



December 25,2006

Volume II

Mission and
Logo (Explained)

Since this is the first year of the "Mystical Rose", it would seem only prudent that we explain why we call our newsletter, "Mystical Rose", and what is the meaning of the Logo at the top of the first page.

The title, "Mystical Rose", is taken from the Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

(cont. on page 2).

A Christmas Story: Yesterday and Today

The thought of the Holy Season of Christmas always stirs within me the Christmas' of my childhood. Our family was one that was steeped in tradition both of our Holy Catholic Faith and of our family heritage. So, the memories of those years gone bye are filled with the splendid majesty of the Church Choir singing the Solemn High Midnight Mass to begin the festivities of the Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

We had put up the Christmas tree and the decorations a few days earlier, but they remained unlit until Christmas Eve, after all, it was still the Season of Advent.

We had the Christmas Eve supper together as a family. After the meal was over, we would sing traditional Christmas songs and enjoy the family get together .We would arrive at church about 11p.m.and the Choir would begin singing the Hymns in preparation for the Mass. The Solemn High Mass would begin at midnight, and it was inspiring! The singing and the liturgy would fill us all with the majesty of that spectacular event which heralded the Birth of Our Lord.

Even to this day, those memories are so clear, that they still bring tears to my eyes and a lump in my throat. We would return home after Holy Mass, all of us full with the graces and the splendor of that beautiful liturgy. We would wish each other a Blessed and Merry Christmas, and retire to bed.

It was hard to get to sleep, even though I was tired and it was late. It was always the same. I can't deny it. My mind was filled with the beauty and excitement of the events of that day. Also, I can't deny the fact that my mind was also occupied with anticipation of the presents to be opened on Christmas Morning. The exchange of gifts was tied into the tradition and the Liturgy of that Holy Season. It was not the focal point. It was the expression of God's love for us; our love for Him; and our love for each other. The scene fades, my trip down memory lane is over, and I slowly return to the present.

As I sit here writing this article, it is the second week of Advent. Looking out from my bedroom window I can see the lights and the decorations of the houses in the cul-de-sac where we live. They are all aglow with the festivity of the season. We can hear the Christmas songs being played on the radio as well as in the stores at the shopping malls. The displays are all there: Santa and his helpers; Rudolph, the red-nosed reindeer; Frosty, the snowman; and all the rest. Along with the songs and the displays, don't forget how all the folks at the mall make sure and wish you the "politically correct" seasons greetings, or happy holiday.

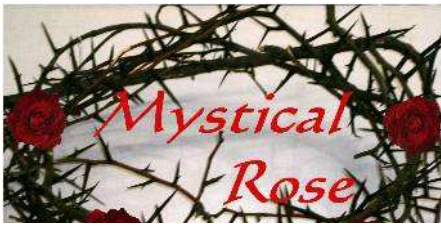
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A Christmas Story. (Cont.)

The Logo of the crown of thorns symbolizes her suffering for her children. The seven roses affixed to the crown of thorns represents the Seven Sorrows of Our Lady.

We dedicate this work to Our Blessed Lady and we ask her to help and guide us, so that we may be able to serve God's people by printing material that will be spiritually edifying: bringing those who read it to a better knowledge of their faith; a better understanding of what God requires of them in order to achieve salvation; and a more sincere desire to serve the Living God to the best of their ability.

Information about Catholicism is so very necessary in order to live a good life. The world in which we live today is in dire need of that information, in order to save mankind from its own self-imposed ignorance. We hope our newsletter will help to inform.

But, wait a minute! What has happened to the season of Advent? Where are all the preparations of that blessed season when we, as good Catholics, prepare our hearts, souls, and the world we live in, for the coming of Our Savior on December 25th. ? What's going on here? How can we sing the songs of the season: Rudolph, the red-nosed reindeer; Santa Claus is coming to town; Silver Bells; Have a Holly-Jolly Christmas; and all the rest, without a single mention of the Blessed Season of Advent?

