

THE ROSARY

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LIGHT & LIFE

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

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A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

With this issue of *Light and Life* we have the immense good fortune to share the first of a two-part reflection on the Sacred and Immaculate Hearts, prepared by Br. Thomas Aquinas Pickett, one of the Dominican students whom friends of the Rosary Center support with their prayers and generous gifts. The rosaries he distributes in his unique ministry of evangelization are also your gift!

– Fr. Reginald Martin, O.P.



THE POWER OF THE HEART

Br. Thomas Aquinas Pickett, O.P.

“I prefer a church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a church which is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security.” These challenging words of Pope Francis inspired me to take up the ministry of “street evangelization.” On the sidewalks of Berkeley and San Francisco, a group of young Dominican friars, walking with brisk enthusiasm, hands out rosaries, engages in conversations with strangers, and seeks to bring the light of Christ to one of the more densely secular strongholds in the American West. Surprisingly, we have encountered almost no negativity, aggression, or hostility.

What I have found on the street is that beneath the veneer of secular indifference to matters divine, minds and hearts are open to, if not bluntly inquisitive, the topic of God. However, the sad fact is, no Christians are there to engage them in rational, compassionate discussion. It seems the Church in the United States after Vatican II has, indeed, opened plenty of windows and doors, but has been afraid to step out and invite others in!

Among the many surprises of my ministry, what has struck me most is the startling honesty and curiosity of



people who are willing to discuss their personal lives, faith, and doubts with absolute strangers dressed in our outlandish, medieval, white Dominican habits. One young woman, tearing up while revealing her loneliness in the urban labyrinth, explained she tries to pray to God, but was unsure whether it “counted.” A middle-aged man going through AA, who the previous night had been left completely unscathed in a devastating car crash, expressed his fearful amazement in the fact God had allowed him to live. He wondered why, despite all his faults, God would choose to keep him safe. A woman, sitting on the ground in her driveway with a cigarette, knees tucked up to her chest, broke down in tears and told us that she was “a little heart-broken.” She gratefully accepted the rosary we gave her, and explained she had stopped by the nearby Catholic church several times just to have some “quiet and peace.”

If you want to find the “real world,” the world where the hearts of men and women are open, raw, and

Continued on page 4

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THEOLOGY FOR THE LAITY

The Ten Commandments: IV

The Third Commandment

"Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy"

By Father Reginald Martin, O.P.

AN URGENT CALL

One need not be a misanthrope to conclude that the demand – and promise – of the Third Commandment has been drowned out by the noise and busy-ness of our 21st Century world. For that reason its call is all the more urgent to the modern Christian. The seventh day's rest God commands is a reminder of the rest God Himself enjoyed in the Book of Genesis. This was not a vacation from being God, which would be impossible, but a retreat from the labor of the previous six days, in which He brought all things into existence. "...in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and hallowed it."

TO IMITATE GOD

A day to rest, and a memorial day to reflect on God's merciful intervention in our lives. Above all, the sabbath is a day to imitate God.

If God "rested and was refreshed" on the seventh day, man too ought to "rest" and should let others, especially the poor, "be refreshed." The sabbath brings everyday work to a halt and provides a respite. It is a day of protest against the servitude of work and the worship of money. (CCC, #2172)

TO SAY "NO"

These words are based in God's command to Moses, but the editors of our *Catechism* want us to be very clear: the sabbath rest is God's message for us today. To embrace and rejoice in the sabbath is neither frivolity nor laziness; it is an acknowledgment of our worth as God's creatures. It is also an opportunity for us, as Christians, to say "no" to a society that often places unreasonable labor demands on its citizens and encourages us to see nothing more than the cash value of the goods that surround us.

THE LORD'S DAY

Those who have reached a certain age will recall an older *Catechism*, which reminded the faithful of their duty to refrain from "unnecessary servile labor" on the sabbath. The words "unnecessary" and "servile" are important to consider here, and they call to mind the criticism Jesus received when his enemies accused Him of violating the sabbath prescriptions by healing several individuals who were ill on that day.

