

## Third Sunday after Pentecost, 2008

*“Hail full of grace, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women.”*  
(Lk. I:28)

That message sent by God through the Archangel Gabriel are so well known to us all; and we repeat those words over and over again in the Mystery of the Holy Rosary — but what emotions do they arouse in our hearts? Has the prayer of that devotion become a hurried routine? Yesterday evening, the last day of May, the month of Mary; a day which for us was celebrated in honour of our Heavenly Queen; and for others in various places the feast of the Visitation linked with the Immaculate Heart of Mary; it was a delight to see, in Rome, the



THE ANNUNCIATION  
by Sandro Botticelli  
1481-1485  
Uffizi Gallery, Florence

celebration of the end of Mary's month. There were Cardinals, Bishops, priests, religious both men and women, and thousands of faithful of all ages; children being carried by parents and taking part in that long ceremony of a meditated Rosary. Thousands of candles shielded in cups of blue, and yellow and red; and a fervent gathering of prayer and meditation interspersed with hymns as the procession moved slowly along, a beautiful image of the Madonna and Child flanked by Swiss Guards and other uniformed figures which eventually was enthroned on a special dais under the shelter by the papal throne. It brought back memories of bygone days. The evening was drawing on and the sky changed to a cloudless deeper blue. Our Holy Father in his homily spoke of the last times in which we are living — the Angel's message was the beginning of the last chapter of history. Once again the pious practice of praying the Rosary in which we meditate on the life of Christ in company with His Blessed Mother was recommended as a family exercise — as so many Popes have done before.

*“The Holy Rosary is not only a weapon to put to flight the enemies of God and of Religion but, above all, it fosters and nourishes the Gospel virtues. And, in*

*the first place, it reanimates the Catholic faith by contemplation of the divine mysteries and improves our understanding of the truths revealed by God.”<sup>1</sup>*

*“A prayer marvellous in its simplicity and in its depth! In this prayer we repeat over and over again the words which the Virgin Mary heard from the Archangel and from her cousin Elizabeth. The whole Church joins in these words. At the same time our heart can include in these decades of the Rosary all the events which go to make up the life of the individual, the family, the nation, the Church and the whole of humanity. Incidents which affect us personally or our neighbour and, in a special way, those who are closest to us, whom we keep in our heart. Thus the simple prayer of the Rosary marks the rhythm of life ... a prayer which is so simple and rich.”<sup>2</sup>*

The last day of May for us recalls the Coronation of the Blessed Virgin, Spouse of the Holy Ghost, by God the Father and Jesus her Son. In giving birth to the Son of the Most High, the “Eternal Word made flesh”, everlasting King with the Father and the Holy Ghost, Mary is truly the Mother of God and Spouse of the Holy Ghost, having conceived by His intervention — “The Holy Spirit will come upon thee, and the power of the Most High will overshadow thee; and therefore the Holy which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.”

Thus Mary, in virtue of being Mother of God and Spouse of the Holy Spirit, is, we might almost say, Queen by right. Hence God could not fail to bring her to Heaven in body and soul, and crown her as Queen of the Angels and Saints. With the whole Church, we venerate her and proclaim her Queen of heaven and earth! Daily we salute her and invoke her as we sing, “Hail Holy Queen, Mother of mercy; hail our life, our sweetness and our hope.”

The end of May brings us into the Month of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus. Personally I think that the great tragedy of today’s Ireland is that devotion to the Holy Rosary has almost disappeared from our schools and thus from the hearts of the future population. Fr Patrick Peyton’s great crusade for the family Rosary seems to be remembered by few with sad results for families that have lost the bond of true family charity. And the Blessed Virgin always leads those who are devoted to her to her Divine Son. This is so evident at Fatima and in Lourdes. The great candle-light procession is devoted to the Most Blessed Sacrament; and I feel sure that the sick are inspired to cry out to Him: “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy upon us.” In Fatima too, the procession with the Image of the Immaculate Heart leads to the Altar of God where the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is to be offered. There is a great need for more fervent prayer; for a willingness to follow our Holy Father in his efforts to restore the traditional devotions that brought serenity and contentment to families, and through them to the countries where they lived.

These words from Pope Leo XIII may be a good help: “In the devotion of the Rosary, Christ occupies the first place ... by means of the vocal prayers of which it is formed. We can express and profess our faith in God, our most provident Father; in eternal

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<sup>1</sup> Pope Pius XI

<sup>2</sup> Pope John Paul II

life, in the forgiveness of sins, and also in the mysteries of the Most Holy Trinity, the Incarnate Word, the divine Maternity, and others. Certainly, nobody is ignorant of the great value and merit of faith. Faith, in fact, is nothing else than the chosen seed which, in the present, produces the flowers of all the virtues which render us pleasing to God and yields fruits which will last for eternity — since “To know thee is perfect justice and thy power is the root of immortality.”<sup>3</sup> This affirmation of Pope Leo XIII is admirable. He is telling us that the Most Holy Trinity and the saving work of Christ are at the centre of this great prayer, the Rosary, making it a profession of faith in these central mysteries of Catholic Doctrine.

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<sup>3</sup> Wisdom 15:3