



LIGHT & LIFE

VOICE OF THE ROSARY CENTER & CONFRATERNITY

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Fr. Dismas Sayre, O.P., Director Sept-Oct 2022, Vol 75, No 5 Western Dominican Province

New Priest at the Shrine Church



We give thanks to almighty God, and to you, for having supported our Dominican vocations through your prayer and donations. You have helped make our newest priest possible! Fr.

Joseph Selinger, O.P. hails from Vancouver, British Columbia, being ordained with two other fine young men for our Province on the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Here, he shares his personal experience of the Rosary.

When I was around 11 years old, I was baptized and became a Christian. My father was raised Catholic but fell away when he was a young man. My grandfather, a very devout Catholic, encouraged my father to have me baptized, but it was not until after my grandfather's death that my father returned to the Catholic faith and had me baptized.

My beginning in the Christian life came out of nowhere. One day, completely out of the blue, my parents told me that I would be baptized, and I remember strongly protesting and crying. My only contact with Christianity at that time was through the television show *The Simpsons*, and I thought that my parents wanted me to be like the children of the character Ned Flanders—naïve and a “goodie goodie,” not having any grit, but ridiculously passive and sheltered.

What changed my mind was seeing how much it meant to my parents. I could intuitively see that having me baptized was not like anything else they wanted me to do—there was something more intimate and personal about it for them. I trusted my parents, and thought that, if this is how they feel about the whole ordeal, it is probably for my benefit. So, I stopped my protest and was baptized.

As so often happens today, I fell away from the Catholic faith in my mid-teens. At the time, I thought that the Catholic faith was an obstacle to enjoying life and living it to the fullest, containing arbitrary rules that were at the expense of my happiness. I always had faith—I would have professed the Creed if you asked me to, but I generally cared little about religion.

In my late teens something changed. I never encountered an inspiring youth pastor or inspiring priest. I never went to a youth retreat and went away “set on fire” with the Spirit. What I experienced was a sudden influx of divine grace that seemed to come out of nowhere without warning. To this day it is one of two truly mystical experiences of my life. The other experience was more recently during my ordination, when the hands of the bishop came down on my head—my entire world changed in an instant in a complete and indescribable way. I am not prone to such religious experiences or an overactive imagination and generally not charismatic by natural disposition. So, when I say that it was a mystical experience, I am not a person who exaggerates—I have a strong skeptical disposition to such things.



MADONNA OF THE ROSARY
Simone Cantarini (1612–1648)

After my world was turned upside down in my late teens, my thoughts were the following: if I am going to be Catholic, if I am going to dedicate my life to God and the Church, then I am not going half-way. My attitude was and still is: go big or go home. So, I decided to go big and devour as much information about the Catholic faith as possible.

I knew as a Catholic I should pray the Rosary. I was instructed on how to pray it when I was in my first series of catechism classes after my baptism, but I forgot how

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THEOLOGY FOR THE LAITY

Incarnational Theology and the Rosary

By Fr. Dismas Sayre, O.P.

On Christmas Day, 2005, Pope Benedict XVI released his first encyclical, *Deus Caritas Est*, that is, “God is Charity,” or “God is Love.” On Christmas Day! Shouldn’t someone like the Holy Father be a little busy around Christmas, like any priest or bishop; too busy to be publishing an encyclical; not just AN encyclical, but his first encyclical, AND an encyclical touching on something that is such a cornerstone of the Christian faith? It’s almost as if he wanted to start from the beginning, with what was most important, Benedict XVI ever being the consummate teacher, the Holy Father would not have released it then specifically without cause. When you read the encyclical, you really begin to understand why.

Charity, or love, cannot be expressed institutionally, abstractly. Institutions cannot love. Only people, properly speaking, are capable of love. Love must be expressed personally. This is not to say that institutions are bad in themselves. Institutions, such as government, relief, or welfare agencies, can allow us the freedom to love more, and to do more. And in this, God sets the prime example: Not only is God love, but now, God is man. Love is expressed personally to us, LITERALLY, in the person, through the very flesh of the God-man Jesus Christ.

