



OUR NOBLE PRAYER.

The Philosophy of the Rosary.

A critical Study in the Light of REASON AND SCIENCE.

Preston Catholic News.

Almost all non-Catholics are entirely ignorant of the devotion of the Rosary, and hold it in utter contempt and reprobation. Even within the Household of Faith there exist persons who suppose that, however good and useful it may be in itself, it is only or chiefly adapted to the use of the more ignorant classes of devotees, and who, therefore, wholly neglect its use. On the other hand those who know it best and use it most hold rightly that the solemn liturgy of the Church aside, it is the highest and noblest and most effectual of all forms of stated prayer. Those who love and esteem the Holy Rosary do so because it was revealed by Our Lady to St. Dominic, because it has shown itself

Miraculously Efficient in the Conversion of Souls

and the impetration of celestial favours, and because experience in its use has endeared it to them as a delight and comfort to the spirit, all inspiration and expiration of Divine love. But whatever is true and good is supremely reasonable, and there are those who need to see the rationale of a thing before they can, unless by a prodigy of grace, be brought to accept and use it. A critical study of the Rosary in the light of reason and science more than corroborates the highest claims that have been made for it by its votaries. It

Illustrates Some of the Most Subtle and Important Principles of Practical Psychology

and commends itself, to whoever will take the trouble to examine it thoroughly and impartially, as the one popular devotion which is equally adapted to the use of men and women of every type and degree of culture and learning. The Rosary consists of four elements, the same which are found in every work of art, whether religious or profane. A great painting, for example, consists of the canvas, the pigments, the design and grouping, and a certain central idea and dominating conception which gives to the whole its highest meaning and significance. So the Rosary consists of the beads, certain prayers are said upon them, certain mysteries in the life of Our Lord and the Blessed Virgin Mary which are contemplated while the prayers are being recited, and the ideal or mystical truths which these mysteries represent. The

Material Substratum of this Wonderful Spiritual Creation

is a string of 165 beads, arranged in fifteen decades or groups of ten, separated by single beads. For convenience sake, a string of one third this size is commonly used, such a chaplet, as it is called, being repeated three times in the recitation of the whole rosary. Its verbal substratum is a certain arrangement of the three prayers—the "Our Father," the "Hail Mary," and "Glory be to the Father"—one of which is said at the touch of each bead. Its intellectual element, corresponding to what has been called the "transcendental form" of a work of art, is furnished by a series of fifteen episodes in the life of Jesus Christ and His Immaculate Mother, which are successively contemplated during the recitation of the prayers. Its essence is

The Great Drama of the Incarnation and Redemption,

which is the central fact in the history of the universe, and the crowning manifestation of the Divine glory. That the Rosary is the best of all prayers is evident from the fact that it is the most potent means in existence by which the soul can maintain in itself a vivid consciousness and due appreciation of those scenes of Divine achievement which are the pivot of all history and all philosophy and all religion, and in which the chief actor was Jesus Christ, union with Whom is the only road to salvation from sin and to supernatural beatitude. The Rosary is triune, like the nature of the Godhead. It illustrates the Hegelian formula thesis, antithesis, and synthesis—which, rightly understood, is in several senses a true summary of the history of Redemption. First, the overflowing as it were of the Godhead into the comple-

ted creation, the miracle of Divine love and glory. This is exhibited in the Joyful Mysteries. Opposed to this is the vast weight of woe,

The Inevitable Sequence of Sin, and which no one has felt in all the horror of its awful import save God Himself, manifest in the flesh; as we behold in the Sorrowful Mysteries. But springing from this twofold source, and reconciling this tremendous incongruity, appears the Living Church, whose triumph in the persons of its Head and of its members is revealed in the Glorious Mysteries. The Joyful Mysteries are the Mysteries of the Incarnation; the Sorrowful are the Mysteries of the Passion; and the Glorious are the Mysteries of the Beatitude. The Five Joyful Mysteries are: The Annunciation, the Word becoming flesh; the Visitation, God adored in the bosom of Mary; the Nativity;—God manifest to the world as Jesus Christ; the Presentation, the fulfilment of the law and the recognition of the Heavenly Guest; the Finding in the Temple, the Proclamation of Divine Truth. Here is exhibited a progressive unfolding of the

Crowning Glory of God's Creative Work.

