



The Holy See

GENERAL AUDIENCE OF JOHN PAUL II

Wednesday, 29 October 2003

1. With the month of October, the Year of the Rosary comes to an end.

I am deeply grateful to God for this period of grace, in which the entire Ecclesial Community has been able to deepen the value and importance of the Rosary as a Christological and contemplative prayer.

"*To contemplate with Mary the face of Christ*" (Apostolic Letter *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, n. 3). These recurring words in the Apostolic Letter *Rosarium Virginis Mariae* have become, as it were, the "motto" of the Year of the Rosary. They sum up the authentic meaning of this prayer that is both simple and profound. At the same time, they emphasize the continuity between what the Rosary proposes and the path pointed out to the People of God in my previous Apostolic Letter, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*.

2. If, in fact, Christians at the beginning of the third millennium are called to grow as "contemplators of the face of Christ" (cf. *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, n. 16), and Ecclesial Communities are asked to become "genuine 'schools' of prayer" (*ibid.*, n. 33), the Rosary constitutes the "Marian Way", hence, a privileged means of achieving this twofold goal. Wishing to be more and more transparent to the "mystery" of Christ in order to meditate on the "mysteries" of his Gospel, the Church learns at the school of Mary. This is "Mary's Way" (cf. *ibid.*, n. 24), the one she took on her exemplary pilgrimage of faith as the first disciple of the incarnate Word. At the same time, it is the way of genuine Marian devotion, totally centred on the bond that exists between Christ and his Blessed Mother (cf. *ibid.*).

3. During this Year, I wanted to entrust two important prayer intentions to the People of God: *peace and the family*.

The 21st century, born under the banner of the Great Jubilee of Reconciliation, unfortunately inherited many smouldering hotbeds of war and violence from the past. The alarming attacks of 11 September 2001 and its repercussions in the world have built up tension on a global level. In the face of this disturbing situation, the recitation of the Rosary is not a passive withdrawal but a conscious choice of faith: as we contemplate the Face of Christ, our Peace and our Reconciliation, let us implore God for *the gift of peace* through the intercession of Mary Most Holy. Let us ask her for the necessary strength to be builders of peace, starting with daily life in the family.

The family! The family nucleus must be the very first place in which Christ's peace is welcomed, fostered and safeguarded. In our day, however, without prayer it becomes more and more difficult for families to fulfil this vocation of theirs. This is why it would be truly helpful to return to the beautiful custom of reciting the Rosary at home, as was the practice of past generations. "The family that prays together stays together" (*Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, n. 41).

4. I entrust these intentions to Our Lady, so that she may protect families and obtain peace for individuals and for the whole world.

I hope that all believers, together with the Virgin, may start out with determination on the path of holiness, keeping their gaze fixed on Jesus and meditating, with the Rosary, on the mysteries of salvation. This will be the most precious fruit of this year dedicated to praying the Rosary.

To the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors

I extend a special welcome to the English-speaking visitors and pilgrims here today, including the groups from England, Ireland, Finland, Japan and the United States. May Mary, Queen of the Rosary, protect you and lead you ever more closely to her Son.

To young people, the sick and newly-weds

I now address an affectionate greeting to the *young people*, to the *sick*, and to the *newly-weds*. I urge you all to base your lives on the Word of God, to be builders of the civilization of love that is eloquently symbolized by the Cross of Christ, a source of light, comfort and hope for people in every age.