

# THE ROSARY

JAN. - FEB. 2016

Voice of the Rosary Confraternity

# LIGHT & LIFE

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

Vol. 69, No. 1 - A WESTERN DOMINICAN PUBLICATION

## LOURDES AND REPENTANCE

At first glance, Lourdes and Ash Wednesday might not appear to be likely companions. This year, however, Mary's feast falls the day after Ash Wednesday, so the feast is a good time to reflect on Mary's urging Bernadette to call her peers to "Repent!"

This is the same call our Holy Father repeats in his Apostolic Letter on the Year of Mercy, which is once again the subject of our *Light and Life* reflection. Pope Francis could not be more clear in his urging the faithful to avail themselves of the mercy God extends in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and lest anyone doubt his sincerity, he reminds confessors they are the servants of this sacrament. I have no idea whether our Pontiff wished to inject humor into his letter, but his admonishing priests to avoid asking useless questions in the confessional caused me to smile – and it should cause the reluctant penitent to heave a sigh of relief.

## A MILESTONE ANNIVERSARY

Last April we had the good fortune to celebrate Fr. Paul Duffner's one hundredth birthday. Last month we had the honor to celebrate the seventy-fifth anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood. Fr. Duffner is the eldest member of the Western Dominican Province, and his three-quarters of a century of priestly ministry stand as a remarkable tribute.

The Western Province extends from Anchorage, Alaska to Mexicali, Mexico. For a number of years, however, Dominicans served a mission in Chiapas, the southernmost state of Mexico, bordering on Guatemala. Fr. Duffner is one of the few Western Dominicans to have the distinction of serving in both these locations.

But he is probably best known for the years he served as the Western Province's novice master – and the two decades he directed the ministry of the Rosary Center. When our superiors asked whether he would be willing to leave his assignment in San Francisco to assume responsibility as pastor in Portland, Oregon, his one question was whether he might bring the Rosary Confraternity with him.

The Rosary apostolate thrived under Fr. Duffner's care, and Dominicans and their friends are astounded to learn



*Entrance to the Basilica at Lourdes*

the destinations the Rosary Center supplies with Rosaries. At the tender age of one hundred, Fr. Duffner is, perhaps, no longer the agile athlete whose ability to jump fences so impressed his novices in 1948, but he still comes to the Rosary Center each day, and lends a hand with the Center's affairs. In 2004, when our superiors asked me to assume the Director's responsibilities, I realized I had very large shoes to fill. Nothing has happened in the intervening eleven years to change my mind.

## STAY TUNED

This past autumn I received an email from Fr. Don Calloway, a priest I did not know, asking whether I would read a volume on the Rosary he had just completed. In addition, he asked, would I be willing to add a comment or two to those of other Dominicans whose opinions he had sought.

Why not, thought I, so I agreed, and downloaded his text. Along the way, I found comments from the "other Dominicans" he had mentioned. They included Cardinal Christoph Schonborn, Archbishop of Vienna, and Archbishop Augustine di Noia, Secretary for the Vatican's Congregation for Divine Worship! Needless to say, I'd not

*(Continued on page 4)*

**THE ROSARY LIGHT & LIFE**  
The Rosary Center

P. O. Box 3617 *Portland, Oregon 97208*

### Subscription Rates:

*United States* ..... \$12.00 Per Year  
*Canada & Mexico* ..... \$15.00 Per Year  
*Other Countries* ..... \$15.00 Per Year

2 Novenas of Masses

in honor of

**OUR LADY OF LOURDES**

FEB. 3 - 11 — FEB. 12 - 20

TO BE OFFERED FOR YOUR INTENTIONS

# THEOLOGY FOR THE LAITY

## The Works of Mercy: II A Year of Pilgrimage

By Father Reginald Martin, O.P.

### THE CORPORAL WORKS OF MERCY

As we drew our last reflection to a close we identified the corporal works of mercy as feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, welcoming strangers, clothing the naked, healing the sick, and visiting the imprisoned. Some of these are doubtless beyond our capacity, but some services to the poor and sick are part of parish outreach programs. Thus, although we may not consider the effect at the time, these ministries offer an opportunity to minister and offer mercy to the suffering Christ in our midst.

### THE SPIRITUAL WORKS OF MERCY

The spiritual works of mercy are considerably more subtle, but here, too, the Church reminds us of our responsibility to find Christ in those around us. The spiritual works of mercy are instructing the ignorant, counseling the doubtful, admonishing sinners, bearing wrongs patiently, forgiving offences, comforting the afflicted, and praying for the living and the dead.

