

LIGHT & LIFE

FATHER REGINALD MARTIN, O.P., *DIRECTOR*

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REFLECTIONS FROM THE DIRECTOR

The October – November issue of Light and Life is always a challenge. We prepare it in August, some time before we celebrate the Assumption, yet look forward to September 8, when we honor Our Lady's birth. We look even further ahead in our liturgical year, to the "Feast of the Holy Rosary," and we invite our friends to send the names of loved ones they would like us to remember at Mass during the month of November. Faced with this embarrassment of riches, one hardly knows where to begin.

Let us start, then, at the beginning, and with the two feasts – Mary's Birth and Assumption – that demand our attention in August and September. We know nothing of Mary's birth or early childhood. The details we have are collected from pious legends, which present a charming – but (one suspects) hardly historical – picture of a remarkable being's remarkable early life. One of the early stories says that when Mary's parents presented her in the Temple, she ran up the steps and danced before the surprised assembly.

The gospel presents only a few pictures of the Blessed Mother, but these are quite telling. Mary is the only individual in the gospel present at every event in the life of Christ and the early Church. Wherever we encounter Mary in the Scripture, we are supposed to find ourselves.

The language the evangelists employ when writing about Mary is significant. In Matthew and Luke we discover a woman described in the richest images of the Old Testament, an individual who sums up and represents the noblest and holiest aspirations of our spiritual ancestors. From these descriptions we are able to conclude that God rewarded Mary with the everlasting life each of us looks forward to. As we stand in awe of her Assumption, our faith challenges us to follow the example of her holiness, that we might share the reward God lavished upon her.

October's Feast of the Holy Rosary celebrates a famous naval victory as well as – and more important



OUR LADY OF THE ROSARY

Silhouette by Sr. Jean Dorcy

– the divine intervention by which the victory was won. In these times we appropriately hesitate to employ force to achieve our ends, so October 7 is an opportunity to recall the faith of those who fought at Lepanto, and who harbored no doubt that their victory was God's response to their fervent prayers to the Mother of God.

November brings the Solemnity of All Saints, followed by the Solemnity of All Souls. In the first we celebrate the memory of the Church's acknowledged heroes; in the latter, we pray that all the dead may one day share the glory God has prepared for His faithful. Chief among these, of course, is Mary, the Mother of God's Son. The month of the Holy Souls invites us to address Mary as the "Refuge of sinners" and "Comforter of the afflicted," a faithful friend who will not abandon us at the moment of death. Friends of the Rosary Center may find particular solace in the following prayer, taken from the Roman Ritual,

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TO BE OFFERED FOR YOUR INTENTIONS

THEOLOGY FOR THE LAITY

THE OUR FATHER, PART III

THY KINGDOM COME

By Father Reginald Martin, O.P.

THE GIFT OF PIETY

Among the Holy Spirit's gifts is piety, which perfects us in our relations with others. Piety is a disposition of devotion toward a parent, and of friendliness and compassion toward those in need. The very first words of the Lord's Prayer express our desire for a proper ordering of our affections; this second petition asks God to make things right in our relations with Him, and in our relations to one another.

We properly approach God with awe and reverence, but the invitation to call Him "Father" is an invitation to approach Him in piety, with confidence and love. This invitation also calls us to identify our desires with God's; and since God can want nothing more than to share with us the joy of life in His Kingdom, we naturally pray for the kingdom to be made manifest in our midst.

WHAT IS A KINGDOM?

We may be tempted to picture kingdoms as castles, romantic buildings with turrets and battlements, but the word is far more subtle. The suffix "—dom" indicates a condition or state of being. "Thralldom," thus, is a condition of slavery; "freedom," as the word suggests, is the opposite. To speak of the "kingdom" of God is to name a way of life in which God is the ruler.

Here we should remark that when we speak of God's kingdom, we are not speaking in the political terms we ordinarily associate with kings. God is an absolute monarch; He does not reign at our pleasure. Rather we live and serve at His. History provides numberless examples of flawed, or even wicked, kings, whose kingdoms have been characterized by terror, greed, and bloodshed. These should not diminish our appreciation of God's kingship. Instead, they should remind us what God is not, and how our Father in heaven does not behave toward His subjects on earth.

WHY PRAY FOR GOD'S KINGDOM?

St. Thomas Aquinas asks, "*since the Kingdom of God always was, why must we ask for it to come?*" He provides three reasons: so that all things may be subject to Him, because the notion of "kingdom" signifies the life we look forward to in heaven, and because sin at least occasionally holds sway in the world. In other words, although God's kingdom is always present, it is not always visible.

St. Augustine provides a vivid illustration, the word "come," he writes,

is to be understood in the sense of "manifested to men." For in the same way...as a light...is absent to the blind, and to those who shut their eyes, so the kingdom of God, though it never departs from the earth, is yet absent to those who are ignorant of it.

