



"To gather priests to Christ and to one another to proclaim..."

THE VISITATION

A monthly publication of the Fraternity of Priests, Inc.

HOLY MARY, YOU PRAY FOR US

by Fr. John Theodore, C.S.Sp

The spate of clerical sex abuse allegations has spurred much debate inside and outside the Church. Policies have been revisited and refined. Bishops have given assurances to the media and to the faithful. Have we done all that we can do? What is at work in this decadence which has affected the Church? Money which should have been used for the building up of God's kingdom has been used in not so noble ways. Some argue this means it is time to rethink priesthood, sexuality and celibacy. How should the Catholic read the present crisis?

In this month's feature article, Fr Theodore gives some help. He reminds us that Satan is the arch-enemy. But, he says, a praying people has the ammunition to cripple this enemy.

When Mary came to Fatima she said, "I am the Lady of the Rosary." Why does God send her with a rosary in her hand? We have to understand God's approach when a nation is falling apart, when a world is falling apart.

In the Ezekiel 22, we have a clear lesson. From verses 23 to 29, God describes in detail the nation falling apart. Then in verse 30 God gives His solution. He says, "I looked for someone to pray for

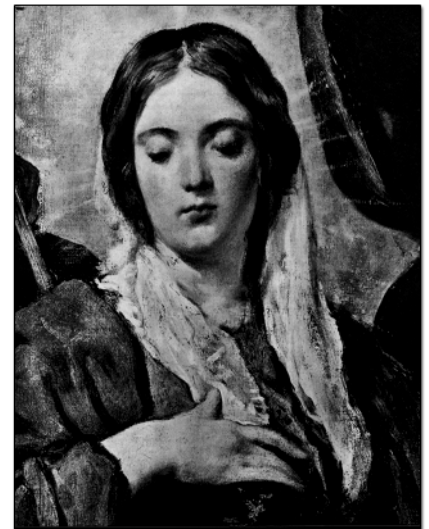
them, someone to stand in the gap ..." Prayer is God's solution. If we are a praying people, then we are where the solution is.

Lack of laborers is a major problem for the kingdom, Jesus did not say, "Organize more seminars and workshops." He said, "Pray the Lord of the harvest to send laborers." As praying people we are where the solution is. This is why Satan will do anything to stop us from praying. This is why Satan must try to cripple the Church. This is why Satan tries to make the Church a laughing-stock. Satan knows that the Church is into the solution.

Our prayer is crucial to the salvation of God's children. Jesus said, "You are the salt of the earth." Salt is useful for preserving things. In a world falling apart our prayer is a question of life and death. At Fatima, Our Lady showed the children a vision of hell and told them that many people are in hell because no one prayed for them. Could you imagine that? On Judgment Day Jesus will show us people who went to hell because we did not pray enough. A true child of God says, "Lord, whatever price I must pay, none of your children must go to hell because I did not pray enough."

Jesus taught us that only prayer stops Satan. In Luke 22:31, He says, "Simon, Simon, Satan has got his wish to sift you all like wheat, but I have prayed for you." He is saying, "Satan is coming to do a job on you, but he cannot do it because I have prayed for you."

When you pick up your rosary you are telling Satan: "Not my child, not my family, not my nation." When Jesus tells Peter that Satan is coming go sift you, He is telling us that the enemy has a plan for our lives. Somebody must tell him "No".



God sees our world falling apart and He sends Mary with a prayer, the rosary. Why the rosary? To understand this we must look at a few lessons from the scriptures.

1. Some situations need stronger spiritual power. Daniel

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Submissions and articles are always appreciated from members. If you have events that are upcoming, please alert the editors so they can prepare a followup article on the event.

The other day I was stuck by a line from the book of Joshua, where God is instructing the new leader of the Hebrew people who are about to enter the land of promise. He says: "...be firm and steadfast! Do not fear or be dismayed, for the Lord, your God, is with you everywhere you go" (Jos:1-9).

What words of encouragement! Imagine the fear and trepidation there must have been at this point; they were about the face the great walled city of Jericho. Of course, we know the outcome, their God was with them in power.

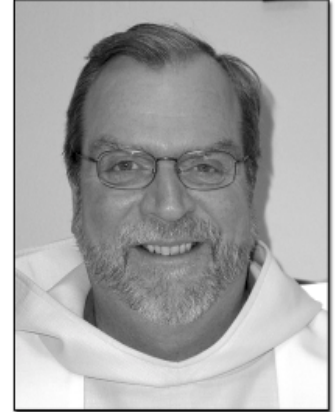
I really believe that in these days of turmoil in our Church and in the priesthood when it is so easy to become discouraged and negative (even cynical), the words of the Lord to Joshua are words for us; we too are called to be firm and steadfast, because God is still with us. After all, "if God is for us, who can be against us?" (Rm.8.31). The Lord is not about to abandon His people, He never has and He never will! He may be purifying His bride but He will never abandon her; so, "...be firm and steadfast."

