

Memorial of Our Lady of the Rosary

Bishop John Barres' Homily

St. Agnes Cathedral

October 7, 2020

In his book *The World's First Love*, Venerable Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen draws on the insights and intuitions of Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804-1864), a pivotal figure in the history of American literature.

Hawthorne was not Catholic, but looking in from the outside, he appreciated the Church's Marian devotion and doctrine. He wrote: "I have always envied the Catholics that sweet, sacred, Virgin Mother who stands between them and the Deity, intercepting somewhat his awful splendor, but permitting his love to stream on the worshiper more intelligibly to human comprehension through the medium of a woman's tenderness."¹

Little did Nathaniel Hawthorne know his profound appreciation of Marian devotion from outside the Catholic Church would one day be experienced by his daughter, Servant of God Sr. Rose Hawthorne (1851-1926), from inside the Catholic Church.

Sr. Rose was the foundress of the Dominican Sisters of Hawthorne and devoted to Good Samaritan-service of those suffering with cancer.

What a truth this story relates! God's providential designs are so often expressed and accomplished through the intercession and love of Our Lady.

The Blessed Virgin Mary is involved in the life of every believer. When we pray a daily Rosary, we draw near to her who points always to her Son. In the Rosary, we go to Jesus through Mary.

The daily rhythm of the Rosary is essential to the daily rhythm of our lives. When we are faithful to the Rosary, Mary teaches us the power of silence and expands our capacity for contemplative concentration in all aspects of our prayer lives. The

¹ Venerable Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen, *The World's First Love: Mary, Mother of God* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1996) 230. I discovered this quote in the July 2019 edition of the *Magnificat*.

Rosary is a powerful prayer for peace -- for interior peace, peace within families, peace in the Church we love, peace in our cities² and peace in the world.

In his 2002 Apostolic Letter *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, Pope Saint John Paul II described the power of the Rosary in the lives of the saints and in the history of the Church.³

He emphasized the Rosary as both a biblical and contemplative prayer, and by adding the Luminous mysteries, he made this prayer a true “compendium of the Gospel” that leads us deeper into the mystery of Christ.

The Joyful, Sorrowful, Glorious and Luminous mysteries, with the exception of a few, are taken directly from the Gospels, so praying the Rosary deepens our bond with the Lord. By picking up our rosary and thumbing the beads, we meet Him in the midst of our day, and we meet Him with Our Lady.

Mary’s presence in the mysteries models for us a Marian approach to *lectio divina* or meditation on the Scriptures.⁴

The Our Father anchors and sets each mystery we pray. That Our Father said in the context of the rhythm of the entire Rosary helps us focus on the Lord’s will and helps us to respond to Christ, the Teacher of prayer.

The contemplative and peaceful rhythm of the Hail Mary, prayed while meditating on a gospel mystery, helps us enter the mysteries with Mary as our guide. With Mary by our side, the mysteries teach us about holiness.

How life-changing the Rosary can be for a home! Husbands and wives experience hurts, conflict, differences of temperament or personality, disagreements about duties and tasks, hurtful words that wound, misunderstandings, pride and self-will. The Rosary brings light and grace into these areas of darkness.

The contemplative rhythm of the Rosary (or just a decade prayed together daily) can gradually help couples and all family members begin to change negative and abrasive relational patterns into a new rhythm of intimacy, gentleness, humility, forgiveness and a refined fidelity. These movements of grace have a profound impact on their children and extended family and their daily parenting. How deeply

² See Pope Francis’ 2013 Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelium Gaudium*, 71-75. This section is entitled, “Challenges from Urban Cultures.”

³ See the Vatican website.

⁴ See Pope Benedict XVI’s 2010 Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum Domini*, 27-28.

young children can grow to love the Rosary and pray it devoutly. How often do they draw on those early devotional experiences later in life.

The spirit of prayer behind the Rosary points out that marriages are deepened and strengthened in unity, fidelity and indissolubility when a couple focuses on the love and will of God together. It is also a powerful prayer for harmonious relationships and healing between parents and their sons and daughters.

Our Lady of the Rosary, pray for us!