

Encouragement Encouragement

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Mother of Mercy. Queen of the Rosary

October is the month that heralds the coming of winter and a month when saints tumble out at us with special feast days. There is St Francis of Assisi, St Faustyna, St Thérèse of Lisieux, St Teresa of Avila (500th anniversary) Blessed John Henry Newman, SS. Simon and Jude, all well known to us. Each with their own special charism and grace. But quietly, in the silence that our Lady Mary knew we have the feast of her as the Queen of the Holy Rosary. There are almost no saints that have not had the rosary or devotion to her as the essential part of their prayer. Over the centuries many titles have accrued to her and we have only to look at the Litany to her asking for her intercession to have a glimpse at some. In this coming jubilee year of reminding us of the Mercy of God, starting in December on her Feast day, (8th) as The Immaculate, born without original sin, we are reminded of her maternal role also. She is our mother and as a mother does, she tries to beg for all that is good for us. She as a merciful mother has pity on her children.

There are many ways to pray the rosary and many mysteries in every sense of the word. Some concentrate on the Joy filled things that she experienced with Jesus, such as his birth. There are the so called 'Glorious' Mysteries that reminds us of the great events of Jesus' life and those of His Mother and the Sorrowful, the sorrows of His Passion. More recently St. Pope John Paul gave us more reflections on the key incidents of Jesus life in Mysteries of Light and especially those that tell us about the living of the Gospel. She was Jesus' mother and wants us to follow her son utterly and acknowledge him as the King of our hearts and minds. God's Mercy extends throughout generations and He is always faithful. So too is Mary faithful to her Son and in her role as a mother who leads us to her Son. It is not always easy for everyone to pray the Rosary. This is partly because some people find the repetitive

prayer difficult, sometimes because people find that it is time consuming, yet others do not fully grasp the scriptural nature of the prayers or find it difficult to meditate. Yet in some ways it is the simplest of all prayers and reminds us of the simplicity of Mary who simply said 'yes' to God and bore a Son who saved us. If we just ponder on the words of the 'Hail Mary' we have the essence of why we turn to her and ask for her intercession.

In recent times there has been a renewal of an interest in the Rosary especially at the many apparitional sites, Lourdes, Fatima, Medjugorje etc. and pleaded for by our Mother. Many would confess that they had lost interest or lapsed in their appreciation of it and its value. **Pope Francis** has this to 'own' and said the following:

"Ten years ago I read about Our Lady's request at Fatima that we say a daily rosary. At first I flinched at the notion of saying one every day. I thought it impossible; I'd never have the time, the concentration or the patience to meditate on five decades each day. But it got easier. Now, even if I have worked for 12 hours, and struggle to fit in the five decades, I still manage it, even if I forfeit sleep or a social occasion or have to eat a late dinner and pray the rosary at the same time".

The Pope's confidence in Our Lady developed because of two key personal awakenings that happened in the mid-1980s. In 1985 he attended a rosary that was being led by St John Paul II. The sight of the Polish Pope on his knees greatly moved him. He did some acute soul-searching as to how much he trusted Our Lady, and he later reflected: **"I became aware of the density of the words of the Mother of Guadalupe to St Juan Diego: 'Don't be afraid, am I not perhaps your mother?'"**

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He then goes on to say that he encourages all to pray the *rosary* “*they will never be conquered by misfortune*”. *I often tell friends of mine to say a rosary when they are in-between jobs, stumped with a huge bill or they have been reminded of their student debt*”. He also, at a time of personal struggle as ‘Padre’ Bergoglio discovered the painting of Our Lady ‘Untier of Knots’ in Germany and this greatly encouraged him. Painted by J Schmidtner in the 17th century to commemorate an answer to a marriage problem of a nobleman, he took the devotion back to Argentina with him and today pleads for her to untie the knots that cause the world to stumble and fall. For Pope Francis, the knots represent the sins that separate us from God, and Our Lady, in untying them, brings us closer to God. As the Pope Francis has said: “*Mary, whose ‘yes’ opened the door for God to undo the knot of the ancient disobedience, is the Mother who patiently and lovingly brings us to God, so that he can untangle the knots of our soul by His Fatherly mercy.*”



But what about us? Do we say that’s all very well but he is the Pope, a holy man. Many ordinary people have found great solace in the rosary and as Mary our Mother who looks with pity on her children, It is at a time of pain that I found many ways of praying the rosary, sometimes only one decade. Other times leading to greater prayer on an aspect of Our Lady’s life and that of Jesus and their unique relationship.

There are endless reflections possible on the life of Jesus and Mary and using scripture to highlight these. There is room to reflect on the aspects of Our Lady’s own life. One such is the Dolours or Sadness’s of her life and concentrate on these: *The prophecy of Simeon, The flight into Egypt, The loss of Jesus for three days, The meeting on the way to Calvary, The taking down of Jesus from the Cross and the Burial of Jesus*. Similarly there is the Rosary dedicated to the Tears of Our Lady.

In reflecting on all these and others it occurred to me that we tend to forget that there were challenging and difficult parts of Our Lady’s life but that showed both her valour and courage and may be suitable for our time. The Mysteries of Light brought us through Jesus’ life and his actions and so too we can look at Mary’s life, for though a woman of silence she was clearly involved with Jesus all the way through to His death and dealt with many issues that perhaps are those of today. While reflecting on Mary’s journey we might be encouraged to seek her guidance and help. If we know that someone has trodden the path that we have to tread we are more willing to ask for help and advice or support from them. This is obviously true about the

lives of saints and especially the Mother of ourselves and Jesus himself.

We can pick any incident in the life of Our Lady and see how she had to endure and survive that time, The following are some of perhaps less considered aspects of her Journey.

The Birth of Mary... her parents and home, Joachim and Anna who were to be the grandparent of Jesus.

The Presentation of Mary in the temple... What did that mean in terms of her relationship with her parents at an early stage and her early prayer life?

Betrothal/ Engagement to Joseph and all that this entailed and the birth of Jesus. The consequences of her ‘yes’!

Journey through to Egypt and escape from persecution. Resettlement in a foreign land, a new language and fears. Loss of work for Joseph? Resettlement in Nazareth. Seeing

Jesus grow up and then start His public ministry. Loss of contact and concern. “Your mother and brothers are outside looking for you”.

At the foot of the Cross. How did she endure what she saw? How did she keep hoping and lay His body down after His death.?

At the end of the Rosary we pray the Hail Holy Queen, *Mother of mercy* for that is what she is...Maybe we could pray for all the people who suffer as she did in our time and especially those who are young...Maybe let us open our lives to the strength of Jesus’ love for us.

Halina Holman

‘Hail Holy Queen Mother of mercy, hail our life our sweetness and our hope. To you do we cry poor banished children of Eve to you do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this vale of tears. Turn, most gracious advocate your eyes of mercy towards us and after this our exile show unto us the fruit of your womb, Oh Clement, Oh loving, oh sweet Virgin Mary.

Feast Days in October.

1st St Thérèse of Lisieux

(Sunday 4th St Francis of Assisi).

5th St Faustyna of the Blessed Sacrament.

7th Our Lady of the Rosary.

9th Blessed John Henry Newman

15th St Teresa of Avila

19th St John de Brébeuf and Isaac Jogues and Companions 28th St. Simon and Jude

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