

“The Power of the Rosary to Change History”

Address to 2013 Rosary Rally

October 12, 2013, San Francisco

Introduction

"The family that prays together stays together" - this is the slogan with which Father Patrick Peyton identified the Family Rosary Crusade, which he then organized into rosary rallies beginning in 1948.

Historical Precedence

Just think about what the world was going through at that time: it had just emerged from perhaps the darkest moment of recent history, when National Socialism threatened to engulf the entire world at the time of the Second World War. It was the beginning of the Cold War, when a new threat, that of Soviet Communism, was casting a new shadow of darkness over the world, especially over those countries most devastated by the war and that were just beginning to rebuild themselves. It was a time of hope that evil could, yes, be conquered, but also a time of new anxiety as people had to understand how to live in and deal with the new world that rose out of the ashes of the most brutal and destructive global conflict it had ever known. Could the freedom we so enjoy still be lost? Could human flourishing once again be crushed in the name of a godless ideology?

Father Peyton knew the power of the rosary, he knew that in all such dark moments of life, the Christian faithful have turned to prayer, especially, praying the rosary, asking the intercession of the greatest honor of our race, the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, asking her to intercede for us at the throne of her Son.

The Christian faithful have always known this power. Immediately after the war, the Soviet Union occupied the nation of Austria: it was a very tense political time, when, so it seemed, Austria would not be able to wrest itself free from Soviet control without further bloodshed, if at all. So the Austrian bishops implored their people to pray the rosary, and pray the rosary the Austrian Catholics did. After six months, for no stated reason, the Soviet Union quietly withdrew from Austria. And this is just one of many examples of the power of the rosary to effect peace in the world, thus explaining the other slogan identifying the Family Rosary Crusade: "A world at prayer is a world at peace."

Here and Now

We are now facing different kinds of threats to peace, stability and human thriving in our own time which are unprecedented in history: the destruction of family life; the disregard for the sanctity of human life in so many different ways, wherever human life might seem inconvenient, an imposition or on the margins of society – the throw-away culture in which we live now even extends to our brother and sisters who find themselves

vulnerable to the forces of the powerful and greedy; the diminishment of religious freedom around the globe, and in more subtle forms even now in our own nation, a nation – unlike any other – which did not evolve, but was founded, and founded precisely to guarantee freedom to its citizens, of which religious freedom is the first and most cherished. The challenges we face now, though, are really more on the inside: the attitudes, values, priorities and instincts of each member of our society and of our society as a whole, of the cultural influencers of our society – entertainment, media, education, public policy, advertising.

But can't all of this ultimately be traced back to the breakdown of family life? And does not the breakdown of family life result from the fact that families are no longer praying together: praying together in the home, attending Church on Sundays together to keep the Lord's Day holy, celebrating the mysteries of our faith in the home, especially on special feast days and those graced seasons of the year in the life of our Church?

This is why the bishops now in our own country, here in the United States of America, have asked our people to pray the rosary daily, for families to pray the rosary together, for all of us to pray the rosary every day: for a renewal of faith and virtue; to reclaim a culture which cherishes every human life, especially the most vulnerable; so that the role of faith might once again be valued and welcomed in the public square, making its own unique contribution to the common good and human flourishing, a contribution that nothing and no one else can make, a contribution without which we cannot possibly hope to establish a just and charitable social order; and most especially, for a renewal of family life, based on the sure foundation of the loving and stable relationship of mother and father in marriage, so that children might know the love of father and mother and be loved and cared for by each one, in each one's unique and indispensable role in the upbringing and well-being of their children.

Pray the Rosary!

We bishops are asking our people of America to pray the rosary daily now, before we reach the dire, dark moments the Church has known in the past when she took recourse to the Mother of our Lord in the Holy Rosary. We must implore the Lord now for mercy, to turn our hearts back to him now, so that all that we do and say, in the privacy of our homes and in the public sphere of the workplace and our communities, we may proclaim Him – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – as the one true God, and not the false gods of a throw-away culture; that we might live according to His truth and not be duped by the false promises of the false gods that entice us to self-indulgence masqueraded as happiness and which lead only to loneliness, sadness, and ultimately despair. We need to pray now, while there is time. This moment of history is a time of grace the Lord is giving us – yes, a grace period – to seek Him in prayer and ask Him to turn our hearts and minds back to Him, while there is still time.

Do not underestimate the power of the rosary. The rosary is the most powerful of prayers: it has the power to soften the hardest of hearts, to convert the most stubborn of sinners, and to align our minds to the mind of God. The rosary is as powerful now as it

always has been, and it will always be so. The rosary is not "in vogue" in one moment, "outdated" in another, and then "back in style" yet again, as if this were some sort of "retro-style" craze so popular these days. No, the rosary is timeless: to meditate on the mysteries of our faith in the life of our Lord and our Lady as recounted in the Scriptures and taught in the Church's Tradition has tremendous power in every age, for every generation.

Conclusion

"Every generation will call me blessed." So proclaimed our Blessed Mother when she encountered her cousin Elizabeth, who was carrying in her womb the precursor of Mary's Son. And we, too, proclaim her blessed, and we do so most especially when we pray her rosary. So I ask you, I implore you, I plead with you: pray the rosary every day, pray the rosary together as a family! We are the heirs of Father Peyton and his compatriots, as we reclaim the power of the rosary for peace here in the city of the saint of peace, our beloved patron Saint Francis of Assisi. May he pray for us, may Our Lady of the Rosary pray for us, may we respond to the love of God they reflect to us by praying the rosary every day, so that God will smile upon us with mercy and grant us peace: peace in our families, peace in our neighborhoods, peace in our world.