

A FAMILY PRAYER

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REPEATEDLY the Holy Pontiffs have warned that the family is the backbone of the nation. As a chain is no stronger than its weakest link, and an army no stronger than its soldiers, so too a nation is no better than its citizens. Consequently, if the characters of the future citizens of a nation are not molded within the family circle, where will they be formed? Will they be left to develop alone, or to be nurtured by the forces of disorder?

The forces of disorder are as rampant today as they were when Our Holy Father, Pope Leo XIII wrote: 'Only too many elements are at work in the present condition of things to loosen the bonds of public order and to draw the people away from sound principles of life and conduct.'¹ With the seeds of rebellion again being sown on the bloody soil of the world today, there is an ever increasing menace to the work of God among men; for the Church is threatened, and nations are being destroyed because the family is losing its strength.

Systems of thought which reject the Creator of mankind, which deny the truth that man is made for God, which would erase the thought of man's immortality must of necessity ridicule the part the family plays in attaining eternal happiness. Daily the newspapers depict with lurid details the proceedings of the divorce courts, while the stage and screen show the broken homes of glamour seekers. Yet in their nearsightedness they do not see the real tragedy which they portray. In evolutionary processes they would have us believe that incompatibility and divorce are the natural stages in the evolution of married life. The advocates of these pernicious ideas not only seek to destroy the permanent bond between husband and wife; they also propose vicious practices to limit the number of God's creatures. Where is there any reference made to what God wants? Who will ask what He Who is "the way, the truth, and the life" meant when He said, "What God has joined together, let no man put asunder" (Mt. XIX, 6)?

The fight against the family is more deadly than that ever waged

¹ Encyclical Letter, *Laetitiae Sanctae*—Leo XIII.

by any Japanese suicide crew. On the battlefield the enemy can be met with weapons; but when he has donned the clothes of the spy he is more treacherous, because he undermines the cause he feigns to support under the pretense of being an ally. We all condone the punishment meted out to spies, for we realize the heinousness of their crimes; no one is surprised when the death penalty is passed upon them, for their warfare is a treacherous one. But why is the Church almost alone in raising a voice of protest against the enemies of the family? If these enemies did no more than weaken the manpower of the nation, they should be severely judged as criminals; but their treachery does not stop there. They are not content with the increase of orphans from broken homes, nor are they satisfied to be able to prevent births. They will destroy, if possible, the morals of whole families and of the whole nation.

Under the pretense of humanitarianism they plead that families be curtailed so that a greater good may result. What do they advocate in the place of children made to the image and likeness of God? They will console the two partners of the marriage pact with the promise of better ice boxes to cool their drinks, more convenient stoves to cook less food for fewer mouths, more powerful radios to tune in more undermining propaganda. They will emphasize the wonders of modern science, and they will contend that the latest contrivance is essential to man's happiness; but they forget, or at least they refuse to acknowledge, that Christ has raised marriage to the dignity of a sacrament.

No one denies that modern discoveries do facilitate every-day living; but when so much emphasis is placed upon these material benefits that they are chosen in preference to the children of God, we may ask ourselves this question: Did Christ die the terrible death of the cross that we might have a new automobile every year, or did He die that we might save our immortal souls? Certainly if material comforts are sought to the exclusion of a family and of family rights, it is not God but idols which are being served. Since He loved us enough to sacrifice His own life for us, why can we not love ourselves and those entrusted to our care enough to make some sacrifice for eternal happiness?

Now we have learned during this war that we have to make sacrifices, for victory could not be won unless each had a share of the burden. If we are convinced that sacrifices are necessary for the attainment of temporal benefits, why should we forget that sacrifices are also necessary for obtaining that greatest good, God? Since God has told us exactly what He expects of the family, who can refuse

to abide by His wise counsels? God Himself has shown what family life should be in the ever-living story of the Holy Family.

The Rosary was given to St. Dominic by our Blessed Mother to wipe out a vicious heresy in thirteenth-century Europe. This prayer was most efficacious precisely because it was given by the Mother of God. Then as now, there was a great threat to family life, for the Albigensian heretics had rejected the true notion of the Christian family and would have destroyed the Catholic home with all the fury of the forces of Hell, had not these forces been chained by the Rosary of Mary. The head of the serpent was again crushed by the heel of the humble Virgin. Today a similar threat besets the Catholic home. Materialistic Atheism has denied all family rights because it has denied the Giver of all rights. There is no reason why the same help should not be sought now as was sought at the time of St. Dominic, for Mary is as eager that families of today lead Christian lives as she was at the time when she gave us her Rosary.

