

Let the Rosary be a Means for Peace

By Bishop Victor Galeone

My dear friends,

On Oct. 26, I received an email from the music director of my last parish in Baltimore, who happens to be the mother of four healthy boys, all under the age of ten. She began by recounting how the neighborhood parents had decided not to allow their children to go trick or treating if the sniper was still on the loose. They live on the south side of Baltimore, much closer to Washington than Richmond is, where the sniper had last struck. I quote from Marianne's email:

"When I walked into Jesse and Jake's bedroom last Wednesday evening, I thought they were saying our usual night prayers, but they kept repeating Hail Mary's. So I listened. Then it dawned on me that they were praying the rosary. My sons, who wrestle and fight and beat on each other all day long, were praying the rosary!

"Now after having my Aunt Clarice force rosaries on me throughout my childhood and adolescence, I never wanted to do that to my kids. So while I pray with them throughout the day, I have never recited the rosary with them. I was so surprised at what they were doing that Jesse and Jake told me they were praying a rosary so that God would lead the police to the sniper.

"And he did. That very night! The next morning we learned that the snipers were apprehended at 3:00 in the morning without incident. We were all overjoyed. The sniper had held the whole region hostage for three weeks. The kids weren't allowed outside at school for gym or recess. The last straw for Jesse and Jake was canceling trick or treat. They decided that they had better do something, so on their own initiative they prayed the rosary. I think they will always remember the rosary that led police to the killers."

While Jesse and Jake's rosary wasn't the sole prayer that ended the sniper crisis, still, their reason for praying it was one of the very motives that the Holy Father suggests in his latest apostolic letter, *On the Rosary of the Virgin Mary*. After referring to the terrifying attacks of Sept. 11, the pope remarked that the revival of the rosary could be an invaluable means for achieving peace.

For those who would label John Paul naive, I invite them to revisit the battle of Lepanto in 1571. The Christian fleet of 200 ships was outnumbered two-to-one by the Turkish fleet, whose pennants were emblazoned with verses from the Koran. Weeks in advance of the battle, Pope Pius V had insisted that all Christians pray incessantly, especially the rosary. The afternoon of Oct. 7, while praying the rosary with the cardinals assembled in his chapel, Pius arose, went to the window, and gazing heavenward, said: *Our Lady's intercession has prevailed! The victory is ours!* Weeks later, couriers arrived with the news that it was that very afternoon that the Turkish fleet had been decimated.

Besides being a prayer for peace, the Holy Father says that the rosary "is and always has been a prayer of and for the family. At one time this prayer was particularly dear to Christian families and it certainly brought them closer together." He then goes on to remind us of the need to pray for the institution of the family, which is under severe attack today from the surrounding secular culture. "Families seldom manage to come together, and the rare occasions when they do are often taken up with watching television." Reciting the rosary draws families together with the Holy Family, bringing their hopes and concerns to God and filling their hearts with images from the life of Christ rather than from the world of television, he pointed out.

In addition to the customary images from the Lord's life as presented in the Joyful, Sorrowful and Glorious mysteries, John Paul has suggested a new set of meditations, the *Mysteries of Light*. He suggests that the Joyful mysteries, traditionally prayed on Thursday, be moved to Saturday, thus freeing up Thursday for the *Mysteries of Light*. The new mysteries are:

- Christ's baptism in the Jordan.
- His first miracle at the wedding of Cana.
- His proclamation of the Kingdom of God with his call to conversion.
- His Transfiguration.
- His institution of the Eucharist.

In issuing this apostolic letter, John Paul has proclaimed this year, October 2002-October 2003, as the Year of the Rosary. It's a prayer that's especially powerful as a petition for peace and for the health of the family. I invite all of us to imitate the childlike faith of my little friends Jesse and Jake. This year, let's pray the rosary daily for the Lord to restore peace to our world and spiritual health to our families.

May all of you have a blessed and joyous Christmas!