

Pray the Most Holy Rosary **OUR GLORIOUS FAITH** AND HOW TO LOSE IT

This article is taken from a booklet with the above title written by Fr. Hugh Thwaites, S.J. It contains different stories of how we can lose our faith but this paper will deal only with the Holy Rosary. Fr. Thwaites' words on this subject are as follows:

Without delay now, I want to talk about my theme. It seems to me that a principal cause of the loss of faith is the dropping off in the practice of the family rosary.

In Austria, after World War II, there was a complete collapse of vocations. One year, apparently, no one at all entered the seminaries. So the bishops held a synod, to find out how it could be that this had happened. The conclusion they reached was that the war had so disrupted family life that the centuries-old practice of the rosary in the home had stopped, and had just not started up again. This is my experience, too; when the rosary goes, the faith soon collapses.

I remember someone telling me of a friend of his, a great Catholic, the pillar of the parish, whose children had all lapsed, one after the other. They had all fallen away from the sacraments and from attending Mass. So I said to him, "I wouldn't mind betting that your friend had been brought up to recite the family rosary when he was a boy, and that his children haven't." The next time I saw him, he said that this was indeed true. His friend had recited the family rosary at home when he was a boy, and when he had got married and started his own family they all said the rosary. But then, one evening when they were about to start the rosary, one of the children switched on the television, and that was that. The custom of the family rosary was dropped, and in due course they gave up the practice of the faith.

After this life, that one unrebuked action will be seen to have affected the eternity of many people. God sent His Mother to Fatima to tell us that we had to say the rosary every day. There were no other prayers She asked us to say. Accordingly, we should do what She asked.

A layman I met once who did not say his rosary told me that he read the breviary every day. That is fine. It is what priests have to do. It is the prayer of the Church. So in a way it is better than the rosary. But it is not what Our Lady asked for. She asked for the rosary. If a mother sends her child to the shop for a bottle of milk, and he comes back instead with ice cream, is she

pleased? In a way, ice cream is better than milk, but it is not what she asked for.

In that most holy home at Nazareth, do you think that Our Lady had to ask for anything twice? If we want in any way to be like Jesus, we must do what His Mother asks. If we do not, can we expect things to go right? We cannot with impunity disobey the Mother of God. She knows better than we the dangers of this spiritual warfare. She sees more clearly than we do the dangers that beset us. She warns us: You must say your rosary every day.

If the garage mechanic warns you that your car needs repairing or else it will break down, surely you would heed that warning. If the gas gauge warns you that you need more gas, do you do nothing about it? And if Our Lady comes to Fatima and tells us, not just once but six times, that we must say the rosary every day, do we disregard that warning? If we do, we have only ourselves to blame when we find that our children have lapsed from the faith.

I know that Fatima is only a private revelation, but nevertheless the Church has endorsed it, and that makes it rash for us to disregard it. If the Church informs us that Our Lady really did come to Fatima and tell us these things, then we must harken to her words. It really seems to me that those Catholics who do not take Fatima seriously and say the rosary every day in their homes, are very akin to the Jews who laughed at Jeremiah. If God sends us His prophets and we do not take them seriously – well, we have the whole of the Old Testament to tell us what happens as a result. But at Fatima, God sent us, not His prophets, but His Immaculate Mother.

So I think that the abandonment of the family rosary is a main reason why so many Catholics have lost the faith. It seems to me that the Church of the future is going to consist solely of those families who have been faithful to the rosary. But there will be vast numbers of people whose families used to be Catholic.

In my work of going round visiting homes I have seen this conclusion borne out time and again. Homes can be transformed by starting the recitation of the daily rosary. I remember a woman telling me that she could not thank me enough for having nagged her into starting it; it had united her family as never before. And I remember another home where I called. There was a strange tension there: the children were silent and the wife seemed withdrawn, but the husband was willing to start the family rosary. When I called back again a couple of months later, the atmosphere was quite different. The children were chatty and the wife was friendly, and the husband walked down the road with me afterwards and said how amazing it was that the home was so much happier.

One reason, I think, why the daily rosary makes for a happy home, is this. From what some possessed people have said, and from what some of the saints have said, it seems certain that demons fear the rosary. It makes their hair stand on end, so to speak. Holy water certainly drives them out, but they come back again. The daily rosary drives them out and keeps them out. It is rather like living in an old house where there are mice everywhere. The only way to get rid of them is to bring cats. If you get a couple of cats, after a week or two there simply will not be any more mice. Mice fear the very smell of cats. And in a home where the rosary is said every day, after a time the demons realize they are impotent in front of Our Lady, and go elsewhere.

This must be one reason why, as they say, "the family that prays together stays together." In that home, utterly free of evil spirits, there is an atmosphere one does not find outside. In a demon-infested city like London, where I live, such a home is an oasis of God's grace, and people find a comfort and peace there which they enjoy greatly. We human beings are not meant to live in the company of demons, but with God and with the angels and saints in heaven.

So, as I see it, in this effort we are making to keep the faith and pass it on, the practice of the rosary is absolutely indispensable. Whatever else a person may do, even though they go to Mass every day, they still need to say the rosary in their home. It is the medicine our Mother has told us to take, to keep our faith strong and healthy.

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