I have been told, many times, that I have to stop living in the past. Christmas is big business for merchants of all kinds and they have to take advantage of the season to get as much profit as possible before Christmas day. So they put up the Christmas decorations sometime in November, and the Christmas Sales get into full swing on the day after Thanksgiving. Somehow, the season of Advent has gotten lost in favor of a longer list of shopping days before Christmas.

I know that this has been going on for a long time. It was even going on when I was a boy. But the mania of the secular attitude towards the Christmas Shopping Season, never seemed to interfere with our observances of the Season of Advent. We shopped for gifts, but it didn't change our focus on the preparation for the coming of the Christ Child on Christmas Day! We were able to observe the Season of Advent, and by doing so, it made our Christmas celebrations that much more wonderful.

Today, it seems that the Christmas trees and the decorations are up and going sometimes even before the Season of Advent has begun. By December 31st, a number of Christmas trees are in the garbage, and to think that the Season of Christmas doesn't begin until December 24th, and it doesn't end until January 6th, the Feast of the Epiphany. How very sad! Mankind has lost the true spirit of the season in favor of the merchants and buying junkies who push for a longer shopping season, and a more profitable sales outcome.

As for me, in spite of all of this, I want to re-echo the words of an Irving Berlin song for the season: " I'm dreaming of a White Christmas, just like the one's I used to know..." Please make it so and put Christ back in Christmas. No more pagan celebrations echoing a pagan greeting of "Happy Holidays", but a true Catholic spirit of rendering a traditional Christmas Greeting: " A most Blessed and Joyous Christmas to you and to all of your loved ones!" Amen.



Sermon from Fr. Martin Stepanich: Part II; "Prayer from the Heart"

(given in Chicago on December 15th.1963)



The new constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, which has just been made public, stresses the need of attending liturgical services with the "proper dispositions" and also that the "minds" of the faithful "should be attuned to their voices". That means that we should have our minds on what we are saying and doing.

But, as the same Constitution rightly observes, our spiritual life does not consist only in attending the services of the Liturgy: the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass; Benediction; Vespers; and all the rest, but in private prayer also. As Jesus expressed on His Sermon on the Mount, we should shut ourselves up in our rooms and "pray to the Father in secret"(Matt. 6:6). And so it is that we often do pray to God in secret or privately, whether it be in our rooms or homes, or in church, or at work or leisure, or while traveling, etc.

What is said of the need of attending the sacred liturgical services with the "proper dispositions" applies also to any prayer that we offer to God, whether in public or in private. Among the proper dispositions there is, first of all, humility, which enables us to see our lowliness before the Most High God; then there is also sincere sorrow for the many sins by which we know we have offended the Good Heavenly Father; likewise, a consciousness of our complete unworthiness before the All-Holy God; and, a profound reverence in the face of the Infinite and August Majesty of God.

These and other proper dispositions will enable us to attune our minds to our voices, so that our minds will be saying the same things as our lips; so that we will mean every word of what we are saying; so that our prayers will come from the depths of our hearts.

Of the prayers that we can offer to God-or to the Blessed Mother or to the Angels or Saints- there are prayers composed by somebody else and there are prayers, which we make up as we go along, telling God everything in our own words. Both types of prayers are good and useful; both are necessary in their proper place and at the proper time. But, in either case, it is important that we put out heart into the prayer and really mean what we are saying. This is the main point that I want to stress today.

Of the prayers given to us by others, the one that really stands out is the Our Father, given to us by request, by Our Lord Himself. It is a Biblical prayer, found in the Gospel, There is also the Hail Mary, and you know that the first part is taken directly from the Gospel, too, and it consists in the words which the Archangel Gabriel and St. Elizabeth addressed to Our Lady.

And the Church has given us countless indulgenced prayers, which are gathered together in what is called *The Racolta* . The saints, too, have left us many a beautiful prayer and some of their best prayers are collected in a book called *The Saints at Prayer*. And there are many useful prayers in our prayer books.

