

THE ROSARY

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LIGHT & LIFE

FATHER REGINALD E. MARTIN, O.P., DIRECTOR

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HEARTS AND WORDS

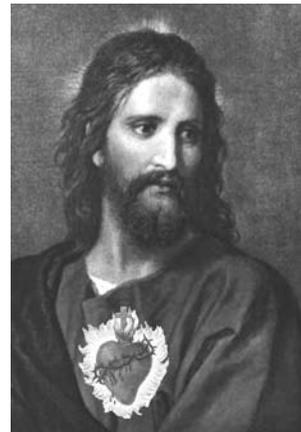
The Easter Season ends with the Solemnity of Pentecost, which ushers in the Church's celebrations to honor the Trinity, the Body and Blood of Christ and, finally, the great feasts that praise the Sacred Heart of our Savior, and the Immaculate Heart of His mother.

The Mass we celebrate each day unites every moment of our Church's liturgical year. Indeed, the sacrifice Jesus offered on Calvary is the very basis for our worship. Nevertheless, we celebrate some moments of our liturgical life with greater solemnity, and Pentecost stands as a fitting end to the Easter season, and a splendid introduction to the special feasts we honor in this issue of *Light and Life*. The reason for the connection of these feasts is the connection between our lips and our hearts, our words and our actions.

In the very early days of our Church, St. Ignatius of Antioch counseled *"It is better to be silent and real than to chatter and be unreal."* In the 19th Century one novelist wrote: *"Speech is a rolling mill which presses out the sentiments into lengths of metallic ribbon."* When we were growing up we learned that if we carry a big enough stick, we can speak very softly indeed, and each of us has been taught that the pen is mightier than the sword.

The right to use words powerfully is guaranteed by our country's Constitution – sometimes in ways that are very difficult for the average citizen to understand. In the Scripture we hear that God spoke and every atom of creation came into existence. God spoke again and his Word became flesh, and whether we say something occurred before or after Christ or before or after the Common Era, we date every event in our history from this Incarnation of God's Word.

In the 6th Century, in a Pentecost sermon he preached in Rome, St. Gregory the Great asked why God's Spirit should appear as tongues, and especially tongues of fire? He answered the tongue has the closest connection with words so a tongue fittingly illustrates the eternal connection between God's Spirit and God's Word. The tongue should be on fire, he said, because anyone the Spirit touches becomes both ardent and eloquent.



THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS



THE IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY

At Pentecost, tongues of fire purify us and remind us that our speech is to bring out what is within, and to order the world with power and with love. To speak to the world a word of peace and forgiveness – the very words of Jesus.

Everyone has heard of Gregory the Great, but listen to the words of another sixth Century writer. This one anonymous, and from Africa

And if anyone says to one of us: "You have received the Holy Spirit, why do you not speak in tongues?" such a one should reply: "I do... for I am in the Body of Christ, the Church, which speaks in every tongue... Celebrate, then, this day as members of the one body of Christ. Your celebration will not be vain if you are what you celebrate."

In the Eucharist we become what we eat. At Pentecost we celebrate what we have become, the one body of Christ. This is a great honor, and with the honor comes the equally great responsibility to imitate God's Incarnate Word not only in our words, but with our actions.

Here we see the connection between Pentecost, in which we celebrate the refinement of our gift of speech, and the feasts that honor the hearts of Jesus and Mary, which challenge us to *"lift up our hearts"* in imitation of Our Lord and His Mother.

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THE ROSARY LIGHT & LIFE

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TO BE OFFERED FOR YOUR INTENTIONS

THEOLOGY FOR THE LAITY

The Our Father, Part VII Lead Us Not Into Temptation But Deliver Us From Evil

By Father Reginald Martin, O.P.

A REMEDY FOR THE FUTURE

In the petitions of the Lord's Prayer that we have considered thus far, we have asked God to protect us from present ills, and to forgive sins we may have committed in the past. As the Lord's Prayer draws to its close, we ask God to preserve us from sin – and from what leads us to sin – in our future actions.