This past June on the feast of St. Baranabas (June 6) I was touched by this disciple's ministry. "Barnabas" was a surname given to Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus. The name means "son of consolation", or "son of encouragement". He was an early disciple whom we do not know too much about, but, as St. John Chrysostom points out, his surname must have been inspired by his conciliatory spirit and his sympathetic manner. Engaged with Paul on his missionary journey, and later with Peter, he was the "encourager" who built up faith and encouraged others on to stronger faith and trust in the Lord.

Isn't this the kind of ministry we need today? When the media, gossip, etc., tears down the Church and the priesthood, when peoples' spirits, morale, and hope are low, we the baptized disciples of Jesus Christ need to encourage one another. Why add to the negativity and darkness? Why not

add more light by shining our faith in acts of consolation and encouragement? We are the Barnabas' of today.

Our priests need encouragement. So many of us feel and carry the heaviness of the times and the sadness of the attacks. We are worried about the scandals and the faith of our people.



Your parish priest is probably feeling awful. Have you encouraged him? Personally, I've received a number of cards, letters, and phone calls from parishioners and friends that have deeply encouraged me. They've urged me to be "firm and steadfast." They've comforted me with promises of prayer. If you haven't done so, you, be a Barnabas to your parish priest. It can only be appreciated!

We of the Fraternity of Priests are committed to the pastoral care of priests, and part of that is encouraging each other and reminding each other that the Lord is still with us wherever we go. There are so many intercessors and benefactors supporting us too! Thank you, and please keep on praying for us and for your parish priest. Be assured of our prayers and best wishes for your encouragement and consolation. As we come together as the Body of Christ in mutual support and prayer, "...be firm and steadfast! Do not fear or be dismayed, for the Lord, your God, is with you wherever you go."

In Jesus,



Fr. John

continued from page 1...

10:9-14. God sent an angel to do a job for Daniel in Persia but the angel was not strong enough so He called in St Michael the Archangel. Some situations need stronger spiritual power.

2. Some people's prayers are stronger than other people's prayers. We have the cases of Moses (Numbers 21:4-9); Judith (Judith 8:28-31); Samuel (Jeremiah 15:1).

3. Sin weakens our prayer; a holy life makes our prayer strong (Isaiah 59:1-3; James 5:16).

4. Not only are some people's prayers stronger than other people's prayers, God sends us to those people for them to pray for us (Genesis 20:7-18; Job 42:7-10).

Now we understand why God sends Mary with a rosary in her hands. The rosary says, Holy Mary, you pray for us." The same God who said to Abimelech, "let Abraham pray for you", the same God who said to others, "let Job pray for you," that same God is saying to us, "let Mary pray for you." God is saying to us, "You are all sinners. You need strong prayer. Her prayer is much stronger than yours."

In the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center, thousands died in a flash. Mary looks at our world. She often appears crying blood. She knows how many of us are unprepared. She says, "I want my praying people to pray more." In Medugorje Mary is supposed to have said: "When I ask you to pray

the rosary, I do not mean five decades. I mean fifteen decades." She is really saying to us, "you are in deep trouble. If you pray more it will make a real difference. I plead with you pray 15 decades."

Jesus taught us by His own example that when we are in deep trouble we must pray more. In Luke 22:44, we read that in the Garden of Gethsemane, at the deepest

moment of His agony, He prayed more. Jesus is saying: "This is where the solution is. You have nowhere else to go. If the trouble gets deeper, you pray more."

This article is part of a homily delivered by Fr. John Theodore at the Laventille Marian Shrine, Trinidad, shortly after the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City and the Pentagon in Washington, D.C.

God is saying to us, "You are all sinners. You need strong prayer. Her [Mary's] prayer is much stronger than yours."

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(1 Timothy 6:12)

Brothers! All is ready, please come. We want to hear from you. We want to see you. Let us encourage one another.

...and if you have the time, there's so much in Arizona to see, so much to do. (e.g. Kitt Peak Observatory, Pima Aerospace Museum, Kartchner Caves, Saguaro National Park)



Please send us your prayer intentions: _____

THANK YOU FOR PRAYING FOR A PRIEST EACH DAY!

A PRAYER FOR PRIESTS

Jesus, Eternal High Priest, live in (name of priest), act in him, speak in and through him. Think your thoughts in his mind, love through his heart. Give him your own disposition and feelings. Teach, lead and guide him always. Correct, enlighten and expand his thoughts and behavior. Possess his soul, take over his entire personality and life. Replace him with yourself. Incline him to constant adoration and thanksgiving; pray in and through him. Let him live in you and keep him in this intimate union always.

Mary, Immaculate Conception, Mother of Jesus and Mother of priests, pray and intercede for (.....). Amen.

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