



LIGHT & LIFE

VOICE OF THE ROSARY CENTER & CONFRATERNITY

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Fr. Dismas Sayre, O.P., *Director* Sep-Oct 2024, Vol 77, No 5 Western Dominican Province

I Planted, Apollos Watered.

St. Paul, to prevent boasting and self-aggrandizement among the Corinthians, reminds them, that in the end, he and his co-laborers are as nothing in comparison to Him who is over all – God. Thus, he writes, “I planted, Apollos watered, but God caused the growth. Therefore, neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who causes the growth” (1 Cor 3:7). This is an excellent point to keep in mind as we move forward with our next phase.

By the time you receive this, we should have brought to fruition our 2nd annual Rosary Pilgrimage in that most beautiful National Basilica of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Washington, DC. But even just taking the *first* event in mind, I cannot but lavishly praise my fellow Dominicans in the Eastern US Province, the Province of St. Joseph, for their incredible work in organizing and pulling off this blessed and inspiring event. As St. Paul writes to those same stubborn Corinthians, “If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it; if one part is honored, all the parts share its joy” (1 Cor 12:26). I thus, and really, all the members of our holy confraternity, then, share in the joy of their achievement, as much as we share in the sorrow and suffering of our fellow Confraternity members when we pray.

This event is too wonderful, too blessed to keep to oneself in one location, however. At the event last year, I did meet a few people from other parts of the country beyond the Eastern seaboard, but they were relatively few. Like the March for Life and Walk for Life on opposite coasts, we need *something* that can reach a much broader area of our very expansive country. Thus, I have begun discussions with my superiors about extending this to the West Coast, within my own Dominican Order province’s boundaries – something that could reach those more locally hungry for our own Rosary Pilgrimage, overflowing with Dominican and Confraternity goodness and blessings.

It is still *far* too early to talk details. I have some ideas and thoughts floating around in my mind, but my job, mainly, *right now* is to plant the seed. Other Dominicans and layfolk will have to take up the watering and tending

and work with us. If we hold it next Fall, it would coincide most serendipitously with the 175th anniversary of the founding of our particular province of the Dominican Order, the Province of the Most Holy Name of Jesus; the full and formal canonization of some wonderful saints devoted to the Rosary; and the Jubilee Year of Hope 2025, in which the Holy Father asked us as a worldwide Confraternity to take part in. We can also build off the stunning success of the Eucharistic Congress that was recently held in Indianapolis. It is obvious that people are hungry, *spiritually* hungry, and we need to provide good, solid, spiritual food. But everything in God’s good time. As St. Paul says elsewhere, “If God is for us, who can be against us?” (Romans 8:31b).

For that reason, then, we would ask that whenever you are looking for some particular intentions to pray for, you join us in praying for this future event. It would be wonderful to connect some more faces to the names I receive online and through the postal system, and it would be a blessing to have a real meeting of all our fellow Confraternity members here on the West Coast and throughout the world. And of course, joining in prayer with all our Confraternity members worldwide as we come together to worship Our Lord under His Blessed Mother’s banner and with her Rosary in hand.

May our good and gracious God will it so.



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Novena of Masses in honor of

Our Lady Of The Rosary

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TO BE OFFERED FOR YOUR INTENTIONS

THEOLOGY FOR THE LAITY

Why Did God Make You?

By Fr. Dismas Sayre, O.P.

Baltimore Catechism (edition 4):

6 Q. Why did God make you? A. God made me to know Him, to love Him, and to serve Him in this world, and to be happy with Him forever in the next.

"To know" Him, because we must know of a thing before we can love it. A poor savage in Africa never longs to be at a game or contest going on in America, because he does not know it and therefore cannot love it. We see a person and know him; if he pleases us we love him, and if we love him we will try to serve him; we will not be satisfied with doing merely what he asks of us, but will do whatever we think might give him pleasure. So it is in regard to God. We must first know Him—learn who He is from our catechisms and books of instruction, but especially from the teaching of God's ministers, the Holy Father, bishops and priests. When we know Him, we shall love Him. If we knew Him perfectly, we should love Him perfectly; so the better we know Him the more we shall love Him. And as it is our chief duty to love Him and serve Him upon earth, it becomes our strict duty to learn here whatever we can of His nature, attributes, and holy laws. The saints and angels in Heaven know God so well that they must love Him, and cannot therefore offend Him.