THE NATURE OF TEMPTATION

Although we commonly think of temptation solely in negative terms, St. Thomas Aquinas teaches that temptation can also serve as inducement to do good. Temptation, in itself, is simply a trial or proof of our virtue. We demonstrate our capacity for virtue by doing good and avoiding evil, so we may be tempted in either resolve.

DOING GOOD

God tempts us to do good either by inspiring us to undertake some additional virtuous act (e.g., fasting, or performing one of the works of mercy), or by allowing us to experience some hardship, by which we come to understand the strength of our character and our ability to withstand attack upon it. In the Book of Deuteronomy, God tells Moses He may occasionally allow false prophets to rise in the midst of His people. When this happens, He says, "...the Lord is testing you, to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul" (Deut. 13:3).

DOING EVIL

Our more common experience of temptation is probably the lure of something that leads us to turn away from God. Our theology has traditionally identified the world, the flesh, and the devil as the sources of this temptation. We shall consider each of these in turn, but first we must remember "*God cannot be tempted with evil and He Himself tempts no one*" (James 1:13). Our disordered desire makes sin appear attractive, and God may allow us to experience this attraction, but God does not cause evil. He may permit it, so some good may emerge, and thus He may allow us to be tempted, but only so that we may realize our total dependence upon His mercy, and so we can come to know our capacity to do good.

SOURCES OF TEMPTATION: THE WORLD

The world is the realm of material good and secular honor. The world encourages us to promote ourselves

excessively, and to seek material possessions far beyond those we need to satisfy our legitimate needs. Obviously, we have a right to a good reputation, and the virtue of humility urges us to rejoice in what God's love allows us to be and do. The temptation exerted by the world is one of degree; we surrender to it when the desire for money, fame, or some other indicator of success becomes so great that it imperils our own salvation, or blinds us to our obligations to God and one another.

But the world exerts another, more insidious, temptation, which is the fear of persecution. On the one hand, we can be so eager to succeed that we drive ourselves to reach for an excessive share of material goods. On the other hand, fear exerts an opposite lure, encouraging us to shrink from doing good because we dread some consequence of our virtuous act. St. Paul reminds Timothy, "...all who live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted...." (2 Tim. 3:12), and we must expect some conflict if we are serious about living a Christian life in a world that often scorns Christian values. The alternative is a moral paralysis that is terrible to consider because it prevents us from sharing the reward Christ promises to those who are willing to forsake themselves to endure His cross.

SOURCES OF TEMPTATION: THE FLESH

Our flesh continually reminds us of physical pleasure, and it always seeks its own gratification. We commonly identify sins of the flesh as lust, or some over-indulgence in food, drink, or something else that is good or necessary. But our flesh exerts another temptation as well, and that is the urge to turn away from a spiritual good. This can be as simple as choosing time on the Internet over time for prayer, but however this temptation manifests itself it prevents us from pursuing what will nourish, refresh, and restore our spirit.

St. Paul summed up this tension when he lamented,

I delight in the law of God in my inmost self, but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind, and making me captive to the law of sin which is in my members" (Rom. 7:22-23).

Other temptations assail us from outside us; our flesh is a part of us, and we must always respond to its legitimate claims. The challenge for Christians is to distinguish between the needs of the flesh and its wants. We must

grant the one, while keeping in mind that our bodies must never stand in the way of our souls' everlasting happiness.

SOURCES OF TEMPTATION: THE DEVIL

The devil deceives us by confusing the appearance of good and evil, and – once we have succumbed to sin – by suggesting excuses for continuing to sin. St. Thomas Aquinas was a superb psychologist. He realized we naturally shrink from evil that we recognize as evil. A far more subtle challenge is to avoid an evil that appears – if only temporarily – as good.

We encounter temptation in this guise every day, with minor or more serious effects. For example, when we must choose between wasting time and using it more profitably, when we are urged to spend more than we can afford for a product that promises marginally better results than a competing good, or when we are urged to overlook some flawed aspect of a political candidate's platform because the rest is so attractive.

