

The History of Mary's Psalter

T

he history of the Rosary is bound up with the 150 Psalms of the Old Testament, otherwise known as the Psalter of David. From the dawn of Catholic history, monks and hermits prayed these Psalms as part of their daily liturgical life.

Saint Benedict, in his Holy Rule, explains that the monks of the

desert recited the 150 Psalms every day. Saint Benedict arranged the Psalms for his monks so that all 150 would be recited in one week. This became the Divine Office (Breviary) that priests and religious recited every day until the post-Conciliar *aggiornamento* revolutionized both Breviary and Mass.

The story of "Mary's Psalter" reportedly begins with the Irish monks in the 7th Century. These monks divided the 150 Psalms of David into a *Na tri coicat* format of three groups of fifty. Arranged in such a way, the "fifties" served both as reflective and corporal/penitential prayer.

The people of the Middle Ages, in their great love of Our Lady, set to fashioning "Rosariums" in Her honor. They composed Psalms in praise of Mary to match the 150 Psalms of David. St. Anselm of Canterbury (1109) made such a Rosary. In the 13th Century, St. Bonaventure divided his 150 Marian Psalms into three groups. The first group commenced with the word *Ave*, the next with *Salve*, and the final fifty Psalms commenced with the word *Gaude*. Such Rosaries of praise took the name of Our Lady's Psalter.

It was not long before the custom of reciting *Hail Mary's* became the substitute of reciting the Psalms in praise of Our Lady. "By the 13th Century", writes the Redemptorist Father James Galvin, "the number of *Aves* was set at one hundred and fifty, to equal the number of the Psalms of David".



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Saint Thomas Aquinas explains that the Psalter of David, composed as it is of one hundred and fifty Psalms, is divided into three equal parts of fifty Psalms each. These three equal parts represent, figuratively, the three stages in which the faithful find themselves: the state of penance, the state of justice, the state of glory. Likewise, explains Father Anthony Fuerst, "the Rosary of Mary is divided into three parts of fifty Hail Mary's each, in order to express fully the phases of the life of the faithful: penance, justice and glory."

Heaven Itself declared the immeasurable value of this

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The Secret of the Thing Worse Than War

From July 13, 1917, when Lucy, Francisco, and Jacinta had been shown the vision of Hell and told about devotion to the Immaculate Heart, people in increasing numbers began going to the Cova da Iria to say the Rosary. For the three seers and especially for their parents, the crowds were only a cause of painful trials.

The adult Sister Lucy recalled:

“My poor mother was more and more afflicted in seeing the number of people who came there from everywhere.”

Maria Rosa’s motives were simple:

“Those poor people certainly come here to be deceived by your lies and truly I don’t know what to do to undeceive them.”

“She made a new effort to oblige me to confess that I had lied,” was how Lucy characterized the

pressure from her mother, when she accompanied Lucy to the house of the priest for a second visit about the apparitions.

In front of Jacinta’s and Francisco’s house, Maria Rosa stooped to give Lucy stern instruction. “When you arrive, you will kneel down, you will tell him that you lied and you will ask his forgiveness.”

Jacinta came to the doorway and whispered, “I’m going to get up and call Francisco. We are going to pray near the well. On your return, come and meet us there.”

On the veranda of the priest’s house Lucy was compelled to ask her mother: “But Mama, how could I say that I have not seen what I have seen?”

“Listen well! What I want is that you tell the truth. If you have seen, say what you have seen, but if you did not see, admit that you lied.”

Once inside Father Ferreira listens kindly and attentively, a noticeable difference in his attitude

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THE HISTORY OF MARY’S PSALTER

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Psalter. In 1214, Our Blessed Mother told Saint Dominic to “preach My Psalter” in order to rekindle faith, to convert sinners and to crush stubborn heresy. Saint Louis de Montfort tells the story in his magnificent work, *The Secret of The Rosary*.

“Saint Dominic,” writes Saint Louis, “seeing that the gravity of the peoples’ sin was hindering the conversion of the Albigensians, withdrew to a forest near Toulouse where he prayed unceasingly for three days and three nights. During this time he did nothing but weep and do harsh penances in order to appease the anger of Almighty God. He used his discipline so much that his body was lacerated, and finally he fell into a coma.”

Our Lady then appeared to him, accompanied by three angels. She said, “Dear Dominic, do you know which weapon the Blessed Trinity wants to use to reform the world?”

Saint Dominic asked Her to tell him. Our Lady responded:

“I want you to know that, in this kind of warfare, the battering ram has always been the Angelic Psalter which is the foundation stone of the New Testament. Therefore, if you want to reach these hardened souls and win them

over to God, preach My Psalter.”

