



LIGHT & LIFE

VOICE OF THE ROSARY CENTER & CONFRATERNITY

www.rosarycenter.org

Fr. Joseph Sergott, OP, Director Nov.-Dec. 2019, Vol 72, No 6 Western Dominican Province

THE MISSION & HISTORY OF THE ROSARY CENTER

Many people have received the Rosary Center's Newsletter, the *Rosary, Light & Life* for decades, which has included articles on various subjects related to the Rosary, the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Church and the Faith in general; however, they may not know fully about the apostolate of the Rosary Center or its history. The Rosary Center is a ministry of the Dominican Friars of the Western Province, and it serves as the headquarters of the Rosary Confraternity in the West.

Our Mission is to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ for the conversion, sanctification and salvation of souls by promoting devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, especially through the preaching of her Rosary and the incorporation of its Mysteries into our lives. Our entire apostolate is placed under the care and guidance of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

The Rosary Center is open every weekday and has a full-time staff of five people including a full-time priest who is the Director of the Rosary Center and also the Promoter of the Rosary Confraternity. We are blessed to own our own building with its little Blessed Sacrament chapel—although both desperately need repairs. Each day we support various ministries of the Church throughout the world, including prison outreach, military chaplains and overseas missions by shipping rosaries, books and pamphlets (e.g., our leaflet, "Pray the Rosary Daily").

Our staff prays regularly for all those who request our prayers. In our chapel, each morning at Mass, and in our afternoon Rosary, we pray for the members of the Confraternity (living and deceased) and for the success and needs of our apostolate. We accept prayer requests via our website, email, physical mail, and also by phone, and place them in a basket in front of the altar in our chapel. Every two months, the Rosary Center

offers a Novena of Masses in honor of special feasts, and in November we celebrate a 30-day Mass Novena for the faithful departed. People can join us in these novena prayers which are found online at our website (rosarycenter.org) or in a leaflet that can be sent to them in the mail.

The Rosary Confraternity is the heart and soul of the Rosary Center. We consider ourselves advocates for its members. The Confraternity is a spiritual association of the Catholic Church, under the care and guidance of the Dominican Order, whose members honor the Blessed Virgin Mary and place themselves under her protection by the praying of the Rosary. We actively enroll new members in the Confraternity on a daily basis.

Through the preaching of Bl. Alan de la Roche, the Rosary Confraternity blossomed in the 15th Century. Under his influence, enrollment in the Confraternity became world-wide. By his death in 1475, he had brought in over 100,000 members to the Confraternity; by 1479, 500,000 had registered. In the Confraternity's first printed manual in 1476, enrollment in the association was a condition of membership, as well as praying fifteen mysteries of the Rosary per week—as it remains today.¹ Today there are at least 1,000,000 members in the Rosary Confraternity.

In 1898, Pope Leo XIII decreed that the Rosary Confraternity would be placed formally under the authority of the Master of the Dominican Order. Thus, no Rosary Confraternity can be erected without his approval nor can any benefits, privileges or indulgences be received without the permission of the Master of the Order.²

There are many benefits to being a member of the Rosary Confraternity. Members gain the special protection

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Immaculate Conception
Giovanni Battista Tiepolo

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THEOLOGY FOR THE LAITY

The Mysteries

By Fr. Joseph Sergott, O.P.

[Fr. Joseph Mary Sergott, OP, was born and raised in the Detroit area, and worked for five years in the aerospace industry at Hughes Aircraft in Southern California. In 1988, he entered the Western Province of the Dominican Order. He was ordained a priest in 1996. He serves as Director of the Rosary Center and Promoter of the Rosary Confraternity for the Western Province. He also serves as the prior of the Dominican Community at Holy Rosary in Portland, OR. Prior to his present assignment, Fr. Joseph served as Socius and Vicar to the Provincial of the Western Province, pastor at Holy Family Cathedral in Anchorage and St. Thomas More Newman Center in Eugene, OR, respectively, and as a parochial vicar at Holy Rosary Church in Antioch, CA and the Newman Center at UCSD in San Diego.]

There is a reason that the Rosary has been around for centuries—the Rosary Confraternity is itself over 500 years old. Throughout the long history of the Church, many dominant structures of society have come and gone. Entire countries and great empires, like the Roman Empire, have ceased to exist. Even within the Church, religious orders that once had profound influence have since died out. Many movements that people thought would last forever have passed into obscurity and powerful individuals who had tremendous impact on the world have been forgotten.

