

SUPERIORE ANNO

ON THE RECITATION OF THE ROSARY

Encyclical of Pope Leo XIII promulgated on August 30, 1884.

To All Our Venerable Brethren the Patriarchs, Primates, Archbishops, and Bishops of the Catholic World in the Grace and Communion of the Apostolic See.

Venerable Brethren, Health and Apostolic Benediction.

Last year, as each of you is aware, We decreed by an Encyclical Letter that, to win the help of Heaven for the Church in her trials, the great Mother of God should be honored by the means of the most holy Rosary during the whole of the month of October. In this We followed both Our own impulse and the example of Our predecessors, who in times of difficulty were wont to have recourse with increased fervor to the Blessed Virgin, and to seek her aid with special prayers. That wish of Ours has been complied with, with such a willingness and unanimity that it is more than ever apparent how real is the religion and how great is the fervor of the Christian peoples, and how great is the trust everywhere placed in the heavenly patronage of the Virgin Mary. For Us, weighed down with the burden of such and so great trials and evils, We confess that the sight of such intensity of open piety and faith has been a great consolation, and even gives Us new courage for the facing, if that be the wish of God, of still greater trials. Indeed, from the spirit of prayer which is poured out over the house of David and the dwellers in Jerusalem, we have a confident hope that God will at length let Himself be touched and have pity upon the state of His Church, and give ear to the prayers coming to Him through her whom He has chosen to be the dispenser of all heavenly graces.

2. For these reasons, therefore, with the same causes in existence which impelled Us last year, as We have said, to rouse the piety of all, We have deemed it Our duty to exhort again this year the people of Christendom to persevere in that method and formula of prayer known as the Rosary of Mary, and thereby to merit the powerful patronage of the great Mother of God. In as much as the enemies of Christianity are so stubborn in their aims, its defenders must be equally staunch, especially as the heavenly help and the benefits which are bestowed on us by God are the more usually the fruits of our perseverance. It is good to recall to memory the example of that illustrious widow, Judith -- a type of the Blessed Virgin -- who curbed the ill-judged impatience of the Jews when they attempted to fix, according to their own judgment, the day appointed by God for the deliverance of His city. The example should also be borne in mind of the Apostles, who awaited the supreme gift promised unto them of the Paraclete, and persevered unanimously in prayer with Mary the Mother of Jesus. For it is indeed, an arduous and exceeding weighty matter that is now in hand: it is to humiliate an old and most subtle enemy in the spread-out array of his power; to win back the freedom of the Church and of her Head; to preserve and secure the fortifications within which should rest in peace the safety and weal of human society. Care must be taken, therefore, that, in these times of mourning for the Church, the most holy devotion of the Rosary of Mary be assiduously and piously observed, the more so that this method of prayer being so arranged as to recall in turn all the mysteries of our salvation, is eminently fitted to foster the spirit of piety.

3. With respect to Italy, it is now most necessary to implore the intercession of the most powerful Virgin through the medium of the Rosary, since a misfortune, and not an imaginary one, is threatening -- nay, rather is among us. The Asiatic cholera, having, under God's will, crossed the boundary within which nature seemed to have confined it, has spread through the crowded shores of a French port, and thence to the neighboring districts of Italian soil. -- To Mary, therefore, we must fly -- to her whom rightly and justly the Church entitles the dispenser of saving, aiding, and protecting gifts -- that she, graciously hearkening to our prayers, may grant us the help they besought, and drive far from us the unclean plague.

4. We have therefore resolved that in this coming month of October, in which the sacred devotions to Our Virgin Lady of the Rosary are solemnized throughout the Catholic world, all the devotions shall again be observed which were commanded by Us this time last year. -- We therefore decree and make order that from the 1st of October to the 2nd of November following in all the parish churches (*curialibus templis*), in all public churches dedicated to the Mother of God, or in such as are appointed by the Ordinary, five decades at least of the Rosary be recited, together with the Litany. If in the morning, the Holy Sacrifice will take place during these prayers; if in the evening, the Blessed Sacrament will be exposed for the adoration of the faithful; after which those present will receive the customary Benediction. We desire that, wherever it be lawful, the local confraternity of the Rosary should make a solemn procession through the streets as a public manifestation of religious devotion.

5. That the heavenly treasures of the Church may be thrown open to all, We hereby renew every Indulgence granted by Us last year. To all those, therefore, who shall have assisted on the prescribed days at the public recital of the Rosary, and have prayed for Our intentions -- to all those also who from legitimate causes shall have been compelled to do so in private -- We grant for each occasion an Indulgence of seven years and seven times forty days. To those who, in the prescribed space of time shall have performed these devotions at least ten times -- either publicly in the churches or from just causes in the privacy of their homes--and shall have expiated their sins by confession and have received Communion at the altar, We grant from the treasury of the Church a Plenary Indulgence. We also grant this full forgiveness of sins and plenary remission of punishment to all those who, either on the feast day itself of Our Blessed Lady of the Rosary, or on any day within the subsequent eight days, shall have washed the stains from their souls and have holily partaken of the Divine banquet, and shall have also prayed in any church to God and His most holy Mother for Our intentions. As We desire also to consult the interests of those who live in country districts, and are hindered, especially in the month of October, by their agricultural labors, We permit all We have above decreed, and also the holy Indulgences gainable in the month of October, to be postponed to the following months of November or December, according to the prudent decision of the Ordinaries.

6. We doubt not, Venerable Brethren, that rich and abundant fruits will be the result of these efforts, especially if God, by the bestowal of His heavenly graces, bring an added increase to the fields planted by Us and watered by your zeal. We are certain that the faithful of Christendom will hearken to the utterance of Our Apostolic authority with the same fervor of faith and piety of which they gave most ample evidence last year. May our Heavenly Patroness, invoked by us through the Rosary, graciously be with us and obtain that, all disagreements of opinion being removed and Christianity restored throughout the world, we may obtain from God the wished for peace in the Church. -- In pledge of that boon, to you, your clergy, and the flock entrusted to your care, We lovingly bestow the Apostolic Benediction.

Given in Rome, at St. Peter's, the 30th of August, 1884, in the Seventh Year of Our Pontificate.