Our Lady’s words contain two special points of interest:

- 1) She uses the language of the Church militant. She does not speak of the Rosary in a sentimental manner, in order to achieve good feelings or pan-religious unity. No, She refers to it as a *battering ram* against heresy.
- 2) She *twice* uses the term “Psalter”, which is the Rosary designated as 150 *Aves* that link it to the Psalms of David.

Regarding the Rosary’s traditional structure, Msgr. George Shea writes, “Because its 150 Hail Mary’s correspond to the 150 Psalms of the Psalter, the complete Rosary is sometimes called Our Lady’s Psalter. In fact, the latter was its common designation down to the end of the 15th Century, while ‘Rosary’ was reserved for a part, i.e., a third, of Our Lady’s Psalter.”

As late as the last quarter of the 15th Century, Blessed Alaus de Rupe protested vigorously against the use of the terms “Rosario,” “Chapelet” or “Corono,” and insisted that the title of Our Lady’s Psalter be retained. Msgr. Shea points out that the first indication from a Pope that the Psalter of Mary is commonly called “Rosary” is found in the Apostolic Constitution of Pope Leo X, *Pastor Aeterni* dated October 6, 1520, over three hundred years after Our Lady spoke to Saint Dominic. †

from the first visit.

"The good parish priest received us with great friendliness," Sister Lucy relates, "I should even say, tenderness. He questioned me with such gravity and delicacy, while employing some tactics to see if I was contradicting myself or if I was putting one thing in place of another."

Looking at Maria Rosa, he said, "I do not know what to say nor what to make of all that!"

Later, behind her house, Lucy ran down the slope toward the well. She saw Francisco and Jacinta.

"On returning I ran to the well. There they were, the two of them, on their knees, praying." Jacinta rose and ran to Lucy, hugging her.

"You see," she cried, "we need not be afraid of anything. Our Lady helps us! She is such a friend to us."

But she is sobbing almost uncontrollably as she says this. They went to kneel by the well with Francisco, and are soon lost in talking about the events of that morning.

"We had chosen that site as a place to talk, for our fervent prayers, and also to often shed our bitter tears. We mingled our tears with the water from the well, to drink them later at the same source where we had shed them. Would that well not be the image of Mary in whose Heart we dried our tears, and drank of the purest consolation?"

All these accounts show the degree of heroic suffering Lucy had to undergo in order to certify the truth of her testimony. But she had a friend in her father, Antonio. That evening near sunset, near the well, he sat alongside her.

Gently he asked her: "Listen. Right now you are going to tell me the truth. Yes or no, did you see that Lady at the Cova da Iria? Don't be afraid to say that you didn't see Her; whether you said that for your own amusement and for the people to believe, or whether, simply, you lied. There are many people in the world who lie. That is not important. People will

stop going to the Cova and all that will finish."

"Well, it is true", replied Lucy. "Since I saw Her, how can I say that I did not see Her? And the Lady says She will come again each month until October."

Antonio rose from the well. "Tomorrow, very early, you will go with your sheep to the Cova da Iria. I will go with you."

At the first glimmer of dawn, the sounds of sheep led Antonio and Lucy toward the pasture of the Cova, now showing signs of being completely trampled by the repeated crowds.

"Twenty bushels of corn lost, as well as the beans and the pumpkins that were sown in the middle (a heavy sigh). Patience!", said Antonio. "We will not harvest anything but some olives, acorns or arbutus berries that will be left high on the trees."

Near the holm-oak, Antonio studied the small tree thoughtfully.

"Is that where Our Lady appeared?"

"Yes."

"How many times will Our Lady come?"

"Until October."

"If, then, Our Lady doesn't come anymore, the people will cease coming, and next year, we will begin again to cultivate the Cova da Iria as before."

Antonio looked pensively at Lucy. "What do the people come to do?" he asked.

"They come to recite the Rosary and everyone wants me to pray with them."

Antonio said affectionately,

"Well then, say the Rosary also with me."

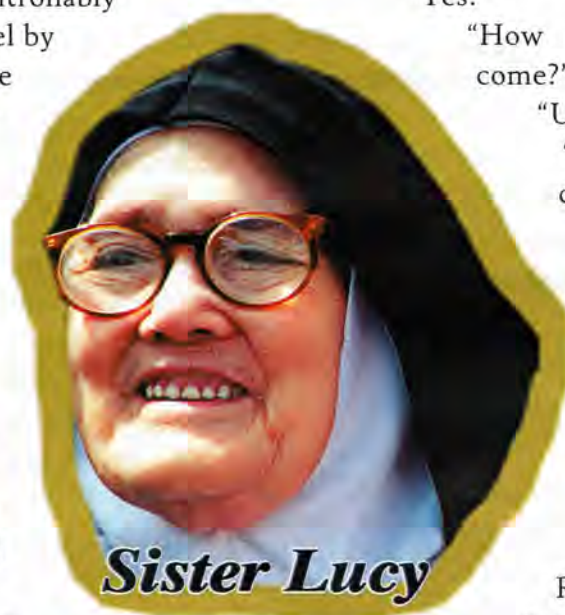
"Yes!" she said.

