

LIGHT & LIFE

FATHER REGINALD MARTIN, O.P., DIRECTOR

Vol. 59, No. 5 - A WESTERN DOMINICAN PUBLICATION

MARY, OUR MOTHER AND OUR HELPER

With this issue of *Light and Life* we have the opportunity to reflect on two great liturgical feasts that honor the Mother of God. The first is the Birth of Mary, on September 8, the second the feast of the Holy Rosary on October 7.

One of the maxims that helps summarize our faith tells us that the Church believes as it prays (*lex credendi lex orandi*). Thus, if we wish to learn what the Church teaches on a particular topic, we can profitably begin our study by an examination of the Church's prayer.

If we look at our liturgical calendar we see parallels between the honor paid Christ throughout the year, and the honor paid His Mother. We celebrate the conception and birth of both Mary and her Divine Son. We likewise celebrate their presentations in the temple. We celebrate their deaths, of course, and the similar glorification of their being taken, body and soul, to enjoy everlasting life in heaven.

In the Western world, we date every event by its relation to the birth of Christ. But our faith invites us to look beyond the birth of Our Savior, and to acknowledge the birth of His Mother. Mary's birth has had no effect on our calendar, but it reminds us (if we need an additional reminder) that, in His humanity, Jesus was no different from us. We have no idea what form birthday celebrations may have taken in the Nazareth of Our Lord's youth, but the humanity of Jesus gives the humanity of His Mother a special significance, and the birthday of Mary marks the beginning of an important transition between the Old Testament and the New.

Mary says very little in the Scripture, but when she utters the immortal words of her "*Magnificat*" (Lk. 1:47), she sums up all the hopes and yearnings of God's faithful people in the Old Testament. Her words echo those of another mother, Hannah, whose son grew up to become the prophet Samuel. When Mary rejoices that "*the almighty has done great things for me...*" by lifting up the lowly, filling the hungry, casting the mighty



**Shrine of Our Lady of the Rosary
Holy Rosary Church**

from their thrones and routing the proud in their conceit, we see all of Israel's yearnings offered up triumphantly in the person of Christ's Mother.

At the Visitation the welcome offered by Mary's kinswoman, Elizabeth, reinforces the Old Testament connection. Elizabeth greets Mary as "*the mother of my Lord*" (Lk. 1:43), the traditional title of respect paid not to a King's wife (for a king could have many wives) but to his mother. This greeting encourages us to see Jesus as the king God's People hoped for under the Old Law, and to see Mary as a unique tool in God's plan.

(continued on page 4)

THE ROSARY LIGHT & LIFE

Rosary Center

P. O. Box 3617, Portland, Oregon 97208

Subscription Rates:

United States	\$7.50 Per Year
Canada & Mexico	\$8.50 Per Year
Other Countries	\$9.50 Per Year

2 Novenas of Masses
in honor of

OUR LADY OF THE ROSARY

Sep. 29 - Oct. 7 — Oct. 8 - 16

TO BE OFFERED FOR YOUR INTENTIONS

THEOLOGY FOR THE LAITY

THE CREED, PART II

I BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST

By Father Reginald Martin, O.P.

AN ESSENTIAL TRUTH

Belief in Jesus as God's Son is central to our faith as Christians. Scripture proclaims this truth, the apostles preach it, and the Fathers of the Church rejoice to ponder and expound its meaning for us.

Not all the early writers accepted the truth that we embrace, namely, that Jesus is God's Son, that He is God's only Son, and that He is eternally a Person of the Blessed Trinity. Twenty-first Century Christians may find this hard to accept, but the nature of Christ was the subject of fierce debate during the first four centuries of our Church's history.

BRINGING LIGHT FROM DARKNESS

Controversy is never pleasant, but an argument can be a source of clarification. As a result of the early debates over the nature of Christ, the Church proclaims that Christ is God's Son from all eternity, distinct from the Father, but sharing His divine nature. Moreover, Christ is the Word of God.