So there is certainly no lack of prayers composed by others. And so many of them are just perfect for our needs. They say just what we want to say to God.

With such sets of prayers, there is the danger of saying them mechanically, without putting our heart and soul into them. So our endeavor must therefore be to say them thoughtfully and reverently. We have our difficulties in this regard, that is true, but we must not make the fatal mistake of giving up prayer on that account. Nor must we be so foolish as to hot-rod our way through a bunch of words, as if we were in a terrible hurry to get it over with, to get away from God, as if He were Someone with Whom one shouldn't associate with too much. If we would only realize how insulting it is to God to dash through our prayers with great speed. That really isn't prayer; it's just noise.

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We may as well ask ourselves just why we do not pray to well, from the fullness of our hearts. The truth hurts, but let's face it. We know that we are too worldly, too self-centered, and too sensual. How can anyone care to spend time with God in prayer if he is completely in love with the things of this world? And a selfish heart has no room for God within itself. A person constantly indulging in sensual pleasures and entertainment and fun just can't have any taste for God and for the spiritual.

We must first love God with our whole heart and with our whole soul, as we are bidden to do by the Great Commandment of Love, and then it will come natural to pray to Him with our whole heart and soul. Amen.

Catechism: "About God"

"One of the hardest things for thinking people to understand is the present day neglect of God. It is not that men have ceased to believe in God, but that they have become completely indifferent to Him."

One of the hardest things for thinking people to understand, is the present day neglect of God. It is not that men have ceased to believe in God, but that they have become completely indifferent to Him. Hence, it is very necessary to review the arguments for His existence and to discuss His Nature and His Claims.

God's existence can be proved in many ways, but the simplest way is that way known as "the argument from design." Not only must a watch come from a watchmaker, but every part of it must have had a designer who knew how to make it.

The universe is full of design, infinitely more wonderful than the watch. Obviously, then, it must have had a Designer with tremendous intelligence. More than that—even matter is designed. So, not only the universe, but even the very matter of which the universe is made, must have had a Designer. Another word for the Designer of matter is "Creator".

Matter did not exist forever. It was created, and the Creator is called God.

The story is told of a famous astronomer who was being visited by a scientist friend who claimed to be an atheist. The latter was admiring a working-model of the solar system that stood upon a table; by turning the handle the planets could be made to revolve in their respective orbits around the sun.

"Very ingenious, indeed" he remarked. "Who made it?" "Nobody made it" replied the astronomer, "it just happened-made itself". The scientist realized he was being taught a lesson and became annoyed. "You are trying to be funny," he said. "How silly you are" exclaimed the astronomer, "You can't believe that this little model made itself, and yet you can believe that the real sun, moon, earth, and planets, and stars, and everything else in the vast universe, just came into existence without any Maker."

Catechism: "About God." (cont.)



"God has spoken to us through Holy Scriptures. Therein He has revealed much about Himself."

God has spoken to us through Holy Scripture. Therein He has revealed much about Himself. For example:

His Existence. "From the foundations of the world, men have caught sight of His invisible nature; His eternal power, and His Divinity, as they are known through His creatures. Thus, there is no excuse for them." (Rom. 1:20)

His Name. At the burning bush God told Moses he was to be the deliverer of the Israelites. Moses said: "If they (the Israelites) should say to me: What is His Name? What shall I say to them?" God said to Moses: "I am Who am." He said: "Thus shalt thou say to the children of Israel: He Who is that sent me to you." By this God reveals that His essence is subsistent being itself, that He is not dependent on any being for His existence but subsists in His own right. Everything else has but a borrowed being, dependant on Him.

His Nature: "God is pure spirit, incorruptible." (Jn. 4:24),(Rom. 1:33). There is no composition of any description in God. As St. Augustine put it: "What He has, He is." He is unchangeable. "I am the Lord and I change not."(Mal. 3:6).