### WHERE? HOW?

These days, instructing the ignorant is a task that has been largely undertaken by government or private institutions, but the catechetical instruction offered in parishes affords opportunities for many to share the wealth of their knowledge of Church teaching. But the other works lay claim to us, as well, and demand an equal sacrifice of ourselves. Counsel, comfort, patience, and forgiveness are precisely the deeds Jesus took on our flesh to accomplish among us. When we reach out to one another to perform them, we bear witness to the Incarnation.

The Holy Father is very clear when he admonishes us

*We cannot escape the Lord's words to us, and they will serve as the criteria upon which we will be judged: whether we have fed the hungry and given drink to the thirsty, welcomed the stranger and clothed the naked, or spent time with the sick and those in prison (cf. Mt 25:31-45). Moreover, we will be asked if we have helped others to escape the doubt that causes them to fall into despair and which is often a source of loneliness; if we have helped to overcome the ignorance in which millions of people live, especially children deprived of the necessary means to free them from the bonds.*

*(Misericordiae Vultus, 15)*

### AN ECHO FROM FR. DUFFNER

Fr. Paul Duffner, who directed the ministry of the Rosary Center for many years, echoed this warning once, when he preached

*Forgiveness is the one type of alms we can always give. It is a form of charity that can be exercised at any time by any one, be he rich or poor, young or old, sick or healthy. If we cannot manage this type of almsgiving, our poverty is much greater than being in want of money, food, clothing, or shelter....*

### AN APPLICATION FOR LENT

Pope Francis turns to the Season of Lent, which will begin just as friends of the Rosary Center will receive this issue of *Light and Life*, to urge us to reflect on what God has given us during these holy days.

*How many pages of Sacred Scripture are appropriate for meditation during the weeks of Lent to help us rediscover the merciful face of the Father! We can repeat the words of the prophet Micah and make them our own: You, O Lord, are a God who takes away iniquity and pardons sin, who does not hold your anger forever, but are pleased to show mercy. You, Lord, will return to us and have pity on your people. You will trample down our sins and toss them into the depths of the sea. (cf. 7:18-19) (MV, 17)*

### THE CALL TO REPENTANCE

And he begs us to "...place the Sacrament of Reconciliation at the center once more in such a way that it will enable people to touch the grandeur of God's mercy with their own hands. For every penitent, it will be a source of true interior peace."

### CONSOLATION TO SINNERS

While the Holy Father's words to penitents are words of joy, his words to priests are very serious: "Let us never forget that to be confessors means to participate in the very mission of Jesus to be a concrete sign of the constancy of divine love that pardons and saves."

### AN ADMONITION TO PRIESTS

Pope Francis intends these words to offer special consolation to women who have sought abortions, and to those who have sought financial gain at the expense of others' lives, but the following admonition should give great hope to anyone who has hesitated to seek out the Sacrament of Reconciliation for fear of a cold reception or severe reprimand.

*We priests have received the gift of the Holy Spirit for the forgiveness of sins, and we are responsible for this. None of us wields power over this Sacrament; rather, we are faithful servants of God's mercy through it... May confessors not ask useless questions, but*

*like the father in the parable, interrupt the speech prepared ahead of time by the prodigal son, so that confessors will learn to accept the plea for help and mercy pouring from the heart of every penitent. In short, confessors are called to be a sign of the primacy of mercy always, everywhere, and in every situation, no matter what.*

## **MERCY AND JUSTICE**

Toward the end of his letter, Pope Francis turns to the Prophet Hosea, whose words from the Old Testament are a poignant reminder that God's justice is intimately connected to his mercy. God sees that his people have betrayed their faith, and yet he cries out,

*"How can I give you up, O Ephraim! How can I hand you over, O Israel! ...My heart recoils within me, my compassion grows warm and tender. I will not execute my fierce anger...for I am God, not man... and I will not come to destroy."*

## **THE DEMANDS OF JUSTICE**

The Holy Father is quick to point out that God's mercy and tenderness are not a denial of justice. Anyone who does wrong, must pay the penalty. Justice is the beginning of conversion; it leads the sinner to God's mercy. Justice and mercy, he writes,

*...are not two contradictory realities, but two dimensions of a single reality that unfolds progressively until it culminates in the fullness of love. Justice is a fundamental concept for civil society, which is meant to be governed by the rule of law.... (MV, 20)*

## **JUSTICE: TO OTHERS AND GOD**

At the beginning of his public ministry Jesus promised beatitude to those who hunger and thirst for justice, which our theology teaches is the will to give each person what she or he deserves. Although we seldom think of it, perhaps, the virtue of Justice governs our relations with God as well as our dealing with one another.

