

CASES AND QUERIES

THE INDULGENCES OF THE ROSARY

I am a rabid — if the adjective may be permitted — believer of the efficacy of the Rosary. Perhaps it is my age and my love for history more than the deeper conviction of the theology of the Marian prayer. But a couple of days ago, I received the jolt of my life; a priest, in an informal conversation, somewhat vaguely mentioned something about the Church's changing attitude regarding the Rosary. In effect, he said that the Church "almost" had taken whatever attraction the Rosary has by substantially taking away the indulgences attached to its recitation.

Dumbfounded at first to hear my favorite devotion downgraded, I ended up so confused. Will you please enlighten me about this whole thing?

Let us begin with a little history.

In the Apostolic Constitution *The Doctrine of Indulgences* of January 1, 1967, Paul VI introduced notable changes in the discipline of the indulgences and established new norms in the process. Three main objectives were taken to guide the whole works:

- (1) introduce other more theological modes for gaining partial indulgences;
- (2) arrive to a more equitable diminution in relation to plenary indulgences;
- (3) reduce and adjust to a new and more dignified form the so-called *real* and *local* indulgences.

The revision of the Enchiridion of Indulgences had to be done then "with a view to attaching indulgences only to the most important prayers

and works of piety, charity and penance." (n. 13) The Sacred Penitentiary, the body commissioned to carry out this revision, presented to the Holy Father on June 28, 1968, a much shorter and carefully prepared new Enchiridion of Indulgences.

Regarding the recitation of the Marian Rosary, norm 48 says: "A *plenary* indulgence is granted, if the Rosary is recited in a Church or public oratory or in a family group, a religious or pious association; a *partial* indulgence is granted in other circumstances."

More concretely, in order to gain a plenary indulgence in the recitation of the Marian Rosary, one must take into account the following norms:

(1) The recitation of a third part only of the Rosary suffices; but the five decades must be recited continuously.

(2) The vocal recitation must be accomplished by pious meditation on the mysteries.

(3) In public recitation the mysteries must be announced in the manner customary in the place; for private recitation, however, it suffices if the vocal recitation is accompanied by meditation on the mysteries." (*ibidem*)

I should like to call attention to several points which can serve to clarify the provisions. *Firstly*, the use of a blessed rosary is not mentioned here as a necessary requirement in order to gain the aforesaid plenary indulgence. *Secondly*, in virtue of the norm 24, §11, he who recites the Rosary fulfilling all the conditions above-mentioned may acquire plenary indulgence *everyday*. *Thirdly*, the Rosary, recited *privately* in a *semi-public* or *private* oratory, has no attached plenary indulgence; while when recited *privately* in a *Church* or *public* oratory, one can gain a plenary indulgence as long as the conditions above-mentioned were fulfilled. *Fourthly*, the Rosary, when recited in *common* by the members of the family, or a religious congregation or pious association, has an attached plenary indulgence, *servatis servandis*.

Consequently, instead of feeling depressed by the new provisions on the indulgences of the Rosary, we should be happier. The new Enchiridion of indulgences gives such importance only to *three* other pious exer-

cises, namely: (a) adoration of the Most Holy Sacrament during at least half an hour; (b) the devout reading of Holy Scripture for the same length of time; and lastly, (c) the pious practice of the Way of the Cross.

It is indeed both enlightening and refreshing to see how much importance the Church is giving to the recitation of the Marian Rosary. The mere fact that it is being afforded the singular honor of being bracketed — in relation to indulgences — with these three devotions, proves the consistent high esteem of the Church for Mary's Rosary.

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It does not happen everyday, but mark it well: the red letter days will be:

November 25-26, 1969

UST Priest Alumni Homecoming.

See you at home—UST Central Seminary.