He is Eternal: - had no beginning and will never cease to be. "Before the mountains were brought forth and the earth and the world were born, and from everlasting to everlasting, Thou art, O God." (Ps. 89:2). "Before Abraham came to be, I am." (Jn. 8:58).

He is everywhere, knowing and seeing all things. "From Him no creature can be hidden; everything lies bare, everything is brought face to face with Him, this God to Whom we must give an account." (Heb.4:13). "It is in Him that we live and move and have our being." (Acts17:28).

He possesses each and every perfection in an infinite, unlimited degree. "His greatness is unsearchable." (Ps. 144:5). "No human handicraft can do Him service, as if He stood in need of anything. He Who gives all of us life and health and all we have." (Acts17:25).

He is One, not only in that He is absolutely indivisible, but also in that there can be no other like Himself, no other God. "The Lord, Our God, is One God.(Deut.6:4). "I alone am, and there is no other God besides Me." (Deut.32:39).

"God is Love."(Jn.4:12). Our Lord tells us to pray to God as "Our Father", and continually refers to Him by this title.

He is Just and Merciful. "Thou art just, O Lord, and Thy judgment is right." (Ps. 118:137). "The Lord is good to all and merciful to all His works." (Ps. 144:9).

He is All-Powerful. "All things are in Thy power and there is none that can resist Thy Will." (Est.13:9). He wants all men to be saved. "It is His Will that all men should be saved, and be led to the Truth." (1 Tim. 2:4).

"The study of God is the only study which can be called Wisdom, in the fullest sense of the word." (St. Thomas Aquinas).

Evil. Sometimes it is objected that the presence of evil, or disorder, in the world proves that the world was not created by God. That is no more true than the fact that one unmade bed, in a dormitory containing 19 made beds which have been made, proves that there was no bed-maker. It would be obvious, for that reason known to himself, that the person who made the 19 beds, left the other unmade. So it was that, when God made the world, for reasons known to Himself, He permitted evil to exist in it. Of course, evil is not a positive thing, which can be the result of a direct creative act. It is the absence of good, or due order, just as a shadow is the absence of light. Men always tend to exaggerate the amount of evil

Catechism: "About God." (Cont.)



present in the world. Death, for instance, is really the beginning of life,; suffering is always a grace.

The facts are that God exists, and that He is Goodness, Wisdom, Love, and Power. He knows everything; our knowledge is very limited. Therefore, it is absurd for us to sit in judgement on God. Reason alone tells us how He died for love of us, embracing the most bitter suffering in the process. We must bow down in faith, trust, and love before His Holy Will.

“God Almighty would in no way permit evil in His works were He not so Omnipotent and Good that, even out of evil, He could work good.” (St. Augustine).

“We must Love God”

Man’s highest activity is love, and there is no nobler object of his love than God. So, the first and greatest Commandment is: “Thou shalt love the Lord, Thy God, with thy whole heart, and thy whole soul, and thy whole mind.”(Matt.22:37).

Nothing is more important than that. “Love alone makes heavy burdens light and bears in like balance things pleasant and unpleasant; bears a heavy burden and feels it not, and makes bitter things to be savory and sweet...Nothing is sweeter than love, nothing higher, nothing stronger, nothing larger, nothing more joyful, nothing fuller, nor anything better in heaven or on earth; for love descends from God, and may not rest finally in anything lower than God.(Imitation of Christ; Bk.3, Ch.5).

So many men today expect God to tolerate from them contempt, insubordination, disobedience, and neglect, such as they would never tolerate from their own children, In Scripture God asks: “ If I be a Father, where is My honor? And if I be a Master, where is My fear?” (Mal.1:6). Failure to love God can only result in tragedy either in this world, or in the next.

“God Claims”

“Can’t I do what I want with my own life?” What a frequent objection that is! And yet, how silly!