SUBJECTION TO GOD'S WILL

God by His nature is Lord of all things, so He has the right to rule all creation. However, experience demonstrates that not all of God's creatures acknowledge His sovereignty. Thus, the reality of God's kingship will only be fully visible at the end of the world. In the meantime, St. Paul tells us, we enjoy God's kingdom in stages. "*He must reign until He hath put all His enemies under His feet...last of all, the enemy, death, shall be destroyed*" (1 Cor. 15:25-26).

When we pray for the coming of God's kingdom we do not express a mere hope that the world will continue to run smoothly; St. Paul's words remind us that when we pray for God's kingdom we pray specifically for the safety of the just, punishment of the wicked, and the destruction of death.

PERSEVERANCE OF THE JUST

To pray that God's kingdom will come is to pledge our willingness to embrace the consequences of citizenship in the kingdom. St. Cyprian wrote, "*What we pray for is that...we who formerly were slaves of this world will reign from now on under the dominion of Christ.*" He adds, "*...it could also be that the kingdom of God...is Christ Himself, since it is His coming that we long for.*"

To pray for the coming of God's kingdom is to pray that we will be completely subject to God's will, living lives befitting individuals whom Christ has redeemed by His death and resurrection.

PUNISHMENT OF THE WICKED

If we pray for an "end," or goal, we pray for the means by which that end will be achieved. To pray that God will reign over all creation is to pray not only that the righteous will remain faithful, but for punishment on those who resist embracing God's will. We may reasonably

shrink from wishing to punish others – however wicked they may be – but we must acknowledge that the possibility of such punishment is one manifestation of God’s justice. Moreover, we must never forget the Lord’s Prayer is a challenge to look within; when we ask for the manifestation of God’s kingdom, we are asking for our own just punishment if we fail to surrender to God.

THE DESTRUCTION OF DEATH

Because Christ is life, death has no place in His kingdom. In the resurrection at the end of time, *“He will transform the body of our lowliness, that it may be made like to the body of His glory”* (Phil 3:21). To pray for the coming of God’s kingdom expresses our belief in His victory over death, and our trust in what our funeral liturgy calls *“the bright promise of immortality,”* that day when *“every tear will be wiped away.”*

THE GLORY OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

We do not have to be very old before we realize the world offers many challenges to our salvation. To pray for the coming of God’s kingdom expresses our confidence in the future and a new order of creation, in which nothing is opposed to God’s will for our well-being. St. John Chrysostom suggests that this second petition of the Lord’s Prayer *“is the language of a right-minded child, not to be riveted to things that are seen...but to hasten unto our Father, and to long for the things to come.”*

THE GLORY OF LIBERTY

Because piety is the perfection of our relations with others, the supreme act of piety is freely offering ourselves to God. Human experience demonstrates how difficult this can be, how often our free will is compromised, and how seldom we fully achieve our goal. When God’s kingdom is fully revealed, however, we shall be *“delivered from the slavery to corruption”* (Rom 8:21), and enjoy perfect freedom to embrace God’s will.

THE WEALTH OF GOD’S KINGDOM

St. Thomas reminds us that the good things we enjoy in our lives on earth are a mere reflection of what God has laid up for us in heaven. At the same time, the pain we suffer in this life has no place in God’s reign. The kingdom we pray for is a reign in which we not only enjoy the fullness of everything that is good, but one in which no evil interferes with our joy.

Complete abundance and absolute excellence – we might think of these qualities as the perfection of quality and quantity – are characteristics of God’s kingdom. The prophet Isaiah exclaimed, *“You shall see and your hearts shall rejoice!”* (Is 66:14), a reminder that when we are blessed with the coming of God’s kingdom the excellence and abundance that delight us – and frustrate us, if we cannot possess them – will be ours to enjoy without measure.

Here is perhaps a good place to mention that many of the material examples Jesus employs in the gospel are

an invitation to look beyond the here and now realities of life. Obviously, we will have no need of food or drink in heaven, but the value we place on these necessities helps us evaluate the spiritual riches God has stored up for us. At the same time, the immaterial realities that enrich us on earth – our friendships, the love we share among our families, the joy we feel at another’s success – are precisely the same relations we may forward to in heaven.

AN ALTERNATIVE TO SIN

The gospel relates that Jesus often cast out demons. This act of mercy not only provided relief for the individual whom the demon tortured, it gave a sign that God’s kingdom had extended itself a little further into the world. When we pray the Our Father we say, *“Thy kingdom come,”* words that express our willingness to surrender our will to God’s. At the same time these words are also a plea for God (and not sin) to reign in our lives. We shall realize this fully only in heaven, of course, but every time we turn away from sin – each time we choose God’s will over our own – we touch the world, as Our Savior did, with an additional sign of God’s rule. Each victory over sin on earth is a tribute to the everlasting triumph over sin God has promised us in heaven.

GOD’S KINGDOM AND THE BEATITUDES

In the gospel, the Lord’s Prayer and the beatitudes are part of Jesus’ long Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 5:1-7:28). When he considers the beatitudes, St. Thomas writes *“...one is said to possess the end...when one hopes to possess it...and a man is moved towards and approaches the happy end by works of virtue”* (ST I-II, 69.1). When we pray for God’s kingdom, the very act of our prayer allows us to enjoy potentially the reality for which we pray. Our uttering the words of the Lord’s Prayer lets us touch – however imperfectly – the good things of God’s kingdom. Our good works then cooperate with our prayer, to make God’s kingdom more and more a reality in the world.

