



LIGHT & LIFE

VOICE OF THE ROSARY CENTER & CONFRATERNITY

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Fr. Dismas Sayre, O.P., *Director* Mar-Apr 2023, Vol 76, No 2 Western Dominican Province

A Rosary Resurrection (of sorts)

For various reasons, massive Rosary-related events have mostly gone by the wayside. A few groups still have resources and events, but these tend to be more local, or situated in local cells within parish groups. They *do* serve a wonderful spiritual purpose, but the question remains, *why not more?* Why not another large, public witness to our Faith and to the power of the Rosary? Regrettably, the days of Father Peyton's famous "Rosary Rallies" have but faded into a fond memory for many of our older prayer warriors.

It is somewhat to our shame as Dominicans, the traditional keepers and promoters of the Rosary, that we have allowed this to occur. As I often tell people, I don't care so much that people join our blessed and indulgenced Confraternity as much as I desire that people actually do pray the Rosary. But that does *not* imply that we cannot be doing more as Dominicans.

Motivated by so great a need, then, we, the various Rosary Confraternities throughout the United States, are joining together to promote our first Rosary Pilgrimage. Although the first couple of months have passed, it is *never* too late to join in our monthly prayer, on each 30th day of the month, to pray our Rosary Pilgrimage prayer, and finally, to join together in person for the inaugural Rosary Pilgrimage Mass at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, DC, on the 30th of September, the vigil for what will be Rosary Sunday in 2023. For those who receive this newsletter by mail, you will receive a Rosary Pilgrimage holy card. For those who receive this newsletter electronically, we would be most happy to send you a card. If you need a large number of cards for your parish, making absolutely sure that the pastor *explicitly* approves (we cannot stress this strongly enough), please let us know and we will send them to your parish.

As I write this, the schedule for the in-person event is still being finalized. However, we Dominicans have agreed on one thing: It shall be Dominican. You who have received our newsletters, or have read our beloved Fr. Paul Duffner, OP's wonderful books filled with his articles, know our spirituality and theology as



Dominicans, know well how Dominicans love Our Lady, how we strive to preach the word, in season or out of season, for the salvation of souls. *That* is what you will experience in our nation's capital.

So please consider this your formal, written invitation. Join your confraternity brothers and sisters throughout our nation in prayer, listen to the Dominican friars share their faith and their contemplation of the great gift that is Our Lady's Rosary. And even if you can't join us in person, join us in prayer for this event, that it may be the start of something beautiful, and something glorious, for the salvation of souls.

Nine Month Novena starting January 30, 2023. Pilgrimage to the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, Washington, DC, September 30, 2023, Vigil of Rosary Sunday. For more information on this event specifically, visit:

rosarypilgrimage.org

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Novena of Masses in honor of

Easter

April 9th -17th

TO BE OFFERED FOR YOUR INTENTIONS

THEOLOGY FOR THE LAITY

Echoes of the Resurrection

By Fr. Dismas Sayre, O.P.

I have always been curious about a wide variety of subjects. I'm not sure how the Youtube algorithm would interpret all the different kinds of videos that I like to watch -- "There's gotta be more than one *odd* person using this account!" Nope. It's just me, wanting to learn about everything that strikes me. I am sure that many of you share this trait.

What I love most isn't one particular thing, but the weave of the many different threads throughout the whole of history. That's why one of my favorite shows when I was growing up was BBC's "Connections," a show about how one invention would generate, directly, or more often indirectly, all sorts of consequences, most often unintended. The one thing that the show lacked, at least according to our Catholic world-view, was a "teleology," that is, a view that all things have some kind of intended end or purpose. While the show demonstrated successfully both the very small individual events and the overall picture, it never pulled back far enough to get the Christian point of view: that somehow, in some way, in spite of all human randomness, all things are leading toward our God who is the God of history and works through and within our human triumphs and failures.

