



MEANS OF SALVATION

Praying the Rosary as a family: a weapon for peace

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With the second anniversary of the start of the war between Hamas and Israel (7 October 2023) just a few days away, diplomats are working tirelessly to find a peace agreement amid countless stoppages. A similar situation is unfolding in the Russia-Ukraine conflict, which has been ongoing for more than three and a half years, with heightened tensions between Moscow and the West prompting fears of a third world war. While diplomatic avenues should certainly not be neglected, Christians know that prayer is their greatest means, alongside fasting, for obtaining peace.

Every prayer is pleasing to God, but one is particularly so: the Holy Rosary. It has the power to resolve or avert any kind of conflict, as Our Lady explained in her first apparition to the shepherd children of Fátima on 13 May 1917: "Recite the Rosary every day to obtain peace in the world and an end to war". This peace is brought about by constant meditation on the mysteries of our salvation. It is not just the absence of armed conflict; it takes place first and foremost in our hearts, allowing us to bring Christ

into the various spheres of social living — an indispensable premise for true and lasting peace.

It is therefore timely to recall the words of Pope Leo XIV, who, during his general audience on Wednesday, 24 September, reminded us that October is dedicated to the Rosary. He invited everyone to pray the Rosary for peace every day of the month, both personally, in the family and in community. It is precisely the family dimension on which we focus our attention, as it is the privileged cradle of faith and prayer.

The lives of the saints often describe the importance of a Christian upbringing received at home and how someone benefited from parents who gathered their children to pray together at specific times of the day, such as in the morning and evening perhaps in front of the hearth. Examples abound and without delving too far into history, we need only recall the life of the saint Gianna Beretta Molla (1922–1962). Among the various devotional practices in which her parents trained her — despite a thousand commitments, they went to Mass every day, rising at the heroic hour of 5 a.m. — there was the fixed appointment of the after-dinner meal. As one of Saint Gianna's brothers, Father Joseph, wrote, "another important moment in the life of our family arrived: the recitation of the Holy Rosary. Dad would stand in front of the image of Our Lady, with the older children beside him and the younger ones around Mum, who would help us answer until we fell asleep resting on her lap".

The family of another contemporary saint, Teresa of Calcutta (1910–1997), also gathered together to pray: her parents had a special devotion to the Rosary, too. Now an adult, she recommended: "Take the Rosary into your family and consecrate your family to the Sacred Heart. Parents, teach your children to pray and pray with them".

Similarly, a famous friend of hers, St. John Paul II (who also quoted her), wrote in the apostolic letter *Rosarium Virginis Mariae* (2002): "*The family that prays together stays together*. The Holy Rosary, by age-old tradition, has shown itself particularly effective as a prayer which brings the family together" and facilitates communication between its members and the ability to forgive one another, precisely because, if recited with care, it helps one to cast one's gaze on Jesus. Pope Wojtyla was very clear that the powerful influence of this prayer, which is so dear to Mary, applies not only to individual families, but also to entire nations, and that it is capable of provoking that "intervention from above" which alone can change the fate of the world. In the same letter, he wrote, "*The Rosary is by its nature a prayer for peace*, since it consists in the contemplation of Christ, the Prince of Peace, the one who is 'our peace' (*Eph 2:14*). Anyone who assimilates the mystery of Christ – and this is clearly the goal of the Rosary – learns the

secret of peace and makes it his life's project. Moreover, by virtue of its meditative character, with the tranquil succession of *Hail Marys*, the Rosary has a peaceful effect on those who pray it, disposing them to receive and experience in their innermost depths, and to spread around them, that true peace which is the special gift of the Risen Lord". This peace is reflected in one's relations with one's neighbour, making one see the face of Christ in the other.

From this, we can understand why the devil tries to destroy the identity of the family as a natural society founded on marriage by inspiring norms and lifestyles contrary to the natural moral law, such as divorce, abortion, artificial insemination, gay unions and cohabitation. We can also understand why he fears the Holy Rosary so much. Parents therefore have the serious task of rediscovering this prayer and teaching their children to recite it together. This is as much a task for mothers as for fathers. They are called to recover the healthy role of guide, also in the practice of the faith within the family, a role which secularisation and attacks on the father figure have undermined. This is at the heart of their educational mission, the ultimate goal of which can only be to bring their children to God — to Him to whom they truly belong — by guiding them on the path of the sacraments, prayer, and love for Mary. This will help them realise the heavenly Father's plan of eternal salvation for them. Peace on earth can only come from this.