken of the propagation of Russia's errors - forewarned by Our Lady at Fatima - and that tanks and missiles cannot combat them.¹⁵ Rather, we should recall Our Lord's words to the apostles unable cast out a certain demon: *This kind can go out only by prayer and fasting.*¹⁶ Together with penance and reform, in the Holy Rosary Our Lady has given an effective weapon.

As at Lepanto, God has placed victory over Satan and secularism into her hands. Repeatedly, the Mother of God has come down from heaven - most notably at Lourdes and Fatima - to exhort the faithful to pray her Rosary. Let us heed her word.

In the name of the Father...

¹⁴ [Lk 1:41](#)

¹⁵ [VIII Sunday after Pentecost – Fatima and the Revolution](#)

¹⁶ [Mk 9:29](#) – Gospel for Ember Wednesday in September