Why would a simple, ordinary prayer like the Rosary continue to flourish and inspire devotion for over 800 years? What is it about this “commoner’s prayer” that has captured the hearts of the faithful and endured throughout the centuries?

THE HEART OF THE CATHOLIC FAITH

One reason is that meditating on the mysteries of the Rosary goes to the heart of the Catholic faith. Many people, including some theologians, overlook this fact. While the Rosary will never be on the same level of importance as the Mass, it is firmly rooted in the very cornerstone, the essential foundation of the Catholic faith, the Mystery of mysteries as it were: the Rosary contemplates the story of the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

In ancient Israel, it was understood that there were mysteries and secrets about God’s plan for man’s salvation. So, the people looked to the prophets to reveal God’s plan.¹ As the Prophet Amos says, “Indeed, the Lord God does nothing without revealing his plan to his servants the prophets.” (Amos 3:7) So, all the prophets foretold the coming of the Christ, God’s anointed One. St. Paul, in all of his writings, affirms that Jesus Christ is in fact the fulfillment of all these centuries-old secrets and mysteries: “I wish their hearts to be strengthened and themselves to be closely united in

love, enriched with full assurance by their knowledge of the mystery of God—namely Christ—in whom every treasure of wisdom and knowledge is hidden.” (Colossians 2:2)

Consequently, in Jesus Christ, we see three essential things: 1) as God’s Son, he came to establish God’s kingdom on earth and to reveal finally the divine secrets of God in their fullness concerning the salvation of the world; 2) in him, the revelation of God’s plan is fulfilled; 3) as a result, the mysteries of the kingdom of God are present on earth in his very person. *Therefore, when we pray the Rosary, we contemplate the divine secrets revealed in the person of Jesus through each mystery of his life on earth.* The key is that the mysteries of God regarding our salvation are no longer meant to be secrets! The Messianic secret has been revealed, and in order to come to understand the mysteries surrounding the life of Christ, we need to delve deeper into these sacred events.²

For example, we ponder Jesus’ divine origin and his Incarnation in the Joyful Mysteries; his mission from the Father and his Messianic plan to redeem the world in the Luminous Mysteries; his human suffering and sacrifice in his Passion and Death in the Sorrowful Mysteries, and his Resurrection and Ascension in the Glorious Mysteries, which include his ultimate victory over sin, evil and even death itself. Thus, at its heart, the Rosary tells the story of how God redeemed the human race in the person of Jesus.

BASED UPON SACRED SCRIPTURE

As the Old Testament heralded the coming of Jesus Christ, the New Testament is the Living Word that reveals him in his fullness as the Savior of the world. Many people who look upon the Rosary as only a devotional prayer don’t take into account that it is almost entirely based on Sacred Scripture. 18 of the 20 mysteries come directly from the Bible. Only the last two mysteries, the Assumption of Mary and her Coronation in heaven, come from Sacred Tradition, with the Assumption being a formal dogma of the Catholic faith. There may be no better way to enter into the mysteries of the lives of Jesus Christ and His Mother than by praying the Rosary and pondering the Sacred Scripture contained within it, which is inspired by the Holy Spirit. Thus, those who struggle with praying the Rosary may benefit from reading a correlating scripture passage as they begin each mystery.

WE MEDITATE WITH MARY

The Rosary was given to us by the Blessed Virgin Mary. The life and message of Our Blessed Mother are forever linked to that of Jesus Christ. The Second Person of the Trinity chose to be born of her and willed to give her a vital and essential place in salvation history. She is the loving and obedient handmaid of the Lord. She lives for him and brings to him the souls he redeemed at so dear a price.

Please remember the Rosary Center in your will. By arranging a gift to the Rosary Center through your will, you can continue to support our apostolate of serving the Lord and his Mother into the future.



When we address the “Hail Mary” to her, asking her to pray for us, she hastens to shine her light on the path that leads us to her Son. Those who pray the Rosary embark on this road which leads to eternal life. Many saints attest to her faithfulness in accompanying those who journey toward heaven and to the hope she inspires that they will one day reach their goal. It is no coincidence that the mysteries of the life of Jesus are intertwined with his Mother.