He Himself descends into the tabernacle which He has prepared for Himself in the heart of His Own creation, abides there recognised only by the illuminated eye of the chosen ones among His elect, comes forth into the midst of mankind, of civil and religious society, and finally pours forth the riches of celestial wisdom in human accents. The Five Sorrowful Mysteries are: The Agony in the Garden, the suffering of the soul; the Scourging at the Pillar, the suffering of the flesh; the Crowning with Thorns, the suffering of the head; the Carrying of the Cross, the Suffering of the bodily frame; the Crucifixion, the supreme suffering of the whole being. These awful scenes display the Redeemer following the path which the venom of sin had traversed, to root out the curse at every point. The crime of Adam, beginning with the malice in the soul, brought disease and unsightliness to the outer body, error to the mind, weakness to the muscular and osseous system, and disorder into the whole organism. These evils form the dire antithesis to the wonders of the Divine works in nature and man; but their remedy is provided in the holy sorrow which springs from the sight of their last and most cruel effects. Here

The Punishment of sin Falls Upon the All-Holy;

the serpent of darkness bites the heel of the Woman's Seed; the suffering which has become the common lot of humanity makes bold to attack the impassible Godhead that has condescended to assume it and in the very place where its splendour shines forth most dazzlingly, the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The Five Glorious Mysteries are: The Resurrection—the triumph over death. The Ascension—the triumph over hell. The Descent of the Holy Ghost—the establishment of the Divine kingdom on earth. The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin—the consummated redemption of the body. The Coronation of the Blessed Virgin—the consummated redemption of the soul. Now we see the Incarnate God treading sin and death beneath His feet, and triumphantly entering the celestial courts, accompanied by the holy patriarchs that had so long been waiting for His coming. The Divine Spirit descends upon its earthly spouse, and the Church by which mankind is to be at once redeemed from sin, and united to God in Christ, is born of Mary in the Cenacle at Jerusalem. Not content to witness the fulfilment of the Divine Glory in the person of the Redeemer, and in humanity at large, we fix our gaze upon its supreme exhibition in the redemption of the individual personality. We have in the Incarnation and the Passion not only a general interest as a means for the salvation and beatitude of the human race, but also a personal interest as the only means by which we ourselves can individually attain to our true destiny. In order, therefore, to appreciate the office of Jesus Christ at its true value, it is necessary to consider what He has done for those who, by perfect co-operation with His grace, have enabled it to exhaust

All the Possibilities of Redemption and Glorification.

When we seek such shining trophies of redeeming love we find that among the Blessed, one stands out pre-eminently as the most glorious of all redeemed personalities. This is no other than the Blessed Virgin Mother herself, the type and example of sanctity, and the one human person who was chosen to co-operate as the representative of the whole created universe in all the mysteries of the Incarnation and Redemption. So we contemplate the assumption of her soul and body into heaven, as the most precious trophy wrested by the hand of the Great Conqueror from death and the grave; and in her coronation by the Ever-Blessed Trinity as the Queen of Angels and Queen of Saints we behold the very ultimate and

Crowning Fruit of the Redemptive Work;

an unapproachable glory, at once God and to creation, which no invention of omnipotence however vast, can ever take away or obscure. But a merely intellectual contemplation of these truths is not sufficient; for it must be our aim to make them a part of our inmost selves. It is the faculty of imagination which most powerfully affects our emotions and our conduct, since it is able to bring persons and events before us with the vividness of an actual experience of our own. We, therefore, picture to ourselves the Annunciation, the Presentation of the Divine Child in the temple, and the other mysteries, with all the accessory incidents recorded by the Holy Scriptures or other early Christian literature. Since they were planned by Divine Providence, performed by God incarnate in the flesh, and recorded by the Holy Spirit, they must be pregnant with spiritual meaning, and we accordingly draw from them

A thousand Varied Mystical Illuminations and Practical Lessons,

according as circumstances, or an inner inspiration of the Divine Spirit, may suggest. But stated meditation is difficult, and for some minds almost impossible; and the imagination is hard to control, especially when all the invisible emissaries of evil press round to divert the mind from these holy images in whose presence they lose all their power.

