

Encouragement Encouragement

October 2017 – Issue 75

Ponder and Pray...

THE HOST APOSTOLATE
WWW.THEHOSTAPOSTOLATE.ORG

14, GOATBECK TERRACE,
LANGLEY MOOR,
COUNTY DURHAM DH7 8JJ

thehostapostolate@gmail.com

There are many important feast days in October, of great Saints like St. Teresa of Avila, St. Faustyna, St. Thérèse of Lisieux and of course St. Francis, each of which teach us something of great importance for our lives as Christians and followers of Jesus. St. Francis, with his simplicity, poverty and brotherhood of man, St. Thérèse, about the simplicity of the call to be 'Love,' and the simple ways it can be achieved, St. Teresa, the importance of 'journeying', spiritual journeying to God, and the difficulties we encounter, and St. Faustyna on the importance of trusting God, the Merciful One, from whom all goodness overflows to us, all indicate to us an important truth. Incidentally too, she entered into the Community of Our Lady of Mercy.

But all these attributes are also found in the Mother of God, Mary our Mother. This month we celebrate the feast of Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary. The Rosary, so important to all the saints, though for St. Francis a simplified form as the 'Hail Mary' has developed over the centuries. The central prayer, the 'Hail Mary', taken from Scripture, often masks the essential crucial elements of the rosary, and that is the life of Our Mother, especially in the Joyful Mysteries, the Annunciation, Birth of Jesus, Assumption etc. The Sorrowful Mysteries and the Mysteries of Light bring the life of Jesus into sharp relief. Why should we therefore ask for Our Lady's intercession? Why is she the 'Queen' of Rosary? Are not these important enough without emphasising her intercession or a simple prayer such as the 'Hail Mary'?

We do not have to dig too deeply to see that she, as Mother of the Word, pleads for her children. We were given to her as she stood at the foot of the Cross, when Jesus told John to behold his Mother. Yes, that was to protect her – a widow with no son, lowest of all creatures in Jewish tradition, but also to draw attention to her importance. As 'Our Mother' she steers us always to her Son – always focussing our attention on Him, whom she nurtured and loved. It is no surprise therefore that she will guide us as we reflect on the life of Jesus and her own, towards the purpose of *our lives*,

and that is to serve God.

What better person than she, to help us reflect on the life of Jesus from birth to death than the one who witnessed both, even in an intimate way. This is no second hand reporting or 'fake news', but an intimate relationship with the one who was her child. Conversely she was also the child of God, chosen for the purpose.

One of the greatest attributes of saints is their dedication to God, in both Word and Sacrament. It is also in their simplicity. In Mary we have a perfect example of simplicity and humility.

The following is taken from a homily recently heard on the Feast of the Assumption which emphasises this point beautifully, words spoken at the Visitation...

*Pray the
Rosary for
peace in
the world.*

In today's Gospel, Elizabeth said to Mary, "Of all women you are the most blest", great praise indeed. It might have gone to Mary's head, but what happened? Did she deny it? No she didn't, she accepted it graciously, but attributed everything to God and His goodness to her. She said "My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord... the Almighty has done great things for me." Humility isn't about self-depreciation; humility is the opposite of that. It is the grateful recognition of our goodness, but, acknowledging that this goodness is a gift from God.

Today there is a great emphasis placed on self-esteem. The unhappiest state of all is to have low self-esteem, and the happiest state of all is to have high self-esteem. The important thing we are told is to feel good about ourselves, to like ourselves and to be able to say 'I'm OK'. And this approach is good up to a point. Self-esteem is a good thing, it is important to have good self-image *but* this self-image must be founded on truth, otherwise we are building on sand...

After hearing the wonderful words of praise from Elizabeth, Mary might have gone back home immediately and basked in the sunshine of self-approval, expecting others to wait on her. Instead she stayed on with her aged relative for three months to help her through her pregnancy...