One of the most famous paintings in the world is Michelangelo’s *The Last Judgment* in the Sistine Chapel. In that masterpiece, one finds a section where two souls are hoisted up to heaven as they cling to a rosary, symbolic of its power to “lift” us up to heaven

GOD’S INVITATION AND OUR RESPONSE

If you reflect long enough upon the 20 mysteries of the Rosary, you will notice that they each beckon us to draw nearer to the Lord, to seek greater insight and knowledge about him, to come to grasp how much he loves us, and to leave our passive way of life to follow him. We can use the Rosary incorrectly and “remain on the sidelines” as we pray, as if watching a movie; or, we can reach back to the Lord in our prayer, uniting our own hearts with his. Christian prayer is about approaching God and seeking union with him. As you pray each mystery of the Rosary, actively listen for the invitation that Our Lord and his Mother extend to you.

In the Fifth Joyful Mystery, for example, we could ask ourselves, what does it mean for me to search for Jesus until I find him? In the Third Luminous Mystery, in meditating upon Jesus’ proclamation of the coming of the kingdom of heaven, how do I feel the Lord calling me to conversion and repentance? In the Fourth Sorrowful Mystery, what does it mean for me to walk with Jesus as he carries his cross—how do I respond to what he is doing for me? In the Third Glorious Mystery, how do the fears of the disciples in the upper room resonate with me? Do I look to the Holy Spirit to calm my own fears and bestow his gifts upon me?

In each mystery, we can ponder, “How does this particular mystery provide an opportunity for me to respond to the grace of the Lord?” After all, grace is . . . the free and undeserved help that God gives us to respond to his call to become children of God . . . partakers of the divine nature and of eternal life.³

THE ROSARY IS FOR SINNERS

Finally, when praying through the mysteries, the latent invitation that can be found in each mystery is the call for the sinner to approach the Lord. When we are burdened by our sins, we can turn to the Blessed Virgin and her Rosary to seek guidance and even consolation. Many people today are burdened by the weight of their own sins. Some even

fall into despair. Others are enslaved by addictions and see no way out. The Rosary is the prayer for sinners. It reminds us that God became one of us to save us from our sins. When we realize that we cannot save ourselves, meditating on the Rosary can give us confidence and consolation that it is Christ who is our hope and salvation. Our Lord says, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness.” Thus, St. Paul says that he would rather “boast most gladly of my weaknesses, in order that the

power of Christ may dwell with me. Therefore, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and constraints, for the sake of Christ; for when I am weak, then I am strong.” (2 Corinthians 12:9-10) When we find ourselves in the depths of sin, the temptation is usually to abandon prayer, often because we are ashamed to turn back to God in our present state of sin. But the words of St. Paul are a reminder that seeking God’s forgiveness is part of our Christian journey. Further, meditating upon the mysteries of Christ’s life in the Rosary will remind us of

how much he loves sinners and gave his life for them. With this knowledge, we can have the courage to approach him, especially knowing that he approached us first.

In summary, as we pray the mysteries of the Rosary and dwell on how Jesus is the fulfillment of God’s plan for our salvation as foretold by the prophets, let us remember that prayer is communion with God; it is the lifting of our hearts, minds and souls to God. Further, Mary accompanies us every time we begin this prayer; she joins us, intercedes for us, and shows us the way. She also consoles us and lifts our spirits. Perhaps one essential consequence of praying the Rosary that we may not have realized is that the intimacy we gain with the Blessed Mother over time becomes intimacy with Jesus. Intimacy with Our Mother begets intimacy with her Child. A commoner’s prayer indeed. ■

¹ Xavier Léon-Dufour, *Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, St. Paul Books & Media: Boston, MA. p. 374

² *Ibid.*, p. 375

³ *Catechism of the Catholic Church* #1996



Fr. Paul Duffner works at his desk at the Rosary Center in 1988, corresponding with the faithful and planning for the future of the Rosary Center.

Note from the Director

Dear faithful supporters of the Rosary Center & Confraternity, we are grateful for your support. We could not fulfill our Mission if not for our benefactors. After decades of constant use, the Rosary Center, the home of the Rosary Confraternity, is greatly in need of renovation. Please consider making a special gift to help make badly needed repairs, and to refurbish the offices, chapel and kitchen. Thank you for your generosity!

Fr. Joseph Sergott, O.P.

Mission & History of the Rosary Center *continued from page 1*

of the Blessed Virgin Mary and share in the prayers and works of millions of Confraternity members throughout the world (even after death), in the prayers, Masses and apostolic works of the entire Order of Preachers, and in the numerous indulgences granted to the Confraternity. Moreover, promoting devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Rosary, along with praying the Rosary, helps the faithful grow in their love of God and the Church, and in their faith in Jesus Christ.

