

MARY'S PEACE PLAN

VINCENT FERRER McHENRY, O.P.

"He that hearkeneth to me shall not be confounded: and they that work by me shall not sin."—Eccclus., 24, 30.



THE PAGES of history oftentimes show that the pen is mightier than the sword. There is another weapon, however, which has prevailed even when both the pen and the sword have proven powerless. It is Mary's prayer, the Rosary. Tradition has preserved the words of our Blessed Mother as she gave St. Dominic the Rosary: "The earth will remain barren until watered by this heavenly dew." Since then what glorious fruits has the Rosary brought forth upon the earth! Every faithful child of Mary can tell of the victories over the Albigenian heretics and over the Turks, and of the more intimate ones over the world, the flesh, and the devil.

Has the Rosary lost its power to effect these results again? Does it still remain the "rainbow of peace" for the Christian world? Our Lady herself has replied and affirmed the undiminished vigor of her Rosary.

MARY'S PLAN

Thirty years ago, she appeared to Lucia, Jacinta, and Francisco, three peasant children, in a tiny town of Portugal, called Fatima, and entrusted them with the mission of warning all men to do penance and pray. Like the prophets of old, these three young seers faithfully fulfilled that mission. If men and women faithfully observed Mary's directions, they said, the world would be spared impending punishment and misery. In those directions Mary made her Rosary play a prominent part. To assure the world that the children spoke for her, she worked a miracle witnessed by seventy thousand people present at the last apparition. Thereby did Mary confirm the truth of her message and the vital strength of her Rosary.

In her message, Our Lady informed the world of the near end of the war, the first World War. She also added that, if men did not amend their sinful ways, the world would soon be punished by "another and worse one." Being the Mother of "knowledge and of holy hope,"¹ Mary did not leave her children orphans, abandoned to fear

¹ Ecclesiasticus, 24, 24.

and despair. She made a threefold request which, if fulfilled, would avert war and bring peace. Her request was that men do penance, that Russia be consecrated to her Immaculate Heart, and that her faithful children over the entire world perform special acts of reparation on the first five Saturdays of five consecutive months. Among those acts, she placed the Rosary.

Few heard the message of Fatima, fewer still observed Mary's requests. As a result, the world is still suffering the punishments foretold by her, war, famine, and persecution. But now is not the time to lament over the neglect of the past; rather, it is the time to hear and carry out our Lady's message. If her wise counsels and requests are again ignored or spurned, heaven alone knows the horrible punishments of a third world war.

Throughout the seven apparitions at Fatima, our Blessed Mother stressed the importance of her cherished devotion, the Rosary. She told Francisco, the smallest of the seers, that he would go to heaven, but before he did, he would have to recite many rosaries. Mary promised to answer personal petitions of the three children, but she bade them pray the Rosary. On another occasion, Mary requested that a statue of Our Lady of the Rosary be carried in procession. She always appeared with a pair of Rosary beads on her person. Persistently did she request the recitation of the Rosary for peace. Having withheld her identity until the last appearance, Mary proclaimed, "I am the Lady of the Rosary." Immediately after her final departure, a tableau depicting scenes of the joyful, sorrowful, and glorious mysteries of the Rosary appeared to the children.

THE WAGES OF SIN

Why was our Blessed Mother so insistent that the Rosary have such a prominent part in her message? The reason was that she realized the real cause of war and the real meaning of peace. Hence, Mary, Seat of Wisdom, chose the most suitable means, the Rosary, for inaugurating and preserving peace.

None of the causes of war, ardently propounded by men of the pen and sword, were named by our Lady during her apparitions. Instead, she revealed the fundamental, underlying reason, "the innumerable sins of men." The real cause of war was not social, not political, not economic. It was personal offenses against God. The sins of the peasant, the housewife, the laborer, the school child, the professional man, the statesman. The sins of all men in station high and low. Succinctly did St. Paul expose the cause of war when he named the works

of the flesh: "Fornication, uncleanness, immodesty, luxury, idolatry, witchcrafts, enmities, contentions, emulations, wraths, quarrels, dissensions, sects. Envy, murders, drunkenness, revelings, and such like."² These are the causes of heaven's punishment, war.

To overcome these causes, Mary had to lead souls to peace. How profoundly did she understand that true peace flows only from union with God! From the moment the Lord had done great things to her, Mary had realized the meaning of peace. She knew that without Christ, the "way and the truth, and the life,"³ there could be no peace in the souls of her children and none in the world.

THE PEN, THE SWORD, OR THE ROSARY

What suitable means, then, did Mary choose to unite her adopted children with her divine Child? She, whom Pius X called the most apt to lead men to the knowledge of Christ, chose the Rosary as her textbook because it is an appropriate book for everyone; it is simple for the humble, profound for the learned. Therein the goodness and mercy of God, the evil of sin, the joy of union with Christ are vividly portrayed. Therein are taught the virtues without which there can be no union with Christ. In a word, therein is the way to life with God now and hereafter.

The fifteen lessons of the Rosary can be studied in less than an hour, but it takes a lifetime to master them. If all men were to mold their daily lives according to what is taught in this breviary of the Gospel and of Christian life, they would discover peace in their own souls, peace in the world, and peace in the life to come. That is why Mary unfolded at Fatima not the pen, nor the sword, but the Rosary.

In the past decade, the sword of war has failed to bring peace, and the pen of statesmen has failed to compose an acceptable plan of peace. Accordingly, the pessimistic cries are again heard: "War is imminent," "War is inevitable." Will Mary's children also join those who have trusted entirely in men? No! Not if they remember Fatima. Not if they pray the Rosary. Not if they live by its teachings and spread its devotion. Despite the present indications of the nearness of war, the world can still obtain the peace promised by our Lady at Fatima, if enough souls meditate on the mysteries of her Rosary and imitate the goodness it contains.

² Galatians, 5, 19-21.

³ St. John, 14, 6.