He replied, "*The Son of Man is lord even of the sabbath,*" (Mk. 2:28) but what is more to the point, our

Catechism remarks, "*With compassion Christ declares the sabbath for doing good rather than harm, for saving life rather than killing.*" (CCC, #2172) Likewise, "*Family needs or important social service can legitimately excuse from the obligation of [sabbath] rest.*" (CCC, #2185) St. Augustine observed, "*The charity of truth seeks holy leisure; the necessity of charity accepts just work.*" God's command to observe the sabbath is serious; it does not excuse us from extending God's mercy to our loved ones or others in need.

A CHANGE OF DAYS?

At some point we may wonder how – and why – God's People in the Old Testament observed their sabbath on the seventh day, while Christians embrace Sunday, the first day of the week, as our sabbath. The simple answer, of course, is our choosing to celebrate Sunday as the day of Christ's Resurrection.

St. Justin (AD 100 – 165), one of the Church's early writers, saw great significance in Jesus' rising on the first day, "...the day of the sun when God separated matter from darkness [and] made the world...." We immediately see the symbolic, literary value of St. Justin's words: Jesus, the Light of the World, rose from the dead on the same day God created light. What better day to rejoice in God's saving love? Thus, our *Catechism* observes

Jesus rose from the dead "on the first day of the week." Because it is the "first day," the day of Christ's Resurrection recalls the first creation. Because it is the "eighth day" following the sabbath, it symbolizes the new creation ushered in by Christ's Resurrection. For Christians it has become the first of all days, the first of all feasts, the Lord's Day.... (CCC, #2174)

The *Catechism* text continues, telling us Jesus fulfilled the many promises God made His people through the prophets; so, too, Sunday fulfills the "spiritual truth" of the sabbath of the Old Law, and the rest we enjoy during our earthly sabbaths points to the eternal rest we look forward to sharing with God in His kingdom.

A CONNECTION AMONG THE COMMANDMENTS

Worship is a traditional part of our sabbath celebrations, and St. Thomas Aquinas makes an interesting connection among the first three of the Ten Commandments. The first commandment, which forbids us to worship false gods, "...remove[s] the obstacles to true religion. Now the chief obstacle to religion is for man to adhere to a false god... Therefore in the first precept of the Law the worship of false gods is excluded." The

second leads us to worship because, *“In one who is being instructed in virtue it is necessary to remove obstacles... before establishing him in true religion. Now a thing is opposed to true religion in two ways...when...that which belongs to religion is given to others than to whom it is due... [and] when God is condemned....”* (ST, II-II, 122.2, 3)

FULFILLING THE SABBATH

None will be surprised to learn the Eucharist is the prayer prescribed for our liturgical observance of the sabbath. *“The Sunday celebration of the Lord’s Day and his Eucharist is at the heart of the Church’s life.”* (CCC, #2177) The Church’s Code of Canon Law observes, *“Sunday is the day on which the paschal mystery is celebrated in light of the apostolic tradition and is to be observed as the foremost holy day of obligation in the universal Church.”* (CIC, 1264.1)

Sunday worship is time-hallowed, and extends back to the Church’s earliest days. The notion of a parish is relatively recent, but community worship is as old as the Church itself. St. John Chrysostom wrote, *“You cannot pray at home as at church, where there is a great multitude, where exclamations are cried out to God as from one great heart.”* The Catechism stresses the importance of the parish when it teaches,

It is the place where all the faithful can be gathered together for the Sunday celebration of the Eucharist. The parish initiates the Christian people into the ordinary expression of the liturgical life; It gathers them together in the celebration; it teaches Christ’s saving doctrine; it practices the charity of the Lord in good works and brotherly love. (CCC, #2179)

THE OBLIGATION TO WORSHIP

The Catechism underscores the gravity of our obligatory duty to participate in Sunday worship when it states, *“The Sunday Eucharist is the foundation and confirmation of all Christian practice. For this reason the faithful are obliged to participate in the Eucharist on days of obligation, unless excused for a serious reason... Those who deliberately fail in this obligation commit a grave sin.”* (CCC, #2181)