The Rosary Center began in the old parish hall of St. Dominic's Church in San Francisco in 1945. At the time, in most Dominican parishes there was a public recitation of the Rosary. Fr. Paul Duffner, OP and Fr. Edward Sanguinetti, OP were both interested in the propagation of this devotion, and thus began a weekly service every Saturday evening consisting of the recitation of the Rosary, a brief homily, and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament.

There were three distinct Rosary associations in the parish at the time: the Living Rosary, the Perpetual Rosary, and the Rosary Confraternity. The Living Rosary had been established in three groups consisting of fifteen people each in different parishes in San Francisco, one of them being St. Dominic's. Thus, in each group each person recited one mystery of the Rosary, so that between all of them the full fifteen mysteries of the Rosary were recited each day. The Perpetual Rosary obligated each of its members to pray the Rosary for a given hour each month so that the Rosary is recited perpetually day and night. The Rosary Confraternity required that its members pray the fifteen mysteries once each week.

Fr. Duffner took over the task of managing the three different groups of the Living Rosary, but found them unwieldy, and thus conceived the idea of uniting these three groups into one center—thus the Rosary Center was born. Further, when the task of organizing the three associations of the Living Rosary, the Perpetual Rosary and the Rosary Confraternity became unmanageable, the Perpetual Rosary was discontinued as the cloistered nuns were fulfilling its obligations, while the Living Rosary was also suspended. That left the Rosary Center to fully concentrate on the Rosary Confraternity.

While the Living Rosary was still in existence, Fr. Duffner had assumed the responsibility of mailing to individuals in the Living Rosary a reflection for the rosary decades that were assigned to each participant. With the efforts now being directed toward the promotion of the Rosary Confraternity, Fr. Duffner began sending a far more substantial newsletter

called *The Rosary Bulletin*, which focused on the teachings of the Church. This title was later changed by Fr. Thomas Feucht, OP to *The Rosary, Light & Life*.

In 1970, Fr. Feucht, then the director of the Rosary Center, was elected prior of the Dominican Community of Holy Rosary in Portland, Oregon. Fr. Feucht agreed to move the Rosary Center to Portland if he could continue as its director. Thus, he brought the mailing equipment up from San Francisco to Portland. A room in the basement of the old Priory was established as their base of operations.

Fr. Joseph Agius, OP succeeded Fr. Feucht as director of the Rosary Center around 1980. Fr. Duffner, who was the pastor of Holy Rosary Church at the time, strongly encouraged and assisted Fr. Agius in acquiring the property on 1331 NE 3rd Avenue in Portland for the new location of the Rosary Center, where it remains to this day. Fr. Duffner was assigned to Alaska from 1981 to 1983; however,

upon his return, he was re-assigned as director of the Rosary Center and promoter of the Rosary Confraternity. He would go on to write articles for the *Light & Life* Newsletter until 2000. Fr. Paul Raftery, OP was the author of the Newsletter from 2000-04. Fr. Reginald Martin, OP, who directed the Rosary Center for many years, also wrote articles regularly for the Newsletter from 2004 until 2016. Fr. Dismas Sayre, OP served as director for one year until Fr. Joseph Sergott, OP took over in July of 2017; he has been the director since then.

The ministry of the Rosary Center in Portland has grown over the decades. Subscriptions to the *Rosary Light & Life* Newsletter are still numerous today with over 35,000 subscribers. The *Light & Life* is available on our web page at rosarycenter.org. It is also mobile friendly.

The spiritual benefits and works of the Rosary Center and the Rosary Confraternity remain abundant. We have a dedicated staff who work tirelessly to spread our Catholic faith, to buoy the struggling, and to assist those who are looking to grow in their faith. We all feel blessed to be able to work here. We are like a family. The concerted effort to promote the Rosary Confraternity remains. Its members reap the prayers of a world-wide association that is active and in fact still growing. Without the grace of God, the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and the financial backing of our loyal supporters, this apostolate would not be possible. May God bless our benefactors.



Fr. Duffner blesses a boy while on pilgrimage to the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico.

¹ Robert Feeney, *The Rosary, "The Little Summa"* 4th ed., p. 49, Aquinas Press, 2003

² *Ubi Primum*, #2, Pope Leo XIII, October 2, 1898