

The Holy Rosary and a Marian Age

Tradition (not Sacred Tradition) has it that the holy rosary was given to the Church by our Holy Mother through St Dominic. St Dominic was from Spain, born around 1170 and died around 1221. He was a contemporary of St Francis of Assisi and, in fact, the two of them were friends. St Dominic was, of course, the founder of “The Order of Preachers” (abbreviated O.P), which are commonly called the Dominicans. At the time of Dominic there was an entrenched heresy, largely in southern France, called the Albigensian heresy which held that a “good deity” (or god) created the spirit world and an evil deity created the material world. Believing anything material to be evil, then, led to practices such as refraining from marriage and even suicide amongst the Albigensians. Dominic had a holy desire to relieve the Albigensians of this false belief. He had little success, though, through preaching and teaching. St Dominic was, of course, very pious and humble and he pleaded with our Lord for His help. It was then that our Holy Mother appeared to St Dominic and gave him the Holy Rosary as a “tool” to defeat this heresy. After this, St Dominic found much greater success in converting Albigensians, and the Dominicans, with the approval of the Church, spread the practice of the Rosary throughout the Catholic world.

In the 1500’s, Pope St Pius V promulgated the memorial of Our Lady of the Rosary (October 7). Muslims had been seeking to invade Europe and had made some inroads. After a number of small battles and small inroads, the Ottoman (Muslim) Empire assembled a great fleet of naval ships, set to invade Europe. They set sail from the Greek city of Lepanto – the Venetian (Italian) name for the Greek city of Naupactus. A smaller Catholic fleet, comprised largely (though not solely) of Spaniards had set sail to prevent the invasion. The ensuing battle, which occurred in a gulf near Greece, is now called the Battle of Lepanto. Pope St Pius V had asked all Catholics to pray the Rosary, seeking the intercession and protection of our Holy Mother. When the smaller Catholic fleet was victorious, thus largely halting Muslim invasion of Europe altogether, Pope Pius attributed the victory to our Holy Mother and established the memorial of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary. We might recall that our Holy Mother identified herself as “Our Lady of the Rosary” at Fatima, thus making it especially relevant to our own times.

There is, of course, quite a lot that can be said about the Holy Rosary, but here I would like to simply present what are called: “**The 15 Promises of the Rosary.**” These were given, by Mary, to St Dominic, repeated to Blessed Alan de la Roche, and approved by the Church. They can be trusted. They are as follows:

1. Those who faithfully serve me by the recitation of the Rosary shall receive signal graces.
2. I promise my special protection and the greatest graces to all those who shall recite the Rosary.
3. The Rosary shall be a powerful armor against hell. It will destroy vice, decrease sin, and defeat heresies.
4. The recitation of the Rosary will cause virtue and good works to flourish. It will obtain for souls the abundant mercy of God. It will withdraw the hearts of men from the love of the world and its vanities, and will lift them to the desire of eternal things. Oh, that souls would sanctify themselves by this means.
5. The soul which recommends itself to me by the recitation of the Rosary shall not perish [go to hell].
6. Those who recite my Rosary devoutly, applying themselves to the consideration of its sacred mysteries, shall never be conquered by misfortune. In His justice, God will not chastise them; nor shall they perish by an unprovided death, i.e., be unprepared for heaven. Sinners shall convert. The just shall persevere in grace and become worthy of eternal life.
7. Those who have a true devotion to the Rosary shall not die without the sacraments of the Church.
8. Those who faithfully recite the Rosary shall have, during their life and at their death, the light of God and the plenitude of His graces. At the moment of death, they shall participate in the merits of the saints in paradise.
9. I shall deliver from purgatory those who have been devoted to the Rosary.
10. The faithful children of the Rosary shall merit a high degree of glory in heaven.

11. By the recitation of the Rosary you shall obtain all that you ask of me.
12. Those who propagate the holy Rosary shall be aided by me in their necessities.
13. I have obtained from my Divine Son that all the advocates of the Rosary shall have for intercessors the entire celestial court during their life and at the hour of their death.
14. All who recite the Rosary are my beloved children and the brothers and sisters of my only Son, Jesus Christ.
15. Devotion for my Rosary is a great sign of predestination.

We will get some “cards” with these promises and set them in the back of the church at each parish. These are magnificent promises, with perhaps the most striking being #14. Can anything greater be had? Notice that our Mother says: who *devoutly* says the Rosary – so be careful not to just rattle off a bunch of words as fast as possible. Strive to be recollected.

Pope Leo XIII, who was pope in the later part of the 1800’s and into the early 1900’s, was a great proponent of Mary and the Rosary. In one of his encyclicals he said: **“This devotion, so great and so confident, to the august Queen of Heaven, has never shone forth with such brilliancy as when the militant Church of God has seemed to be endangered by the violence of heresy spread abroad, or by an intolerable moral corruption, or by the attacks of powerful enemies.”** Does this not seem more than applicable to our own times? Let us follow this with an observation from Bishop Sheen, who said he believes that we have entered a Marian age. This would seem to be a well-founded speculation with the emphasis on Mary in the Second Vatican Council, the great Marian devotion of popes over the last century or so (especially Pope St John Paul II), a renewed emphasis on the Rosary, and the many great Marian apparitions over the last century or so.

“I believe we are in a Marian age.” There are many questions and implications that could be pursued with this observation, and undoubtedly with great benefit. But perhaps here we might offer a little speculation on the question of: if it is our Lord’s will that this time be a specifically Marian age, why? What can be drawn out of that? One of the great heresies (false teaching, false belief) of our time seems to be what might be called, for lack of better term, “softness.” This does not mean we should have some sort of hardness or harshness or lack of compassion within us. Rather, the core of this heresy goes something like this: come here (to the Church, to Jesus, however it’s phrased) and join us and it will be all smiles, hugs, good feelings, and happy times; of course, we do not believe in anything hard or demanding, requiring real self-denial, that would not be “love.” In the 2,000 year history of the Church, this has never happened in the life of even a single saint. This heresy relegates fortitude – the virtue (habit) of not shrinking back from the most difficult things, from suffering and self-sacrifice – as old-fashioned and out of date. A genuine love – the willingness to sacrifice one’s self for the sake of our Lord and the true good of others – is now considered something nasty and mean. Rather, so goes this heresy, everything should be “soft” and nice and easy, with whatever my desires are, whatever I want, being affirmed as good and true. No self-denial, no self-sacrifice, no cross = no relation with our Lord = eternal damnation. This false belief leads to an over-pampering, egoism, and a sense of entitlement, with the corresponding effect of no genuine care for the other. This leads to problems in every walk of life – work, marriage, family life – all human interactions. This heresy of softness might be a corruption of true femininity since a prominent characteristic of true femininity is that of compassion, nourishing, and support. Part of the vocation of a wife is to inspire her husband to greatness, which lies precisely in sacrificing himself. A false femininity then also destroys real masculinity and corrupts family life. Careerism is often held up as a substitute for real motherhood and fatherhood. Perhaps it is, then, that our Lord is holding up His Mother as a teaching of true femininity, one that holds together both a genuine compassion and nourishing but also true good. True good? No one, *no* one, participated as much in our Lord’s Passion and death as the great Mother of God; no one has ever sacrificed their own self for the sake of the will of God, no one has ever suffered as much for His sake, as Mary most Holy. The true femininity of Mary does set aside fortitude or true love, in favor of some false imitation provided by Satan. Returning, then, to the Holy Rosary. I plead on behalf of Mary and our Lord: bear those promises firmly in mind, trust them, and respond. God bless you, Fr Kuhn.