Indeed, the family Rosary is an excellent means of thwarting the attacks against homelife. God, Who is the source of all blessings, deserves honor from families, for every creature must acknowledge its dependence upon God. Not only individuals must pay their debt of worship to God, but also social groups. It is true that part of this debt is satisfied when the family goes to Mass on Sunday; this is a public act of homage. Over and above this act, there is demanded the private prayer of individuals and of the family. Certainly the Rosary is the best private prayer which the family can offer. It is *made to order* for the family circle. It is easily recited by all, for its prayers are the simplest and yet the most sublime. They are the simplest because every school child can utter the words, sublime because they have been given to us by God Himself. What prayer could be more acceptable than the words Christ spoke when He taught us to pray? The *Our Father* was given at the request of the Apostles for a fitting prayer; and what greater respect could be paid to the Mother of God than to repeat humbly the words which announced to her the Redemption of mankind?

The Joyful Mysteries are lived in every home that is truly Christian. Spouses should rejoice that God has brought them together, and they should be thankful for the great joys which He has permitted them. They see that their love for each other is a reflection of their love for God, and they perceive that the love which they have for their children resembles the love which God has for them. God's love has been proved, for the Father has given each one of us

our very existence and all that we have. Without His help we can do nothing.

Too, husband and wife must beg the grace to continue in the love of God and in mutual love. What better example of love of God and of neighbor is there than the example of Mary? She who is "full of grace," and therefore filled with God's own love, visited her cousin Elizabeth, and by that visit sanctified the home that she entered. Mary wants to bring Christ into our homes today. Mary will teach us to love our Redeemer with the fervor that burns in her own heart. She will have her divine Spouse enkindle a mutual love among the members of the family so that they may live peacefully together and may serve God faithfully. The home where Mary reigns has the real joys of a well-ordered household, a household consecrated to God.

The children will learn the lesson of obedience as they look upon the life of that Child Who was both God and man. They will see the lesson of obedience which He taught in His humble subjection to Mary and Joseph. Boys and girls will learn that only by imitating the obedience of Christ can they become like Christ. More and more they will understand the gospel story of the Finding in the Temple, for they will begin to realize why "He went down with them, and came to Nazareth and was subject to them" (Lk. II, 51).

By meditating on the Sorrowful Mysteries of the Rosary, the father and mother know that their joys must be mingled with great sorrows, because they will see that even that most joyful family endured the greatest hardships and sufferings. Amidst the joys of that holy household there was always the shadow of the cross; for Mary had been warned that a sword of sorrow would pierce her heart, and she soon began to understand what the dreadful blade of that sword could do. She had lost her spouse and protector, Joseph, but her faith and confidence in God did not fail. She saw the enemies of her divine Son and she knew that they sought His life. What did she not endure when she saw Him pay the horrible price for sin? The family which ponders the mysteries of the sorrows of Christ and Mary will soon see the lightness of its own misfortunes in contrast to these unspeakable agonies. What grief could compare to that of Mary and her Son? The infinite God and the purest of all creatures were loaded down with the weight of our sins. They saw more clearly than anyone else what the only real evil is; they saw sin in its true light. We may see its bitter effects, namely, death, sickness, mental anguish, and the pain of loss. We may be stunned by these dreadful realities and may even be overcome with distress, but what must have been the

anguish of Christ and Mary who saw the source of all these evils?

Each member of the family will see how petty his troubles are when compared to those of Christ and Mary. The Catholic family which prays the Rosary will be willing to accept the crosses which God sends, and in all the trials of home-life, each member will find the answer to his problem when he finds the answer to his prayer. However, he will not find the answer to his prayer unless he prays.

When the parents and children recite the Glorious Mysteries, they will remember that heaven is real. Yet they see that these Mysteries are preceded by the Sorrowful ones. In the lives of Christ and Mary such was the case, and in the lives of each of us too it is true. In every man's life there can be no resurrection or ascension before the carrying of the cross and the death to sin. The Rosary reminds us that Heaven is our reward and God is our goal, and that this life must be only a means to Him. Hence, our joys and sorrows must be accepted in accord with the Providence of God Who will provide for our needs and Who will lead us to our true home. Mary, the mother of the vast Christian family, will care for each one of her children with a mother's care. Under her guidance, no one will stray far from home, and all will be certain that when they return, she will be waiting to welcome them to the table of her Divine Son.

When the family begs help from this mother, it will find strength to meet the daily difficulties of every-day life. The Rosary is Mary's own prayer; it is the prayer that pleases her most. She will send help to combat the enemies of home-life. God's commands to the family will be respected, the divorce courts and the birth-controller's will be evaluated in their true light as enemies of God. The ideologies which seek to crush the faith of God's Church will be met by Catholics of conviction, for the Virgin Mother will again crush the forces of evil under her heel.

With the help of God we can do all things. Without His help we can do nothing. The Rosary of Mary will bring us this help, for it will bring the blessings of God upon the family and upon the nation. What family can be so independent that it will reject God's help? There is but one hope left. We must return to Christ through Mary. It is through Mary's Rosary that we can make this return journey safely.