This particular question has often been called "The" question and answer of the old Baltimore Catechism. If you remembered nothing else from that Catechism, you *really* needed to remember this. Why? Well, because of that very question, "Why?" To ask "why" is, in a sense, to ask what the purpose of some action or some thing is. The "why" question is the question that the natural sciences are not equipped to deal with. Science has become quite good at asking and probing as to the "what" and "how" of our marvelous natural world, going from the very heart of the atom to the very extremities of our cosmos, but science never really asks to "Well, why *is* there anything, instead of nothing?" There is no law to say that there *must* be something. The simplest thing would be for there to be nothing at all. Is there a real purpose or cause outside of the natural order? This ends up being for believers what we call God. This is something known to us, from at least the natural order. This basic argument is often called the "Argument from Design." If an advanced spaceship fell from the sky, and even if we could see no alien crew members inside, we would not think it as a strange asteroid, but as an abandoned craft made by an advanced space-faring civilization, which would lead us to all sorts of other questions, but we would all begin from the assumption that something else, something not-human made and designed this.

That is not to say that this is something magically

self-apparent to every person born. But it does seem to be something planted within our nature to seek God, or that which we believe is above us and above all things. I am not aware of any early civilization that was without *some* being or beings outside or above nature. There was always *some* creation myth, some explanation for why or how things came into being in their understanding of the cosmos. "Atheism" back then was not so much believing that there is *no* god, but in not believing in *all* the gods. It may seem strange to us today, but "atheism" was a charge against the early Christians, who did not seem to want to participate in the worship of all the gods of Roman society and the Roman Empire and instead seemed to deny the very existence of those civic gods.

The Catholic Church, however, has infallibly defined that "If anyone says that the one, true God, our creator and lord, cannot be known with certainty from the things that have been made, by the natural light of human reason: let him be anathema" (Canon 1, *On revelation*). Scripture argues as much, with St. Paul famously hearkening back to the Book of Wisdom when he proclaims that, "For the invisible things of him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made; his eternal power also, and divinity: so that they are inexcusable" (Romans 1:20). But this does require some heavy intellectual effort, in most cases, and we are each and all formed by the world and society around us. For someone who is born into a pagan, animistic viewpoint, the world is seemingly self-explanatory from his viewpoint, but it would still be possible for him to arrive at a more solid understanding of the One Creator, with enough work and understanding.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church adds that, "Man's faculties make him *capable* of coming to a knowledge of the existence of a personal God. But for man to be able to enter into *real* intimacy with him, God willed both to reveal himself to man and to give him the grace of being able to welcome this revelation in faith. The proofs of God's existence, however, can predispose one to faith and help one to see that faith is not opposed to reason" (35, *emphases mine*).

So, in other words, to go beyond the knowledge of some sort of ancient Greek "Unmoved Mover" to the fullness of Christian Faith, we need the gift of Revelation and of Faith. St. Thomas Aquinas states quite bluntly, for example, that "It is impossible to attain to the knowledge of the Trinity by natural reason" (*Summa Theologiae*, Ia, q 32). The same St. Paul that says that no one is beyond judgment because we all know in some way the natural law also states that, "Yet we do speak a wisdom to those who are mature, but not a wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age who are passing away.

Rather, we speak God's wisdom, mysterious, hidden, which God predetermined before the ages for our glory, and which none of the rulers of this age knew; for if they had known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory" (1 Corinthians 2:6). In this, St. Paul is speaking of *himself* as well. He was, as he says of himself, a kind of "super Jew," well-versed and trained in Old Testament, yet this intimate knowledge of Christ and the Holy Trinity did not come to him except from Divine Revelation and a direct experience and encounter with the living God. Like St. Paul, we do not come to know the living God through our own goodness, or our own worthiness, or our own smarts, but through the mercy and grace of God. The First Vatican Council, in the same section mentioned before, again infallibly states that, "If anyone says that a human being cannot be divinely elevated to a knowledge and perfection which exceeds the natural, but of himself can and must reach finally the possession of all truth and goodness by continual development: let him be anathema" (Canon 1, *On revelation*). To use the biblical phrase from the previous article, "I planted, Apollos watered, but God caused the growth. Therefore, neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who causes the growth" (1 Cor 3:7). Our duty as Christians, parents, clergy and religious, then, is to make sure this preparatory work is done and that we provide the right conditions for the Faith to flourish and educate others, but in the end, it's God's work.

