

DIUTURNI TEMPORIS ENCYCLICAL OF POPE LEO XIII ON THE ROSARY

Leo XIII

Venerable Brethren, Health and Apostolic Benediction.

Looking back over the long space of time, which by God's Will We have passed in the Supreme Pontificate, We cannot but acknowledge that, in spite of Our demerits, We have enjoyed the most singular protection of Divine Providence. This We believe must be attributed principally to the united, and therefore most efficacious, prayers, which, as of old for St. Peter, so now also for Ourselves, are constantly being poured forth by the Universal Church. Wherefore We first of all give profound thanks to God, the Giver of all good things, and we shall continue as long as life lasts to cherish in mind and heart gratitude for each and every favour. And next, there comes to Our mind the sweet remembrance of the motherly protection of the august Queen of Heaven; and this memory likewise We shall cherish and preserve inviolate, ever thanking her and proclaiming her benefits. From her, as from an abundant spring, are derived the streams of heavenly graces. "In her hand are the treasures of the mercies of the Lord" (St. John-Damascene, Sermon I. on the Nativity of the blessed Virgin). "God wisheth her to be the beginning of all good things" (St. Irenaeus, Contra Valen., J. iii., cap. 33). In the love of this tender mother, which We have constantly striven to cherish and to grow in day by day, We confidently hope that We may end Our life.

Summary of Preceding Encyclicals on the Rosary

2. We have long desired to secure the welfare of the human race in an increase of devotion to the Blessed Virgin, as in a powerful citadel, and We have never ceased to encourage the constant use of the Rosary among Christians, by publishing every year since September 1, 1883, an Encyclical Letter on this subject, besides frequently issuing Decrees, as is well known. And now, since God in His merciful Providence has this year again allowed Us to see the approach of the month of October, which We have already consecrated to our Heavenly Queen under the title of the Rosary, We would not refrain from again addressing you; but summarizing in a few words all that we have hitherto done for the promotion of his form of prayer, We will crown our work by yet a new document, in which Our earnest desire and zeal for this form of devotion to Mary may appear still more clearly, and the fervour of the faithful may be stimulated to the devout and constant use of this pious practice.

3. Impelled, therefore, by a constant desire that Christians should ever be convinced of the efficacy and dignity of the Rosary of Our Lady, We first of all pointed out that the origin of this form of prayer is divine rather than human, showing it to be an admirable garland woven from the Angelic Salutation, together with the Lord's Prayer, joined to meditation, and that this form of prayer was most powerful and particularly efficacious for attaining eternal life. For besides the special excellence of the prayers, it affords a powerful protection to faith and conspicuous models of virtue in the mysteries proposed for contemplation. We showed also how easy the devotion is and how suited to the people, offering an absolutely perfect model of domestic life in meditation on the Holy Family at Nazareth, and that therefore Christendom had never failed to experience its salutary effects.

The Popes and the Rosary

4. For these reasons We have ever repeatedly encouraged the recitation of the Holy Rosary, and have endeavoured to increase its dignity by a more solemn cult, following in this the footsteps of our predecessors. Pope Sixtus V., of happy memory, approved the ancient custom of reciting the Rosary; Gregory XIII. dedicated a day under this title, which Clement VIII. afterwards inscribed in the martyrology, and Clement XI. extended to the Universal Church. Benedict XIII. inserted the feast in the Roman Breviary, and We, ourselves, in perpetual testimony of Our affection for this devotion commanded that the solemnity with its office should be celebrated in the Universal Church as a double of the second class, consecrating to this devotion the entire month of October. Finally we ordered the addition to the Litany of Loreto of the invocation "Queen of the most Holy Rosary," as an augury of victory in our present warfare.

The Value of Indulgences

5. It remains to be added that great value and utility accrue to the Rosary from the abundance of privileges and favours which adorn it, and more particularly from the rich treasures of indulgences attached to it. It is evident how greatly to the advantage of all who are solicitous for their eternal salvation is the obtaining of these benefits. For it is a question of obtaining either totally or partially a remission of the debt of temporal punishment which, even after guilt has been forgiven, must be paid either in this life or in the next. Vast indeed is the treasure won by the merits of Christ, His Mother and the Saints, to which our predecessor Clement VI. so aptly applied those words of the Book of Wisdom: "She is an infinite treasure to men: which they that use become the friends of God" (Wisdom vii., 14).

6. The Roman Pontiffs, making use of that supreme power granted them by God, have opened out the most abundant fountains of these graces to the members of the sodality of the Holy rosary and to those who recite the Rosary.

A Projected "Constitution"

7. Wherefore, believing that the Crown of Mary will shine more brilliantly with these privileges and indulgences, as with an adornment of most precious gems, We have decided upon carrying out what We have long contemplated, namely, the publication of a "Constitution" concerning the rights, privileges and indulgences which are enjoyed by the members of the Rosary Sodality. This Our "Constitution" We intend to be a testimony of Our love to the most august Mother of God, and at the same time an encouragement to all the faithful and a reward of their piety, so that in the last hour of life they may be aided by her assistance and sweetly rest in her embrace. This blessing We heartily invoke from Almighty God through the Queen of the most Holy Rosary, and as a earnest and pledge of Divine Blessings, Venerable Brethren, to your clergy and to the people committed to your care, We gladly impart the Apostolic Benediction.

Given at St. Peter's, in Rome, on the 5th day of September, 1898, in the 21st year of Our Pontificate.

LEO XIII

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