THE BEATITUDES AND PIETY

We began this discussion by considering piety, the gift that perfects us in our relations with others. Because the beatitudes govern our attitude toward creation, they are among the chief ways in which we grow in piety. The link between piety and a longing for justice is very easy to see; likewise, the connection between piety and mercy i.e., compassion for another’s misfortune, coupled with action to relieve the distress. However, the most important link between the beatitudes and piety – and a connection that is not immediately apparent – is the union of piety to meekness.

BLESSED ARE THE MEEK

We commonly think of meekness as a person’s inability or unwillingness to impose himself upon others. While this is true, our theology teaches that

meeekness is much more: it is the virtue that moderates anger, which is a desire for vengeance. At first glance, we may not see the connection between meekness and piety, but further investigation reveals that the Lord's Prayer is a powerful quest for the meekness Our Savior commends.

RELIANCE ON GOD

The meek are those who surrender their desire "to win at all costs." When we ask God to let His kingdom come among us, we pray that all creation will be subject to His will. This means we must lay aside our personal notions of judgment and punishment, and leave these matters to God.

DETACHMENT

Meekness not only describes an attitude that ought to characterize our dealings with others, it describes the way by which we attain the things we desire. Because meekness governs our irascible impulses, it moderates our desire to lay hold of what we want by force. To pray for the coming of God's kingdom is to allow God to determine what we need; as our prayer becomes more perfect over time, we should no longer regret a lack of material "things" because our hope becomes more firmly fixed on the blessings God promises in heaven. ■

REFLECTIONS *(continued from page 1)*

O Virgin most kind, Mary, Mother of God, most loving counselor of those in distress, commend to your Son the soul of His servant (here name the individual for whom the prayer is offered), so that, because of your motherly intervention he (she) may be freed from the terrors of death, and may arrive, in your company, at his (her) longed-for home in heaven. Amen.

JUBILEE YEAR TO HONOR ST. PAUL

Pope Benedict XVI has announced a year of special devotion to mark the presumed 2,000th anniversary of the birth of St. Paul. A special feature of the year will be attention paid to the Catholic Church's ecumenical outreach. St. Paul's dramatic conversion from Judaism makes him an ideal patron to preside over the Church's conversations with the faithful from Christian and non-Christian religious communities.

St. Paul is also a role model for today's Catholic, challenged to proclaim and defend the truth of the Church's apostolic truth. The Holy Father remarked, "*as in the Church's beginnings, so today Christ needs apostles ready to sacrifice themselves. It needs witnesses and martyrs like St. Paul.*"

The Pauline Year will conclude on June 29, 2009, the Solemnity of Sts. Peter and Paul. The next issue of Light and Life will offer at least one book of devotions to draw attention to the great preacher of Christ's cross and the glories of God's kingdom.

FR. DUFFNER ANTICIPATES VOLUME II

Fr. Paul Duffner, the faithful apostle of the Rosary Confraternity, and the director of the Rosary Center for more than two decades, has put the finishing touches on the second volume of his reflections, *To Know Him, The Way, The Truth and The Life*. At this moment the Rosary Center is negotiating the book's publication, and we look forward to offering it to our friends, many of whom have been deeply touched by Fr. Duffner's deep devotion and sound scholarship.

We are seeking generous individuals to help underwrite the book's production costs. Anyone who contributes \$500.00 to this worthy project will receive a complimentary copy of the book, inscribed with the good wishes of Fr. Duffner.

A WORD OF THANKS!

Fr. Reginald Martin, Director of the Rosary Center, was recently called to Los Angeles, where his mother was scheduled to undergo surgery. Mrs. Martin is no longer young, and her doctors, although optimistic, were sensibly concerned. Fr. Reginald arrived at the hospital to learn that the surgery was far less invasive than the doctors anticipated. Two days later he was able to drive his mother home, just before he left for the airport to return to the Rosary Center. In the thank-you letters Fr. Reginald wrote before his mother's surgery, he asked our friends for their prayers; in the letters he has written since his return, he has begged prayers for his mother's complete recovery. Sincere thanks to all of you who have taken Mrs. Martin into your hearts, and remembered her in your prayers!

NEW FROM THE ROSARY CENTER

Since the Rosary Center inherited Albertus Magnus Media, the Dominicans' CD production ministry, response to the Center's CDs has been gratifying – occasionally overwhelming. Dominican friar, Fr. Brian Mullady, known to many from his frequent appearances on EWTN, has proven one of the more popular resources in the Rosary Center's catalog. We are pleased to offer two new productions by Fr. Mullady, *Healing of the Spirit* on DVD and *The Christ of the Gospels* on CD. We are certain these will make as deep an impact on our friends' spiritual lives as his many other works, which we are also proud to offer.