But, why, then, don't all know Christ and the Most Holy Trinity? St. Paul instructs the Romans, "How then shall they call on Him, in whom they have not believed? Or how shall they believe Him, of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear, without a preacher?" (Romans 10:14). Pope St. Paul VI wrote in exceedingly strong terms, "Evangelizing is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church, *her deepest identity*. She exists *in order to evangelize*, that is to say, in order to preach and teach, to be the channel of the gift of grace, to reconcile sinners with God, and to perpetuate Christ's sacrifice in the Mass, which is the memorial of His death and glorious resurrection" (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 14, emphases mine). What is called "The Great Commission" at the end of the Gospel of Matthew is not to go out and run schools, not to go out and build clinics, not to go out and run for office, but to "go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19-20a). This Great Commission does not seem to have an expiration date, since Our Lord then adds, "And surely I am with you always, to very end of the age" (Matthew 28:20b).

This evangelization is not a merely intellectual exercise in doctrinal faith, as important as that is. At the very beginning of one of his Apostolic Exhortations, Pope Francis writes that, "The joy of the gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus. Those who accept his offer of salvation are set free from sin, sorrow, inner emptiness and loneliness. With Christ joy is constantly born anew" (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 1). It seems to me,

then, to be rather selfish to keep this joy to ourselves, this joy that feeds our hope, and enlivens our charity. And the proclamation of the Gospel does not limit its effects to the hearer. It is not like a medicine that only affects the patient and not the nurse administering it, rather, it is *for all* and *renews all* at the same time. "A renewal of preaching can offer believers, as well as the lukewarm and the non-practicing, new joy in the faith and fruitfulness in the work of evangelization. The heart of its message will always be the same: the God who revealed his immense love in the crucified and risen Christ. God constantly renews his faithful ones, whatever their age: "They shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not be faint" (Is 40:31). Christ is the "eternal Gospel" (Rev 14:6); he "is the same yesterday and today and forever" (Heb 13:8), yet his riches and beauty are inexhaustible. He is for ever young and a constant source of newness" (Ibid, 11). This may be why those religious orders and congregations which have abandoned their zeal for proclaiming the Gospel are the ones that have collapsed in numbers. And perhaps in abandoning our common missionary mission, we have deprived, then, not just the unbelievers, but *ourselves*, as a Church, of the joy of the Gospel! Little wonder so many Christians today fail to attract others to come to know the God that they supposedly know.

Challenges that are Ever Ancient, Ever New

While the earliest Church was certainly a Church of heroic, valiant saints, that was, at least in part, out of necessity. You could not have a weak faith and a shallow love and be willing to die, not just for God, not just for your fellow believers, but even for the same peoples who would be putting you and your family to death. It was a most demanding, risky faith, and yet, it grew, because those who lived the Faith had the power and conviction of the love of Christ to proclaim that message (cf 2 Cor 5:14-21). Now, the soil in which the Christians found themselves was not exactly what we might call excellent, fertile, ready-made soil. On the contrary, the world around them was often rather worldly and pleasure-seeking, which made for rather harsh soil. The Church may have begun among the pious Jews of the Holy Land, but it went out to some rather suspect and salacious locations. Corinth in the time of the New Testament was heir to a large group of cult prostitutes, whose "spiritual" descendants continued to ply their trade among the many merchants and sailors. Ephesus in those days was known more as a center for magic arts and especially focused around the temple of the Greek Goddess Artemis. In fact, St. Paul nearly caused a riot because he was so bad for business of the merchants selling religious goods to visitors (cf Acts 19). These were not mere stopovers, but actual, valuable, and important destination cities. St. Paul saw these as vital landing beaches for the assault on the world and its ruler, ripe for the Gospel. Ephesus was, of course, also to be the future home of St. John and the Blessed Mother as well.

