

# The Twelve Rosary Encyclicals of Pope Leo XIII

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| 1. <b>Supremi apostolatus officio</b>    | 1 September 1883  |
| 2. <b>Superiore anno</b>                 | 30 August 1884    |
| 3. <b>Quod auctoritate</b>               | 22 December 1885  |
| 4. <b>Vi è ben noto</b>                  | 20 September 1887 |
| 5. <b>Octobri mense</b>                  | 22 September 1891 |
| 6. <b>Magnae Dei Matris</b>              | 8 September 1892  |
| 7. <b>Laetitiae sanctae</b>              | 8 September 1893  |
| 8. <b>Iucunda Semper Expectatione</b>    | 8 September 1894  |
| 9. <b>Adiutricem populi</b>              | 5 September 1895  |
| 10. <b>Fidentem Piumque Animum</b>       | 20 September 1896 |
| 11. <b>Augustissimae Virginis Mariae</b> | 12 September 1897 |
| 12. <b>Diuturni Temporis</b>             | 5 September 1898  |

## **(4) VI È BEN NOTO**

### ENCYCLICAL OF POPE LEO XIII ON THE ROSARY AND PUBLIC LIFE\*

*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. Often times already We, in recommending the pious practice of devoting October to honouring 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 fore fathers, under similar circumstances? And to make this most powerful Queen more and more propitious, We would honour 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, to 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 fulfilment 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 a 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 many 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 favours of the highest kind from heaven.

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

**LEO XIII**

## **(5) OCTOBRI MENSE**

ENCYCLICAL OF POPE LEO XIII  
ON THE ROSARY

*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 honour 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 organisation 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;"(1) 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) 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 practised 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;(3) and the greater was the fear of a misfortune, the greater was the fervour 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.(4) 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.(5) 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.(6) 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 Saviour, 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 favour 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 labours of her Son, and in accepting the charge of her maternal duties towards us all.

5. The design of this most dear mercy, realised 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 than 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 favour from the lips of unworthy men, God will accept when they are recommended by the most Holy Mother, and will grant with all favours. 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, honour 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."(7)

7. Now, among the several rites and manners of paying honour 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 off spring 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 succour came from on high through the instrument of Mary's Rosary. Thus under the favour 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 favour 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 honours, 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 honour 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 favours.

9. Nor may we permit to pass unnoticed the especial Providence of God displayed in this devotion; for through the lapse of time religious fervour 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 marvellous 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 honour 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 fervour with which Mary's Rosary is honoured 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 fervour, in a fit of discouragement. Let these look into themselves and labour 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*;(8) 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 favourably 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*.(9) 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.(10) 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 marvellous 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;(11) 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.(12)

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 fervour of both these virtues combined. Thus prayer fortifies the soul, makes it strong for noble endeavours, 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:(13) 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 succour 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.* (14) 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. (15)

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 endeavour 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.*

**LEO XIII**

## **(6) MAGNAE DEI MATRIS**

ENCYCLICAL OF POPE LEO XIII  
ON THE ROSARY

*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.

*The Holy Father's Devotion to Mary*

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.

*Filial Trust in Mary*

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.

### *The Remedy*

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.

### *The Mother of Mercy*

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."(1)

### *Jesus and Mary*

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."(2) 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.

### *Our Mother in Christ*

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.

### *The Rosary as Meditation*

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."(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.

#### *Our Faith and the Mysteries of the Rosary*

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 stanchest 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.

#### *True Christian Living*

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"(4)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?"(5) 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.

### *"And Dwelt Among Us"*

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."(6) 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."(7) 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?"(8) "I live, now not I; but Christ liveth in me."(9)

### *The Life of Mary*

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 Saviour 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.

### *Mary, Our Model*

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 this 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 obstacles. 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 sighs, 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."(10)

28. Although she was never subject to the frailty and perversity of our nature, Mary well 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.

#### *Devout and Frequent Recitation of the Rosary*

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.

### *The Holy Father's Source of Consolation*

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";(11) Not to us, but to thy name give glory."(12)

### *The Shepherd's Plea to His Flock*

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."(13)

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.*

**LEO XIII**