

The Twelve Rosary Encyclicals of Pope Leo XIII

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

(7) LAETITIAE SANCTAE

ENCYCLICAL OF POPE LEO XIII

COMMENDING DEVOTION TO THE ROSARY

*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 practising 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.

The Rosary and Society

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 laboured - as, God helping, We shall ever continue to labour - 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.

Dislike of Poverty - The Joyful Mysteries

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 labourious 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.

Repugnance to Suffering-The Sorrowful Mysteries

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 labour 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!

Forgetfulness of the Future - The Glorious Mysteries

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 splendour and beauty of our earthly habitation, by which human society is ennobled, may mirror the splendour 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.

Confraternities of the Rosary

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 labouring 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 splendour 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 enrol themselves in the Confraternity, and who will earnestly endeavour 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.

Conclusion

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 fulfilment. 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 favour, 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.

(8) IUCUNDA SEMPER

EXPECTATIONE

ENCYCLICAL OF POPE LEO XIII

ON THE ROSARY

*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 practised 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 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 marvellous 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 honour 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 ardour 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 instil confidence into the

hearts of those who pray, and new influence to move the compassionate heart of Our Mother to comfort and succour 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-Redemptress 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 favoured 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 Saviour. 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 fulfilment 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 honour 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 fulness 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 savour, 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 favour 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 fulfilment 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, practised 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 splendours 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 succour which We need. It is Our ardent wish that this devotion shall be restored to the place of honour; 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 favour of pardon. To this end it is indispensable that zeal should be redoubled, while impiety daily redoubles its efforts and labours 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 theatre 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 Saviour 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 ardour to that wherewith we condemned this sacrilegious offence, 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 honouring the Mother of God, the mighty succourer of the Christian people, the most glorious Queen of Heaven. For Our own part, We confirm with all Our heart the favours 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 fulfil 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.

LEO XIII

(9) *ADIUTRICEM*

ENCYCLICAL OF POPE LEO XIII
ON THE ROSARY

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.

Catholic Devotedness to Mary

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.

Widespread Devotion to the Rosary

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.

The Extension of the Kingdom of Christ

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"(1) - 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.

Jesus Gave Mary to His Church

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!"(2) 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.

Mary, Help of Christians

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,"(3) "the Reparatrix of the whole world,"(4) "the Dispenser of all heavenly gifts."(5)

Mary and Our Faith

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"(6) 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."(7)

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 layer of holy Baptism and churches been founded among every people."(8)

Ever the Protectress of Catholic Belief

11. Nay she has even, as this same Doctor claims, upheld and given strength to the "sceptre of the orthodox faith."(9) 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.

Seat of Wisdom

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, unshakeable prop of the Church."(10) "Hail, thou through whom we have been enrolled as citizens of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church"(11). "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."(12) "Rejoice, because thou alone hast destroyed all the heresies in the world."(13)

A Mother to the Nations

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 selfsame 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 marvellous 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?

Beloved Bond of Christendom

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.

Our Catholic Love of Unity

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.

Mother of Unity and Concord

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." (14) 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." (15)

The Eastern Churches and Mary

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," (16) 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.

Mary's Icons

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.

Mary, Guardian of Unity

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.

For Our Separated Brethren

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?"(17) All must live the life of Christ in an organic unity in order to "bring forth fruit to God"(18) 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."(19)

Devotion to the Rosary in the East

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 everlasting 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.

Let All Turn to Mary

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.

LEO XIII

