



Most Reverend Robert W. Finn
Bishop
Diocese of Kansas City ~ St. Joseph

Feast of the Holy Rosary
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Dear friends in Christ,

Hail Mary! With the announcement of the Archangel Gabriel and the consent of Mary the salvation of the human race is begun.

Hail Mary! We cry out again and again at her invitation. We persevere in trusting prayer – through the rhythms of the rosary - because she is Mother of God and our Mother. She who through the merciful plan of the Eternal Father gave the world its Redeemer wants us to know and love her Son. The mysteries of her life, of Jesus' life, and of our lives are all intertwined. In the mystery of the Incarnation, Jesus Christ, God made man, unites Himself in some way to every man, and reveals to us who we are, and what is our high calling. (*Gaudium et Spes*, no. 22)

Mary's rosary is our picture book of faith, hope, and love. Here in the unfolding images of Christ life: In His joys, through His luminous love, in His sorrows, in His glories; he prepares us for everything that will take place. The will of God is being realized in each event of Christ's life, in Mary's life, and in our life. And Mary will help us say "Yes," and give our free and full assent to His divine plan.

As we repeat her name in the rosary, Mary leads us through our meditation, wanting to explain to us – each time more deeply – who Jesus is, and what He has accomplished for you and me. Most importantly she wants us to realize **why** He lived; **why** He taught, and died, and rose: because of an eternal plan of mercy which is unstoppable; because of the power of His love. God so loved the world, that He gave His Son ... (Jn 3:16) For us, Jesus went through death and opened for us a path to life.

Mary – so close to Him, "full of grace" – followed Him faithfully. From the moment of the An-

nunciation, she knew the joys. She began to see who He was as Divine Son and High Priest. She shared His sorrows, and when she had joined Him in the glory of heaven, He made her our Queen. He showed us, in the example of Mary, how the Church was to follow her and reach our destiny in heaven. Is it any wonder, then, that the rosary has endured as an instrument for holiness ready to draw all who cling to it closer to Christ through Mary?

But it is more. The rosary is a spiritual weapon. Mary is more. She is a crowned monarch who commands legions of angels and rules the hearts of an army of saints, and rallies the fainting courage of even us poor sinners. We love her, and her prayers and intercessions are very powerful. The rosary is more than a faint echo of Bible stories. It is our chant. Mary herself first heard those words from Gabriel: "Hail, Full of Grace!" And do you think that she, whose loving response brought the Savior into the world, would now fail to come flying to her children when we call her – in the crush of the day or in the dark of our night? Hail Mary, Hail Mary, Pray for us, O holy Mother of God.

You know the story of the Battle of Lepanto, and how the Christian fleet in the year 1571, tremendously outnumbered and seemingly without hope, listened to Pope St. Pius V, and prayed the rosary; and they won the battle. Mary, the Lady of the Rosary, won the victory that turned back the occupation of Christian Europe.

In our daily battles do you think that Mary will not hear? Just three or four months ago our Diocese, and the Archdiocese our neighbor, came together – on Corpus Christi Sunday - in the stadium here in Kansas City. In many languages we prayed the rosary, and we adored our Lord Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament. We lifted Him up in the midst of our community, and we begged Him to draw us all to Himself.

This statue of Mary, Our Lady of Fatima, has been a traveling statue – present in many of our parishes and schools – and we crowned her in the Stadium in June. Mary – Mother of every man, woman and child of every language and nationality, rich and poor, heard that rosary in those many languages – our Global Living Rosary – and I know she will hear us again, all together, or one by one. Are you praying the rosary now? – every day, and often together as a family? There are battles – difficult challenges our families face. Don't fail to ask Mary for her maternal love and assistance.

There are battles in our country and our world. We pray for our servicemen, so courageous in going against those intent on violence and terror. Mary, win the battle. Protect them as they carry out the weighty demands of justice. Make us all participants and instruments of peace.

There are battles against the family. Mary, lift up and sustain the true meaning of married life and love. Don't let selfishness or a distortion of our true purpose before God be a substitute for chaste love, open to life. Make our homes holy. Safeguard the vocation of Marriage and the central place of the family in society.

Every day human life is under attack. If it were not enough that our elected leaders and judges too often have failed to stand up for vulnerable pre-born babies, or the disabled or the dying, every election campaign seems to be a referendum on the dignity and value of human life. Candidates who would stand with us valiantly against abortion or assisted suicide are labeled "extreme" and fanatical. Mary, we will not abandon your dear children, but we know that the proponents of these evils will not give up without a fight. Our Lady of the Rosary, Our Lady of Life: Win among us the battle we cannot win without your help. Turn back the culture of death in our nation. Save us from the tyranny and deceit of Choice. Hail Mary, Hail Mary, Pray for us sinners.

Dear friends: children, adults, bishops, priests and religious, Here is our Mother who is also Queen of heaven and earth. We will gladly give God the victory through Mary. As the Eternal Father used our Lady to bring the world its Savior, even now will He use her to bring the world to salvation; back to the bosom of the Father.

Contemplating the Mysteries of her life and ours, may we never cease to speak her name: Hail Mary our Mother! Hail Mary our Mother! Our Lady of the Rosary, Pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of our death.