But this is not to say that this was easy. St. Paul is not writing to these two cities nor spending so much time among them because the work was easy, but I imagine precisely because they *really* needed extra loving attention and correction. The point here is not to malign the ancient Ephesians and Corinthians, but to highlight that this was not a “Golden Age” of the Faith in these two locales, and the environments of these places provided their own challenges.

Let’s begin now with that Bible verse, “Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God” (Matthew 5:8). We live in time and place of not unprecedented sensuality, but of a world in where everything is everywhere readily available and procurable. One does not even have to go in public – we are flooded with pornography and advertisements for products that will satiate every bodily appetite or whim on our mobile phones. So many are addicted, not just to sex and food, but even just the notion of “excitement” and its consequent dopamine rush, with video games often programmed specifically to elicit this rush, not just as a challenge or casual diversion, in order to extract more and more funds from players. The pure of heart see God because chastity and purity are directed by nature toward the higher things. It is not to say that the lower things are evil in themselves, but that they tend to evil when they impede us from the higher things. In other words, the marital union of husband and wife is beautiful and part of God’s plan for the couple and for their children, so it cannot be bad in itself, but if we are focused on the passing pleasure alone, then we will quickly find ourselves focused *only* on the pleasure of the act alone, and lose sight of the human soul in the other person, turning love, real love, inward. It will “feel” like love to us, because love seeks the good in the other person, but all we have is a small part of the person, reducing the person to something that is focused, not on them, but on what the person does for us, or makes us feel. Chastity in marriage is not celibacy, but it is the ordering of one’s spousal love to focus on the beauty of the Sacrament of Matrimony and the holy vocation of being a father and mother. If our eyes are for everyone or everything, in truth, our eyes are for no one but ourselves, and certainly *not* for Christ.

St. Paul writes to the Corinthians in his later epistle, “For I am jealous of you with the jealousy of God, since I betrothed you to one husband to present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts may be corrupted from a sincere and pure commitment to Christ” (2 Corinthians 11:2-3) -- in essence, “Eyes up there, to Christ!”

Greed, or covetousness, is then, the attraction, or perhaps better put, *distraction* of material goods or monies from those higher things as well. Those things in themselves are generally morally neutral. Money is *not* the root of all evil (cf 1 Timothy 6:10), rather, the *love* of money is, because our love is directed away from our

God and neighbor. As we saw, the Ephesians were almost ready to kill St. Paul for killing their business, not being open to his preaching, that he was offering something of *much* greater value to them – the Gospel. Most of us know that famous phrase repeated in Psalms 14 and 53, “The fool hath said in his heart: There is no God.” The reason that these “fools” do not see or know God, though, is not an intellectual atheism, but the Hebrew for “fool” here, *nabal*, is closer to impious, or someone without moral or ethical guidelines. As these two psalms continue, it is clear that these are more “practical” atheists, who do not *want* to see God, because it would put an end to their sin or exploitation. Knowing God *can* be bad for business. But the wise merchant is the one who sells everything he has for that Pearl of Great Price, that is, the Kingdom of Heaven (cf. Matthew 13:45-46). If it is, as people claim, that we try to earn as much as we can so that we can be happy – then wouldn’t it make sense to try to be happy *forever*? What better deal can there be than that which Christ offers us, as we read in our Baltimore Catechism? I can think of no better long-term or higher-reward investment.

Questions 7 and 8 are somewhat related to the question we dealt with in this article, and so we will advance to question 9, “What must we do to save our souls?” for the next issue.

A GOOD PROBLEM TO HAVE!

We are blessed to announce that seven novice brothers recently made their First Vows, and nine have entered the Novitiate at St. Dominic’s Priory in San Francisco, CA. We are always grateful for your donations, and we depend on your bountiful prayers for many good and holy vocations to join us in spreading the Light of the Gospel and in promoting Our Lady’s Rosary.

Blessed be God!



If you are a young man interested in joining the Dominicans to work with us in this holy preaching mission, or if you know a potential good candidate, please visit our website at: opwest.org/vocations

[Image provided by Br. Michael James, OP]