

***MATH JOSEF
FRINGS***



***THE EXCELLENCE
OF THE ROSARY***

Math Josef Frings

The Excellence of the Rosary

**Conferences for Devotions in Honor of the Blessed
Virgin**

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Table of Contents

[Cover](#)

[Titlepage](#)

[Text](#)

THE ROSARY

[Table of Contents](#)

CONFERENCES FOR SODALITIES B. V. M.

I. THE NAME OF THIS DEVOTION

"I was exalted as a rose plant in Jericho."—Eccles. xxiv, 18.

My dear brethren, when Pope Pius IX, on May 23, 1877, gave audience to a number of pious pilgrims he said to them: "Have courage, my dear children! I exhort you to fight against the persecution of the Church and against anarchy, not with the sword, but with the rosary, with prayer and good example." This Pope, who with great wisdom and strong hand has guided for thirty-two years the bark of Peter, which in many violent storms had been rocked to and fro, he who well knew the great dangers of our times, regarded the rosary as a conquering weapon.

What great confidence his successor, Pope Leo XIII, placed in the veneration and invocation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, by means of the rosary! He exhorted all Christianity to pray the rosary daily during the month of October, in order to obtain assistance in these distressing times. In his brief on this occasion Leo XIII says: "It has been a favorite and prevalent custom of Catholics, in times of need and danger, to take refuge in Mary, and to seek consolation from her motherly concern."

Thus the firm reliance and confidence rightly placed by the Catholic Church in the mother of God is staunchly avowed.

As a matter of fact, Mary, the immaculate Virgin, free from original sin, the chosen mother of God, is endowed with such power by her Son, as no other creature, man or angel, has ever received or can receive.

The efficacy of this great devotion to the great Queen of Heaven had been demonstrated especially when false teachings, depravity, or other great enemies threatened disaster to Christians.

History, early and recent, relates how public and private devotion to the mother of God was held in times of calamity and distress, and how these prayers were heard, and help was granted. Thus originated the exalted titles which Catholics give to the Blessed Virgin, such as Help of Christians, Refuge of Sinners, etc.

To these titles was added another, when under date of December 10, 1883, Leo XIII directed that the title "Queen of the Rosary" be added to the Litany of the Blessed Virgin. In his brief the Holy Father expresses the desire that all the faithful practise daily the devotion of the rosary. If, therefore, the rosary is considered of such great power and efficacy by the head of the Church, the representative of Christ, it is befitting that we heed his words and pray often and devoutly by means of the rosary.

If this prayer were better understood it would be prayed with more devotion, and greater benefit would come from it. In order, then, to spread a better knowledge, and to urge the devout recital of the rosary, let us contemplate this devotion in a course of instructive addresses. The name rosary may be the subject of to-day's discourse.

The devotion of the rosary consists in the recital of a fixed number of Our Fathers and Hail Marys, combined with the

meditation on certain mysteries from the lives of Jesus and Mary. The name rosary is significant. It is a symbol of Mary, also of the devotion to her. We will endeavor to make this clear.

The realm of nature is the symbol of the realm of grace, as the realm of grace is a symbol of the realm of glory. It was God's intention to let His earthly creation be a reflection of the divine perfections, of the supernatural, of divinity, so that man might perceive the supernatural through created things, and thus more readily understand it. "For the invisible things of him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made" (Rom. i, 20).

Our first parents obtained a clear conception of the supernatural through the natural things of this life. Nature was to them an open book, in which they could read the divine perfections. Through sin the understanding of man was dimmed and he failed in the interpretation of nature. Instead of being led to God through it, he allowed himself to become estranged, and from a master became the slave of nature.

Then Christ came and redeemed the world from the slavery of sin and again granted to man the clear conception of the true God, as also the right understanding of nature. This is verified in the saints and we have a beautiful example in St. Francis of Assisi. About his interpretation and meditation of nature St. Bonaventure says: "He considered all things created as original from God, and saw in each creature the Creator and Preserver."

Everything in nature was to him a symbol of spiritual life. He took delight especially in flowers, because they reminded

him of the flower from the root of Jesse, which refreshes and gladdens the whole world.

See, my dear brethren, this is the correct, the Christian way of contemplating nature. The spiritual world is reflected in the visible.

And Jesus being the King and Mary the Queen in the realm of grace and glory, nature contains symbols that refer to Jesus and Mary. All things of this creation: from the flowers of the valley to the brilliant stars that illumine the night, all things in nature are symbols of the glorious mother of God. Among many such symbols used in Holy Scripture we find Mary called the mystical rose. The Church therefore regards the rose as a symbol of Mary. Let us see in what the likeness consists.

If on a summer's day we enter a garden, where various flowers through their form, color and sweet odor delight and refresh us, our eye is chiefly attracted by the rose. We are especially well pleased with it. The rose is the queen of flowers in form, color and fragrant odor, because of its beauty.

Let us turn now our gaze to the spiritual garden, the Church of Christ. The various flowers there are the faithful, adorned with piety and virtue, and spreading the fragrance of saintliness with which God is pleased. In the Canticle of Canticles the Lamb of God is pictured as feeding among the lilies. A beautiful thought! It tells us how the Lamb of God, our divine Saviour, is fond of the flowers of God, the God-loving souls, as is the lamb of the lilies.

And in this garden of God, the Holy Church, Mary is the rose, the pride of the garden, the queen of the flowers. The rose is therefore the most beautiful symbol of Mary, of all saints