In a similar manner, I feel that we must also start from the beginning with the Holy Rosary. The world has suffered enough confusion one cannot simply presume a common level of good catechetics - such is the situation we find ourselves in today. St. Paul warned his successors in the ministry that *“there shall be a time, when they will not endure sound doctrine; but, according to their own desires, they will heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears: And will indeed turn away their hearing from the truth, but will be turned unto fables”* (2 Tim 4:3 DRA).

We often hear that particular scripture for the Solemnity of St. Dominic in the Dominican Order as an option. Which leads us to ask, “Well, why a rosary then, at the time of St. Dominic? Why not a rosary the first hundred years, or even the first thousand years of the Church?” Well, we know that in the times before St. Dominic, people did use beads, pebbles, flowers, their own fingers and whatnot to help count as they prayed. I’m getting to an age myself where I can get lost between two and three Hail Marys! Prayer ropes or proto-rosaries were not an innovation in themselves. It is thought that religious might have used 150 beads or knots as a kind of “Psalter” which they used in place of reciting the 150 Psalms of the Bible that choir monks who were literate enough would pray.

St. Dominic found himself fully immersed in a world that had rejected sound doctrine and began following teachings that would tickle its ears. For him, it was especially the Albigensian heresy, which denied the very goodness of Creation in matter, in spite of the scriptural

witness in Genesis that God created all things good, He saw that it was good, and not one thing did He call not good. This denial of the goodness of Creation led to several erroneous conclusions. First, that the Albigensian god could not have created Heaven and Earth (matter being the work of the Evil One), and second, that Jesus Christ was not born of the Blessed Virgin Mary, did not suffer and die, and thus was not buried, nor rose from the dead, but on the contrary, He simply *appeared* as having flesh. It naturally follows, that there would never be a resurrection of the body, for if the body were evil, why would a good god resurrect it? This mirrors an error we often encounter even today, that in Heaven we will be purely spiritual beings forever, like the angels.

Thus, in the days of St. Dominic, the time was ripe for a devotion like the Rosary as we know it to come into the life of the Church, especially where the goodness of matter was in question. The very simple fact that we use beads tells us something – that we are not spiritual beings alone. We have a soul, and the soul is created good, but the soul interacts or interfaces with the world and creation through the human senses. We may have different aptitudes, preferences, and styles for learning: for me, writing or typing out what I need to learn helps make it more “real” for me as I learn it and go over the material again. Getting practice with an actual musical instrument helps me learn the music more than simply knowing intellectually the notes. The beads help me, then, to put the prayer into my head and my heart more than if I were simply reciting without engaging more of my human body.

There are some things we understand or know by instinct, but even then, instinct must act through the body. Truly directly-infused spiritual knowledge is a rare thing, indeed. When we hear stories of the saints in mystic ecstasy, they may appear to be “out” of the body, but the body is responding in part to the soul being overwhelmed. One does not have an ecstatic vision in the soul, with the mind and body going on happily about their business elsewhere, washing dishes in the kitchen, for example.

So then, the soul is never truly disembodied, at least not until death separates it from the body for a time, and even then, we do not consider ourselves complete until we are reunited with our bodies in the Resurrection. The Resurrection of Christ is a sign of this ultimate reality for us, which is one reason why St. Paul insists that Christ was truly risen from the dead, *in the flesh* (see 1 Cor 15). In fact, at one point St. Paul cleverly sets the Pharisees, who believed in the resurrection of the body, against the Sadducees, who did not believe in the resurrection of the body, when he insists that he is being put to trial for believing in the resurrection of the dead (Acts 23:6).

The Mysteries lead us into contemplating the very goodness of Jesus Christ in the flesh, and His very working out of our salvation in the flesh. His Incarnation (literally, “enfleshment”) at the Annunciation is the first tangible sign of God dwelling among us personally, showing us His love personally in a way that would be comprehensible to His creatures. His appearance to St. Elizabeth and St. John the Baptist in her womb, and their subsequent reaction, confirms this love made flesh. The Nativity IS Emmanuel, “God with us,” now being no mere abstraction but dwelling in visible flesh. St. John insists on this, “*That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the word of life*” (1 John 1:1). The Presentation at the Temple and the Finding of the Child Jesus situate Him not simply in the human flesh, but in the human family, while retaining His very Godhood.