Virtues and vices are both habits, and each becomes easier with practice. *“Even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light”* (2 Cor. 11:14), and if we wish to avoid finding ourselves enmeshed in an unprofitable, sinful habit, we must be careful to avoid taking the risky “first steps” that may seem to be no sin at all.

DEFENSE AGAINST TEMPTATION

Temptation is a fact of Christian life – the gospel relates that even Jesus was tempted – and prayer is the first defense against it. In the Lord's Prayer we beg, *“lead us not into temptation.”* Here we should consider that we do not ask God to remove temptation from our lives, which would be unreasonable. Rather, we ask for the strength to resist temptation, as Christ did, and our prayer for this resistance becomes one more way to identify our trials with our Savior's.

Common sense suggests another, practical defense against temptation, which is to avoid the situations or individuals that encourage us to do wrong. These “occasions of sin” are the moral equivalent of physical danger. Our physical lives are subject to all sorts of risks; if we are wise, we minimize our exposure to them. It is the same with our moral lives. We cannot avoid temptation altogether, but we can reduce its threat by not putting ourselves in its way.

A CALL TO LOOK WITHIN

Temptation is never a pleasant topic, but it is fairly easy to consider so long as we view it solely as a force acting upon us. However, as we reflect on our moral lives with others we must acknowledge an additional danger, and that is our own capacity to be a temptation. Anyone who looks at the newspapers in the grocery store has grown numb to the word “scandal.” What may surprise us is that scandal has little to do with the misbehavior of celebrities. In our moral theology, scandal means leading another person into sin.

The virtue of charity calls us to wish another's good, and the greatest good we can wish is another's salvation. To lead another person into sin is the most serious sin against the virtue of charity, so it is the worst sin we can commit. The temporal consequences of Christian discipleship may be painful, for we are beset by all sorts of inconvenience and tribulation. But these are nothing compared to the punishment we will suffer if we trip another – and this is what the word “scandal” means – whom we ought to be supporting on our pilgrim journey to salvation.

CONCLUSION OF OUR PRAYER: DELIVERANCE

Throughout the Lord's Prayer we ask God to forgive the sins we have committed in the past, to form us in His image so we may be signs of His goodness in the present, and to help us avoid committing sin in the future. As the Lord's Prayer draws to its close we also ask God to save us from the general ills that beset us, namely the trials and afflictions that are a part of our everyday life in the world.

God may occasionally intervene directly in our lives, to preserve us from some accident or illness, but experience teaches us that these are rare – indeed, miraculous – events. God's support is generally more subtle, and we experience it in a variety of on-going ways that bring us abiding solace every day.

COMFORT IN SUFFERING

Our word “comfort” comes from the Latin word, *fortis*, which means “strength.” As we approach the great feast of Pentecost, we will often hear the Holy Spirit described as our “Comforter.” We may be inclined to think of God's Spirit as something that makes us warm, but the Spirit's true mission is to make us strong, especially when trial or adversity weakens our faith.

REWARD IN AFFLICTION

When we undergo them – and in this regard we may reasonably think of the many challenges we face in these uncertain economic times – trials are unpleasant, and we may find little in them that is redemptive. When we ask God to deliver us from evil, we seek His gift of insight that allows us to place our trials in perspective – at the very least, to see them as temporary. Our prayer may not altogether relieve our anxiety, but it may allow us to see our suffering in the larger context of a weakness that afflicts the entire Body of Christ as a result of sin.

PATIENCE IN TRIAL

Here we must repeat that the Lord's Prayer does not ask God to deliver us from trial, which is a natural part of our life, but from sin. When faced with temptation or trial – and especially if we succumb to sin – we experience sadness, which blinds us to reason. St. Augustine teaches that Patience is the virtue

whereby [man] bears evil with an equal mind, i.e., without being disturbed by sorrow, lest he abandon with an unequal mind the goods whereby he may advance to better things.