To assist in focussing the mind, as it were, upon these visions of fulfilled prophecy, suggested by the Rosary, and also to so simplify the devotion that every human being without exception, can take part in it by the side of the saints and sages, the Mysteries are supported as it were, by a series of vocal prayers. While meditating upon any one of the fifteen selected events in the life of Our Lord and His Blessed Mother which make up the Drama of Salvation one recites the Our Father once, and then the Hail Mary ten times, concluding with a single recitation of the doxology: Glory be to the Father. By this device the mind is enabled, in case it wanders from the immediate subject of the Mystery, to fall back upon holy and Christian sentiments calculated to immediately recall it to the scene which it is desired to keep before it. In other words, that residuum of attention which is not directed towards the subject of the Mystery is gathered up by the vocal prayers and given a religious direction.

The Essence of Prayer,

as of virtue, lies in a certain kind of intention. Prayer is the direction of the soul towards God; and whoever directs his soul towards God, whether in penitence, or faith or supplication or thanksgiving or communion is offering a true and effectual prayer, whether or not he uses any form of words or thinks of those that he uses. Words are merely means to the end, which is the outpouring of the soul towards its Creator. The loving contemplation of the Person of Jesus Christ, especially in those very acts by which He became our Redeemer is a super-excellent degree of true prayer, and it is to this that the Rosary is adapted to give rise. The body as well as the mind is given a part in this wonderful exercise, by means of the beads, which are slipped one by one through the fingers as the prayers are said.

We are not Pure Spirits, were never meant to be, and never shall be; our physical part is destined to share in our eternal beatitude or woe, as it has shared in the temptations and trials of our earthly probation. Con-

tempt for the body, in the literal sense of the expression, is a Gnosticising error; the Catholic loves and reverences it, demands only that it shall maintain its normal relation of perfect subservience to the soul. It is the temple of God, made by His own wisdom, and power, and the Eternal, clothed in His Eucharistic garments, has brought into it all the splendour of His infinite Majesty. Not only do the beads perfect the prayer by enabling the body to participate in the aspirations of the soul, but they are also a powerful means of awakening, preserving, and enhancing the interior devotion.

The Instincts of Devotion.

According to a now well-established psychological law, the more frequently a certain action has been accompanied by a certain thought, the stronger will be the impulse to a similar thought whenever the action is repeated. When one has been in the habit of reciting the rosary, one's mind turns instinctively to the contemplation of the Mysteries as soon as the beads are taken in the hand. There are many occasions when the mind would be unable to ascend out of the turmoil of momentary and terrestrial interests into the Holy Mountain where the majestic panorama of the joys and sorrows and glories of Jesus and Mary unrolls itself forever before the eyes of the Initiate; and these are often the very occasions when the need of such a solace and stimulus is most acute.

A Garland of Prayer.

It is then that the Beads reveal their power; with the transit of each tiny sphere a part of the incubus of earth and sense rolls off, until the spirit stands untrammelled in the presence of the Arcana of God. Other chains deprive the wearer of the illusory and ambiguous freedom of the body; but he who binds this garland of prayer about his heart attains to the true liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free.

There is no Preacher so Potent as the Rosary,

to one to whom it has ever been familiar or who can be induced to learn and practice it. Many a hardened sinner or confirmed apostate who would listen to no exhortation, and whose bitter obstinacy the very shadow of death could not break, has melted into tears of penance when a chaplet has been placed in his hand, and begged forthwith for a minister of reconciliation to rid his soul from the leprosy of sin and unite it in eternal bonds to its Maker and Redeemer. In the historic order the inner precedes the outer, but in the order of human knowledge the outer precedes the inner. In creation the particular unrolls itself out of the universal, and the highest intelligences see the universe in its truest perspective, the particular and the outer in and through the inner and universal. But the ordinary human mind in its earthly developments has to attain to its general truths by the accumulation of isolated facts, and must be prepared by outward experiences to receive its interior illuminations. The Rosary from this point of view is

A Ladder of Devotion

with its foot planted in the depths of matter, and its head rising into the uncreated splendors of the Self-Existent Godhead. The neophyte first learns to use the beads, with the prayers attached to them; and then, as he goes on, the Mysteries of the Cradle and the Cross and the Crown begin to appear in dim outlines beyond each decade, growing more and more distinct until those scenes of sacred history stand out in bold relief and vivid coloring, and their Hero and Heroine live and speak and breathe before the Worshipper's gaze.

