

ARCHBISHOP'S RESIDENCE
2809 S. CARROLLTON AVENUE
NEW ORLEANS 18, LOUISIANA

September 29, 1958

THE ROSARY OF THE
BLESSED VIRGIN MARY AND PEACE

To the Clergy, Religious and Laity,
Archdiocese of New Orleans

Dearly beloved in Christ:

Many are the blessings which Holy Mother Church owes to Pope Leo XIII whose long reign gave lustre to the closing decades of the nineteenth century and ushered in most propitiously the present century. Inspiring was the holiness of his life and marvelous his keenness of intellect. To him we are indebted for that immortal document on social justice entitled "Rerum novarum" and a series of fourteen official documents on the Rosary, as the outstanding devotion to the Immaculate Mother of God.

The first of these solemn pronouncements, entitled "Supremi Apostolatus" - "The Supreme Apostolate", issued on the first day of September 1883, gave us the dedication of the month of October to the devotion of the Most Holy Rosary. In his bountiful generosity, the same Pontiff, Pope Leo XIII, granted many indulgences to those who attend the October devotions or recite the prescribed prayers in private, when they cannot attend the public exercises.

Pope Leo XIII was prompted to commend to the faithful throughout the world the devotion of the Rosary, because his entire life, and especially his pontificate, was dedicated to the patronage of the Blessed Virgin Mary and because he was conscious of her powerful intercession in times of great need or crises. He was also convinced that the Rosary combined rare sublimity with simplicity, which gave it a powerful appeal to the great body of the faithful, learned and unlearned, rich and poor, the simple child and the mighty ruler. What is there more dignified and sublime than the Lord's Prayer, the Hail Mary, the tribute of glory to the Most Holy Trinity! What is there more challenging to ecstatic meditation than the Mysteries of the Rosary, and what is there more consoling than the quieting panorama of the Life of Christ and of His Blessed Mother that stimulates the mind as it reviews those same Mysteries. The very nature of the Rosary explains the universal popularity which in conformity with the Holy Father's recommendations, this form of prayer enjoys as a private devotion, as a family devotion and as a public devotion for

almost any occasion. Endless likewise is the satisfaction the faithful derive from this wonderful and efficacious form of prayer, the Rosary.

Pope Leo XIII initiated the October Rosary Devotions especially as a means for obtaining, through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin, divine aid and relief in dangers that constantly threaten Holy Mother Church, the Catholic way of life and the peace of the world. It is significant, that, in her apparitions both to Bernadette at Lourdes and to the peasant children at Fatima the Blessed Virgin gave the specific mandate that the Rosary should become the great devotion, through which the conversion of the world to Christ and the establishment of universal peace would be effected.

These considerations prompt us at this particular time to urge the most zealous observance of the OCTOBER DEVOTIONS and the daily or frequent recitation of the Rosary as both a private and a family prayer. No one will question that the potential of serious danger to world peace exists today in the Far East and in the Middle East. Twice within half a century has the world experienced the horrors and anguish, the destruction and desolation, the holocaust of human life, social distress and material sacrifice, which a world-wide conflict inflicts upon the human family. The use of new instruments of destruction in a third war forebodes a veritable "abomination of desolation" in which the innocent at home would seem to suffer more universally and more intensely than the combatants on the field of battle.

Surely then is this a time for united prayer for peace, especially through the intercession of the Queen of Peace, who is also the Queen of the Most Holy Rosary. The hour calls for wisdom and prudence, fortitude tempered with understanding and a deep sense of responsibility, courage to face realities rather than visions of more power or world control. Let it be our daily prayer that with justice and honor for all peace may be the sincere aim of those whose high office charges them with the grave responsibility of shaping and deciding the destinies not only of their own people but of other nations as well.

We cannot fail to recognize with deep concern the fact that we as a nation are confronted with an internal problem, which can become a serious threat to the peace and unity which are indispensable to our well-being and happiness at home and to our prestige and influence throughout the world. Daily we are reminded that the racial controversy is growing in extent, intensity and bitterness. It would indeed be a

calamity to our nation were we to become permanently divided and distressed over an issue which involves basic human rights, moral responsibilities, religious principles and the solid foundations upon which our democratic way of life was conceived and developed.

We have no intention at this moment to repeat or enlarge upon our previous statements on this controversy. We are as convinced as ever that all men are created after the image and likeness of God, endowed with an immortal soul destined to share the life of grace on earth and the life of glory in heaven, the one heaven that offers to all deserving men without distinction of race, nationality or color, the entrancing vision of the All High God. We are as convinced as ever that the Eternal Son of God, Christ Jesus our Lord, lived, suffered and died to merit the grace of sanctification and salvation for all men, that He instructed His Church to make His way of life available to all nations, peoples and races. We are still convinced that the consistency of the Christian faith and conformity with the Christian way of life demand our repudiation of racism in all its obnoxious forms. We are still convinced that love of neighbor is the test and yardstick of our love of God, weighed in the balance of sincerity, helpfulness and absence of compulsory discrimination. We are still convinced that enforced racial discrimination inflicts incalculable mental and emotional cruelty and pain, physical and social privations, educational and economic restrictions upon sixteen millions of our fellow citizens, and that these discriminations are unjustifiable violations of the Christian way of life and the principles of our American heritage.

When the peace of the world is threatened, or when there is evidence of internal disorder within a nation, our supreme spiritual leaders of all ages have urged the Church of God to have recourse to prayer for the calm consideration and objective thinking that lead to peace. In our own generation, from the illustrious Leo XIII to our presently reigning Father in Christ, the universally beloved Pius XII, the Vicars of Christ have exhorted us in every crisis to have recourse to prayer to the Prince of Peace through Mary, the Queen of Peace. Indeed, our Blessed Lady in her apparitions at Fatima has revealed that universal prayer, especially the recitation of the Rosary, will be the great and sure means to peace. Inspired by this guidance, we exhort all the members of our flock in Christ, the Reverend Clergy, the devout religious and faithful laity, children as well as adults, to dedicate the month of October to daily recitation of the Rosary for universal peace with justice and honor

and for the propitious solution of our racial problem at home according to the Christian principles of justice, charity and patience. We further urge that the recitation of the Rosary be continued as a family devotion throughout the year. We need unity in the home, in the parish, in the Archdiocese and in the nation. The true bond of unity is charity, the binding force of charity is prayer, united prayer, sincere prayer, persevering prayer.

In conclusion we ask you, the devoted members of our spiritual family, to join us in placing ourselves and all our interests again under the patronage and powerful intercession of our Blessed Lady, the Queen of the Rosary and the Queen of Peace. May she obtain for all of us the blessings of Her Divine Son, the Prince of Peace, to the end that in our homes and family circles, in our parishes and throughout the Archdiocese, in our nation and throughout the world there may be ushered in an era of peace, security and happiness and that these blessings may be shared in the spirit of charity and mutual respect by all mankind.

Faithfully your Shepherd in Christ,

+ Joseph Francis Rummel

Archbishop of New Orleans