

## THE WORLD'S FIRST LOVE

IT IS OBJECTED THAT there is much repetition in the Rosary because the *Lord's Prayer* and the *Hail Mary* are said so often; therefore it is monotonous. That reminds me of a woman who came to see me one evening after instructions. She said, "I would never become a Catholic. You say the same words in the Rosary over and over again, and anyone who repeats the same words is never sincere. I would never believe anyone who repeated his words, and neither would God." I asked her who the man was with her. She said he was her fiancé. I asked: "Does he love you?" "Certainly, he does." "But how do you know?" "He told me." "What did he say?" "He said: 'I love you.'" "When did he tell you last?" "About an hour ago." "Did he tell you before?" "Yes, last night." "What did he say?" " 'I love you.' " "But never before?" "He tells me every night." I said: "Do not believe him. He is repeating; he is not sincere."

The beautiful truth is that there is no repetition in, "I love you." Because there is a new moment of time, another point in space, the words do not mean the same as they did at another time or space. A mother says to her son: "You are a good boy." She may have said it ten thousand times before, but each time it means something different; the whole personality goes out to it anew, as a new historical circumstance summons forth a new outburst of affection. Love is never monotonous in the uniformity of its expression. The mind is infinitely variable in its language, but the heart is not. The heart of a man, in the face of the woman he loves, is too poor to translate the infinity of his affection into a different word. So the heart takes one expression, "I love you," and in saying it over and over again, it never repeats. It is the only real news in the universe. That is what we do when we say the Rosary, we are saying to God, the Trinity, to the Incarnate Saviour, to the Blessed Mother: "I love you, I love you, I love you." Each time it means something different because, at each decade, our mind is moving to a new demonstration of the Saviour's love: for example, from the mystery of His Love which willed to become one of us in His Incarnation, to the other mystery of love when He suffered for us, and on the other mystery of His Love where He intercedes for us before the Heavenly Father. And who shall forget that Our Lord Himself in the moment of His greatest agony repeated, three times within an hour, the same prayer?

The beauty of the Rosary is that it is not merely a vocal prayer. It is also a mental prayer. One sometimes hears a dramatic presentation in which, while the human voice is speaking, there is a background of beautiful music, giving force and dignity to the words. The Rosary is like that. While the prayer is being said, the heart is not hearing music, but it is meditating on the Life of Christ all over again, applied to his own life and his own needs. . . .

The Rosary is the book of the blind, where souls see and there enact the greatest drama of love the world has ever known; it is the book of the simple, which initiates them into mysteries and knowledge more satisfying than the education of other men; it is the book of the aged, whose eyes close upon the shadow of this world, and open on the substance of the next. The power of the Rosary is beyond description. And here I am reciting concrete instances, which I know. Young people, in danger of death through accident, have had miraculous recoveries—a mother, despaired of in childbirth, was saved with the child—alcoholics became temperate—dissolute lives became spiritualized—fallen-aways returned to the faith—the childless were blessed with a family—soldiers were preserved during battle—mental anxieties were overcome, and pagans were converted. I know of a Jew who, in World War I, was in a shell hole on the Western Front with four Austrian soldiers. Shells had been bursting on all sides. Suddenly, one shell killed his four companions. He took a Rosary from the hands of one of them and began to say it. He knew it by heart, for he had heard others say it so often. At the end of the first decade, he felt an inner warning to leave that shell hole. He crawled through much mud and muck, and threw himself into another. At that moment a shell hit the first hole, where he had been lying. Four more times, exactly the same experience; four more warnings, and four times his life was saved! He promised then to give his life to Our Lord and to His Blessed Mother if he should be saved. After the war more sufferings came to him; his family was burned by Hitler, but his promise lingered on. Recently, I baptized him—and the grateful soldier is now preparing to study for the priesthood.

All the idle moments of one's life can be sanctified, thanks to the Rosary. As we walk the streets, we pray with the Rosary hidden in our hand or in our pocket; driving an automobile, the little knobs under most steering wheels can serve as counters for the decades. While waiting to be served at a lunchroom, or waiting for a train, or in a store; or while playing dummy at bridge; or when conversation or a lecture lags—all these moments can be sanctified and made to serve inner peace, thanks to a prayer that

enables one to pray at all times and under all circumstances. If you wish to convert anyone to the fullness of the knowledge of Our Lord and of His Mystical Body, then teach him the Rosary. One of two things will happen. Either he will stop saying the Rosary—or he will get the gift of faith.

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