



The Rosarian

Volume 2 — Issue 1

TheRosarian.org

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"[The Confraternity of the Rosary is] so to speak, the battalion who fights the battle of Christ, armed with his sacred mysteries, and under the banner and guidance of the heavenly Queen."

— Pope Leo XIII

Dear Friend in Christ,

I am excited to share that our first month was a great success; we enrolled **twenty new members** into the Confraternity in the two

days immediately after *The Rosarian* was published, and have enrolled **more than fifty members over the last month**. That's exciting news as we strive to grow our community, but even more as we consider that the prayers of new members are being added to the Confraternity. Today, I'd like us to consider one of the prayer requests I get most often—a prayer for some sort of conversion—and consider how prayer for conversion can apply to us.



One of the more significant events this month for the Catholic Church is the March for Life in Washington D.C.. The March is an event without a particular faith sponsor, but is significant as a visible locus of the Church's advocacy for the unborn. As tens of thousands of people march for an end to abortion in the United States, the March serves for us as a beacon of hope. But I want to call our attention to the fact that for others, the March is a sign of a nightmare come to life.

The last couple of years have brought a great deal of attention to the issue of abortion in our country. Real progress has been made toward legal recognition of the humanity of the unborn, but the limits of that progress are already becoming clear; the laws of a constitutional republic depend on the hearts and minds of its people. A number of ballot initiatives last year showed that many Americans are more alarmed by restrictions on abortion than motivated to further restrict it. Those who have voted against restrictions see themselves as preserving the prerogatives of women; women considering abortion are often impoverished and without adequate support. Through that lens, abortion restrictions indeed seem anti-woman and callous. How this issue is seen is a microcosm for many others: **how can we hope for unity, with such a wide gulf between the two sides?** The answer is that common prayer intention: Conversion.

Conversion in a Christian context is the human response to God. When we are converted, we are more fully aligned with Christ, and made better able to invite others to a similar experience by our words and example. **God has in mind that every person in our country would be converted.** Unbelievable as it seems, this would lead to a country where abortion is unthinkable, and where the social circumstances which make abortion attractive would be undermined as well. Because conversion involves change and growth, it is never easy. Fortunately for us, **the Rosary has always been an agent and a tool for conversion; through Mary's mediation of grace to humanity, the Rosary has often helped to bring about conversion where it was thought impossible.**

I thank you again for being part of this Confraternity, and ask that we would take our membership as a sign that we are willing to be converted. In this month ahead, may we all prayerfully consider where our lives need conversion; may our conversion lead to the conversion that we want to see in our world.

Fr. James Pierce Cavanaugh O.P.

Fr. James Pierce Cavanaugh, O.P.
Promoter for the Rosary Confraternity

Mary, the Mother of God



Image: Statue from Salamanca Cathedral. Courtesy of Fr. Lawrence Lew, OP (Flickr)

One of the pre-eminent Marian devotions for the month of January is the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God. This Solemnity highlights the Blessed Virgin Mary's role as Mother, concludes the Christmas Octave, and serves as a touchpoint to the cultural celebration of New Year's Day.

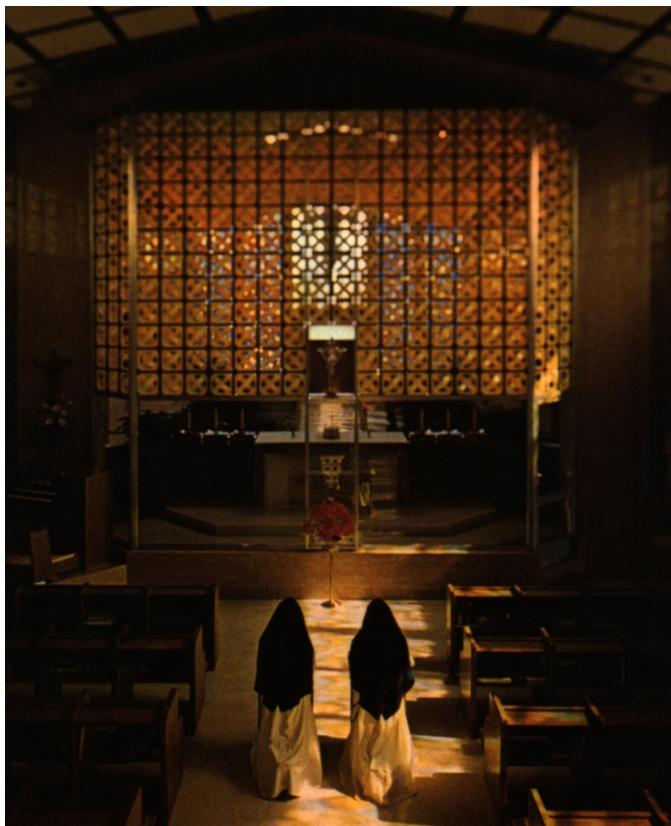
The question of Mary as Mother of God has its roots in some of the Church's earliest Christological controversies. Marian devotion even from its earliest days wished to call Mary by the name of *theotokos*—God-bearer—a title which some found excessive. Critics of this devotion thought it too strong a statement to say that Mary carried the Second Person of the Trinity in her womb, and bore Him as a Son. Mary's status as Mother of God was confirmed by the Council of Ephesus in 431, validating the instinct of those faithful who wished to honor Mary by calling her by such an exalted name, and encouraging bold devotion to the Blessed Mother.