This point of reference, and perhaps that my first degree was in history, means that I take these things somewhat personally, and I can't help wondering how some folks never liked or got into history. Everything *is* connected somehow, even if we don't see it at the moment. Our current anarchist craze to erase and ignore history and simply try to create a new world from scratch is a recipe for disaster, since it is the willful ignorance of the interconnectedness of the human family – whether we like our ancestors or not. It is an ironic attempt to avoid the errors of history by ignoring the errors of history, and therefore inevitably repeating these very same errors! We assume that things will be better this time because we are somehow better human beings. Notwithstanding all this, the Bible is relevant to us today, in spite of being written thousands of years ago, because while history and society changes, human nature, with Original Sin at its very core, does not.

For modern man, the Resurrection of Christ might be one of the things that have been willfully erased or destroyed from the contemporary mind. After all, how does the story of a dead Jew from two millennia ago affect me or my stock portfolio? Taking faith out of the picture for a second, this ignores the fact that this Nazarene and a small band of his followers managed to dramatically change the world, leading to events such as conversion of the Roman Empire, the rising of nation states due at least in part on the teachings of this Jewish rabbi, the collapse of which empires and states led to the monasteries

becoming the centers of study and knowledge, and the later creation of universities, the recovery of the sciences, the development of commerce, and eventually the forming of our 401k plans, and so forth, and so forth.

This contemporary viewpoint casts aside the "Resurrection Event." For the unbeliever, the Resurrection, even whether it happened or not, matters little. For the apostles and early disciples, however, it was of vital importance. For them, the Resurrection was *everything*. One need only read Saint Paul and see the effect of his encounter with the Resurrected Christ on the Road to Emmaus. For Saint Paul, this was not an incidental change; it was a total and complete conversion that transformed *him*, and thus through him, the world. The Resurrection *mattered*. "And if Christ be not risen again, your faith is vain, for you are yet in your sins," as he tells the Corinthians.

The original apostles were almost comically inept and cowardly before the Resurrection. Yet afterward, they became some of the most heroic, selfless, and zealous men ever, preaching a message, no longer of "What's in it for me?" (as we see them squabble in the Gospels a few times), but one of total self-sacrifice to the ends of the known world.

For us Christians today, we have been too affected by the world around us, as were the Corinthians (Ahem. See how little human nature changes?), and thus many of us have lost the original spirit of the Resurrection. "What do I get out of Mass?" is a common question. There is nothing wrong with wanting something out of the Mass, but then what? Does what we get out of the Mass change us? Where is the conversion? Where is the zeal? *Where is the love?* We too often fall into "What's in it for me?" mentality, the emotional consolations, the acquiring of grace and hoarding it, almost as if it were part of a 401k plan, the lack of true inner conversion and an encounter with Christ because we hold too firmly to the things of this world.

But Christ Himself put His Resurrection at the center of the preaching message for the primitive Church. "This is what I told you, He said, while I still walked in your company; how all that was written of me in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, must be fulfilled. Then He enlightened their minds, to make them understand the scriptures; So it was written, he told them, *and so it was fitting that Christ should suffer, and should rise again from the dead on the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. Of this, you are the witnesses.*" (Luke 24:44-48)

So let us look to the explanation of our brother St. Thomas Aquinas, who said that "It behooved Christ to rise again, for five reasons." (Summa Theologica, III, Question 53, Article 1).

First, he explains how it was all for the "commendation of Divine Justice, to which it belongs to exalt them who humble themselves for God's sake," and then he cites the Magnificat of Mary as the Scriptural basis, how God "casts down the mighty from their thrones and lifts up the lowly." (Luke 1:52) Truly, the story of Christ in His earthly life comes full circle in the Resurrection, from the song of Mary at the Incarnation to His Resurrection. Everything was leading to this event, but not until Christ illumined their minds would they be able to comprehend the meaning. The message of the Magnificat fulfilled in Christ serves as a kind of prophecy for our education and sanctification. Truly, He who humbled Himself, not only assuming a lowly human nature, but suffering the ultimate degradation and evil that man could commit, showed how that the power of God conquers all human pretense and sin. The Magnificat is not simply a "nice" song or even "just" beautiful poetry -- it is a revolutionary upheaval of the worldly order for the Kingdom of God. The Resurrection proves the thesis of the Magnificat.