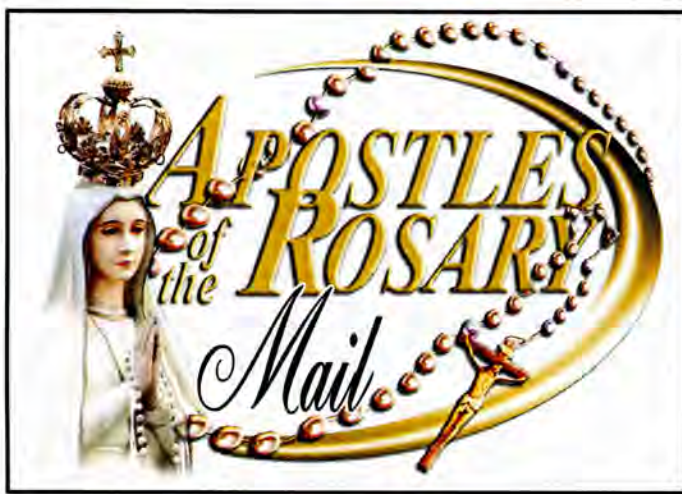
They knelt down before the little holm-oak and took out their Rosaries.

Later Antonio told Maria Rosa, "This year we cannot count on the harvest of the Cova da Iria, everything has been destroyed. But, if it is Our Lady Who is appearing there, She will help us."

Maria Rosa shook her head. "Our Lady? Would to

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Dear Father Gruner and all:

I wish to thank you for the most recent copy of *The Fatima Crusader*. Its coverage of the Holy Rosary renewed again my thirst for this devotion.

Right now, in these dangerous times we need to pray the Rosary more than ever. You did not need to inform me of the threats but did inspire me to call on my pastor (I'm in a Cathedral Parish here) to preach and push the Rosary and Scapular in these most dangerous times.

I even gave the clergy my copy of *The Fatima Crusader*, after reading it, along with a copy of St. Louis de Montfort's *The Secret of the Rosary*. Yesterday I started calling on friends to begin a Novena of the Rosary...

Thank you again,

A. Johnson, MI

Dear Father Gruner,

I most sincerely apologize for not having responded sooner... However, your work has not gone unnoticed. You have played a great part in my rediscovering the old Latin Mass. *The Devil's Final Battle* has brought into focus the many concerns that I've observed and felt at my own "Catholic" church. I've never felt comfortable with Communion in the hand. I felt it disrespectful. Recently, the Tabernacle has been moved to the rear of the church, next to the crying room. The final straw was (I did not attend this Mass, so I consider it 3rd hand information) when the celebrating priest, in his homily, said that too much devotion was given to Mary and Saints ... that less should be given to them and more to Christ! It was my understanding that devotion to Mary and the Saints is

what leads you to Christ. My mother and I now attend one of only 3 Traditional Latin Masses still said here...

It was through daily recitation of the Holy Rosary (which I committed to you via e-mail at your web site, one year ago May) that has led me to what I believe to be the True Mass. Thank you very much for your persistence. I am 40 years old and have never seen the Tridentine Mass. I am truly amazed at the differences from that of the Novus Ordo. I am elated at finally finding the true presence of Our Lord and His Sacrifice.

I know you are a busy man. This letter became longer than I intended, but in no way expresses fully the influence you have had and still have on my journey. Thank you very much. You have my support and more importantly my prayers. By the way, at the end of each Mass, Father C expresses the intention of the Consecration of Russia to Our Lady's Immaculate Heart. Thank you Father Gruner and God Bless You!

Sincerely,

A. Leyva, AZ

THE SECRET OF THE THING WORSE THAN WAR Continued from page 2

Heaven it were Our Lady! But no! It is more likely the devil who has introduced himself into our home. We were so happy, and now we are prisoners of those people who come unceasingly to knock at the door, who wish to see the little one and speak to her. If we don't go to get her, they won't leave. If you were here more often, you could help chase them away."

Antonio, with a heavy sigh, said, "I would not know what to say to them and I cannot mistreat them in order to make them go away ..."

And so the pious and the curious, the wealthy and the poor, continued to make the journey to the homes of the children. So different from today's sophisticated communications systems, people had to leave the comfort of their homes and, without being aware of the extent, greatly added to the discomfort of the dos Santos and Marto households. Lucy's mother, becoming more exasperated each day, only wanted Lucy to admit she was lying about Our Lady's visits so her family's way of living could return to some semblance of normalcy. †