The tie between the final day of the Christmas Octave and Mary's motherhood is a venerable one in the Roman Church. As early as the 7th Century, the Octave's final day celebrated Mary's Maternity. Though this day's focus shifted to the Circumcision of the Lord in the 13th century, the interest in the Blessed Mother's Maternity never really went away. In the 1700s, the King of Portugal petitioned that the feast of the Maternity of the Blessed Virgin Mary would be celebrated in Portugal and Portuguese territories in Brazil and Algeria; dioceses in various territories adopted the celebration, and observed it in October. This was the status quo until the liturgical changes of the Second Vatican Council.

Vatican II's changes to the liturgical calendar as applied to January 1st served to both make the Octave Day more widely understandable, and to transfer the celebration of Mary's Maternity to a date which had been affiliated earlier with the celebration. The Circumcision of the Lord, though no longer officially celebrated, can still be reflected upon as a part of Mary's Maternity; Mary reared Jesus in all aspects of the traditional Jewish upbringing. In celebrating this Solemnity, faithful women living their own maternity can draw inspiration and help from the Mother of God as they strive to keep their families in the faith in the New Year.

A final tie between the Solemnity and the New Year can be seen in an event within our own Provincial Territory more than 70 years ago. In the mid-20th century, Cardinal Joseph Ritter called for every parish in the St. Louis Archdiocese to celebrate a mass at midnight to bring in the year 1951, and prescribed that the proper prayers of the Mass invoke the help of the Virgin Mary for the world. Every year, people bring in the New Year in their own way, often staying awake until midnight, and celebrating with a party; people who celebrate New Year's Day at Mass place the New Year in the hands of God, and can now ask the Blessed Mother's help without needing a special provision by the local bishop.

As we begin our New Year, let's all consider more richly Mary's singular role of Mother of God. May we consider with awe the Father's choosing Mary's Maternity as the means to mediate the grace that the Son brings to humanity, and may we ask her special prayers to help make the world more ready to honor her Son as Lord.



Last month, I mentioned a group of our cloistered nuns, the **Monastery of Mary the Queen**, who will be providing regular insight into their cloistered life. With the publication of last month's newsletter, I heard from many people their surprise at the presence of Dominican nuns in our Provincial territory. That surprise immediately put me in mind of a group of nuns who have been present in our territory long before the arrival of the foundation in Girard. Before hearing from our cloistered sisters, this space will be used to share the story of this other group of nuns, who have resided in the Midwest for more than 100 years: the **Dominican Monastery of the Blessed Sacrament** in Farmington Hills, Michigan.

In 1906, a foundation of cloistered nuns left their home foundation in Newark, New Jersey to come to the Midwest and establish a monastery in Detroit. That group moved to Farmington Hills in 1966, and has been stationed there ever since. As mentioned in the last missive, Dominican nuns pray for the life and success of the Order, and their place in our Provincial territory since the early 20th century makes their prayers especially influential. This group has been especially fruitful; its foundation being called upon to establish new foundations in Albany, New York; Lufkin, Texas; British Columbia and Vietnam. It has been an exceptionally generous monastery, and a sign of the generative life given by the Order's contemplative vocation.

The Monastery of the Blessed Sacrament actually provided my first experience of the Dominican nuns. The first year of Dominican friars' formation—the Novitiate—features acclimation to the prayer and communal practices of the Order, but for our Province also features a tour of the Province's geographical outposts. For my classmates and I, the tour took place in 2015, and included a trip to meet this group of nuns. The visit only lasted for an afternoon, but remains a vivid memory. We were given special permission to visit them within the cloister, and then we spent time in adoration of the Blessed Sacrament before continuing on our tour.

We are fortunate to have not one but two outposts of cloistered Dominicans keeping our provincial territory in their prayers, and cultivating the ground for the Gospel. The history of the Monastery of the Blessed Sacrament also gives hope that the future might bring a growth to the order's Contemplative life, and that our territory might see further spread of the Order's contemplative vocation. In this New Year, we keep the Dominican Nuns of both Farmington Hills and Girard in our prayers, and ask their prayers for devotion to the Rosary to grow throughout the Midwestern United States.



Images courtesy of Monastery of the Blessed Sacrament

Rosary Mailbag

Question

By whom/how were the mysteries of the Rosary chosen?

Answer


The earliest account of the Mysteries of the Rosary can be found in the work of Dominic of Prussia, a Carthusian monk active in the 1400s.

Dominic the monk thought the prayers of the Rosary - the Our Father, the Angelic Salutation the Glory Be - could be more fruitfully prayed when reflecting on specific scenes in the life of Christ and the Blessed Mother. The most popular of these scenes are known today as the Joyful, Sorrowful and Glorious Mysteries.




Dominic of Prussia's contribution to the Rosary testifies to Dominican influence on the Rosary, and also the development which the Rosary has undergone since its beginning. Dominic of Prussia's earliest teacher was a Dominican priest, and it's not a stretch to guess that that priest


would have helped to instill a deep Marian piety. Dominic built upon Marian piety of the day to propose an authentic development. St. John Paul II's addition of the Luminous Mysteries can be seen through a similar lens. As we pray the Rosary, the lesson from the Mysteries' development still applies: time reflecting on and praying with scenes from the Life of Christ is time well-spent.




Confraternity of the Most Holy Rosary

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