Church law also assigns an obligation to attending Mass on Christmas, The Solemnity of Mary the Mother of God, the Immaculate Conception, the Assumption, Epiphany, the Ascension of the Lord, Corpus Christi, and the feasts of St. Joseph, Peter and Paul, and All Saints. However, the text remarks, *“The conference of bishops can abolish certain holy days of obligation or transfer them to a Sunday with prior approval of the Apostolic See.”*

TRANSFERRING FEASTDAYS

Many Catholics have asked why important feast days, like the Lord’s Ascension, have been moved to Sunday, and the reason is to allow the faithful more easily to take part in the liturgy proper to the feast day. Modern life, at least in the United States, seldom recognizes the importance of religious feast days, so many individuals have difficulty attending Mass on holy days – and absolutely cannot observe the sabbath rest such days deserve. By transferring some feast days

to Sunday, the Church allows the faithful at least the opportunity to celebrate the liturgical feast.

SPENDING THE SABBATH

Even in places where no priest is available to celebrate Mass, the faithful are encouraged to gather and reflect on the day’s Scripture readings. Our Baptism is a baptism into Christ’s Body, and we must never forget our Savior’s admonition, *“...where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”* (Mt. 18:20) This is nowhere more evident than when we gather for our sabbath worship.

WORKS OF MERCY

But how shall we spend the rest of our Sunday? The Catechism numbers several worthwhile enterprises

Sunday is traditionally consecrated by Christian piety to good works and humble service of the sick, the infirm and the elderly. Christians will also sanctify Sunday by devoting time and care to their families and relatives, often difficult to do on other days of the week. Sunday is a time for reflection, silence, cultivation of the mind, and meditation which furthers the growth of the Christian interior life. (CCC, #2186)

The first on the list of these activities might include tasks we would not – by any standard – consider “leisure” undertakings. They may be physically, and emotionally, draining. But, like Jesus’ outreach to those in need, these efforts are signs of God’s mercy at work in our world. Our theology teaches us mercy is sorrow for another’s misfortune, coupled with a practical will to relieve it. Charitable causes are no excuse to avoid the spiritual growth the sabbath invites us to cultivate, but when the demands of mercy steal into our meditation, we may console ourselves with Jesus’ reminder, *“The sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath.”* (Mk. 2:28)

AN OPPORTUNITY FOR JUSTICE

Christians have every right to enjoy sport and other recreational activities on Sunday, but we must recall we enjoy them at the expense of others’ sabbaths. *“...public authorities should ensure citizens a time intended for rest and divine worship. Employers have a similar obligation toward their employees.”* (CCC, #2187) Likewise, *“Every Christian should avoid making unnecessary demands on others that would hinder them from observing the Lord’s Day.”* (CCC, #2195)

THE EXAMPLE OF MARY

The gospel tells us nothing of Mary’s education, although tradition claims she spent her childhood in the Temple. Whatever the case, her *Magnificat* is the expression of someone very familiar with Old Testament imagery, and Old Testament theology. Mary’s is the voice expressing in the New Testament the very best the Old Testament has to say. And whether she learned her lessons in the Temple or at the knees of her parents, Anne and Joachim, the beauty with which her soul magnifies the Lord bespeaks the tradition of *“...the Lord’s Day [which] helps everyone enjoy adequate rest and leisure to cultivate their familial, cultural, social and religious lives.”* (CCC, #2184)

MARY AND THE SABBATH

One of Ronald Knox's books, *A Retreat for Lay People*, begins and ends with a reflection on Mary, and in each he asks us to consider her calm, her quiet, and her serenity. Individuals who are quiet and calm can often be taken for depressed, lazy or lethargic, but Knox points out there's another side to this, and that's "...the knack of putting first thing first." After the Annunciation, he remarks, she pays her visit to Elizabeth "in haste," but not "in a hurry."

