



Director's Letter No. 3

by Fr. Karl Stehlin, Director of the Militia Immaculatae

Month of the Holy Rosary, October 2016

Dear Knights of the Immaculata!

Let us enter the month of the Holy Rosary with the immense desire and firm resolution to obey the Immaculate Heart when She requires us to pray the Rosary every day. More than ever before, we now live in terribly apocalyptic times; therefore we should be deeply impressed with the words of Sr. Lucy: “Now God gives us the last two means of salvation: devotion to the Holy Rosary and to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.” With these means alone we will save our souls and the souls of many others. We Knights should be in the front lines fighting the campaign of the Rosary Crusade instituted by our General Superior to make the Immaculate Heart known and loved and Her solemn requests finally fulfilled for the good of Holy Mother Church and the salvation of many souls.

But be attentive: it is insufficient to merely recite the Rosary. We must have a real devotion to it, grasping the treasure hidden of this mysterious prayer. Saint Louis Mary Grignion himself meditates deeply on this hidden treasure in his book about the admirable mystery of the Rosary, and Pope Leo XIII in his encyclicals about the Rosary explains the Rosary in these terms: its exterior ‘body’, its ‘material side,’ is the vocal prayer, but the interior aspect, the ‘soul’ is meditation on the mysteries of the life of Our Lord through Our Lady.

In this letter let me firstly give an answer to the question: why the Rosary is so important in these latter times?

The Rosary is now so vital for us simply as a perfect way to penetrate the mysteries of Jesus through Mary. The ROSARY IS A SHORTCUT to enter into the mystery of OUR LORD. Especially for busy men and women of our times, the Rosary is THE easiest means to meditate on our Faith: perhaps not every mystery, but certainly the most essential mysteries of our Faith, most necessary for our salvation.

The joyful mysteries—the coming of CHRIST into this world—makes clear to us that the center of creation is not man (versus the modern cult of man), is not paradise on earth, is not ones own short life, but CHRIST OUR LORD present among us. The joyful mysteries fix our eyes on Him and help us to

overcome the temptation to make the lies and illusions of the world as the center of our lives. The sorrowful mysteries show us the WAY we must live on earth: "Take up your cross daily!" It is the great law of love which consists in forgetting oneself and offering oneself for the glory of God and the salvation of souls, in identifying ourselves with the sufferings of Our Lord. And the glorious mysteries show us the GOAL of our lives: not earthly success, but the eternal glory merited by the Resurrection of Our Lord. Within these three mysteries we have all the essentials of our spiritual lives: the foundation (Emmanuel — God with us), the way (Via Crucis) and the goal (eternal glory). In this way the Rosary illuminates and liberates us from the dangers in this life of walking a deceptive path towards perdition.

Secondly, let me to present some deeper aspects of the Most Holy Rosary, because this prayer brings God Himself into us through Mary, and brings us back to God through Mary!

This means that devotion to the Holy Rosary is the shortest and surest way to holiness!

1/ MARY brings us into the depths of the Mystery of God Himself!

In the Rosary, She reveals to us the admirable mystery of mysteries, the most Holy Trinity. God himself comes close to us through the Rosary. The loving Heart of our Mother gives us her children a most marvelous gift: God Himself!

In the joyful mysteries we discover God the Father as the source and fountain of all good, especially the highest good, our own salvation. He sends his Son to earth! God the Son is the revelation of God to the world, the spiritual Sun Who disperses the darkness in His Nativity and as a Child enlightens the doctors of the Law in the temple. God the Holy Ghost accomplishes the mystery of the Incarnation and through His inspirations brings the grace of God into the world. He is present in the Visitation of Our Lady and the sanctification of John the Baptist in the womb of his mother Elizabeth, and afterwards during the presentation of the Child Jesus in the temple when He enlightens and sanctifies Simeon and Anne the prophetess.