But we mustn't think that everything was easy for her:

"CONTINUE TO PRAY THE ROSARY EVERY DAY." OUR LADY OF FATIMA TO SISTER LUCIA

the opposite would be nearer the truth. We are called to share in the glory of Jesus and Mary, who is our spiritual mother, who will help us in moments of discouragement and failure. Just because she is in Heaven doesn't mean that she cannot help us on earth. It is precisely because of where she is now, with God, that she can help us..... 15.08.17(extract)

Yes she returned to her 'everyday' and certainly not easy life with travels, journeys, resettlement and loss. But one word exemplifies her for me. **'She pondered these things in her heart'**. This was not only her call but it should be how we look at the 'mysteries' in Scripture in the light of Jesus Himself. We should ponder them in our hearts and let them take deep root.

To ponder is to reflect, to have thoughts of the heart, thoughts that make us love more and deepen our relationship with Jesus. Mary carried Jesus in her body and in her heart. She spoke to Him and listened. She saw His Joys and Sorrows and she shared them. His Joys were hers, His Sorrows hers too. When in communion with Him these thoughts were known to each other, as lover's thoughts often are. When in deep communion of the heart our thoughts turn into prayer. Those innermost feelings and desires become a deeply spiritual encounter, a spiritual communion. Like a pond, which can be very still, or blown gently by the wind thoughts of the heart were stirred within her and she kept them close to herself.

In two Joyful Mysteries, we see these words addressed at her, in the visit of the shepherds, encouraged by the Angels, and in the finding of Jesus in the Temple. When the Angels sent the shepherds to visit the baby Jesus she was surprised and St. Luke records 'She remembered all these things and thought deeply about them'(Luke 2:15-20). At 12 years old, Jesus got left behind in Jerusalem and when found by a distressed Mary and Joseph, she was amazed at His retort, 'Did you not know I must about my Father's business' (Luke 2:49). Again we see Luke record her thoughts 'She treasured all these things in her heart' (Luke 2: 36).

Earlier, when she presented Jesus to Simeon in the Temple, she heard the words from him, "And a sword shall pierce your heart'.

Mary treasured these things... She pondered over them. In the Rosary we have parts of Jesus' life revealed – the above Nativity, Finding in the Temple and Presentation being three such. And how her heart was pierced in all the sorrowful events of the Passion. When we ponder, we do so in silence. The repetitious prayers of the Rosary should therefore lead us to reflect and ponder

the events of the Gospel. Mary treasured these events; she kept them close to her heart. She kept Jesus present to her at all times. This pondering is a way to contemplative prayer – a deeper realisation of what and who Jesus is to us. The synonym for 'ponder' is in fact, to contemplate. In so doing we cannot fail to live close to Him. Mary has this lesson to teach us: she is Our Lady of the Rosary because she teaches us to ponder. Can we learn from her? Halina Holman



Pope Francis

The month of October is dedicated to the Rosary and the Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary. Pope Francis invited all believers to recite the Marian prayer. "The Rosary is the prayer that always accompanies my life: it is also the prayer of simple people and saints...it is the prayer of my heart". Rosary is "a synthesis of Divine Mercy": With Mary, in the mysteries of the Rosary we contemplate the life of Jesus which irradiates the mercy of the Father. Let us rejoice in His love and forgiveness, let us recognize it in foreigners and in those who are needy, let us live His Gospel every day"

Pope Francis gives all people he meets a Rosary.

October 2016

Papal Prayer

'That all workers may receive respect and protection of their rights and that the unemployed may receive the opportunity to contribute to the common good.'

&

"When people love and recite the Rosary they find it makes them better." St. Anthony Mary Claret

Feast Days in October.

2nd The Guardian Angels,

3rd St. Thérèse of Lisieux

4th St Francis of Assisi,

5th St Faustyna,

7th Our Lady of the Rosary.

9th Blessed John Newman,

& St John Leonardi

10th St Paulinus of York.

11th St Pope John XXIII

12th St Wilfred,

13th St Edward the Confessor

16th St Margaret Mary Alacoque

17th St Ignatius of Antioch

18th St Luke Evangelist

19th St. Isaac Jogues, St Paul of the Cross Passionist

24th St Anthony Claret,

25th Six Welsh Martyrs

28th SS. Simon & Jude Apst 31st Bl. Dominic Collins.