## **MERCY AND JUSTICE ON CALVARY**

Most of what led to Jesus' death was patently unjust, but if we do not allow Jesus to teach us a lesson of Justice on Calvary we remain blind to how he worked our salvation. Justice demanded a tribute to God's honor, affronted by our First Parents' sin. Only Christ, one in nature with both God and us, was worthy to offer the tribute acceptable to God on our behalf. (ST, III.48:4) Christ's passion is a sacrifice in justice to God; it is a sacrifice offered in mercy for us.

The result of Eden was a double bondage, by which we owed a debt to God at the same time we found ourselves under the sway of sin. Christ's death is the price that cancels the debt by offering God something of greater value than the offense. And because it was undertaken freely and in love, Christ's death liberates us from our slavery to the selfishness of sin. (III.48:2, 3 ad 2)

## **THE DISPENSATION OF JESUS**

Jesus, however, goes beyond the law. And Pope Francis observes, "...the company he keeps with those

*the law considers sinners makes us realize the depths of his mercy."* (MV, 20) The altar of the Mass unites us with all those Jesus called and saved, and the example of some of those at the heavenly table should be a powerful reminder of all that God is willing to do for us.

## **A HOLY YEAR INDULGENCE**

Holy Years traditionally offer an indulgence; this Year of Mercy is no exception. But before we consider the indulgence itself, we should recall the Church's teaching that an indulgence is the Church's remission of the temporal punishment due a sin already confessed and absolved. (CCC, No. 1471) "To gain an indulgence," Pope Francis writes,

*...is to experience the holiness of the Church, who bestows upon all the fruits of Christ's redemption, so that God's love and forgiveness may extend everywhere. Let us live this Jubilee intensely, begging the Father to forgive our sins and to bathe us with in his merciful "indulgence."*

## **THE BLESSING OF AN INDULGENCE**

The Holy Father points out, "God is always ready to forgive, and he never tires of forgiving in ways that are continually new and surprising." However, he adds, although God forgives and blots out our sin in the Sacrament of Reconciliation,

*...yet sin leaves a negative effect on the way we think and act. But the mercy of God is stronger even than this. It becomes indulgence on the part of the Father who, through the Bride of Christ, his Church, reaches the pardoned sinner and frees him from every residue left by the consequences of sin, enabling him to act with charity, to grow in love rather than to fall back into sin. (MV, 22)*

## **GAINING THE HOLY YEAR INDULGENCE**

This past September Pope Francis specified how the faithful might avail themselves of this Holy Year's indulgence. The indulgence is traditionally granted to those who make a pilgrimage to Rome and walk through the Holy Door of St. Peter's. However, to make the gift accessible to as many individuals as possible, the Pope invites individuals to visit their diocesan cathedral, or other places indicated as Holy Year shrines. And lest we forget the indulgence is an act of communion with the rest of our religious life, the Holy Father is clear to remark

*It is important that this moment be linked, first and foremost, to the Sacrament of Reconciliation and to the celebration of the Holy Eucharist with a reflection on mercy. It will be necessary to accompany these celebrations with the profession of faith and with prayer for me and for the intentions that I bear in my heart for the good of the Church and of the entire world.*

## **AN INDULGENCE FOR THE NEEDY**

Throughout his pontificate, our Holy Father has shown remarkable kindness to those in special need. We should not be surprised, then, that he extends the benefits of the Holy Year Indulgence to those who cannot make even the limited pilgrimage to a local church.

*...I am thinking of those for whom, for various reasons, it will be impossible to enter the Holy Door, particularly the sick and people who are elderly and alone, often confined to the home... receiving communion or attending Holy Mass and community prayer, even through the various means of communication, will be for them the means of obtaining the Jubilee Indulgence.*

### **AN INDULGENCE FOR THE FORGOTTEN**

But his concern does not stop with those whose needs we commonly attend to and pray for.