In the sorrowful mysteries we meditate particular acts of Our Lord's infinite mercy. Here Our Mother opens before our eyes the depths of the Heart of Jesus during His agony in Gethsemane. What happened there? We hear the throbbing of His Heart, He Who is holiest, most beautiful, most perfect, and at the same time crushed by the infinite mass of horror and misery of sin, man's moral filth and repulsive insults. We see a tremendous gesture of mercy in the way He accepts all these horrors, so that He can pay the terrible price of evil and destroy it in the sacrifice of His own life. And we see equally the Father's mercy who sends the angel of the Agony to strengthen His Son in the garden, so that Christ would go the way of the merciful love to the very end. The flagellation and coronation with thorns is God's mercy in action: here and now is destroyed the darkness through payment of His Most Precious Blood, His mangled Body, and His Head pierced with thorns. The Mercy of God is not a joke;

it has nothing of sentimentalism. The Son of God attracts to Himself the greatest possible oppression in order to liberate sinners of slavery of sin. The Mercy of God brought forth our redemption, but at what a price! And could we not understand the carrying of the Cross and the death of Christ as a special participation of the Holy Ghost in this work of God's mercy? The strength of Christ to rise each time after three torturous falls; the help and consolation He accepted from Simon of Cyrene and Veronica; the presence of the Mother of Sorrows Herself on the way of the Cross—behind all this the Holy Ghost discretely reveals Himself, bringing the work of redemption to its full achievement and ultimate totality. And the whole drama culminates on Calvary. Each Divine Person is there: the Father Who sacrifices to the very end what He possesses – His Son! The Son, who loves “until the end” through every possible suffering! The Holy Ghost, Who dwells in the Immaculate Heart of Mary now standing beneath the Cross, the flame of God's eternal Love in Her Heart burning and shining in Her compassion and infinite sorrow!

In the glorious mysteries INFINITE LOVE appears in the triumph and everlasting efficacy of the whole work of salvation. We assist at the final and eternal revelation of God's glory, holiness, and majesty first in the triumph of God's love in miracle of the Resurrection. The Ascension is the triumphant return of Christ to heaven together with the members of His Mystical Body. And the central mystery is the sending of the Holy Ghost — THE FIRE OF GOD'S LOVE! In heaven all desires will be fulfilled in eternal peace and endless happiness. And the last two glorious mysteries show us this happiness in its most perfect realization, when through the Immaculata all of creation begins to return to God. The Coronation of Mary is both the definite revelation of all God's love, who fills Her with Himself more than all angels and saints in heaven, and the ultimate victory and achievement of the created order, when “God will be all in all!”

2/ Mary brings us to the deepest realization and goal of creation:

She makes us understand who we are really and what we ought to be in God's eyes. Saint Thomas teaches that She is the representative of all humanity, and only in Her we can reach our own fulfillment, which is union with Jesus Christ who is given to us by Her, Who purifies, transforms, sanctifies, and finally glorifies us.

In the joyful mysteries She appears as the origin, the source, the fountain, the solemn beginning of our true life as “children of God”; in Her we see the reality of all creatures: that the source of our lives is not the world or the creature but in God, on Whom everything is totally dependent. Each mystery shows a ‘beginning,’ the revelation of the source and fountain of existence, and the relationship of the creature to his Creator.

Ever since the Original Sin was committed, the entire world has groaned in expectation of the Savior (see Rom. 8:20–22) in its desire to be delivered from the slavery of sin and of the devil to “the freedom of the sons of God.” This deliverance begins at the Annunciation, when Mary's answer to the angel

receives the Son of God Incarnate in the world. In this moment, creation — trapped in the slavery of the devil and lost in darkness — receives overwhelming light and regains freedom by being recreated, rebuilt on a new foundation, new principles, and a new law. Because God is now with us (Emmanuel) we find a new center of gravitation, a new form of life, a “new heart.” In the measure in which we orientate everything towards this center, which is GOD IN US, all becomes intelligible, harmonious, beautiful, pure, and holy.