At a beach sand-building competition, a boy and a girl had finished a magnificent sand castle, when they wandered around to look at the efforts of the other children. On returning, they found that another boy had occupied their castle and was adding what he considered to be improvements. “What are you doing— That’s our castle.” They exclaimed. “No, it’s mine. You left it. I found it.” The boy responded. “What do you mean, yours?” the children said. “It’s our castle—we made it and we can do what we like with it because we made it.” They stated. Of course, everyone said that they were right. The intruder was turned out, and they won the prize.

God made me out of nothing, and so, I belong to Him. I am His to do with as He likes. So, life is not our own. God made us; God owns us. We have no rights against God. He has the right to lay down all the conditions as to how we must use the life He has given to us. We are not our own property. We belong to God .He has the right to do just what He likes with us.

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“Our Duty”

Our duties to God can be summed up as follows:

Adoration: because He is Goodness itself, and we owe Him our homage and love;

Contrition: for we have not been good to God and we must tell Him we are sorry;

Thanksgiving: for all He has done for us and will continue to do for us;

Supplication: because we are totally dependent on His graces to be, or to do, good;

God wants our loving service. He has made us free to love Him, or to reject Him. He does not want the service of a human machine. We are able to resist His Rights, but, of course, it is wrong for us to do so. Another name for resistance to God is “sin”. It may appear to give temporary happiness, but, in the end, what takes us away from our Maker, can only bring sorrow.

“Thou hast made us for Thyself, O God, and there is no rest for our hearts till they come to rest in Thee.” (St .Augustine).

We must dedicate to Him all our being—our intelligence, by striving to know Him more and more, especially through prayer; our will—by daily increasing in love for Him, proved by our obedience to His Commandments, and other manifestations of His Will.

St. John Vianney, the Cure of Ars, was walking through the fields one spring day with a friend. The trees were full of birds and the air was full of their singing. The Cure stopped to listen, “Ah, little birds,” he said. “ You were created to sing and you are singing. Man was created to love God and he does not love Him.” *Finito!*

(taken from “*This is the Faith*” published by Catechetical Guild Educational Society, St. Paul, Minn. Nihil Obstat and Imprimatur, January 25th., 1951)

The Following of Christ: Book II, Chapter IV. “Of Prudence in What We Do.”

We must not trust every word or impulse, but cautiously and patiently weigh the matter according to God. Alas! Oftentimes is evil more readily believed and spoken of another than good; so weak are we. But perfect men do not easily believe every tale-teller; for they know human weakness is prone to evil, and very apt to slip in speech.

It is great wisdom not to be rash in what is to be done, and not persist obstinately in our own opinions. It is a part of this wisdom, also, not to believe everything men say, nor straightway to pour into the ears of others what we have heard or believed.

Take counsel of a wise and conscientious man, and seek rather to be instructed by one that is better, than to follow your own inventions. A good life makes a man wise according to God, and gives great experience. The more humble any one is in heart, and the more in subjection to God, so much the wiser will he be in all things, and the more at peace.

The Following of Christ. (cont.)

Practical Reflections.

Nothing is more opposite to the Virtue of Charity, or more fatal to salvation, than the evil reports we make of one another, whether they be true or false; because they irritate the mind, disorder the heart, foment divisions, and embitter hatreds, and because we cannot obtain God's pardon for them, unless we resolve, in our confessions, to repair the evil we have done and to reconcile those we may have set at variance. We should, therefore, neither spread evil reports of others, nor listen to them; and if we do hear anything against our neighbor we should be careful not to repeat it.

Prayer.

Grant, O My Savior, that I may observe, with the greatest care, Thy precepts of Charity towards my neighbor, to love him as Thou hast loved us, since this is absolutely necessary for salvation. Give me also that tenderness of Charity, which may prevent me from wounding it in any way; for Thou hast said that to offend our neighbor is to wound the apple of Thine eye. Grant, therefore, that I may avoid Thy displeasure by not incurring the displeasure of my neighbor. Amen.

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