THE BEATITUDE OF PEACE

Patience allows us to see God's love and goodness in spite of the trials that beset us, and to temper by reason the joys that often threaten to overwhelm us. To the extent we cultivate the equilibrium of patience, we approach the tranquility that is God's gift of peace. The blessing promised peacemakers is to be called God's children, which is nothing less than to be like God. Just as nothing can harm God, so those who are patient can rise to the challenges of prosperity or adversity, joy or sorrow. ■

HEARTS AND WORDS *(Continued from page 1)*

The Sacred Heart of Jesus is a reminder of the immensity of God's love for us. When we were slaves, God's love set us free. When we threw our hearts away, Jesus ransomed them at the cost of His life. St. Bonaventure reminds us that when the soldier pierced Our Savior's side with his lance,

God's Providence decreed... that blood with water might flow out... This blood, which flowed from its source in the secret recesses of His heart, gave the sacraments of the Church power to confer the life of grace, and for those who already live in Christ was a draught of living water welling up to eternal life.

The Virgin Mary is our model and mentor at every moment in the pilgrimage of our Christian life, so we properly look to her to learn what her Son has a right to expect of us in return for the blood shed for our salvation.

It was surely fitting that divine Wisdom, which had built the house of the Church for its abode, should use most holy Mary as its instrument, where the observance of the law, purification of the heart, the doctrine of humility and spiritual offering were concerned. Imitate her, O faithful soul... In everything we do God considers our disposition...so whether we retire mentally to God in earnest contemplation and remain at rest or whether we are intent on being of service to those around us with good works...let our object be that we are motivated only by the love of Christ.

Ultimately, everything we are, and everything we do, brings us back to the love of Christ, revealed on the cross and expressed in the imagery of His Sacred Heart. The heart of Christ is a powerful reminder of God's love for us, and the immense debt we only begin to repay when we beg Jesus, "make our hearts like unto Thine."

These words are nothing less than a promise that we will strive to live up to the nobility God has a right to expect of beings created in His image. St. Paul (whose jubilee year draws to its close a few days after we

celebrate the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart) reminds us God didn't become mortal so that we could escape our flesh, He clothed himself with our humanity to fulfill its promise, so that our hearts – which are so prone to skipping beats – might beat aright.

May Christ dwell in your hearts... and may love be the root and foundation of your life.... so that you may attain to the fullness of God himself.

In recent times St. Paul has been portrayed as bad-tempered, mean-spirited, a chauvinist. These words give the lie to that reputation, and we can hardly imagine a clearer – or more beautiful – description of the potential for human hearts to reveal God. ■

APRIL 14: BIRTHDAY OF A GIANT

On April 14 Fr. Duffner, long-time director of the Rosary Confraternity, celebrated his 94th birthday. The years tell very little on Fr. Duffner. He was an athlete in his youth, and he continues to walk regularly. He faithfully celebrates Mass each morning at 7 o'clock, and after breakfast, comes to the Rosary Center, where he continues to perform a number of tasks.

Our friends know that some of the leaflets and other publications we offer are so small that we sell them only in packages of twenty-five. What our friends may not know is that these packets must be assembled by hand, and by the hundred. This is, by no means, anyone's favorite task, but Fr. Duffner has discovered a way to break the monotony of counting to twenty-five over and over: he weighed one of the packets on the Center's postal scale, and now simply adds leaflets to a pile until they reach the desired weight.

New friends to the Rosary Center may not be aware that the reflections Fr. Duffner wrote for several decades of the Rosary Center's *Light and Life* bulletin have been newly edited and published in book form. The reflections comprise two volumes, and each is available for \$19.95. Those who purchase both volumes (for \$35.00) enjoy a discount on the single-volume price.

A FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTION

What happens if I cannot pray all fifteen decades of the Rosary within a week?

Fr. Reginald replies: prayer is always valuable, so Confraternity members should pray as much of the Rosary as they can, and not fault themselves for what they are unable to accomplish. To be sure, those who cannot pray the entire Rosary within a week will not receive the indulgence promised those who complete the Rosary, but they continue to benefit from the graces that accompany their prayer, and they continue to benefit from the prayers offered for their intentions by the countless other Confraternity members. God surely understands that we cannot always do all the good deeds we propose, but that is no reason to lose heart; God places immense value on every good act we perform, so we should rejoice in what we are able to do, and not concern ourselves overmuch with what we cannot.