The Visitation presents us another ‘beginning’, the inauguration of God’s work of grace through the sanctification of Saint John. This highest gift was brought to him by Mary. Her Visitation was the beginning of his own holiness. And in this we can have confidence that God does not change: what He does once, He continues to do. If the first miracle of grace was accomplished through Mary, then He will continue to sanctify men through Mary. Through Mary, Our Lord Jesus Christ visits each soul and pours into it sanctifying grace. This is the beginning of our return to God, the beginning of a new world, through Mary.

The Nativity shows us that this renewed world does not only exist in the depths of the heart or in an invisible intimacy. We need to see, to hear, to experience. This new foundation must be visible; if not, no one can build on it. How does Eternal Wisdom become visible to us? In the form of a little child. Until the end of the world Mary continues to appear to humanity with Her Child in Her arms, as witnessed in innumerable pictures and icons. What does this mean? It gives us the condition for which we must build our life on the only true foundation, on the foundation of God’s grace: we have to become little children, HER children. The Offering in the Temple is likewise a ‘beginning,’ introducing us to an essential and most sublime human act which must be the beginning of whatever is true, good, and wise: the act of offering, of sacrifice! Again Mary was the first to make this offering, and Her sacrifice was the greatest: She gave God all that She had. She offered the soul of Her soul, the heart of Her heart: Her own Son. It was only 40 days since She received Him from God, and already She gave Him back to the Father, offering Him in the Temple. This is the occasion to meditate about a great principle which has to dominate our spiritual lives: if you want to receive, you must give! If you want to receive more, you must give more. Only one who gives all, receives all! Finally, in meditating on the mystery of the finding of Jesus in the Temple, the Immaculate Heart teaches us another essential condition to fulfill if we would live a new spiritual life in Her. On our own strength we will never be able to sacrifice adequately and bring about order and harmony in our lives. Only the constant seeking of Our Lord, His face, His will, and His doctrine allows us to quit our narrow and closed world. Who seeks, finds!

In the sorrowful mysteries Mary appears to us as the “way which leads us to Heaven.” She shows us here what our daily turning towards God must resemble.

The first experiences on our way to God are very humiliating, but meditation on the Agony shows that we are unable to make even one step on our own. Like the apostles we sleep, like Judas we betray, we flee, we run away, we abandon Him. So we turn in grief towards Her who can bring us back to His feet

just to hear the cry of the agonizing Savior: "Give me the chalice full of your sins! I take them all! I pay the price for them all!" We cannot receive His infinite mercy if first we do not confess to Him all our shame and filth, if we do not allow Him to be merciful towards us. Then the scourging at the pillar and the crown of thorns awakens in us an acute pain, an intense cry: "It is I who provoked You with my impurities and my pride. I myself took part in Your torture! And now even by God's grace I feel contrition, yet I am the most helpless being in the world. I must see how my and other's sins inflicted suffering on Your holy head and body." This helplessness is a torture for somebody who loves, who wants to do something for the beloved! Now a second experience implants in us essential conditions for a solid and constant return to God: compunction and humility. And only on the Way of the Cross can we finally begin to do something for our beloved Lord: with Simon of Cyrene we can actually help Him carry the Cross; with Veronica we can wipe His face with the cloth of compassion. The entire path of our return to God can be preoccupied with such things as this: insignificant things in themselves perhaps, but always done with greater love! But only at the fifth sorrowful mystery do we receive the New Law which must penetrate us, without which we cannot persevere: to assist at Christ's Passion with His Mother, to meditate the wounds of the Savior always and everywhere through Her eyes, and to love Him with Her sorrowful Heart. Therefore an essential act of our lifelong return to God is participation in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Standing together with Her at the foot of the Cross, we hear our Lord give Her to us as our own mother, making our hearts similar to His Heart, full of Love for God and for the salvation of souls.

In the glorious mysteries Our Lady presents us with the unique goal of our lives, the destination of our return to God. She reminds us "why and for what is everything," because She knows that we can easily forget about the most essential and the "only thing necessary." Above all, She gives us the courage that we not despair when obstacles and adversities would seem to obstruct our way to Heaven.