The Sorrowful Mysteries lead us to meditate on Christ suffering, in the flesh, for love for us; dying, in the flesh, for love of us; and rising again, in the flesh, for love of us and for our salvation. The Glorious Mysteries show us that Christ did not simply rise again as a memory in our hearts and nothing more, for that would mean that He remained dead, but that He truly rose in the flesh, ascended in the flesh, and His Blessed Mother then followed Him in glory, as the first non-divine, human person to experience our finality in the flesh in Heaven.

The Mysteries of the Rosary could vary from place to place and time to time. For example, St. John Paul II did not pull the Luminous Mysteries out of pure imagination, but out of a previous devotion. They show Christ doing His public ministry in the flesh, culminating in the gift of the Most Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist -- His Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity.

Some might protest that the Mysteries are a later invention, yet even if you don’t have the Mysteries, you still have the first part of the Hail Mary: “*Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.*” Mary – the mother, in the flesh, of the God made flesh, the very fruit of her womb. The angel esteems Mary full of grace and blessed, not among fellow angels, not among fellow spirits, but among women as a woman.

The Rosary teaches, by drilling it into us, that God loves you! You, singular, in the flesh – not as some abstract singular example of humanity) and so that you could understand that He loves you, He expressed it in a way you can comprehend, He became man, and He took on our flesh and nature. And to show us that a true life of grace is possible with Him, He gave the perfect disciple, the Blessed Virgin Mary, who followed Him to the end, in the flesh. The life of grace is thus possible for you in the flesh, as it was lived out and fully realized in her. Jesus Christ did assume an angelic nature: as God, He assumed a human nature, our human nature. “*For to which of the angels hath He said at any time, Thou art my Son, today have I begotten Thee? And again, I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to me a Son?*” (Hebrews 1:5 DRA). Jesus Christ thus heard with His own human

ears the same way you hear the prayers; He preached the Good News with the same kind of human lips and lungs that you use; and He felt the world around Him with His human hands the same way you feel those beads with your hands.

It is truly wondrous -- parents, do you remember when your child was born? You loved your unborn child, but still, the child was in many ways something abstract. You worried about how you were going to raise him. You worried about what kind of school you could get her into, or if you could make a better life for her. For us men, especially, who do not feel the unborn child growing within, children remain somewhat of an abstract idea when it comes to these kinds of worries. And then, the child is born. Your world just became a lot smaller. Your world became that child. Everything you did then focused on that child. But as for the child, her world just became a whole lot bigger. Those muddled voices now have flesh, and those people behind those voices will now teach her everything.

In the Incarnation of Christ, those perspectives switch. For Jesus, the Second Person of the Trinity, infinite and uncontainable God, now becomes a miniscule part of His Creation, with His Creation. But for those who encountered Christ in the flesh, their world now opened up to incredible possibilities through a life of grace and participation in life of the Holy Trinity. That muddled voice of God, that distant, infinite God, just took on flesh.

This is why, I believe, the Mysteries focus on Jesus Christ and the Blessed Virgin Mary, in the flesh, beginning with the Incarnation and ending with Mary enthroned in Heaven – because these are the Mysteries of our Faith that are most “relevant” to us as men, and these Mysteries place Christ firmly in our midst. A rosary mindset helps to counter various heresies and traps that our modern minds can easily fall into time and again. This is not a God that we can relegate to a mere literary character or fable, but as the One entering into human history to redeem us.

But, can praying the Rosary help *others*? A common critique against the Rosary is that it is simply a pious practice that remains with the little old ladies or nuns in the pews; that it has no tangible effect on the world. Well-meaning Catholics can sometimes sound like some of the more strident atheists, who rage every time someone offers their “thoughts and prayers” as doing nothing. A Catholic who denies the power of prayer would become what Pope Benedict XVIth termed “a practical atheist.” I know of no saint that was a pure functionary in the works of charity, but would always be grounded first in the power of prayer. “*How often I failed in my duty to God, because I was not leaning on the strong pillar of prayer,*” St. Teresa of Avila, that great powerhouse of reform, tells us.

This is where that “Pope of the Rosary,” Leo XIII, can aid us. In one of his rosary encyclicals, *Laetitia Sanctae* (Sacred Joy – On Commending Devotion to the Rosary), after counting the growth of the Rosary Confraternity throughout the world as one of his great joys, shares his deepest conviction “*that the Rosary, if devoutly used, is bound to benefit not only the individual but society at large*” (*Laetitia Sanctae*, 3).