Second, Christ's Godhead is proved through the Resurrection. Saint Paul, in one of his myriad complaints against the Corinthians says, "Must you have proof that it is Christ who speaks through me? In Him at least you will find no weakness; He still exerts His power among you. Weakness brought Him to the cross, *but the power of God brought Him life; and though it is in our weakness that we are united to Him, you will find us too, as he is, alive with God's power.*" (2 Corinthians 13: 3-4) In other words, whatever power we share as Christ's followers and disciples, it is through *His* power, of Him united in the Godhead, that acts in us. While Christ showed in various ways that He was God in His earthly journey, the final word and proof comes from the Resurrection as a historical and real event. Even Hades and the power of death could not contain Him. This was the big "Aha!" for the apostles, once they understood this, that no matter what the world threw at them, they would win in the end. "Who will pass sentence against us, when Jesus Christ, who died, *nay, has risen again*, and sits at the right hand of God, is pleading for us? Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will affliction, or distress, or persecution, or hunger, or nakedness, or peril, or the sword? For thy sake, says the scripture, we face death at every moment, reckoned no better than sheep marked down for slaughter. *Yet in all this we are conquerors*, through Him who has granted us his love. Of this I am fully persuaded; neither death nor life, no angels or principalities or powers, neither what is present nor what is to come, no force whatever, neither the height above us nor the depth beneath us, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which comes to us in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8:34-39)

Third, the Resurrection is for our hope. Saint Paul's exhortation to the Romans above likewise serves as a beautiful message of hope, saying, in effect, "Why are you despairing? Nothing, but NOTHING, can conquer Christ -- for HE conquers all things, and WILL conquer all things in and through you, even death." Saint Thomas Aquinas sees this as the fulfillment of the striking and hopeful prophecy of Job. "This at least I know, that one lives on who will vindicate me, rising up from the dust when the last day comes. Once more my skin shall clothe me, *and in my flesh I shall have sight of God*. I myself, *with my own eyes*; it will not be something other than myself that sees Him. *Deep in my heart is this hope reposed.*" (Job 19:25-27) This is not "seeing" God as an abstract concept -- this is experiencing God as we were meant to experience Him, and as we long for in the depths of our hearts, as a friend, face to face, and this hope has a name and a face - Jesus Christ. The late Pope Benedict XVI, in his encyclical on hope, *Spe Salvi*, notes right at the beginning that, "According to the Christian faith, 'redemption'—salvation—is not simply a given. Redemption is offered to us in the sense that we have been given hope, trustworthy hope, by virtue of which we can face our present: the present, even if it is arduous, can be lived and accepted if it leads towards a goal, if we can be sure of this goal, and if this goal is great enough to justify the effort of the journey." (*Spe Salvi*, 1) Note that hope has the characteristic of moving us toward some goal, toward the object of our hope. By its nature, hope is future-oriented, with a call to action and conversion *now*.

Fourthly, he adds, "to set in order the lives of the faithful." Here, Saint Thomas Aquinas cites Romans 6:4 (although I will expand here), "In our baptism, we have been buried *with Him*, died *like Him*, that so, just as Christ was raised up by his Father's power from the dead, *we too might live and move in a new kind of existence*. We have to be closely fitted into the pattern of his resurrection, as we have been into the pattern of his death; we have to be sure of this, that our former nature has been crucified with Him, and the living power of our guilt annihilated, so that we are the slaves of guilt no longer. Guilt makes no more claim on a man who is dead. And if we have died with Christ, we have faith to believe that we shall share his life. We know that Christ, now he has risen from the dead, cannot die any more; death has no more power over him; the death he died was a death, once for all, to sin; the life he now lives is a life that looks towards God. And you, too, must think of yourselves as dead to sin, and *alive with a life that looks towards God*, through Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 6:4-11) It is clear and imperative in Saint Paul's theology that the Resurrection is key. The death of sin is only the first step. The living in and through the Resurrection of Christ is what compels us to *actively* live as free sons and daughters of God, not free simply to avoid evil, but free for excellence, free to do the good, free to establish a beachhead for the Kingdom of God in this vale of tears. I think that too many Christians, though far from all, have seen Christ saving us from Hell