Meditation on the Resurrection fills our souls with great astonishment, such profound joy, such a victory, such a triumph of Christ over all! Who can deny God's Love! It is for us that Christ rose from the dead, to show us our own future resurrection. We also will rise, if we persevere faithfully to the summit of the spiritual life, in the practice of the highest commandment. The renewed and eternally blissful humanity of Our Lord is the model and the form of our future glorious life in heaven. Love for love! If we will love Him until the end, if we are crucified and buried with Him, then we will also rise from death with Him.

In the meditation on the Ascension, Our Lady shows us the triumphant march of victory of the King of Kings, his glorious return to the Father. How did those souls of the faithful patriarchs and prophets greet Him in heaven? This is a vision we call the ecstasy of Love: to be absorbed in Him, focused on Him, when He entered the heavenly kingdom. Mary fills us with Her own fascination at the sight of Christ, King of Love "clothed with a garment down to the feet, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. And his head and his hairs were white as white wool and as snow. And his eyes were as a flame of fire... and his voice as sound of many waters... and his face was as the sun shining in his power."

(Apocalypse 1:13-16) The glorious figure of the risen Lord should touch us just as it touched Paul when the sight of Christ before the gates of Damascus threw him to the ground and made him forever a prisoner, a servant, friend and apostle of Christ. From this day forward, only one thing was profitable for Paul: "My life is Christ!" This is also the greatest desire of Mary, that we would be caught up in rapture like the Apostle of the Gentiles, and like Herself, in the tremendous love of Her Son.

The Sending of the Holy Ghost brings us to the Cenacle, where the Holy Ghost "enkindles the fire of His Love" in us, as on Pentecost He enkindled Our Heavenly Mother, the apostles and disciples. We see Her in the center surrounded by them—what a fascinating gathering! It is impossible to imagine how Mary appeared when the fire of the Holy Ghost penetrated Her. Later She would appear to privileged souls, and visionaries would try to explain Her heavenly beauty and majesty. At Fatima: "She was more brilliant than the sun, and radiated a light clearer and more intense than a crystal glass filled with sparkling water, when the rays of the burning sun shine through it." At La Salette: "Suddenly I saw a beautiful light, brighter than the sun... I looked attentively towards this light. First it was immobile, but soon afterwards I saw in it another light, even more brilliant and moving, and in this light the most beautiful Lady". At Lourdes to St. Bernadette: "She was different from the figure of other people because from her came an incredible light, and she was beautiful, so miraculously and completely differently beautiful that Bernadette, even if she had been a perfect painter, would not have been able to portray Her beauty even with the most perfect instruments.... Bernadette saw a thin figure of middle height. She looked very young, maybe a girl 20 years old. But this beauty and youth had in itself something extraordinary. It seemed a youthfulness which never passed and could never pass — an eternal youth. And yet there was something else in that youth impossible to put into words. It was as if one could join the grace of a childlike most pure virgin with grave and infinite understanding, unlimited goodness of a mother, and the monarchic majesty of a queen". Can we not see in these descriptions the power of the Holy Ghost, who in praising Her beauty and filling Her with light wants to bring us as well to the heights of His Love?

And so She was the first to reach the infinite peak of the mystery of God. Her journey through life towards heaven was like an immense flame of love: she literally died of love. This becomes visible in her Assumption, when as the first of all mankind she reached the goal, to which afterwards she brings all her children. The death (*dormitio* or repose) of Mary is to be considered as the fullness of Her love, as dying of love. Her Love was so immense that nothing could retain Her any more on this earth. And the last glorious mystery is just a chant of admiration for Her everlasting triumph. But it would be an error to think that because She is in heaven she is therefore far from us, because we remain here on earth. Although She is in heaven, She is not far at all, because here and now She takes care of Her children. The Queen of Heaven and of all creatures should attract our eyes and our hearts. In Her all her children are called to receive the crown of glory. The meditation of this mystery of the Rosary should bring us to such an attitude, that spiritually we would rather dwell there in the mystery of God than here on earth. There is our true reality; here life is only a shadow. There is our heart; here our exile. In Her we can exclaim with Saint Francis: "My God and my All!"

Singapore, 4 October 2016, on the feast of Saint Francis
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