*My thoughts also turn to those incarcerated, whose freedom is limited. The Jubilee Year has always constituted an opportunity for great amnesty, which is intended to include the many people who, despite deserving punishment, have become conscious of the injustice they worked and sincerely wish to re-enter society and make their honest contribution to it... They may obtain the Indulgence in the chapels of the prisons. May the gesture of directing their thought and prayer to the Father each time they cross the threshold of their cell signify for them their passage through the Holy Door, because the mercy of God is able to transform hearts, and is also able to transform bars into an experience of freedom.*

### **AN INDULGENCE FOR THE DEAD**

Finally, the Holy Father reminds us we may obtain the Indulgence for our loved ones who have died.

*Furthermore, the Jubilee Indulgence can also be obtained for the deceased...as we remember them in the Eucharistic celebration...we can, in the great mystery of the Communion of Saints, pray for them, that the merciful Face of the Father free them of every remnant of fault and strongly embrace them in the unending beatitude.*

### **MARY, OUR MOTHER OF MERCY**

Pope Francis closes his letter with words about Mary, the Mother of Mercy. “*May the sweetness of her countenance,*” he prays, “*watch over us in this Holy Year, so that all of us may rediscover the joy of God’s tenderness. No one has penetrated the profound mystery of the Incarnation like Mary.*” (MV, 24)

The Incarnation, Christ’s taking on our flesh, is a call to humility, but humility properly understood – the virtue by which we acknowledge God as the source of everything we have and everything we are. This is closely allied with obedience, because once we realize how utterly dependent we are upon God’s mercy, it becomes easier and easier to surrender our will to God’s will.

Mary, who is our model in all things, is our exemplar in humility and obedience. Mary – like us – can be happy, ecstatic, when she speaks of her lowliness as God’s servant, because to give up our will to embrace God’s will – means having the right to share in God’s triumphs and glory.

The weakness of our humanity lay claim to the Divine Mercy. The Father elevated our humanity in the Incarnation, and the Son sacrificed it on Calvary. If we are to enjoy the salvation Christ won for us, it will be because

our bodies surrender to this mercy, to what we understand with our intellect and determine to do in our will.

### **MERCY, THE EUCHARIST AND THE ROSARY**

The Second Vatican Council calls the sacraments, especially the sacrament of the Eucharist, Christ’s “saving action par excellence.” And if we seek a tool that will extend the effects of the Eucharist and form our humanity according to the example of Christ’s, we need look no further than the Rosary. Pope St. John Paul II said, “*by immersing us in the mysteries of the Redeemer’s life, [the Rosary] ensures that what he has done and what the liturgy makes present is profoundly assimilated and shapes our existence.*” (*Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, 13)

Pope Francis offers the very encouraging reminder that in Mary’s *Magnificat*, we are included among the “generation to generation” of those blessed by God’s mercy shown to her. These words, the Holy Father says, “*...sung at the threshold of the home of Elizabeth...will be a source of comfort and strength to us as we cross the threshold of the Holy Year....*”

### **LOOKING BACK, LOOKING AHEAD**

At the Visitation, Elizabeth greets Mary by asking, “*How is it that the Mother of my Lord should come to me?*” These words echo the title given the preeminent women in the Old Testament, where the most powerful woman in the kingdom was not the king’s wife – a king could have many wives; Solomon, we are told, had several hundred – but the king’s mother. Mary represents all that was best in the Old Testament, which had no doubt God had lifted up the lowly and cast the mighty from their thrones. And Mary always speaks for the Church, which looks at history through the lens of Christ’s death and resurrection, seeing everywhere the infallible signs of God’s mercy to those who fear him. That mercy was shown most clearly at Calvary, where Mary invites us to join her even today, as we gather for the Eucharistic celebration of her Son’s eternal, merciful love. ■

---

### **STAY TUNED**

(Page 1 continued)

expected to find myself in such exalted company – but then, I’d not expected to find Fr. Calloway’s book, *Champions of the Rosary*, so riveting. Here is what I wrote

*This is the most carefully researched volume on the Rosary I have ever encountered. At the same time, it is remarkably accessible, and invites the reader to experience the author’s own growth in Christ’s love through embracing the example of Mary’s loving surrender.*

*The great Dominican, Thomas Aquinas, observed, “...even as it is better to enlighten than merely to shine, so it is better to give to others the fruits of one’s contemplation than merely to contemplate.” The historical examples in these pages provide the tools we need to become Champions of the Rosary for our own, longing world.*

The book is not a “quick read,” but it is well worth the time one invests in meditating upon its two hundred or so pages. I look forward to its publication – and to sharing it with you when it is available.