as *the* goal, when the real, final goal is to get us to Heaven, but by beginning the process of our sanctification and that of the world here and now. In other words, we can't just walk around moribund, when we are actually participating in the *fullness* of life of the Trinity with and in Christ. If we were to encapsulate Saint Paul's message here, it might well say, "You're alive – so act like it!"

Finally, Saint Thomas Aquinas tells us that it is for the completion of our salvation. Citing Romans 4:25, he writes that the death of Christ served to put an end to our sin (here assuming that his readers would understand references to Christ's obedience to the Father and other biblical references). The key part in this biblical citation being that He rose again *for* our justification. It is beyond this small newsletter to get into the doctrine of justification, but to summarize, it is a process of the infusion of God's grace, our response toward this gift of God's grace by faith, which remits sin and moves us away from sin. Here, we have to understand that for Aquinas, justification is not the end of our journey or process here, either, but that there is also a *continuing* process of sanctification that continues in the life of the faithful who have been justified. Once again, this continuing process of sanctification calls for continuing action and further motion of the soul toward God. We have the season of Lent, not just once in our lives, but every year, to help us recall the destructive power of sin in separating us from God, the need for *continuing* conversion and sanctification, which culminates gloriously in the Easter Vigil, with the Resurrected Christ trampling underfoot the dominion of Satan and the power of sin and death. Be attentive to the readings throughout the coming Easter Season, especially those first days after Easter. The Church in these readings, knowing the Resurrection, is not static, but dynamic, filled with the Spirit, going forth to confront the darkness of the world by testifying to the Light of Christ.

And all this leads us back to *you*. Yes, you. Somehow, somehow, you will have an effect on history, on those around you, and in turn, the world. Going back to that BBC show, "Connections," one of the central themes was that there was no way that any of these people who invented new machines, discovered scientific knowledge, or thought of new philosophies could ever imagine all the effects that their works would bring upon the world, for good or for evil. It is simply beyond the power of any individual to see the whole fabric of history and the threads of fate that run through it. One can only live in the present with some knowledge of the past. But you, you do know that Christ will triumph. You know that Christ once dead has risen and can no longer die again. By faith, you participate in this Risen Christ. You know all these things, and do you remain static? At the end of days, when all things are revealed, we will see just how much effect we have had on ourselves and others by leaving so many good deeds undone, by leaving so many words unsaid. In a similar way, perhaps to our great surprise, we will see all the good effects our good deeds had, rippling throughout history. So let us choose then, to live, truly, as an Easter people, a people of the Resurrection, a people that will change the world, and continue to change, the world. ■



DOMINICAN ROSARY PILGRIMAGE

Nine Month Novena starting January 30, 2023. Pilgrimage to the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, Washington, DC, September 30, 2023, Vigil of Rosary Sunday.

NOVENA PRAYER

God our Father, we thank you for the gift of your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we are adopted as your beloved sons

and daughters. At Pentecost you poured out the Holy Spirit upon Our Lady and the Apostles while they were at prayer. Pour out that same Holy Spirit upon us as we meditate upon the mysteries of Christ contained in the Most Holy Rosary. Enlighten our faith, strengthen our hope, and set us ablaze with love for you and our neighbor. Graciously grant us St. Dominic's own zeal for the salvation of souls. Bless the Dominican Rosary Pilgrimage. May it lead many souls to Jesus through Mary, so that we may know you and your saving power now and for all eternity. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen. Our Lady of the Rosary, pray for us! St. Dominic, pray for us!

Learn more at rosarypilgrimage.org

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