Our dictionary defines "haste" as speed, but adds it is speed combined with a certain purpose or dispatch, which echoes Knox's observation, "Calm people don't need to be in a hurry, because they hasten at the right moment, about the right things." The 19th Century Dominican Henri Lacordaire observed, "After the Word, Silence is the most powerful force in the world. The sabbath is an invitation to cultivate that powerful force in our lives, that we may hasten at the proper time, and about the right things. When the gospel tells us, 'and his mother kept all these things in her heart' we may be certain she cultivated the sabbath silence that allowed her to reflect upon them. ■

THE POWER OF THE HEART Continued from page 1

exposed, you will find it on the sidewalks of our towns and cities. The reality of this world is that people are lonely, hurt, unsure, and in need of something greater than themselves. One does not need familiarity with the doctrine of Original Sin to know human life is characterized by messiness and failure. We see this in the shattering of families and marriages, the countless numbers addicted to alcohol, drugs, pornography and masturbation. We see the same failure in the abuse of children, spouses, and the elderly, in senseless crime, violence and war, as well as scandal in the Church and the political realm. The rise of depression, anxiety, and suicide are among the many other manifestations of our brokenness. Every man and woman, Christian or not, is susceptible to sin and guilty of perpetuating it. Each man and woman is affected by the sins of others, and all affect others through their own sins. Especially with the drastic devastations to human life, dignity, morality and faith wrought by the last century, we might easily sympathize with certain Reformation theologians who described the "total depravity" of human nature.

Despite its glaring presence, though, the reality of sin and the necessity of conversion is an issue our contemporaries seem to avoid. The frequency of confession provides a quick and simple demonstration of this. A study in 2008 by the Center for the Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) states, "[t]hree-quarters of Catholics report that they never participate in the sacrament of Reconciliation or that they do so less than once a year." What an unimaginable fact! To deny the reality of sin in our lives is to deny Christ who died on the cross for our sins. Not to avail oneself of Christ's forgiveness and mercy is unthinkable if one intellectually and existentially grasps the damage of sin, and the necessity of a savior.

For Catholics not to have recourse to Reconciliation demonstrates something fundamental is broken in the understanding and living of the Faith. It seems easier for us to recognize sin in the world than to see it in ourselves. It is easier, for example, to get involved in protesting social injustice than to become an activist against the sins that hold us captive. We obliviously ignore St. Paul's stinging words:

By your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed. For he will render to every man according to his works. (Rom 2:5-6).

Ironically, by denying sin, we likewise deny God's mercy. This is an atrocity of the greatest order! As Raniero Cantalamessa O.F.M.Cap., Preacher of the Papal Household, said during the Good Friday service at St. Peter's this spring, "Judas' greatest sin wasn't having betrayed Jesus, but having doubted his mercy."

We need a way of balancing sin and mercy. On the one hand we can err, like certain Protestants, in relying solely on God's mercy and grace (cf. *Antinomianism*) regardless of our actions. On the other, we can err, like Pelagius, in relying solely on what we can do ourselves to right the sins of the world. We must take the Catholic middle course and say that sin is, indeed operative in us, and in the world. But, on the other hand, God's mercy is also at work, and is necessary for our salvation.

In a perfect world, we would simply have scores of Dominicans preach the doctrine of sin and mercy to attentive, rapt droves of well-formed and catechized Catholics. But, as this is far from the reality, we must find another way, a more expedient way, to proclaim simultaneously the gravity of sin and the profundity of mercy. I believe we find a solution in devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary. The Church itself, in the Collect for the Feast of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, makes this connection between sin and mercy:

O God, who in the Heart of your Son, wounded by our sins, bestow on us in mercy the boundless treasures of your love, grant, we pray, that, in paying him the homage of our devotion, we may also offer worthy reparation.

To have a devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and to the Immaculate Heart of Mary means to serve God, to grow in love of God, in and through a particular understanding of the relation of sin, mercy, and love as they pertain to the salvific mission of Jesus, and the participation of Mary in that same mission. The devotion to the Sacred Heart, lauded by virtually every Pope since Leo XIII, leads its devotees to a fuller, experiential living out of the mystery of redemption. Devotees serve God through intentional reparation for their sins and those of the whole world. Meditating on the hearts of Jesus and Mary, one marvels at the stupendous love of God for sinful humanity, and, consequently is lead to act as a co-worker (cf. 1 Cor 3:9) in God's plan to "draw all things to Myself" (John 12:32).