The Joyful Mysteries for him help counter the “dislike of poverty” that had grown in society. He does not advocate that we do nothing about material poverty, but that we truly remain poor in spirit, avoiding the pitfalls of class struggles and envies that threatened to tear human society and even the human family apart, which are quite evident in our own days. Truly, we see St. Joseph the Worker with the Holy Family as the core of the Joyous Mysteries, and by meditating on their example, and of Jesus’ own example in not disdain human labor or service and sacrifice for the family as beneath Him. In that School of Love that is the Holy Family, we should grow in love, beginning with our own families, and radiating outward toward the human family at large.

The Sorrowful Mysteries bring to light the all-too human “repugnance to suffering.” Meditating on these Mysteries puts us on the same “Way of the Cross” as Our Lord, walking with Him, and embracing suffering, not for its own sake, but for the sake of others, for the sake of love. He gives strength to all of us who suffer great and little martyrdoms alike for truth and justice, that we may always walk forward, and that we may always walk with those who suffer, as our Blessed Mother did.

Finally, the Holy Father speaks of the Glorious Mysteries as being a remedy for the societal ill of “forgetfulness of the future.” Pope Leo XIII observed that this is something often thrown in the face of Christians, that in thinking of Heaven as our “future homeland,” we somehow become less patriotic, or less concerned with the troubles of this world. He counters that, *“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”* (LS 12). Perhaps anticipating the modern ecological movement, he adds, *“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”* (ibid).


It is modern man, that in being forgetful of his true future, tends to center upon himself more. For if we live for ourselves and our time, what is there to work for or toward? Or, in focusing on one aspect of the ecological problem, we ignore the entire human aspect, as if our treatment of others, perhaps of our political adversaries, or especially of the poor in remote lands, were something not to be involved in the calculus of our political policies for a cleaner or more just world.

Those Glorious Mysteries, then, are forward-looking -- to a New Heavens and a New Earth, yes, but the Christian does not get there without working out his salvation in fear and trembling (see Philippians 2:12). *“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.” (LS, 15)

It is worth noting that all this was not the counsel of a pious pontiff locked away in an ivory tower, but the Father of Modern Social Justice (see *Rerum Novarum*), and great friend of the poor and the worker, leading the charge against societies that had forgotten God and sought to exploit man, whether for a corporation or a godless state. May his vision, then, come to fruition!

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. (Laetitia Sanctae, 15). ■

	<p>In your charity, please pray for our dearly departed Office Manager, Cecelia Hoesly, who passed away after a long fight with leukemia on August 10th.</p> <p>She was our behind-the-scenes powerhouse, also assisting Fr. Duffner greatly in his old age. A devout lay Dominican and beloved CCD teacher, she was a Rosary prayer warrior until the end, doing all for love of God and His Blessed Mother, in the image of St. Dominic.</p> <p>May her soul, and the soul of all our departed Confraternity members, rest in peace.</p>
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New Priest... (Continued from page 1)

to do it. So, I did what any teenager my age would do—I looked on the Internet.

I found a website with all the information on how to pray the Rosary. What was this website? It was the website of our Rosary Center. I owe the Rosary Center my devotion to the Most Holy Rosary, a devotion that nourished my spiritual life and led to my priestly vocation.

I am a fruit of the Rosary Center—a fruit of all your prayers and tireless work. I pray that this Holy Rosary, which I learned to pray from our ministry, will obtain for me the graces to be a good priest for the people of Holy Rosary Parish. ■

NEW OFFERING FROM THE ROSARY CENTER

Modern psychology is often a very problematic area for Catholics. Post-Freudian psychology is based on a mistaken idea that moral laws lead to neuroses. It argues that we must be freed from morality in order to become psychologically whole.

In this powerful and reassuring new book, *ST. THOMAS AQUINAS RESCUES MODERN PSYCHOLOGY*, Fr. Brian Mullady, O.P., examines the nature of a healthy Christian emotional life, and ultimately provides the Catholic answer to the theories of Sigmund Freud. Available online - RosaryCenterStore.org