

THE THIRD ORDER

Of the Society of St. Pius X



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Dear Postulants and Professed members,

Already 4 months have passed in this 3rd Rosary Crusade aimed at nothing less than Russia's consecration, leaving "only" 7 months to go. Do you have the same great fervour as you did in your recitation of the Rosary when the Crusade began in May? If you do, you are either specially favoured by God, or rather abnormal. Most of us only have bouts of fervour periodically, such as on the last day of a Retreat, or when we read a particularly moving book. Maintaining sensible fervour without interruption is normally impossible for us wayfarers, but happily we **can** maintain fervour of the **will**, what we might call a "volitional" fervour¹. This kind of fervour is manifested in the faithful fulfilling (or best attempt at it) of our social and religious duties despite all interior and exterior obstacles. If you are managing to keep up your quota of Rosaries, you are doing very well, even if you feel (a very good sign by the way) as though God probably looks upon your prayers somewhat as a famished king beholds a proffered plate of mouldy fruit.

The Liturgy of the Catholic Church has a yearly cycle, beginning with the Season of Advent, wherein we all unite our own anticipation to that of the Patriarchs and Prophets of the Old Testament for the Messiah Who is to come, the "Expectation of Nations". The close following of the liturgical **year** is a marvellous way to unite oneself with the rest of the Mystical Body, whether those members be on earth, in heaven, or purgatory. Like a tremendous and exhaustive buffet meal, there is no taste not catered for in what the Catholic Church has on offer. From the bitterness of Passion Week to the sweetness of the Assumption; from the most sober, grave and unadorned Requiem Mass to the most gorgeous display of colour, joy and music in a solemnly celebrated Mass on Easter Sunday, the Church in Her externals has always been "all things to all men".

But by the Holy Rosary, we can all join in a sort of liturgical **day** as we recite the 15 decades of the Rosary (if possible) covering the entire earthly history of God Incarnate and His Immaculate Mother. In this letter, we will have an ever so brief look at the Joyful Mysteries, offering some ideas and representations that may help in their devout and intelligent recitation.

The **Annuntiation** of a great mystery was what one would have *seen* if he had been an observer in Our Lady's room at Nazareth, but this title is only the preface and accidental background to the substance of what really took place: the Incarnation, or "taking flesh" of the 2nd Person of the Holy Trinity. All of us are inclined to lift up the small and the helpless, and nothing pleased Almighty God more than to "behold the lowliness of His handmaid" and raise Her up to sublime heights. The weight of God's innumerable gifts had pushed Her roots of humility deep into the ground, and the lower the roots go, the taller the tree grows. Our Lady's soil, fertilized by so many of God's gifts, awaited only the planting of His Sacred Seed to begin germination. But unlike the farmer with his irrational soil, God first *asked* His "enclosed garden" if She would give warmth and light to the "light of the world". Although She knew Her Son would be "a man of sorrows", She heroically responded in the affirmative, choosing *obedience* to God speaking through a *good* angel, to counteract Eve's *disobedience* to God due to a *fallen* angel.

No sooner was the Host consecrated by the overshadowing of the Holy Ghost on the altar of Mary's womb, than this living virginal monstrance went on the first procession of the Blessed Sacrament for the **Visitation** of Her cousin Elizabeth, who had *also* conceived miraculously. Of course the miracle in this case was done not despite virginity, but despite old age. The mere mention of Elizabeth's condition by Gabriel, the "strength of God", was enough for the new-found bearer of Charity to immediately fulfil charity's most difficult precept, love of neighbour. The beloved disciple would say that he is a liar who says that he loves God but not his neighbour. We usually see the wedding feast at Cana as Christ's first miracle, but was it not perhaps here, where St John the Baptist, "the greatest man born of woman", was miraculously sanctified by Christ using the greeting of His Mother as an instrument of a gift surpassing even the bodily resurrection of Lazarus?

In the **Nativity**, we behold a scene whose astounding nature has probably been dulled by overfamiliarity and cosy-looking Nativity sets. A gardener feels at home amongst his flowers, an artist with his paintings, and a

¹ The latin word for our faculty of the willing is "voluntas", from the verb "volle", "to will/want".

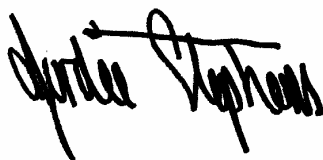
father with his children, but the Creator found "no place to lay His head" in His very own creation. "He came into His own, and His own received Him not", and He only found reception only between an ox and an ass, and in the hearts of ignorant shepherds and pagan astrologers. Where were all those learned priests and scribes who knew chapter and verse all the most minute details concerning the coming Messiah? Divinity is often found behind despicable externals, and to enter the lowly cave at Bethlehem we must bend our egos in humility. Born in a stranger's cave, He would later be buried in a stranger's grave.

Ever since the departure from Egypt under Moses, every firstborn male was consecrated to God in remembrance of all those firstborn Egyptians who had been slain. The **Presentation** of *this* Jewish boy *would* involve His being slain at a future Passover for the deliverance of the human race from the captivity of sin. Too poor to afford a lamb and a turtledove, Joseph and Mary offered 2 pigeons instead. Or *did* they offer a lamb? "Behold the Lamb of God, Who takes away the sins of the world!" At the sunset of his life, the elderly Simeon sees the sunrise of God's salvation for all the world, happy now to close his eyes after seeing the most beautiful of the sons of men. Moreover, as the perfect Christ would humbly submit Himself 30 years later to St John's baptism of penance, so the immaculately pure Virgin here submits to the rite of "purification", required by law 40 days after the birth of a male child. Considering this, we sinners should never think *anything* is below our dignity!

The **Finding of our Lord** in our own lives, either by a complete "conversion", or by the return of fervour after a period of spiritual dryness, always brings great joy. The greater the value of the thing lost, the greater the joy when it is possessed once more. What began as one of Our Lady's great sorrows ended as one of Her greatest joys. We all love and jealously guard our independence, and surely God Himself has *no* need of anyone else! And yet, as Christ would later in His public life constantly refer to His dependence on His Father, it is already here as a 12-year old that His "father's business" occupies chief place in His thoughts. The Gospel tells us that the young Christ with regard to the doctors was "listening to them and answering their questions", which should be our *model* in our efforts to draw others to the Truth and make conversions. We all love to be patiently listened to, and, as the traditional catechism format shows, the best way both to learn oneself and teach others is to ask questions.

Next month we'll move on to the Sorrowful Mysteries, and until then I encourage you to say all 15 decades of the Rosary each day, saying the 153 Hail Mary's prefigured by the 153 fish caught by the Apostles after Christ's Resurrection in the 21st chapter of St John. The more time we make for God, the more time He will make for us. He is the Master of Time, and will have no difficulty in blessing all your other daily activities with fruitfulness and efficiency if you are generous. "For those who love God, all things work together unto good".

In the Sacred Heart, through the Immaculate heart of Mary,



Fr Jordie Stephens
Spiritual Director of the Third Order of SSPX for Australia

Note: The Days of Recollection will occur on the following dates:

Rockdale, Sydney-	Saturday 5 th September
Jolimont, Perth-	Saturday 26 th September
Tynong, Melbourne-	October (date to be announced)
Oxley, Brisbane-	Saturday 21 st November

****Please check with your priest for more information****