

My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

For those of you who joined us for the Crowning of Mary last Sunday: Thank you! Thank you for coming and honoring Our Lady! As we reach out to honor her, we open ourselves to her and to grace – she is the mediatrix of all graces, and so all the grace of God pours through her humble hands!

This weekend (Saturday, May 13th), we celebrate the 100th Anniversary of Our Lady's first apparition at Fatima, Portugal. For more information about the apparitions, check out wafusa.org. You can also log into FORMED.org (Parish Code: **nr3434** [all lowercase]) and watch one of the movies about Fatima, read an e-book, or listen to a talk on Fatima.

One of the key parts of Our Lady's message of Fatima is the **Rosary**. In fact, in the October apparition, she revealed that she was the Lady of the Rosary. The message is simple: if we want peace, pray the Rosary. The Rosary is a gift from heaven. There are so many instances of how praying the Rosary has brought heavenly intervention for peace.

A few examples:

The Battle of Lepanto on October 7, 1571 was a battle to save Europe. The Muslim invading fleet was vastly superior to the small European Christian fleet. Pope St. Pius V ordered Christians to pray the Rosary the whole day of the battle, and the flagship carried a picture of Our Lady. What should have been an incredible disaster for the small "David" of Europe, ended up destroying the "Giant" invading fleet. As the commanding officer summarized the battle for the Pope: "We came! We saw! But Mary conquered!"

In 1955 (much closer to our time!), Russia held a large portion of Austria, and planned to gain control of the whole country. Fr. Petrus Pavlicek inspired the country with a prayer campaign, forming groups to pray the Rosary and fast with the intention of saving the country from Communist control, as Our Lady of Fatima had said. Miraculously, the Communists gave up control of the country and left without a bullet being fired.

On October 12, 1960, Russian Premier Khrushchev spoke to the United Nations and took off his shoe, banging it on the podium and saying, "We will bury you," knowing that they were in the end stages of developing the largest, furthest reaching nuclear missile built to date. He knew that after the test on October 24, he would be able to dominate the world. Prior to this speech, Bishop Venancio of Leiria, Portugal urgently asked all the bishops of the world to pray and do penance for the conversion of Russia, and to come to the Shrine in Fatima on October 12-13 (the anniversary of the final apparition of Fatima) to pray. In the pouring rain, hundreds of thousands of pilgrims prayed in Fatima. October 24 came and the rocket exploded on the launch pad, significantly pushing the Russians' work back.

We've all heard of the Cuban Missile Crisis in October 1962. Throughout the tension filled days, as the world waited, expecting nuclear war, American Catholics turned to the Rosary and invoked the Blessed Mother. On October 26, Khrushchev said he would remove the missiles if the U.S. did not invade Cuba. Again, our Mother's powerful but gentle hand was there, bringing peace. (Thanks to the book *Fatima for Today*, chapter 8, by Fr. Andrew Apostoli, CFR, for these references.)

The Rosary is a gift from Heaven so that we can have peace! It is not about relentlessly praying "Hail, Marys" over and over, but about allowing our Mother to walk us through the Mysteries of Christ. The repetition of a familiar prayer helps us to focus more on the Mystery, and not be bogged down in the words. Mary then takes us by the hand and walks us to Jesus, to know Him, to ponder His love and His life. The more we know Him, the more we love Him and trust Him, the more grace He is able to pour into our lives and the world.

If you have been away from the Rosary, now is the time to come back! If you have never prayed the Rosary, now is the time to learn! There are "How to Pray the Rosary" pamphlets by the main entrance of the Church, but there are also many different resources online. One such can be found here: www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/prayers-and-devotions/rosaries/how-to-pray-the-rosary.cfm.

In this tumultuous world, when, more than now, would we need the gift of peace that Our Mother promises? Let us take up this great prayer, this "Weapon of Mass Conversion" – stronger than nuclear arms, more powerful than all the hosts of hell – and let us turn to the Mother of God who turns her loving eyes upon us in our need!