



ARCHDIOCESE OF INDIANAPOLIS

The Church in Central and Southern Indiana

Leadership Briefing

By Archbishop Charles C. Thompson

On October 7, we celebrated the Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary. This traditional form of Marian devotion can be described as a prayerful, meditative participation in the lives of Jesus and Mary. The Holy Rosary is a powerful resource in the spiritual struggles every Christian must face in some way. The Rosary is also an instrument of peace in tumultuous times like the present, and it is a source of deep comfort whenever our hearts are troubled.



The theologian Romano Guardini once described the Catholic emphasis on the Rosary as "participation in the life of Mary, whose focus was Christ." Pope Francis made a similar point when he said, "contemplating the face of Christ with the heart of Mary our Mother will make us even more united as a spiritual family and will help us overcome this time of trial." These wonderful images—the face of Christ and the heart of Mary—capture both the beauty and the intimacy of the Holy Rosary. Especially in troubled times, there is much comfort offered to us in this simple, meditative form of prayer.

Pope Emeritus Benedict VI has written that after several decades of neglect the Rosary is experiencing "a new springtime." He described the renewal of interest in the Rosary as "one of the most eloquent signs of love that the young generation nourish for Jesus and his Mother." According to Pope Benedict, the Rosary is a meditation on all the important moments of salvation history.

Recently Pope Francis encouraged all individuals and families to pray the Rosary daily to ask for our Blessed Mother's special protection and care during this pandemic. He asks all of us to consider continuing (or beginning) this beautiful practice as an integral part of our personal spirituality.

While we all look forward to a return to a time of normalcy, we know that, in fact, we will never be quite the same. May Mary, the Mother of the Church, and the Mother of God, bless us, and all the people we serve, with her compassion and her courage. May she inspire us to avoid “turning backward” or returning to “business as usual,” but may we instead embrace confidently the mission of her Son, Jesus, to move forward in hope.

And in this Year of St. Joseph, may the foster father of Jesus and the husband of Mary, continue to be the Protector of our Church. May all that we have experienced lead us to a profound renewal of our faith in God, of our hope in a better life to come, and of our ability to love God and our neighbor by living the mission each of us was given in our baptism. Our Lady of the Rosary, pray for us.

+Charles C. Thompson
Archbishop of Indianapolis

Selections from the APOSTOLIC LETTER

ROSARIUM VIRGINIS MARIAE (ON THE MOST HOLY ROSARY)

By Pope St. John Paul II

October 16, 2002

The Rosary, a contemplative prayer

12. The Rosary, precisely because it starts with Mary's own experience, is an exquisitely contemplative prayer... 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”.

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”, 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. 1 Thes 5:17)”. 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.

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... 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.

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).

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). 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 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”, 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.

Image by Simone Cantarini

A Message from Pope Francis: Words of Challenge and Hope

The months of May and October are times when the People of God express with particular intensity their love and devotion for the Blessed Virgin Mary. It is traditional in these months to pray the Rosary at home within the family. The restrictions of the pandemic have made us come to appreciate all the more this “family” aspect, also from a spiritual point of view.



For this reason, I want to encourage everyone to rediscover the beauty of praying the Rosary at home in the months of May and October. This can be done either as a group or individually; you can decide according to your own situations, making the most of both opportunities. The key to doing this is always simplicity, and it is easy also on the internet to find good models of prayers to follow.

Dear brothers and sisters, contemplating the face of Christ with the heart of Mary our Mother will make us even more united as a spiritual family and will help us overcome this time of trial. I keep all of you in my prayers, especially those suffering most greatly, and I ask you, please, to pray for me. I thank you, and with great affection I send you my blessing. (Adapted from Pope Francis's remarks on the Feast of Saint Mark the Evangelist, Saint John Lateran, 25 April 2020.)

My Prayer for You

Here is one of our Holy Father's prayers to Mary during this troubled time. It is the text of an ancient Marian hymn, *Sub Tuum Praesidium* (Beneath Thy Protection):

We seek refuge under your protection, O Holy Mother of God. Do not despise our pleas — we who are put to the test — and deliver us from every danger, O glorious and blessed Virgin. Amen.

+ Charles C. Thompson