

## **Diocesan Marian Day: The Rosary – a Spiritual Treasure, Chain of Hope**

A celebration in honor of Our Blessed Mother was held at the Cathedral of St. Peter-in-Chains during the morning hours of Saturday October 31<sup>st</sup>, marking the end of the Month of the Holy Rosary. Bishop De Angelis presided at Holy Mass which was followed by a lecture on “The Rosary, A Spiritual Treasure, Chain of Hope”, the solemn recitation of the rosary and a Holy Hour with Eucharistic Benediction concluding the celebration.

The gathering, organized by the Evangelization Office and featuring choirs and musicians from various parishes, was inspired by the words of Pope John Paul II who in his Apostolic Letter on the Holy Rosary in 2002 called this devotion “a prayer loved by countless Saints and encouraged by the Magisterium. Simple yet profound, it still remains, at the dawn of this third millennium, a prayer of great significance, destined to bring forth a harvest of holiness. It blends easily into the spiritual journey of the Christian life, which, after two thousand years, has lost none of the freshness of its beginnings and feels drawn by the Spirit of God to ‘set out into the deep’ (*duc in altum!*) in order once more to proclaim, and even cry out, before the world that Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior, ‘the way, and the truth and the life’ (*Jn 14:6*), the goal of human history and the point on which the desires of history and civilization turn. The Rosary, though clearly Marian in character, is at heart a Christocentric prayer. In the sobriety of its elements, it has all the depth of the Gospel message in its entirety, of which it can be said to be a compendium. It is an echo of the prayer of Mary, her perennial *Magnificat* for the work of the redemptive Incarnation which began in her virginal womb. With the Rosary, the Christian people sit at the school of Mary and are led to contemplate the beauty on the face of Christ and to experience the depths of his love. Through the Rosary the faithful receive abundant grace, as though from the very hands of the Mother of the Redeemer.” (‘Rosarium Virginis Mariae’ by John Paul II # 1)

“But the most important reason for strongly encouraging the practice of the Rosary is that it represents a most effective means of fostering among the faithful that commitment to the contemplation of the Christian mystery which I have proposed in the Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte* as a genuine ‘training in holiness’: ‘What is needed is a Christian life distinguished above all in the art of prayer’. Inasmuch as contemporary culture, even amid so many indications to the contrary, has witnessed the flowering of a new call for spirituality, due also to the influence of other religions, it is more urgent than ever that our Christian communities should become ‘genuine schools of prayer’. The Rosary belongs among the finest and most praiseworthy traditions of Christian contemplation. Developed in the West, it is a typically meditative prayer, corresponding in some way to the ‘prayer of the heart’ or ‘Jesus prayer’ which took root in the soil of the Christian East.” (ibid. # 5)

“A number of historical circumstances also make a revival of the Rosary quite timely. First of all, the need to implore from God the gift of peace. The Rosary has many times been proposed by my predecessors and myself as a prayer for peace. At the start of a millennium which began with the terrifying attacks of 11 September 2001, a millennium

which witnesses every day innumerable parts of the world fresh scenes of bloodshed and violence, to rediscover the Rosary means to immerse oneself in contemplation of the mystery of Christ who 'is our peace', since he made 'the two of us one, and broke down the dividing wall of hostility' (*Eph 2:14*). Consequently, one cannot recite the Rosary without feeling caught up in a clear commitment to advancing peace, especially in the land of Jesus, still so sorely afflicted and so close to the heart of every Christian. A similar need for commitment and prayer arises in relation to another critical contemporary issue: the family, the primary cell of society, increasingly menaced by forces of disintegration on both the ideological and practical planes, so as to make us fear for the future of this fundamental and indispensable institution and, with it, for the future of society as a whole. The revival of the Rosary in Christian families, within the context of a broader pastoral ministry to the family, will be an effective aid to countering the devastating effects of this crisis typical of our age." (ibid. # 6)

"The grave challenges confronting the world at the start of this new Millennium lead us to think that only an intervention from on high, capable of guiding the hearts of those living in situations of conflict and those governing the destinies of nations, can give reason to hope for a brighter future. The Rosary is by its nature a prayer for peace, since it consists in the contemplation of Christ, the Prince of Peace, the one who is 'our peace' (*Eph 2:14*). Anyone who assimilates the mystery of Christ – and this is clearly the goal of the Rosary – learns the secret of peace and makes it his life's project." (ibid. # 40)

"It is also beautiful and fruitful to entrust to this prayer the growth and development of children. Does the Rosary not follow the life of Christ, from his conception to his death, and then to his Resurrection and his glory? Parents are finding it ever more difficult to follow the lives of their children as they grow to maturity. In a society of advanced technology, of mass communications and globalization, everything has become hurried, and the cultural distance between generations is growing ever greater. The most diverse messages and the most unpredictable experiences rapidly make their way into the lives of children and adolescents, and parents can become quite anxious about the dangers their children face. At times parents suffer acute disappointment at the failure of their children to resist the seductions of the drug culture, the lure of an unbridled hedonism, the temptation to violence, and the manifold expressions of meaninglessness and despair. To pray the Rosary for children, and even more, with children, training them from their earliest years to experience this daily 'pause for prayer' with the family, is admittedly not the solution to every problem, but it is a spiritual aid which should not be underestimated." (ibid. # 42)

"This school of Mary is all the more effective if we consider that she teaches by obtaining for us in abundance the gifts of the Holy Spirit, even as she offers us the incomparable example of her own 'pilgrimage of faith'. As we contemplate each mystery of her Son's life, she invites us to do as she did at the Annunciation: to ask humbly the questions which open us to the light, in order to end with the obedience of faith: 'Behold I am the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to your word' (*Lk 1:38*). (ibid. # 14)

“May this appeal of mine not go unheard! ... ‘O Blessed Rosary of Mary, sweet chain which unites us to God, bond of love which unites us to the angels, tower of salvation against the assaults of Hell, safe port in our universal shipwreck, we will never abandon you. You will be our comfort in the hour of death: yours our final kiss as life ebbs away. And the last word from our lips will be your sweet name, O Queen of the Rosary ... O dearest Mother, O Refuge of Sinners, O Sovereign Consoler of the Afflicted. May you be everywhere blessed, today and always, on earth and in heaven’”. (ibid. # 43)