This last concept may be difficult to grasp, because it employs technical theological language unfamiliar to us. To help us understand it, St. Thomas Aquinas asks us to look at ourselves. In his famous Lenten homily on the Creed, St. Thomas says, "*...nothing is so like God as the human soul.*" This is an invitation to look within and, in the process, to learn something about God. When we look at ourselves, and consider the way in which we think and learn, we discover that

"...the manner of generation in the soul is that a man by his soul conceives something which is called the concept of the mind. This concept proceeds from the soul as from its father, and is called the word of the mind... of man. Accordingly the soul by thought generates its word."

A UNIQUE ABILITY

What this means is that when we think of something we are, in a sense, the creator of what we are thinking of. The Church's earliest writers called the resulting thought a "word," because we express our thoughts in words. Our senses enable us to understand the things we see about us in the world; the power of speech allows us to bring out what is within us, and to use the power of speech to order the elements of God's creation. The Book of Genesis tells us that we are made in God's image, and one of the ways in which we manifest our likeness to God is our ability to use words to get things done.

THE NATURE OF OUR WORDS

To call the thought of our soul a "word" gives this word a technical, theological meaning. We will say more about this, but for the present, let us reflect that because we are fragile, limited creatures (and because a word reflects the nature of the person who thinks it) our words are subject to the same death and decay that await each one of us. God's Word, on the other hand, is (like God) eternal, and eternally a part of Him.

Thus far we have spoken only of "words" in the abstract. However, words (and here we must remember we are speaking of a "word" in the limited, theological sense of an idea) have a practical aspect. They are the form or pattern for the things we make, or the things we do. Whether we are baking a pie, sending a rocket into outer space, or visiting a sick friend, we shape our creation (or our acts) according to a "word" or concept created in our mind.

THE IMMENSITY OF GOD'S WORD

Now, let us apply this idea to God. In the creed, we say that "*all things were made*" through God's Word – who, our faith tells us, is God's Son, Jesus Christ. This means that Jesus is the eternal blueprint for everything that exists. This may be an overwhelming thought for us to consider, but it ought to remind us that the infinite variety of forms we see around us illustrates God's infinite creativity and imagination. Jesus, who is always a part of God's life, gives life to everything we see around us, for He is the pattern of everything we see.

In the famous Lenten sermon that we are considering, St. Thomas preached, "*...the Son of God is nothing else but this Word of God, not like the word that is uttered externally [i.e., human words]... but as the word conceived inwardly. Therefore this same Word of God is of one nature with God and equal to God.*" This means that Jesus tells us everything we need to know about God, and everything we need to know about the His relation to the Father.

AN EXAMPLE FROM LIFE

To understand this more fully, let us look again at ourselves. If we consider our families, we see evidence of our parents and grandparents in ourselves and the family members around us. These traces of others in our lives are a concrete expression of their thoughts and ideas. Therefore, we are the "words" our ancestors have spoken, for better or worse. Now, consider God and

His creation, which is the concrete expression of God's thoughts and ideas. We see God's words wherever we look, for everything in our universe is the work of God, who creates through His Son.

Each atom of creation bears a likeness to the God who created it, and because God is always loving, merciful, wise, and just, all His "words" and works are similarly good. The resemblance between God and His creation is an invitation to listen to God's word and to believe what He tells us. Moreover, we should think about God's words and reflect on them. Obviously, the more clearly we see God in our lives, the greater we benefit from His presence.

BEAUTY IS AS BEAUTY DOES

Additionally, prayer and meditation are ways by which we refine God's image in our life and actions. We are created in His image. If we look like God, we ought to act like Him, and one of the ways we do this is by showing others the same generosity God has shown us. Our theology teaches us that gifts are never given just to enrich the one who receives them; they are a gift for the entire Church, and we have no right to hoard God's gifts. God realizes how good He is, and He wants us to enjoy life with Him to the fullest possible extent. This is the reason He created the universe: to give us a share in Himself during our life on earth, and to prepare us for eternal life with Him in heaven. God commands us to use the gifts of His creation wisely, so that we will not obscure His image in the things He has created.