Unspeakable Sublimities of the Life of God.

In course of time the faithful Rosarian's vision becomes still more wonderful. The halo of supernatural significance surrounding the historic scenes takes on deeper and richer and more varied hues; through all the avenues of thought and sense new images of glory and sacred sorrow and mystic love pour in and cluster around these central figures; broad lines of prophetic type and historic influence stretch off everywhere into the undiscernable distance, the wonders of creation crowned with the unspeakable sublimities of the Life of God loom in blessed portent; and gradually each of

the fifteen Mysteries become a world-cycle—a cosmic lotus, a mystical rose with her who is, by excellence, the Rosa Mystica in its centre, holding forth the Word of Life who is the meeting-point of the finite and infinite.

Our Enemies Witness,

An escaped nun has been telling the readers of the "Rock" how to convert Catholics and considering her history she is not so very unfair as her class generally are. She says: "One thing which, I fear, is often overlooked, is the necessity, in all controversy with Rome, of having an intelligent knowledge of the subject. We look at things from our own standpoint. If we are to reach Romanists, and I do not think it is at all so impracticable as is often supposed, we must understand what they are and what they think. And what is more difficult, we must have a sincere consideration for their deep-seated convictions. We should remember that they believe in their religion to a degree which leads them to make the greatest sacrifices for its advancement, without a thought of any suffering to themselves. For example, if the good people who are so anxious for convent inspection only knew what every Romanist knows, that nuns go into convents with the express desire of suffering, and that the great difficulty of a Superior often is to prevent them from practising austerities, they would ask for convent inspection on the bare ground that all public institutions should be inspected, and not on the supposed idea that nuns wish to escape sufferings, which are inflicted on them against their will." There is not much here to which we can object. People who want to convert us ought to have an intelligent knowledge of the matters in discussion, and ought not to look at them from their own standpoint merely. And she is quite right when she says that we really believe in our religion, and that for it we make the greatest sacrifices. But we are shocked when she goes on to admit that "nuns go into convents with the express desire of suffering." Perhaps they leave convents, too, when they no longer have an "express desire of suffering." She should not have made so damaging an admission. She will never succeed if she throws over the old tactics. Going into convents for mortification! This is not nearly as effective on a platform as the good old Protestant idea that nuns went into convents for quite other purposes. And we are surprised that the "Rock" should allow such a statement in its columns. But of late we have noticed several things which lead to a suspicion that the "Rock" is being used for the propagation of Catholic ideas. Very likely there is some disguised Jesuit on its staff. One never knows what they are up to, or where they are.—CATHOLIC TIMES.

The Pope and the Rosary.

There are various signs of deep and tender feeling in the Encyclical on the Rosary which the Holy Father has just published and a translation of which we give in our present issue. It is quite evident he is anxious that the promotion of devotion to the Blessed Virgin through the Rosary should be one of the most notable features of his Pontificate. In language full of pathos he declares that whilst life lasts he will never cease to celebrate the praises of the Blessed Mother, and as his days are now fast drawing to a close he desires to repeat to every Catholic the touching words which Our Lord addressed from the Cross to his beloved disciple, "Son, behold thy mother." His Holiness, it is said, regards this Encyclical as his testament with respect to the Rosary. It certainly is a worthy continuation of a noble series of documents on this subject from the pen of Leo XIII., and whether the remainder of his reign be long or short, he will be mentioned in history as one of the Pontiffs who have been most successful in spreading amongst the faithful the pious practice of the Rosary.—CATHOLIC TIMES.