

# Revive the Rosary

By FATHER BENEDICT EHMANN

October is still the month of the rosary, Oct. 7 is still the feast of Our Lady of the rosary. Today's Church has not rejected or disapproved of the rosary. On the contrary, the 2nd Vatican Council pleaded that God's People might continue to treasure it (cf. Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, #67).

Yet, the rosary, for the last few years, has been in eclipse: partial, if not total. Perhaps close to half of the Catholic folk no longer pray it. Most of these are of the under-30 generation. Some of them were rebels against it a decade ago when they were in school. But most of them are simply aliens to it.

One can hardly blame today's youth for neglecting the rosary. It seems that it is not recommended or encouraged in our schools. In most churches, October devotions have become passe. Rosary Societies, formerly flourishing, have died or are dying for lack of recruits. The Family Rosary for Peace on a local radio station is widely followed, but probably by less than half of the Catholic community, and mostly by the older people. And Father Peytons' crusade for the family rosary seems to have lost momentum, at least in these parts.

This is a dismal litany of decline. There would be no value in recounting it, except that we need to evaluate where we are and how we got to this point, and to assess whether and how far, and by what means, a revival of the rosary is

## INSIGHTS On Pastoral Liturgy

possible. Surely it is desirable, for the rosary is one of the greatest treasures of Christian prayer, surpassed only by the liturgy, in Mass, sacraments, and the liturgy of the hours.

How begin the revival of the rosary? It must be re-discovered by those who have given it up after many years, as well as by those who continue to stay with it, but in a lack-lustre, dispirited way. The rosary needs time to unfold thoughtfully, if it is to be prayerful. There is need of a determined good-will to keep one's self in focus, but yet without tension. This focus can fluctuate, centering at times on the mysteries, at times on the prayers.

It's a great help to frame each decade with a verse or two of Scripture related to it, or with a stanza from some appropriate hymn. This change of scene and mood is a fine help to keep one's thoughts from wandering. Even the physical holding of the beads and passing them through the fingers must be reckoned as helpful to ground the currents of nervousness and restlessness, and to add a sense

of movement and drama.

Best of all, the rosary prayers are rich and provocative. Derived from the Bible, they have the Spirit-filled power to reach into us and to make us come alive with the freshness and fragrance of the Gospel. We put ourselves in tune with the very aspirations of Jesus in the Lord's Prayer and vibrate with His resonance within us. With the Hail Mary we enter into the awesome silence of those moments of the Annunciation which are the hinge of human history. The words are truly charismatic, ringing with echoes from the Old Testament: "Rejoice, Mary, highly-favored one" (much nearer to St. Luke's Greek than "Hail, full of grace"). "The Lord is with thee." Mary would remember these words spoken by God to Abraham, to Jacob, to Moses, to Gideon, to Jeremiah, always the prelude to a weighty message for Israel's destiny. "Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb." Elizabeth's eulogy of Mary as the infant in her womb leaps for joy at the presence of Jesus in Mary's womb lifts us, too, in loving outreach to Our Lady.

Until the rosary has been so rediscovered, any crusade to restore it must come to grief. Such a reawakening must be devoutly prayed for. Only when our teachers come alive to the power and beauty of the Rosary will they be moved to share their treasure with our school children, and enable them to discover it and to be magnetized by its appeal. Only when parishes reschedule at least an occasional public rosary devotion can we anticipate that it will again come into its own. And only when space is allotted in the routine of our families for the daily rosary, or at least the daily decade, will family prayer stand a fair chance of being a rallying point away from the strident, hypnotic lure of the electronic Pied Piper who now occupies every livingroom.

as a heart patient. So, rest, quiet, calm, leisure were the orders of the day. I didn't feel strong enough, after the sedations, to read my Breviary, so I kept my rosary with me and decided to recite one rosary in the morning, one in the afternoon, and one in the evening.

Then I made a discovery about the rosary. I found out why it could become a bore to some. The reason is, so often we hurry it. Rush, rush, rush — that was the problem with the rosary. That too incidentally is what makes the difference between eating and dining: eating is a hurried act; dining is a leisurely function. One is animalistic; the other human. The key to the rosary was not to hurry it, not to rush it! I used to give myself 12 minutes for the rosary. But in the hospital, I had all the time in the world. I took at least 20 minutes. I would close my eyes and say each Hail Mary slowly, relishing the inspired words. But always, it was Mary whose image I had in mind and to whom I spoke, within the context of each mystery.


Another point: I began to stop picturing Mary as some unearthly Madonna way out there, so remote as to be untouchable. Lying in a hospital bed, quite helpless, it is not hard to become like a little child. In my rosary I began to picture Mary as really a mother, my mother, and I, as her child. The older I get, the more aware I have become of the assaults of the devil and of my own weakness, and the more aware I have become, the more fervently I find myself turning to Mary, who is as a Tower of David, impregnable, unassailable, and a secure refuge for her children.

Forgive me for being so personal, but I hope you will come to love the rosary and draw from it the power and strength it has given me.

But remember: you must get in a relaxed mood of mind, you must be ready "to waste" at least 20 minutes. Then begin to picture Mary as a dear, dear mother, very, very close to each of us — loving us as a mother does her dearest child. Then hail her, not as some marble Madonna, far removed from us, but as one so near and dear to us that she eagerly, lovingly and earnestly prays for us sinners now and at the hour of our death — even unasked.

"I prayed, and prudence was given me" (Rt).

**WORD FOR SUNDAY**



Fr. Albert Shamon

Sunday's Readings: (R3) Mk. 10:17-30. (R1) Wis. 7:7-11. (R2) Hebr. 4:12-13.

In the middle of August I was stricken with double pneumonia that hospitalized me for 10 days in our wonderful Taylor-Brown Hospital in Waterloo.

Somehow the word got around and I received a plethora of cards, flowers, and letters for which I am deeply grateful. One letter was from Dr. Therese Lynch, a dear good friend of mine. She wrote in part: "Physical setbacks (major or minor) seem to me to be very important stepping stones. We learn a lot about ourselves and our trust in the Lord. I hope you'll share some of your insights on sickness — (maybe in the Courier). Just want you to know I'm praying for you — that this will be a time of great peace and renewal for you."

My sickness was a time of great peace and renewal for me. That it was, I feel was because of the many, many prayers of many friends. As for sharing my spiritual insights with readers, my instinctive reaction was, "In no way, I can't do that. Such moments are too, too personal." Then a few days later, I felt compelled to override my initial reaction and to share with you in this Rosary Month my rosary experience while sick.

I have always prayed the rosary daily. For I deeply love this devotion to our Mother Mary. I feel a bit sad that some have abandoned it — like giving up walking because one has a new car.

For the first five days in the hospital, I was sedated. Good Dr. Emanuel Li said he was treating me

**GEM APPOINTEE**  
The Genesee Ecumenical Ministries Board of Directors has announced the appointment of William J. Benet as director of the Education Resource Network (ERN). The ERN program is a federally funded project designed to assist groups within the community as they attempt to improve the quality of education in the City School District. The program provides information and training to community people in order to improve their ability to obtain their goals.

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Friday, October 15th at 7:15 P.M.

Toastmaster — Rev. William J. O'Malley, S.J.  
McQuaid Jesuit High School  
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