TRUE GENEROSITY: THE PREACHING VOCATION

One way we show our generosity is by sharing God's word with one another. When we think of this activity we may think first of the liturgical preaching that is entrusted to priests and deacons. But to confine preaching solely to a pulpit, or during the Mass, is to define the act of preaching too narrowly. St. Paul urged each of us to embrace a preaching vocation when he wrote "*Let no evil speech proceed from your mouth, but that which is good for edification*" (Eph. 4:29). And, "*Let the word of Christ dwell in you abundantly; in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another*" (Col. 3:16).

EVERYDAY PREACHING

Parents preach when they teach their children to follow the commandments of God and the Church. The rest of us participate in this vocation when we advise, counsel or guide those who are seeking the paths that lead to God's kingdom. "*Preach the word... reprove, entreat, rebuke, in all patience and doctrine*" (2 Tim. 4:2). St. Paul wrote these words to his disciple Timothy, but they are a command to each of us, here and now.

WHEN ACTIONS SPEAK LOUDER THAN WORDS

Finally, we must consider our personal response to God's word. St. James urges us to "*be doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving [ourselves]*" (Jas. 1:22).

Shakespeare's Ophelia echoes this warning when she cautions her brother about the dangers of hypocrisy, "*Do not, as some ungracious pastors do, show me the steep and thorny way to heaven, whiles... himself the primrose path of dalliance treads...*" We accomplish very little if we do not allow our actions to be formed, and informed, by God's word. The largest room in the world is the room for improvement; if we hope to lead others by our words, we must first demonstrate that we have allowed ourselves to be led by God's word.

THE FIVE-FOLD EXAMPLE OF MARY

Our response to God's word is five-fold. We must hear the word, we must embrace it in faith, we must reflect upon it, we must proclaim it, and we must put it into practice in our lives. We can find no better model for our response to God's word than the Blessed Virgin. When the angel Gabriel appeared to her, Mary listened attentively to the Good news he brought. But her attentiveness was no mere passive acceptance of his message. She asked the very reasonable question, "*how can this be, since I have no husband?*" (Lk. 1:34)

God's word is frequently puzzling, and we commit no sin if we ask "how?" and "why?" We only go awry, a contemporary missionary preacher tells us, when we say, "Thy will be done," but mean, "Thy will be changed." God's answer to our questions may be unclear – and sometimes the answer to our prayers is "no" – but Faith allows us, as it did Mary, to assent to God's word without knowing everything that may be required of us. "*Behold the handmaid of the Lord,*" Mary says. "*Let it be done to me according to thy word*" (Lk. 1:38).

HOW WE GIVE FLESH TO GOD'S WORD

When Mary conceived God's Son, she bore the Word for nine months in her womb, nourishing Him and giving Him flesh, blood, and human features. God challenges us to do the same. Not bearing the Christ Child physically, as Mary did, but allowing God's word to grow spiritually in our hearts, to take on flesh and blood in our actions that show how we have allowed the Word to transform us.

Throughout the nine months of her pregnancy Mary's awareness of her unique role in our salvation must have grown clearer, and with it grew an urgency to preach the Good News of what God had done for her. Mary's Magnificat is the first Christian sermon; it expresses all the wonder and joy we ought to feel at being signs of God's saving plan for His people. Mary's sermon was preached to a congregation of one, but her words have inspired God's people for two thousand years, reminding us that great ideas may have very humble beginnings.

MARY, THE PATTERN FOR OUR LIVES

Mary is our model in all things, not least in putting God's word into practice. By nourishing God's Son and watching over His childhood, Mary teaches us that the Christ each of us bears in our hearts must be guarded,

protected, and tended with love. The gospel tells us that, thanks to the ministrations of His mother and St. Joseph, Jesus *“increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man”* (Lk. 2:52). Once we reach a certain age we may be able to survive by ourselves, but common sense tells us we cannot thrive on our own; if Christ is to grow in our day, we must nurture Him in one another, and – like Mary – preach His Good News with our lives. ■

MARY OUR MOTHER ... (continued from page 1)

If the birth of Mary is a celebration of beginnings, the feast of the Holy Rosary celebrates the fulfillment of those promises. The feast has its origins in the famous Battle of Lepanto, in 1571, the last great battle fought in ships powered by oars.

When Christian Europe faced the possibility of losing control of the Adriatic Sea, Pope Pius V helped assemble a multi-national naval force that engaged the far-larger Turkish fleet at Lepanto, in the Gulf of Corinth. Tradition tells us that the Christian sailors spent the night before the battle praying the Rosary, and they attributed their victory the following day to Mary's intervention on their behalf.

In the Memorare we pray that Mary will turn her *“eyes of mercy”* toward all those who fly to her protection, implore her help and seek her intercession. Twenty-first Century Christians may shrink from seeking God's hand in Lepanto's violence and bloodshed, but we may not dispute the faith of those who begged God's protection in a time of mortal peril. Today we appropriately look for means other than warfare to achieve our ends, but Lepanto stands as testimony to the power of prayer, and to the power of Mary as intercessor for those who turn to her in times of need. ■

**QUEEN OF THE ROSARY AND
QUEEN OF ALL SOULS**

With this issue of *Light and Life* we once again include sheets on which we ask our friends to list the names of deceased relatives and friends for whom we will pray throughout November, the month of the Poor Souls. The final days of summer may seem far too early to begin thinking of All Souls Day, but our printing schedule forces us to provide the memorial sheets at this time. We ask you to compile your list of those for whom you wish us to pray and to return the list quickly. We will offer Mass each day during November for the individuals whose names you send.

ROSARY CONFRATERNITY EDUCATION FUND

In the last issue of *Light and Life* we introduced the Rosary Confraternity Memorial Education Fund, established to support today's Dominican students who will be tomorrow's eloquent preachers of the gospel Good News of Our Lady's Rosary. Friends of the Rosary

Center have contributed generously to the fund, and it is especially popular among those wishing to honor a loved one who has died.

Gifts to the Memorial Fund will remain intact; the Rosary Center will use only the fund's income. This means that a gift to the fund will carry the memory of a loved one – as well as the donor's generosity – far into the future. We encourage all our friends to think of the Memorial Fund when they wish to commemorate a special occasion or pay lasting tribute to someone who has died.

POSTAL PALS

We cannot recall when we made our first appeal for help with postage for the rosaries we send abroad, but the response has been overwhelming. Some individuals have funded postage for four or more boxes, and the combined generosity of our Postal Pals amounts to nearly ten thousand dollars.

Most of us cannot remember a time we did not have a rosary, so we can only dimly imagine what a treasured gift these rosaries are for those who receive them. However, the pictures we receive tell the whole story, and it is a story of sincere gratitude. India and Africa are the most common destinations for our rosaries, but our postal pals have also underwritten the cost of sending our rosaries to the Philippines, as well as Central and South America.

AT YEAR END, A WORD OF THANKS

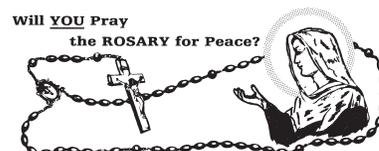
The Rosary Center's year-end financial report once again reveals the immense generosity of our many friends and benefactors. Thanks to your kindness the Rosary Center was able to increase the number of rosaries we send to mission territories – and to publish Fr. Duffner's book, *To Know Him* – without decreasing or interrupting any of our ordinary efforts to promote devotion to the Rosary. For all you have helped us achieve this year, Thanks!

A PROMISE

We often receive notes from benefactors, asking us not to share their names or addresses with other charitable organizations. If this is your concern, you may rest assured that we have never shared our friends' names, nor shall we.

**Another Way of Furthering
THE ROSARY CRUSADE FOR PEACE**

The design below, a self-adhesive label for the outside of your letters. Each sheet contains 30 labels..



COST OF SHEETS AND MAILING	
1 Sheet ...	\$1.00
5 Sheets	5.00
10 Sheets ...	8.50
25 Sheets ..	17.00
50 Sheets ..	28.00
100 Sheets ..	49.00